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Today's News... This Morning

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Wednesday, November 27, 2024

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Athens, Tennessee

Final Update : Fatal Meigs County Crash a 'Tragic Accident'



A new report concludes that the deaths of Deputy R.J. Leonard and Tabitha Smith, who drowned after Leonard's patrol car drove into the Tennessee River, were the result of a tragic accident stemming from inexperience, outdated equipment, and poor conditions.

Deputy Leonard responded to a report of a woman running into traffic on the Highway 60 bridge. He detained Tabitha Smith, citing concern for her safety, and began driving to the sheriff's office. Text messages between Leonard and a fellow deputy described Smith as a habitual drug user. An autopsy later confirmed the presence of methamphetamine and marijuana in her system.

The report found Leonard, a New York transplant unfamiliar with the area, likely mistook Blythe Ferry Road for Shadden Road due to confusing signage and poor visibility from heavy fog. Blythe Ferry Road ends at the river. Leonard's final radio transmission at 10:03 p.m. was a single word: "water."

Smith was found in the back seat of the submerged vehicle, still handcuffed, while Leonard's body was recovered nearby. His driver's side window was open. Investigators ruled out a struggle between the two, stating Smith could not have reached Leonard from the back seat.

The grand jury recommended adding barriers or gates and installing warning lights at the site, along with equipping patrol vehicles with GPS systems. Smith's family, who acknowledged her struggles with addiction, said, "Nobody deserves to die in handcuffs in the back of a cop car," and has filed a lawsuit against Meigs County. *Source/Photo Provided by: [WTVC News Channel 9](#)*

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Wednesday, November 27, 2024 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 Athens, Tennessee

TN 'Season to Remember Ceremony' Honors Homicide Victims on December 5

Families of homicide victims and public safety officials will gather for the 22nd annual "Tennessee Season to Remember" on Thursday, Dec. 5, at 5:30 p.m. CST at First Baptist Church in downtown Nashville. The ceremony provides a space to honor victims and support survivors during the holiday season.

Keynote speaker Tennessee Highway Patrol Lieutenant Angelia Jeffers-Smith will share her journey into law enforcement, inspired by the tragic loss of her sister, Sandy Jeffers, in 2003. Other speakers include John DeBerry, Senior Advisor to Governor Bill Lee and former First Lady Andrea Conte, who founded the event.

Families will hang ornaments on memorial wreaths, later displayed at the Tennessee State Capitol, which will be illuminated in purple to commemorate the occasion. The event will feature a musical tribute by Pastor Travis Duke of Murfreesboro.

For those unable to attend, the ceremony will be livestreamed on First Baptist Church Nashville's YouTube channel.

The event is coordinated by numerous state and local agencies, including the Tennessee Board of Parole, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and victim advocacy groups.

Charity Fraud Awareness Week is This Week

Secretary of State Tre Hargett reminds Tennesseans to use state provided resources to give safely and avoid charity scams during Charity Fraud Awareness Week, going on this week.

Tennesseans, known for their generosity, are encouraged to research charities through the Secretary of State's website to verify registration, ask questions about donation impact, and avoid high-pressure solicitations. Donors should use secure payment methods, request receipts, and confirm if contributions are tax-deductible.

For more Wise Giving Tips or to report suspicious activity, contact the Division of Business and Charitable Organizations at 615-741-2555.

We encourage you to e-mail community events, church news, or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax.

If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to:

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Holiday Hours Update

Dec 1: Closed

Dec 8: Open

December 9 - January 11: Closed

January 12: Open



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December 6-7
6:30-8:00 p.m.
Solid Rock Baptist Church
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Pastor Scott Martin

Wednesday, November 27, 2024 Morning Fax@...Today's News This Morning Page 4 Athens, Tennessee

Cochran Remains Asst. Majority Leader



State Rep. Mark Cochran, R-Englewood, has been reelected as assistant majority leader for the House Republican Caucus in the upcoming 114th Tennessee General Assembly.

As the third-ranking officer in the caucus, Cochran will assist in leading legislative efforts, serve as a floor leader, and support the advancement of the governor's agenda. "It's an incredible honor to serve the people of McMinn and Monroe counties in the General Assembly, and I'm grateful to my colleagues for placing their trust in me as assistant majority leader," Cochran said.

First elected in 2018, Cochran has held leadership roles for six years, including caucus treasurer. House Speaker Cameron Sexton praised his integrity and dedication, calling him "a perfect fit for this role."

The 114th Tennessee General Assembly convenes Jan. 14, 2025. **Source: TN House Deputy Press Secretary**

Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn County Historical Society will have their monthly meeting on Sunday, December 1 at 2:00 pm in the Blue Room of the McMinn County Courthouse.
- Etowah Carnegie Library is hosting the following holiday programs: Holiday Storytime 12/3; Pictures with Santa 12/7; Christmas Cookie Decorating 12/10 Visit etowahlibrary.com/programs for more info.
- UT Extension's SNAP Employment and Training Program: Skill Up Tennessee is a program that helps SNAP participants gain the skills and training they need to get a job. If you currently receive SNAP benefits and are NOT receiving TANF cash assistance, you may qualify for benefits including Gas cards for Transportation, Uniforms, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies, Testing fees and Textbooks. Visit tiny.utk.edu/SkillUpTn to see if you are eligible and to preregister.

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Sunday, December 1st at 6:30 pm
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Sunday, December 15th at 10:45 am
The Sanctuary Choir presents
"One Small Child"

Sunday, December 8th at 10:45 am
Handbells Ring Christmas
during morning worship

Sunday, December 22nd at 10:45 am
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Tuesday, December 24th at 4:00 pm
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Wednesday, November 27, 2024 Morning Fax@...Today's News This Morning Page 5 Athens, Tennessee

Three Collegedale Officers Under Investigation for Fondling of Juvenile at UT Game



Two officers have resigned from the Collegedale Police Department, and another is on paid administrative leave as all three face an investigation into an incident involving forcible fondling of a juvenile during a football game at Neyland Stadium.

The Collegedale Police Department released a statement about the incident on social media. It said it was made aware of the incident on Nov. 5.

The police department also stated, "Officer complaints or allegations of misconduct are thoroughly investigated regardless if the officer has resigned."

The University of Tennessee Police Department said the incident report related to the investigation is a forcible fondling of a juvenile, during the time of the Tennessee and Kentucky game on Nov. 2. Collegedale police said Burlon Hayworth and Andrew Carter have resigned from the department, while Corporal Josh Parson was placed on paid administrative leave.

Local 3 News, an NBC affiliate with WBIR, has reached out to both agencies involved numerous times to specify the involvement of each officer under investigation, but has yet to hear back. It previously said none of the officers were facing charges and the officers were off-duty during the incident. *Story Originally Reported by [Local 3 News](#)*

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McMinn County Arrest Reports

Michael McKeehan, 54 of Athens, was arrested by the Drug Task Force for Failure to Appear. Total Bond: \$1,000.

Matthew Hanley, 29 of Etowah, was arrested by the Athens PD for Domestic Assault. Total Bond: \$1,000

James Hanley, 53 of Etowah, was arrested by the Athens PD for Domestic Assault. Total Bond: \$500.

Noah Johnson, 26 of Englewood, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear. No Bond.

Travis Raper, 47 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear and Introduction of Contraband into a Penal Facility. Total Bond: \$27,000.

Morgan Chandler, 24 of Etowah, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$2,000.

Daniel Sledge, 39 of Decatur, was arrested by the MCSO for Domestic Assault and Criminal Trespass. Total Bond: \$4,500.

James Davis, 51 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Tampering with Evidence, Violation of Probation, and Manufacture, Sale, Delivery and Possession of Meth. Total Bond: \$24,000.

Ben Benjamin, 45 of Bristol, CT, was arrested by the MCSO as a Fugitive from Justice. No Bond.

Dwane Tillet, 20 of Atlanta, GA was arrested by Etowah PD for Possession of a Schedule VI substance, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$9,000

Ashton Perron, 19 of Athens, was arrested by Athens PD for DUI. Total Bond: \$1,000.

Jeremy Burnett, 40 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for DUI and Open Container. Total Bond: \$1,000.

Gabriel Onbey, 25 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation, Failure to Appear in Meigs Co., Possession of Schedule II Meth, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$2,500.

Eugene Donnell Frazier, 52 of Sweetwater, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of an Order of Protection. Total Bond: \$10,000

Crystal Gladson, 51 of Springfield, OR, was arrested by Etowah PD for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$3,700.

Amanda Neil, 35 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Domestic Assault and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. No Bond.

Savannah Hitt, 24 of Sweetwater, was arrested by the MCSO for State Violation of Probation. No Bond.

Bryan Broyles, 50 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Possession of Schedule II for Resale, Possession of Schedule III Suboxone, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$20,000

Brockinton Latimar, 29 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$1,100.

Dustin Winton, 42 of Etowah, was arrested by the Etowah PD for Possession of Schedule II Fentanyl. No Bond.

Teresa Cole, 51 of Etowah, was arrested by the Etowah PD for Possession of Meth and Fentanyl, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$13,000.

Makenzie Beal, 21 of Englewood, was arrested by the Athens PD for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$1,200.

Richard Moser, of Loudon, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$600.

Jason Creek, 31 of Cleveland, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear. No Bond.

Bobby Stewart, 33 of Athens was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$2,000.

Nicholas Petersen, 38 of Spring City, was arrested by the THP for Failure to Appear. No Bond.

Richard Hyzer, 49 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Failure to Appear. No Bond.

Queston Simpson, 29 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for domestic Assault. Total Bond: \$2,000

Richard Littleton, 49 of Loudon, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$700.

Megan Gregg, 37 of Niota, was arrested by the MCSO for Manufacturing, sale, delivery of Fentanyl, Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia, Driving on a Suspended License, and Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$41,000

Trey Allbright, 41 of Douglasville, GA was arrested by the MCSO for Aggravated Robbery. Total Bond: \$100,000.

David Pack, 54 of Dunlap, was arrested by the MCSO for Driving on a Revoked License, Possession of Schedule II Meth, Possession of Cannabis, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$38,000

Donald Call, of Decatur, was arrested by the THP for Reckless Driving, Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia, Reckless Endangerment, and Evading Arrest. No Bond.

Loggan White, 27 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear. Total Bond: \$14,000.

Tammy Presswood, 44 of Sweetwater, was arrested by the Etowah PD for Driving on a Revoked License. Total Bond: \$2,000

George Holman, 69 of Etowah, was arrested by the THP for Leaving the Scene of a Crash and Failure to Report Crash. Total Bond: \$1,000

Lanny Millins, 46 of Athens, was arrested by MCSO for Failure to Pay Child Support. Total Bond: \$5,000.

Amanda Womac, 26 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Violation of Probation. Total Bond: \$600

Billy Curtis, 25 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Theft over \$2,500, and Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia. Total Bond: \$12,000

Whisper Flowers, 20 of Maryville, was arrested by the MCSO for Theft over \$10,000. Total Bond: \$30,000.

Wesley Mann, 32 of Athens, was arrested by the Athens PD for Domestic Assault. Total Bond: \$1,000

Rowdy Boase, 40 of Niota, was arrested by the MCSO for Domestic Assault. Total Bond: \$10,000.



The accused are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. Information gathered from Public Sources.