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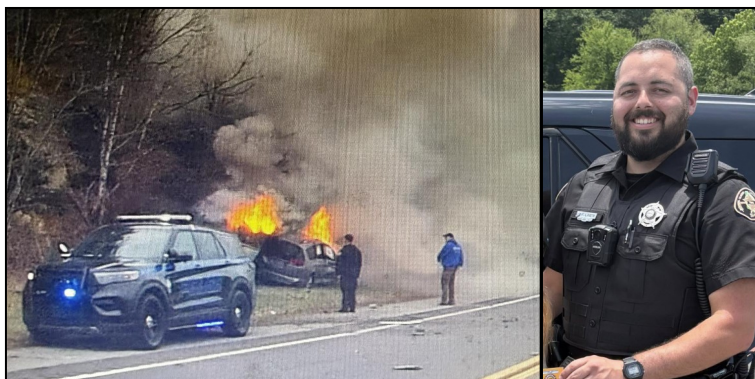
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Monday, January 26, 2026**Page 1****Athens, Tennessee**

McMinn County Deputy to Receive Commendation for Bravery



A McMinn County deputy will be recognized for extraordinary bravery following his actions at a fatal crash on Highway 68 involving a stolen vehicle pursued by Sweetwater Police. Sheriff Joe Guy said Deputy Kelby Liner's response, documented through witness statements and body camera footage, clearly went beyond the call of duty.

Deputy Liner was approaching the area when he was advised the suspect vehicle had crashed head-on into another car. Upon arriving to find both vehicles on fire, Liner immediately deployed a pressurized water can he personally purchased, provided a fire extinguisher to a Sweetwater officer,

and began fighting the blaze. A trained volunteer firefighter, Liner also directed other responders and later took a hose from a responding fire truck to continue extinguishing the fire, exposing himself to danger from flames and debris.

Once the fire was reduced, Liner helped open the passenger door of one vehicle and assisted in removing a victim so life-saving efforts could be attempted. He continued battling the fire and aiding other responders despite the extreme conditions. Sheriff Guy said that although two victims and the suspect were ultimately killed, Liner's actions were described by witnesses as heroic and gave victims the best possible chance. Liner will receive a formal commendation, and the sheriff's office offered prayers to the families affected by the tragedy.

Source: [Joe Guy, Facebook](#)



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• Fri: Sweetwater Little Drugs-10:30 - 2:30

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Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Community News You Can Use

- Tennessee Songwriters Week 2026 qualifying rounds run Jan. 25 –Feb. 7 at venues statewide, with the **Tennessee Overhill round set for Saturday, Jan. 31 at 7 p.m. at the Gem Theater in Etowah**, where up to 16 songwriters will perform original music and two winners will advance to the regional showcase in Chattanooga, with finalists ultimately competing for a spot at Nashville's Bluebird Cafe.
- Due to the forecasted wintry weather and predicted icy road conditions Athens City Schools will be closed Monday, January 26 and Tuesday, January 27, 2026. Kids Connection will be also closed.
- The McMinn County Board of Education will meet in called session on Tuesday, February 3 at 5:30 p.m. at the McMinn County Center for Educational Excellence. The purpose of this meeting is for the selection of Melasawn Knight as Director of Schools.
- The Athens Utilities Board monthly meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 27th, at 5:00 p.m.
- The E.G. Fisher Public Library is closed today and the McMinn County Library Board meeting scheduled for this evening at E.G. Fisher Library has been rescheduled for 6:00pm on February 9 at the library.
- Storm Power Components will be delayed until 8:00 am on Monday (today) for 'A' Shift.

Songwriter's Night to Close Black Box Concert Series at The Arts Center

The Athens Area Council for the Arts will close its 2025–2026 Black Box Concert Series with *Songwriter's Night with Kyshona* on Friday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m. in the Sue E. Trotter Black Box Theater at The Arts Center.

The intimate concert will feature Kyshona Armstrong alongside fellow singer-songwriters Damien Horne and Joy Clark. Curated by Armstrong, the evening will showcase original music and storytelling from the three artists.

Armstrong, a singer-songwriter and licensed music therapist, is known for music centered on community, healing, and untold stories. Joining her is Joy Clark, a Louisiana native whose debut album *Tell It to the Wind* reflects both personal independence and deep-rooted musical traditions. Also performing is Damien Horne, a North Carolina native who later moved to Nashville, where his career included national touring after being discovered by country artist John Rich.

Tickets for the performance are on sale now and range from \$20 to \$25. All Black Box Concert Series events are held in the Sue E. Trotter Black Box Theater, and patrons are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance.

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Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

Morning Fax[®]...Today's News This Morning Page 3

Athens, Tennessee

Driver Flees Scene After Crash in Englewood



Authorities are searching for the driver of a 1998 Ford Explorer who fled the scene of a crash Thursday night around 9 p.m. at the intersection of North Niota Road and Harlan Daugherty Street.

Emergency responders arrived to find the vehicle involved in a single-vehicle accident, but the driver had already left the area. Etowah City Fire's K-9 unit, Remi, and handler Firefighter Austin Hancock were deployed to search for the driver, but the individual was not located.

Responding agencies included the Englewood Police Department, McMinn County Sheriff's Department, Englewood Rural Fire Department and AMR. The Tennessee Highway Patrol is investigating the crash, with Trooper Casey Shell assigned to the case.

Photos courtesy of Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural FD

Near Head-On Collision Reported on County Road 350



A near head-on collision involving a Dodge Dart and a Ford Edge was reported Thursday around 12:30 p.m. in the 400 block of County Road 350 in McMinn County.



According to authorities, four people were traveling in the Dodge Dart and one person was in the Ford Edge. No injuries were reported as a result of the incident.

Niota Fire Department and Englewood Fire Department responded to the scene along with the McMinn County Sheriff's Office. Chad Gates with the Niota Fire Department was in charge of the scene. The crash is under investigation by Tennessee Highway Patrol Trooper Rodney Best.

Photos courtesy of David Prater, Niota Rural FD

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Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

January 22, 2026

Edwin Foster, 47 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for driving on a suspended license, Bond \$683.95.

Cory Lankford, 41 of Niota charged with escape, and failure to appear for possession of meth for resale.

Brooke Croft, 38 of Madisonville, charged with violation of probation for shoplifting.

Jacob Moore, 31 of Riceville, charged with schedule II meth for resale, schedule 4 and armed dangerous felonies.

Danny Sprague, 50 of Etowah, charged with driving on a suspended license.

January 23, 2026

Joel Lamb, 42 of Delano, charged with aggravated assault, aggravated burglary, aggravated assault against a first responder, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$64,000.

Tristan Spruill, 25 of Etowah, charged with disorderly conduct, Bond \$2,000.

Angela McDowell, 39 of Spring City, charged with driving on a revoked license, violation of registration laws, removal, or alteration of a tag, and failure to have insurance, all three charges in Meigs County.

Clayton Shelton, 36 of Athens, charged with disorderly conduct and indecent exposure, Bond \$3,000.

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

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Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Ella Mae Carter Kincannon Gibson, 90 of Englewood, passed away on Wednesday, January 21. She loved tending to her flower beds, watching birds, crocheting, working puzzles, and singing. Ella Mae was also a skilled professional seamstress, a career she devoted herself to until her retirement. She was a member of Light of Life Faith Ministries International in Athens. A Funeral Service will be held on Saturday, January 31 at 3:00pm at Companion Funeral Home of Athens. A Visitation will be held prior from 1:00pm-3:00pm. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

Margaret Pickett, 77, passed away on Thursday, January 22. Margaret lived a life filled with love and dedication to her family. She thrived when she was able to help and take care of others. A graveside service to honor Margaret was held on Saturday, January 24 at Green Hill Cemetery in Etowah. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah was in charge of arrangements.

Tommy Paul Lucas, 74 of Knoxville, passed away on Friday, January 23. Tommy dedicated more than 30 years of service to the Tennessee Valley Authority. Known for his strong work ethic and commitment to protecting others, Tommy took great pride in his career and the relationships he built over the years. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

Webster L. McDermott, 69, passed Wednesday Jan. 21, 2026 at UT Knoxville Medical Center. Survivors and funeral arrangements to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

Douglas Taylor passed away on Thursday, January 22. Survivors and funeral arrangements to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.



Celebrating School Board Appreciation Week

January 25 - January 31



Front Row L to R: Bill Irvin, Vice Chairperson Donna Casteel, Chairman Jonathan Pierce, Tony Allman, Tony Campbell

Back Row L to R: Joe Malone, Dustin Prichard, Mike Cochran, Melasawn Knight, Interim Director of Schools, Taylor Cook, Kevin Goins