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**Friday, March 21, 2025**                      **Page 1**                      **Athens, Tennessee**

# Two identified in deadly Sweetwater house fire



Two people were killed in a house fire late Saturday night in Sweetwater, according to the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

The family told [WVLT](#) that 86-year-old Marlene Sethney and 59-year-old Angela Cook were the ones who weren't able to escape the fire.

"I think everyone hasn't fully processed it just because it wasn't something we were expecting. If anything she was getting older and something was going to happen," said family member Cameron Krueger.


For Krueger, this means the loss of Sethney, a great aunt, and Cook, her aunt. Originally from Minnesota, Cook moved to Sweetwater several years ago along with her husband. As Sethney got older, she decided to spend the winter months with Cook in East Tennessee.

"I know that bringing in Marlene for the winters was huge for her just that she would be able to spend time with family that wasn't so close physically. Just to bring her down and get her in a warmer place to take care of her as she was getting older," said Krueger.

Krueger described both Sethney and Cook as family members who were extremely caring for one another, and would always go the extra mile to help someone. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is investigating the fire and Sheriff Tommy Jones said he does not believe there was foul play involved.

*Written by [Sam Luther, WVLT](#)*

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Friday, March 21, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

**Carlos Porras**, 76 of Sweetwater, passed away on Monday, March 10. As his family's first immigrant from Guatemala, he brought his family to the United States and paved the way for future generations, instilling in them the values of hard work and perseverance. Carlos dedicated over 40 years of his career to Honda before retiring. Carlos will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. A memorial service will be held at 5 PM at his daughter's house in Sweetwater, where family and friends will gather to light and release lanterns in his memory. Companion Funeral Home in Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist his family with these arrangements.

**Kristina Marie Heifnar**, 54 of Athens, passed away on Tuesday, March 18. A proud graduate of McMinn County High School's Class of 1988, Kristina worked as a Candy Stripper while attending Cleveland State, where she became an LPN. She earned both her BSN and MBA from Wesleyan University. A celebration of Kristina's life will be held at the Grove Church in Kingston, on Sunday, March 23rd at 3pm. The family asks for everyone to wear Kristina's favorite color purple to the celebration, and bring pictures and memories to share. Fraker Funeral Home of Kingston is in charge of all the arrangements.

**Patsy Janow**, 72, passed away on Thursday, March 20. Arrangements will be announced at a later time. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Patsy Janow.

**Thomas "Tommy" Bivens**, 43 of Tellico Plains, passed away on Friday, March 7 at Blount Memorial Hospital. Tommy was an avid musician and mechanic. He loved to ride motorcycles and tinker on engines. Tommy had a big heart and even in his last moments, he saved four people through organ donation. A celebration of life will be announced to his family and friends for a date in April decided by family. Companion Funeral Home in Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist his family with these arrangements.

**Clarence Ronald "Ronnie" McPhail**, 80 of Etowah, passed away on Wednesday, March 19 at Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland. He spent 30 years working for Bellsouth in both Etowah and Athens. There will be a memorial service 7:00 pm Saturday, March 22 in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home will be in charge of the arrangements.

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Friday, March 21, 2025 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3 Athens, Tennessee

## Church News & Events

- **The Greensons** will be singing LIVE at **Solid Rock Baptist Church** (4975 Hwy. 11, Calhoun) on March 23 at 10:45am. The Kingsmen will be singing at Solid Rock as well on March 29 at 6:00 pm. (See their ads below)
- **Zion Hill Baptist Church** (269 County Road 516, Englewood) announces the next **Men's Prayer Breakfast** on Saturday, April 5 at the TWU Cafeteria in Athens. The Speaker will be Dr. Jeff Laborg from Fairview Knox Church and will include testimonies from Miracle Lake. Breakfast will begin at 8:00 am with the service immediately following at 9:45 am. Register Online at [zhbc.com/breakfast](http://zhbc.com/breakfast)
- **SRBC Kids presents: Kingdom Seekers** on Sunday Nights at 5:30 pm at **Solid Rock Baptist Church** (4975 Hwy. 11, Calhoun) This all ages event combines, God, music, games and fun into a very special All Ages event.
- **Planted In Christ Outreach Fellowship** (317 Maple Street, Athens) holds Outreach Deliverance Classes every Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
- **Celebrate Recovery** meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00 P.M. at Woodward Ave. Church of God (507 Woodward Ave., Athens). They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00 P.M. at Watts Bar Community Church (1517 TN-68, Decatur)

- Are you grieving the loss of someone close to you? **Clearwater Baptist Church** (964 County Road 180, Athens) is beginning a new session of GriefShare helping those grieving find hope, comfort, and guidance. Beginning on Thursday, March 6th from 6 pm - 7:30 pm there will be an ongoing (in 13 week rotations) grief support group **that you can join at any time** and is open to the community. For more info visit: [clearwaterbc.org/grief-share](http://clearwaterbc.org/grief-share)
- **New Life Church** hosts weekly Prayer Meetings every Wednesday night beginning at 7:00 pm. The church is located at 204 Fisher St. in Athens. All are welcome.

The Greensons  
MARCH 23, 2025  
10:45 A.M.

Scott Martin  
Pastor

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Friday, March 21, 2025

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

## Fire Spreads from Backyard Burn in Etowah



A controlled burn quickly turned dangerous on Tuesday afternoon when flames from burning Bermuda grass spread from the backyard to the front yard of a residence on County Road 890.

The homeowner believed the fire was extinguished, but it reignited, setting front bushes ablaze and melting the vinyl soffit of the home's overhang.

Fire crews from Etowah Rural Fire, Etowah City Fire, and Englewood Rural Fire responded to the scene, with Etowah Rural Fire Chief Adam Hafley leading the effort.

Authorities remind residents to exercise caution with outdoor burns, ensuring fires are fully extinguished to prevent property damage.

*Photo courtesy of Etowah Rural Fire Department*

## Community News You Can Use

- The McMinn County Highway Department announces the following road closures: **McMinn County Road 660 near Etowah - Piney Grove Road between County Road 636 & County Road 782** will be *closed* on **Monday, March 24 & Tuesday, March 25, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.** for road construction. **McMinn County Road 660 near Etowah - Piney Grove Road between County Road 609 & County Road 618** will be *closed* on **Wednesday, March 26 & Thursday, March 27, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.** for road construction.
- [The City of Athens](#) is seeking responsible and safety-conscious individuals to serve as [lifeguards for the 2025 summer season at Ingleside Pool](#). Lifeguard duties include supervising swimmers, enforcing safety rules, responding to emergencies, administering first aid/CPR, assisting with pool maintenance, and helping with swimming lessons. Candidates must complete a Red Cross Lifesaving Course and hold current CPR and First Aid certification. Prior experience is preferred but not required. The position pays \$12.00 per hour. Applications are available at [www.athenstn.gov/jobs](http://www.athenstn.gov/jobs) or in person at Athens City Hall, Human Resources Department, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Positions will remain open until filled. The City of Athens is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages all qualified individuals to apply.



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Friday, March 21, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

## Driver Extricated After Two-Vehicle Crash in Englewood



A two-vehicle crash Wednesday morning on County Road 578 near County Road 576 left one driver trapped inside their vehicle.

The accident, which occurred around 10 a.m., involved a 1991 Honda Accord and a 2021 Kia Forte. The driver of the Accord was entrapped and required extrication by the Englewood Rural Fire Department. Once freed, the driver was treated on the scene and transported by AMR to Starr Regional Medical Center in Athens for further care. Tennessee Highway Patrol Sgt. Kyle Millsaps is leading the investigation into the crash.

*Photos by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural Fire Department*



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**Friday, March 21, 2025**      **Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 6**      **Athens, Tennessee**

**Young Astronomer Captures Stunning Lunar Eclipse**



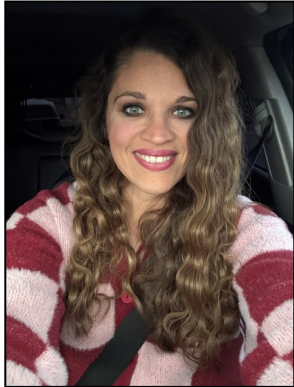
**Elliot McCaslin** (left), a 12-year-old 6th grade student at Englewood Elementary School, recently captured an incredible image of last weekend's total lunar eclipse, known as the Blood Worm Moon. Using a Nexstar 6SE six-inch telescope paired with an iPhone, Elliot successfully

photographed the celestial event, showcasing his passion for astronomy. His impressive work highlights the potential for young minds to explore and document the wonders of space.

*Photos Courtesy of Blake McCaslin*



**Grace and Mercy hires new director**



Grace and Mercy Ministries has appointed Erika Galish as its new Executive Director. With over seven years of experience in the nonprofit sector, Galish brings a deep passion for serving the community and furthering the ministry's mission.

"I am excited to join a great group of people who are dedicated to our community as much as I am," said Galish.

Board Chair Nicki McConkey expressed confidence in Galish's leadership, stating that her seven years of experience working with non-profits and passion for the ministry will be invaluable to the organization.

Grace and Mercy Ministries looks forward to continuing its work under Galish's leadership, striving to make a positive impact in Athens and beyond.

*Source: Rob Preston, CEO, Athens Chamber*

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Friday, March 21, 2025

Morning Fax<sup>®</sup>...Today's News This Morning Page 7

Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

**Krista Jackson**, 26 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear. No Bond.

**Misty Linder**, 45 of Niota, was arrested by the MCSO for Possession of Schedule II Fentanyl, Driving on a Revoked License, Unlawful Drug Paraphernalia, and 2nd Offense DUI. Total Bond: \$19,000

**Chasity Sanders**, 33 of Dalton, GA, was arrested by the MCSO for Failure to Appear. Total Bond: \$2,000.

**Charles Cole**, 50 of Niota, was arrested by the Athens PD for Failure to Appear. Total Bond: \$2000

**Alual Kual Ar**, 29 of Stone Mountain, GA, was

arrested by the THP for DUI, Open Container, Failure to Maintain Lane and Failure to use Turn Signal. Total Bond: \$3,000

**Mitchell Stevenson**, 30 of Athens, was arrested by the THP for DUI. Driving on a Revoked License, Traffic Violations, and Open Container. Total Bond: \$3,000

**Steven Handzlik**, 29 of Athens, was arrested by the MCSO for DUI, Open Container, Possession of a Handgun while Under the Influence, Violation of Implied Consent. Total Bond: \$2,000

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



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