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Wednesday, October 28, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

WYXI Goes LIVE From Another Successful Pumpkintown Festival



Pictured: Athens Vice Mayor Jordan Curtis is interviewed by "Cousin" Mark and "Brother Barry"

Another successful Pumpkintown Festival filled the streets of downtown Athens as thousands of visitors turned out to enjoy one of East Tennessee's most popular fall traditions. Despite being postponed for two weeks because of hurricane-related weather concerns, the festival returned under sunny skies and drew large crowds throughout the day.

Presented by Friendly City Festivals, Pumpkintown has become a signature event for Athens and McMinn County since its founding in 2003. One of the county's largest annual events, the festival attracts tens of thousands of visitors to historic downtown Athens each year and features more than 300 vendors, live entertainment, local shopping, food, family activities, and the Scott Crisp Memorial PowWow celebrating Native American culture and heritage.

Festivalgoers packed the downtown streets, enjoying live music on multiple stages, arts and crafts vendors, children's activities, and community exhibits. The event showcased why Pumpkintown remains one of the region's most anticipated annual gatherings.

Adding to the excitement was a successful live broadcast by Athens radio station WYXI. Led by General Manager "Cousin" Mark Lefler and "Trading Post" host "Brother" Barry Sullivan, the broadcast featured interviews with local leaders, business representatives, and community officials throughout the day. Among those stopping by the WYXI broadcast location were Steven Hayes of DENSO, Athens Vice Mayor Jordan Curtis, Lindsey Ferguson, executive director of the McMinn County Economic Development Authority, EDA Assistant Director and McMinn Tourism Director Brianna Baker, City of Athens Interim City Manager Bridget Roberts, former Athens businessman Jack Allen, McMinn County Mayor John Gentry, and Athens City Councilman Perry McCowan. The live interviews highlighted the community partnerships and local pride that have helped make Pumpkintown a success year after year.

Organizers credited the strong turnout, community support, and ideal fall weather for another memorable festival. Special recognition was given to Meredith Willson and the volunteers, sponsors, vendors, and community partners whose efforts helped ensure that even after an unexpected postponement, Pumpkintown once again delivered a successful celebration for residents and visitors alike.



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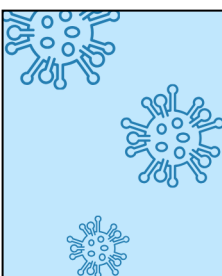
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Wednesday, October 28, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 Athens, Tennessee

Niota Main Street Filled with Halloween Fun for Annual Trunk-or-Treat



The City of Niota closed a portion of Main Street Sunday afternoon as families gathered for a community Halloween celebration and trunk-or-treat event. Young and old alike enjoyed an afternoon of festivities that included bounce

houses, food, candy, and free giveaways.

Organizers expressed appreciation to the local businesses, churches, and community groups that participated and helped make the event a success by providing treats, food, and other goodies for attendees.

Source: Niota Volunteer Fire Department

Community News You Can Use

- Registration is now open for the City of Athens Youth Basketball League for Pre-K through 6th grade. Games will be played on Saturday mornings beginning in January at Athens City Primary and Intermediate School gyms, with practices held one night per week. The cost is \$80 per player. Those interested may register online at secure.rec1.com/TN/athens-tn/catalog, by calling Athens Parks and Recreation at 423-744-2704, or in person at the new Parks and Recreation office, 122 Regional Park Drive. For more information, call 423-744-2704.
- The McMinn County Livestock Association will hold its annual meeting on Nov. 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the University of Tennessee Extension Conference Center, 2345 Denso Drive, Athens. Guest speaker will be Valerie Bass, executive director of the Tennessee Beef Industry Council. Those planning to attend are asked to RSVP to the UT Extension Office at 423-745-2852.

Thursday, November 19 • 6-7 PM

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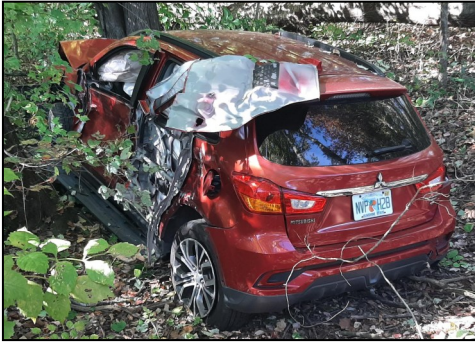
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Florida Man Suffers Minor Injuries in I-75 Crash Near Niota



A 79-year-old Florida man suffered minor injuries Sunday afternoon following a two-vehicle crash on Interstate 75 northbound near the 56-mile marker in Niota.

According to reports, the driver of a Mitsubishi Outlander traveled into the median and wooded area after making contact with a Chevrolet Malibu. The Outlander's driver was evaluated at the scene by EMS but declined transport. The driver of the Malibu was not injured.

Responding agencies included AMR, the Niota Fire Department, Athens Fire Department, Clearwater Fire Department and the McMinn County Sheriff's Office.

Tennessee Highway Patrol Trooper Jalen Skipper is investigating the crash. *Photos by the Niota FD*

McMinn County Arrest Report

October 26, 2026

David Morgan, 34, of Athens, charged with child support. Bond \$1500.

Jason Smallwood, 23, of Athens, charged with violation of the sex offender registry. Bond \$10,000.

Joshua Roberts, 43, of Riceville, charged with domestic assault, and false imprisonment. Bond \$16,000.

**Those accused are considered
innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.
Information gathered using public sources.**

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Wednesday, October 28, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4 Athens, Tennessee

Historic Ceremonies Planned in Athens and Calhoun on October 31

The Hiwassee Chapter of the Tennessee Society Sons of the American Revolution will host two historical commemorative events on Saturday, Oct. 31. The day will begin at 11 a.m. with a Patriot Grave Marking Ceremony honoring James Riggins at 430 County Road 130 (Rocky Mount Road) in Athens. Participants will assemble in the field next to the residence and enter through the marked access points.

At 2 p.m., the chapter will dedicate a Liberty Tree in Calhoun near Meadow Lands Park, across from the Calhoun Post Office. Following the dedication, members will re-mark the gravesite of former Tennessee Governor Joseph McMinn at the Old Calhoun Presbyterian Cemetery. The events are part of ongoing efforts to recognize and preserve the area's Revolutionary War and early Tennessee history.

Source: Ed Waldron, President, Hiwassee Chapter, TNSSAR

Obituaries

Karen Wear Taylor, 79, of Etowah, passed away unexpectedly Thursday, October 22. She was a proud graduate of Etowah High School, Class of 1965, and continued her education at the University of Tennessee, where she earned an associate degree. She went on to serve as a confidential secretary for Consolidated Freightways in Atlanta, Georgia, dedicating 22 years of service to the company. Per Karen's wishes, no formal services will be held. [Bordwine Funeral Home](#) is in charge of arrangements.

Aniyia Marie Mooney, 15, passed away on Sunday, October 25. Survivors and arrangements to be announced. [M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home](#) in charge of arrangements.



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