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## Man Charged with Wife's Murder



A McMinn County man was apprehended in Georgia and has been charged in the murder of his wife after her body was located at the scene of a McMinn County homicide on Thursday, May 30. According to Sheriff Joe Guy, Cpl. Megan Chandler of the McMinn County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to a residence on County Road 312 near Sweetwater to a report of a female, Debbie Johnson, not showing up to work that day. Deputies Greg Sparks and Bri Mitchell also responded.

"When the deputies arrived, they located Mrs. Johnson on the front porch, deceased from an apparent gunshot wound," said Sheriff Guy. "They immediately secured what appeared to be a homicide crime scene and notified our detective division. Detective Sgt. Jared Price and other McMinn County Detectives, along with Investigators with the TBI and the DA Office, all responded and began an investigation. The officers were familiar with this residence and this family," said Sheriff Guy.

Unfortunately, we had been there before due to threats and domestic violence issues with Mrs. Johnson's husband, James Coy Johnson.

Story Continued on Page 2


## Community News You Can Use

- The Friends of the Library Book Sale is set for Thursday, June 20 - Sunday, June 23. The book sale will once again occur at the McMinn County High School Cafeteria. This event is a yearly fundraiser with all proceeds benefitting the E.G. Fisher Public Library. All types of books from Fiction to Non-Fiction, in hardback and paperback will be for sale. This is a cash only event, so please come prepared! Their flyer with daily operating times can be seen on their Facebook page [HERE](#).
- The Regular Session of the McMinn County Commission meeting scheduled for June 17, 2024 at 6:00 has been changed to June 28, 2024 at 12:00 pm. More information for the meeting will be posted later.
- The Women at the Well "Made Well Retreat Center" is celebrating its ribbon cutting and entry into the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce TODAY June 11, at 1:30 pm. The center is located at 875 County Road 655 in Athens.


**LISTENING REMINDER:** This week's guests on Main Street Moments will be Everette Gillespie, President of the Friends of the Library Board and Becky Coleman, Director of the E.G. Fisher Public Library. The broadcast will be aired at 8:15 a.m. Tuesday on WYXI RADIO : AM-1390 and FM-94.5.

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# Obituaries

**James "Jim" Wesley Stephens**, 80 of Englewood, passed away Tuesday, May 28 at Starr Regional Medical Center of Athens. He was a native of Decherd, TN and a resident of McMinn County since 2007. He was a physicist involved in many areas of work including on the Apollo Moon missions. He was a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. Two Celebrations of life will be held with the first being at White Oak Grove Church of God on Sunday, June 9 beginning at 2:30 CST in Decherd, TN. The second will be at Central Baptist Church on Saturday, June 15 from 2:00 - 4:00 PM in Athens. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

**Lester Howard Edmonson**, 70 of Athens, passed away Sunday, June 9 at his residence. He was a faithful member of Mount Harmony Baptist Church #2 in Riceville, TN where he served as a deacon. He loved to hunt and be outdoors and spend time with grandkids. Funeral Services will be at 6pm on Wednesday, June 12 in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Interment will follow at Double Springs Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 3 - 6pm at the funeral home. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

**Dewayne "Wayne" Couey**, age 67, lifelong resident of McMinn County, passed away on Sunday, June 9. He was a member of Mt. Harmony Baptist Church in Riceville. The family will receive friends from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM on Thursday, June 13 at Mt. Harmony Baptist Church in Riceville. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 PM at the church. Interment will follow at Couey Family Cemetery in Riceville. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Dewayne "Wayne" Couey.

# Man Charged with Wife's Murder

In 2023, Sheriff's Deputies arrested James Johnson on charges of assault and resisting arrest stemming from a domestic violence incident involving Debbie Johnson at the residence on County Road 312. James Johnson subsequently pleaded guilty to assault and was placed on 2 years probation. Mr. Johnson was not located at the residence by the responding officers on Thursday. Sheriff Guy said that as the investigation continued, evidence came to light that Mr. Johnson had been at the residence earlier. Neighbors indicated that a gunshot was heard and then Mr. Johnson had left. No report was made on the gunshot, as neighbors said it was a common occurrence at the residence. Detectives entered Mr. Johnson's vehicle information into the FLOCK automated license plate reader system in an attempt to locate him, which over the course of the evening showed the vehicle in numerous locations including Sweetwater and later in Georgia.

"Just after 9 pm on Thursday, our detectives were contacted by the West Point, Georgia Police Department who said they had Mr. Johnson in custody on several charges, including DUI," said Sheriff Guy.

A hold was placed on Mr. Johnson and the extradition process was begun, in order for him to be brought back to McMinn County and face the charges for Murder in the First Degree. He was returned to McMinn County, booked into the McMinn County Jail and placed under a \$1,000,000 bond on Friday, June 7th.

"Tragic domestic violence incidents like this affect every community," added Detective Sgt. Jared Price. "We hope that anyone affected by or is a victim of domestic abuse will reach out to local law enforcement for assistance or referral or support agencies."

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Tuesday, June 11, 2024

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Athens, Tennessee

## From the Desk of Meredith Willson



Photo Provided by:  
Friendly City Festivals

Friendly City Festivals will kick off the 15th annual Sounds of Summer Concert series on Friday, June 14th with Dirk Quinn Band.

Based in Philadelphia, PA, Dirk Quinn Band is a four-piece high energy jazz/funk band that travels extensively throughout the US/Canada. As stated in Raleigh Music Listings -"This Philly based band must be the standard bearers of the funk scene up in the City of Brotherly Love...they have a great blend of Dirk's guitar, drum keys and horns that make this a funky jazz journey into the unknown."

"Fleet-fingered Philadelphia-based guitarist Dirk Quinn could be the illegitimate son of Jeff Beck, although his fiery electric work is firmly rooted in jazz and, in the context of his band, it's allayed with insistent, funky grooves to create a brilliantly lave-laden form of electric fusion. To put it another way, this guy is smokin'" writes Connect Savannah.

You can follow Dirk Quinn Band on most social platforms and stream their music on all streaming sources.

Sounds of Summer was started by local musician Tim Hughes with a simple purpose - to provide free live music in Athens' historic downtown creating a community party. This year the venue will stay on Friday nights and the remaining line up is:

- June 21st- Just Us Bluegrass
- June 28th-September Song
- July 5th-Sweet Georgia Sound
- July 12th-Run Katie Run
- July 19th-Sugar Lime Blue
- July 26th-Second Wind Band
- August 2nd - Will Carter
- August 9th - Tim Hughes Quartet
- August 16th - Trailer Hippies
- August 23rd - Mendingwall
- August 30th - The Dexter Thomas Band

Dirk Quinn Band will perform at Market Pavilion in Downtown Athens starting Friday, June 14th at 7:00 p.m. Food trucks for the evening will be Lobster Dogs, Chick-fil-A and Kona Ice. Concert goers are encouraged to bring their lawn chairs, family and friends.

Sound for the Sounds of Summer concert series is provided by Integrity Sound Solutions.

This free to the public series is produced by Friendly City Festivals, a 501(c)3 subsidiary of Willsonthropic, Inc. and is made possible by the financial support of: The City of Athens, McMinn County Tourism Board, Wolfenden Family Pharmacies, Dynasty Spa and Pool, TVA, Tennessee Overhill Association, Tennessee Arts Commission, Mayfield Dairy Farm, DENSO, Humana, VEC Customer Shares, Citizens National Bank of Sevier County, Valley Oil, Starr Regional Medical Center, Kona Ice, Pendleton Playground, Simmons Bank, Simmons Wealth Management Group, Warren-Jackson CPAs, and Athens Kiwanis Club. Special thanks to The Daily Post-Athenian, Morning Fax, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce and The Arts Center for social media support.

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Tuesday, June 11, 2024

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Athens, Tennessee

## Arrest Reports

Lamar Smith, 37 of Decatur, was arrested by the MCSO for Theft of Property. No Bond Reported

Amanda Neil, 34 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Disorderly Conduct. \$1000 Bond.

Jerrell Espy, 20 of Riceville, was arrested by the Athens PD for Aggravated Assault, Reckless Engangerment with a Deadly Weapon, Unlawful Possession of a Weapon, and Contempt of Court. Total Bond: \$66,000.

Ashlyn Ponthier, 27 of Englewood, was arrested by the MCSO for Possession of Schedule II Meth, Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia and Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$7,000.

Calob Frye, 28 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Driving without a License. No Bond Reported.

April Johnson, 28 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Felony Escape, Possession of Schedule II Oxycodone, and Felony Evading Arrest. Total Bond: \$18,000

**The accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. The preceding information was compiled from public sources.**

## Fire Aerial Training 2024



During the weekend of June 1-2, 2024, Athens City Fire and Englewood Rural Fire Departments attended a Modern Aerial Apparatus Operations, Strategies and Tactics state course taught by Tennessee Fire Enforcement and Codes Academy Instructors. The instructors were Fire Instructor 2 Andy Soccodato and also Instructor 2 Kollyn Marquis. The 16 hour course illustrated how to do rescues, how to access buildings, ventilation and how to



elevate the water streams from the aerial ladder. Firefighters practiced how to position the ladder truck, gaining entrance to the buildings and rescue maneuvers. Firefighters were also instructed how to stabilize the truck and operating the ladder system. *Photos by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural Fire Department*



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