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Everyone is Invited!

## McMinn County Historical Society Monthly Meeting

Sunday at 2:00 pm  
in Blueroom of  
Courthouse



Friday, January 30, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn Living Heritage Museum February Classes open for Registration

The McMinn Living Heritage Museum has announced a full slate of February programs that highlight hands-on learning, local and regional history, and traditional cuisine. All events will take place at the museum, located at 522 W. Madison Ave. in Athens, unless otherwise noted.

The schedule begins **Saturday, Feb. 7, at 9 a.m.** with a Heritage School basketmaking class. The hands-on workshop will be led by Cindy Mishtal and offers participants the opportunity to learn traditional basketmaking techniques. The cost is \$35, or \$30 for museum members, with materials included in the registration fee.

On **Thursday, Feb. 12, at noon**, the museum will host its monthly History for Lunch program featuring a presentation on the history of Little Debbie and McKee Foods. Hunter McKee will discuss how the company began in Chattanooga during the Great Depression, when O.D. McKee sold five-cent snack cakes from the back of his 1928 Whippet, and how it grew into a nationally recognized brand. Admission to this program is free.

A new specialty cuisine series, Heritage Table, will debut on **Saturday, Feb. 21, at 5 p.m.** with a Shabu Shabu cooking class. The program focuses on traditional meals with deep cultural roots. Kumi Alderman and Naoko Podhorszki of the Asian Cultural Center of Tennessee in Knoxville will lead participants in preparing the popular Asian hot pot dish, well suited for winter months. Admission is \$30, and the registration deadline is Feb. 13.

The Heritage Table series continues **Saturday, Feb. 28, at 11 a.m.** with a Louisiana gumbo cooking class led by Pam and Warren Scher. The class will explore this classic Southern dish and its culinary traditions. Admission is \$5, or free for museum members. Members wishing to register at no cost must use the online registration form available through the museum's website.

Additional information and registration details for all programs can be found at [www.livingheritagemuseum.org](http://www.livingheritagemuseum.org).



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Friday, Jan. 30, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## AACA Showcases Dual Art Exhibits at The Arts Center



The Athens Area Council for the Arts (AACA) is featuring two new art exhibits at The Arts Center, highlighting the work of painter Bill Long and 3-D artist Calvin Walton. The exhibits will be on display from Jan. 9 through March 7, 2026.

Long's exhibit, *Roots, Rocks, and Rivers*, is displayed on the Gallery Wall in the Peggy Dow Performance Center and features naturalistic works inspired by the creeks and landscapes of Appalachia. A military veteran and 1974 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Long has spent decades as a practicing artist. Since retiring from his custom sign business, he has focused on developing a contemporary style that blends realism and abstraction, drawing heavily from his connection to nature and the effects of light on the landscape.

Walton's exhibit, *Unconfined*, is on display in the Willson Exhibit Room and Hallway Gallery. His three-dimensional and mixed-media works explore themes ranging from nature and music to abstract interpretations of the human experience. Walton, a native of Athens now living in Stone Mountain, Georgia, works primarily with acrylic on wood, mixed media, and resin to create vibrant pieces rich in color and texture.

Viewing hours for both exhibits are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., as well as during special events. An artist reception and meet-and-greet with both artists is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 6, at 5 p.m. at The Arts Center.

## Winter Weather Advisory Issued for East Tennessee Ahead of Weekend Storm

The National Weather Service office in Morristown has issued a [Winter Weather Advisory for McMinn County](#) and surrounding areas as a winter storm system is expected to impact East Tennessee this weekend. The advisory is in effect from 1 p.m. Friday through 7 p.m. Saturday. Forecasters say snow is expected, with total accumulations of one to three inches possible across the county. Snow and falling temperatures could lead to hazardous travel conditions, particularly during the Friday evening commute. Motorists are urged to slow down, allow extra travel time, and use caution on roads that may become slick.

Friday is expected to be mostly cloudy with a high near 41 degrees. Winds will be light early, becoming northerly around 5 mph during the afternoon. Friday night brings a 50 percent chance of snow, mainly after 1 a.m., with lows dropping to around 17 degrees. North winds of 5 to 10 mph could gust as high as 20 mph.

On Saturday, there is a 40 percent chance of snow before 1 p.m., with mostly cloudy skies and a high near 24 degrees. North winds will increase to 10 to 15 mph, with gusts up to 25 mph. Saturday night will remain mostly cloudy, with temperatures falling sharply to around 9 degrees.

Conditions improve Sunday, with mostly sunny skies and a high near 31 degrees. Sunday night is expected to be mostly clear with a low near 9 degrees. Residents are encouraged to stay informed of changing weather conditions and check the latest road conditions by calling 511.

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204 E College Street, Athens TN 37303

Scan and select the upcoming Sunday from the lunch meal period.



 TWUDINI



Friday, Jan. 30, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## Church News & Events

- **Celebrate Recovery** meets every **Tuesday** at 6:00pm at Woodward Ave. Church of God in Athens They also meet every **Thursday** at 6:00pm at Watts Bar Community Church in Decatur.
- The gospel singing group **The Lawsons** will be featured in concert on Sunday, February 8, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at Solid Rock Baptist Church, located at 4975 Highway 11 South in Calhoun. The event is open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend.
- Are you grieving the loss of someone close to you? Clearwater Baptist Church (964 County Road 180, Athens) is starting a new session of GriefShare helping those grieving find hope, comfort, and guidance. Beginning on Thursday, February 5th from 6 pm - 7:30 pm there will be an ongoing (in 13wk rotations) grief support group that you can join at any time and is open to the community. For more info or sign up visit: [clearwaterbc.org/grief-share](http://clearwaterbc.org/grief-share)
- **St. Mary's Legacy Clinic** offers free mobile medical care for the uninsured. Anyone who is medically uninsured is eligible to receive care. *St. Mary's Catholic Church (1291 E Madison Ave, Athens) is the McMinn County location and accepts patients every 3rd Thursday of the month.*
- Lakeview Baptist Church will host a special musical service featuring **Testimony** on Sunday, February 1, at 6 p.m. The event is open to the public. The church is located at 183 County Road 126 in Athens, beside Dynasty Spa. All are welcome to attend.
- The next Christian Men's Prayer Breakfast sponsored by New Hope Methodist Church will occur on Thursday, February 8 at 8 a.m. at Maddi Mae's Cafe in downtown Athens. This ecumenical prayer breakfast is open to all men of Christian faith (regardless of church affiliation) and those men who want to establish a relationship with Jesus. Please contact Marcus Guinn at 423-507-7769 or email [marcusguinn@gmail.com](mailto:marcusguinn@gmail.com) for more information.
- Mt. Verd Baptist Church will celebrate **Pastor Donnie Dalton's 32 years of service** on Sunday, February 1, at 10:30 a.m. **Pastor Jeff Moore** of James Chapel Baptist Church in Clyde, North Carolina, will deliver the message, and special music will be provided by **The Edwards Family** of Burnsville, North Carolina. A meal will follow the morning service, and there will be **no evening service**. The public is invited to attend. For more information, call 423-506-4052.


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Friday, Jan. 23, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Unemployment Drops to 4.1% in December; Meigs Among Counties at or Above 5%

Most Tennessee counties ended 2025 with relatively low unemployment, according to new data from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, though a small number of counties — including Meigs County — remained at or above the 5 percent mark.

Statewide, 91 of Tennessee's 95 counties recorded unemployment rates below 5 percent in December, while four counties reported rates of 5 percent or higher, with the highest unemployment rate reaching 5.7 percent. From November to December, unemployment declined in 87 counties, increased in six, and remained unchanged in two.

McMinn County continued its downward employment trend, posting a 4.1 percent unemployment rate in December 2025, a 0.5 percentage point decrease from November and a 0.5 percent decline compared to one year ago. The county reported a labor force of 20,765 residents, with 19,912 employed and 853 unemployed, reflecting steady job stability in the local workforce.

Neighboring Meigs County, which borders McMinn County to the north, was among the four Tennessee counties with unemployment rates of 5 percent or higher in December, underscoring economic contrasts within the region. While most surrounding counties fell below the 5 percent threshold, higher unemployment in Meigs highlights continued workforce challenges in some rural areas.

Across Tennessee, Williamson and Cheatham counties reported the lowest unemployment rates in the state at 2.6 percent, both seeing month-to-month declines. Several other counties — including Sevier, Wilson, Rutherford, Dickson, Macon, Sumner, Knox, and Haywood — followed closely with rates of 2.7 percent.

At the other end of the spectrum, Maury County recorded the state's highest unemployment rate at 5.7 percent, an increase of 2.4 percentage points from November. Lewis County followed at 5.6 percent, while Perry County reported a 5.3 percent rate, though that figure represented an improvement from the previous month.

Tennessee's statewide unemployment rate was 3.6 percent in December. Unlike the statewide figure, county unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted, meaning local fluctuations may reflect short-term or seasonal employment shifts rather than long-term economic change.



## 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








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Friday, Jan. 30, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

### January 28, 2026

**Christy Carter**, 56 of Knoxville, charged with violation of probation for DUI, Bond \$2,000.

**Dimitri Foster**, 33 of Athens, charged with shoplifting, Bond \$2000.

**Sean Duckery**, 47 of Knoxville, charged with state violation of probation for two counts of theft of property, \$1,000 to \$2,500.

**Joseph Wingate**, 38 of Etowah, charged with state violation of probation in Loudon County for theft of property \$1,000 to \$2,500.

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

## Obituaries

**Kenneth Ray Gage "Kenny"**, 68, passed away at his home on Monday, January 26. Companion Funeral Home and the Cody Family are honored to serve Kenny's family during this difficult time.

**Robert "Bob" William Wentworth III**, 55, of Charleston, passed away on Wednesday, January 28 at Etowah Health Care. Bob worked as a truck driver for Flowers Bakery for more than ten years, a job that reflected his strong work ethic and sense of responsibility. Family will receive guests at the chapel of Companion Funeral Home in Athens, TN, on Saturday, February 14, 2026, from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m., with the funeral service beginning at 7:00 p.m. Burial will follow on Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. at Cedar Grove Cemetery in Athens. Companion Funeral Home and the Cody Family are honored to serve the Wentworth family during this difficult time.

**Doris Mayes**, 85 of Cleveland passed away on January 29, 2026. Survivors and arrangements to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home & Cremation Service in charge of arrangements.

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