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1991 McMinn County John Doe Identified After 35 Years

More than three decades after partial human remains were discovered in McMinn County, investigators have identified the victim as Forest Wayne Loudermilk, thanks to advances in DNA technology and a partnership involving the McMinn County Sheriff's Office, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the University of Tennessee Forensic Anthropology Center.

The remains were found on April 10, 1991, in a residential area of McMinn County. At the time, forensic anthropologists believed the remains belonged to a Black male between the ages of 31 and 50. Despite extensive efforts, investigators were unable to determine the victim's identity, and the case remained unsolved for more than 35 years.

A major breakthrough came in 2025 through the TBI's Unidentified Human Remains DNA Initiative. With funding from RTI International, investigators submitted DNA evidence to Texas-based forensic genealogy company Othram Inc. Scientists identified potential relatives, leading investigators to obtain a familial DNA sample for comparison.

The testing confirmed the remains belonged to Forest Wayne Loudermilk (Dec. 8, 1931), a white male originally from North Carolina who was last seen by family members around 1980. Authorities said some records list him as Wayne Forrest Loudermilk or Forest Wayman Loudermilk. Investigators have been unable to locate a photograph of him.

The McMinn County Sheriff's Office and TBI are now seeking information about Loudermilk's life and the circumstances surrounding his death. Investigators are particularly interested in learning who he may have been with before his death and are asking anyone with information or photographs of Loudermilk to contact the sheriff's office at 423-745-5620, Ext. 1928.

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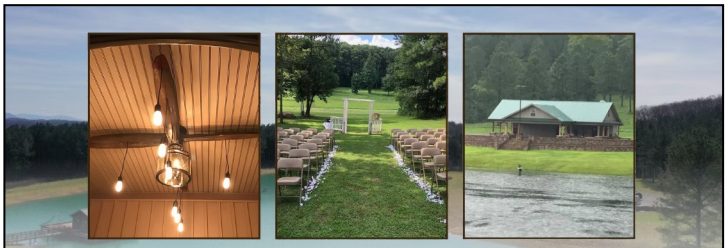
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TWU Awarded $190,000 Security Grant

Tennessee Wesleyan University has received a $190,000 federal grant through FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program to fund campus safety and security upgrades.

The funding will be used to expand ID card access at residential and academic buildings, beginning with exterior doors at Nocatula Apartments and later extending to academic facilities. The project will also add a remote campus lockdown system designed to improve emergency response capabilities.

University officials said the enhancements are part of TWU's ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and secure environment for students, faculty, staff, alumni and visitors. The upgrades are expected to be completed by spring 2028.

Source: Tennessee Wesleyan University

Etowah Receives $491,000 State Loan for Sewer System Improvements

The City of Etowah will receive a $491,000 low-interest loan from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program to support planning and design work aimed at correcting inflow and infiltration issues in the city's wastewater system.

The loan, approved by the Tennessee Local Development Authority, carries a five-year term with a 1.48% interest rate. The project will focus on identifying and addressing sources of excess stormwater and groundwater entering the sewer system, a common issue that can strain wastewater infrastructure.

Etowah was one of seven Tennessee communities and utility providers approved for funding as part of a $38.4 million package of water infrastructure loans announced by TDEC. The State Revolving Fund program provides low-interest financing to help local governments and utility systems complete water and wastewater improvement projects that might otherwise be difficult to fund through traditional financing.





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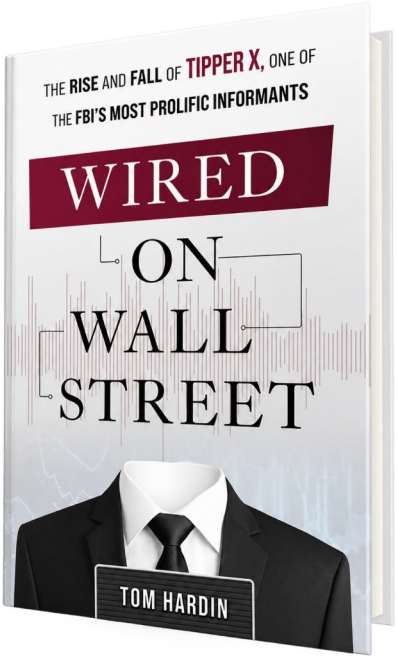

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Dr. McIntire Named Holly Ball Master of Ceremonies



Dr. Edward M. McIntire will serve as master of ceremonies for the 64th Annual Cleveland-Athens Cotillion Holly Ball, scheduled for Monday, December 28.

The Holly Ball continues a tradition rooted in the historic cotillion, a social custom dating to 18th-century Europe. Originally centered on formal dances and etiquette, cotillions evolved in the United States into debutante presentations and community celebrations that recognize young women as they enter adulthood.

This year's debutantes are Sarah Grace Hallenberg, Kendyl Claire McConkey, Ashlyn Isabel Robbins and Madeline Blythe Schultz.

McIntire's family has longstanding ties to the organization. His wife, Rebecca, is a longtime Cotillion member, and their daughter, Maddox, was presented as a debutante in 2019. The couple also has a son, Jay.

A graduate of the University of Arkansas, McIntire earned his medical degree from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and completed his residency at Kansas University Medical Center. He later moved to Cleveland and is now a partner at Tennessee Valley Urology and a board member of US Specialists Management.

Beyond his medical career, McIntire has been active in community service, helping found organizations including the Bradley Initiative for Church and Community, Smart Choice Credit Union and the Community Foundation of the Ocoee Region. He is a member of Broad Street United Methodist Church, where he has served as a youth teacher for 25 years.

McIntire said attending the Holly Ball has long been a family holiday tradition and that he is honored to introduce and present this year's debutantes.

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Vols Survive LSU, Turn Attention to Vanderbilt and Playoff Push



Tennessee didn't play its cleanest game against LSU, but the Vols did what good teams do in late November: they found a way to win. The No. 9 Vols improved to 9-2 with a 27-13 victory at Neyland Stadium, keeping themselves firmly in the College Football Playoff hunt.

The game was another example of Tennessee's identity in 2026. While the offense struggled for long stretches, the defense once again carried the load. Tennessee managed just 308 total yards, converted only four of 17 third-down attempts and committed three turnovers. Yet LSU never consistently threatened because the Vols dominated at the line of scrimmage, holding the Tigers to just 43 rushing yards while recording eight sacks.

After LSU tied the game at 13-13 late in the third quarter, Tennessee responded in the fourth behind freshman quarterback Faizon Brandon, whose touchdown runs of 18 and 55 yards provided the difference. It wasn't a perfect performance, but with playoff positioning on the line, style points mattered less than the result.

Now the Vols turn their attention to Vanderbilt. Tennessee enters the regular-season finale controlling much of its playoff fate. If the defense continues playing at its current level and the offense avoids turnovers, the Vols have the clear talent advantage and should be favored to leave Nashville with a win. Vanderbilt's best chance is to force mistakes, shorten the game and keep the score low enough to create fourth-quarter pressure.

The bottom line is simple: Tennessee remains alive and well in the playoff race. The Vols are 9-2, ranked ninth in the latest CFP standings, and one win away from strengthening their case for a postseason berth. Another victory over their in-state rival would likely send Tennessee into Selection Sunday with plenty to feel confident about.






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From Cheryl Ingram, McMinn County Register of Deeds.


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McMinn County Arrest Report

November 22, 2026

William Keller, 30, of Madisonville, charged with violation of probation for driving on a revoked license, and failure to have insurance.

Courtney Costa, 43, of Cleveland, charged with driving on a revoked license.

Lori Phillips, 49, of Sweetwater, charged with DUI ,and violation of implied consent.

Tony Winfield, 49, of Athens, charged with domestic aggravated assault.

Marian Azoria, 24, of Athens, charged with driving without a license.

Austin Bird, 23, of Athens, charged with driving on a suspended license.

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



Obituaries

Tammie Moses Thompson, 67, of Etowah, passed away on Friday, November 20. She was a lifetime member of the Amvets Ladies Auxiliary and Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She was also a member of her Ladies Circle, Ladies Luncheon Group, The First Christian Church Bell Choir, and The Sisters Circle, where she made many lasting friendships over the years. Funeral services will be held at 7:00 p.m., Friday, November 27 at Etowah First Christian Church. The family will receive friends from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Friday prior to the service. Family and friends will assemble at Green Hill Cemetery, 3:00 p.m., Saturday, November 28 for the committal service. **Bordwine Funeral Home** of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

Barbara Jean Irons, 86, of Athens, passed away on Sunday, November 22. She was retired from Goody's Department Store and a member of Union McMinn Baptist Church where she taught Sunday School for many years. Funeral services will be 2:00 P.M. Sunday, November 29 in the Chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Interment will follow in Pond Hill Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 12:00 to 2:00 P.M. Sunday in the funeral home. **Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home**, Athens. in charge of arrangements.

Douglas "Doug" Christopher McConkey, 64, of Athens, passed away on Sunday, November 22. Doug had a love for music, enjoying a good time, and making memories with his family. He proudly served his country in the United States Army and later worked in a machine shop. A funeral service will be held on Tuesday, November 24 at 7:00pm at Companion Funeral Home of Athens with the receiving of friends held prior from 5:00pm-7:00pm. **Companion Funeral Home** of Athens in charge of arrangements.

Roy Jr. Dennis, 73, of Birchwood and formerly of Decatur, passed away on Monday, November 23. Roy dedicated his career as a machine technician at Shaw Industries Plant 10, demonstrating a remarkable work ethic and commitment to excellence. A funeral service will be held at 2 p.m., on Saturday, November 28 in the Chapel of Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Interment will follow in the Walnut Grove Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 12 noon - 2 p.m., prior to the service. **Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services** is honored to serve the Dennis family.