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McMinn Schools Names RISE Award Winner



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 Joy Mason Notia Elementary	 Misty Sigmon Riceville Elementary	 Karen Webb Rogers Creek Elementary	 Sarah Dixon Maint. & Transportation	 Kim Bivens Central Office	

McMinn County Schools has announced its RISE Award winner, recognizing a classified employee who consistently goes above and beyond in serving students and staff.

The RISE Award — Recognizing Inspiring School Employees — honors classified employees whose dedication, professionalism and commitment make a meaningful impact within their school or work environment and help support the district's mission.

This year's overall winner, Ms. Kim Bivens, will now be nominated for the Tennessee RISE Award, selected by the Tennessee Department of Education and the Governor's Office. The statewide winner will go on to represent Tennessee in the U.S. Department of Education national selection process.

Source: *Kylie Gentry, Administrative Assistant, McMinn County Schools*



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Monday, March 02, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Planning Commission to Review Rezoning, Development Requests

The Athens Municipal-Regional Planning Commission will meet Monday, March 2, at noon (assuming a quorum) in the conference room to consider several zoning and development matters.

Under old business, commissioners will take public comment and review a recommendation from the Athens Historical Preservation Committee regarding a proposed H-2 Commercial Historic Preservation Overlay within the B-2 Central Business District.

New business includes public comment and consideration of several final plat approvals. **Porter Clark** is seeking approval for property totaling 0.61 acres and three lots off Decatur Pike and the unopened Railroad Avenue right of way. **Jessica Anderson** has requested final plat approval for a 5.67-acre, one-lot property off County Road 213 within the Urban Growth Boundary.

Commissioners will also consider a patio home preliminary plat renewal request from **Hector Jaramillo** for 22.56 acres on Cedar Springs Road and Keith Lane, which could allow up to 93 lots in an R-2 Medium Density Residential district.

In addition, **Scott Underwood** has requested rezoning of approximately 1.16 acres at 613 Eastanallee Ave. from I-1 Light Industrial to R-2 Medium Density Residential.

The agenda also includes review and approval of improvements to Eureka Trail and Prof Powers Park.



Final Round of Loose Leaf Pickup Set for March 2-6

The City of Athens Public Works Department has announced the final round of loose leaf collection for the season.

Loose leaves will be collected from Monday, March 2 at 7 a.m. through Friday, March 6 at 2 p.m.

Residents are asked to place loose leaves curbside, three to five feet from the edge of the yard and up into the yard for pickup. To be added to the collection list, residents should call the Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.

After March 6, all leaves must be bagged for collection. Bagged leaves are picked up year-round during scheduled brush and junk route pickups.

For additional information, contact the Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.

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Monday, March 02, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Starr Regional Honors Herb Hoffman on Retirement After 53 Years



Starr Regional Medical Center recently celebrated the retirement of longtime employee Herb Hoffman, who concluded a remarkable 53-year career serving the hospital and the Athens community.

Hoffman began working at Starr Regional in 1973 as a receiving clerk in the Materials Management Department. Over more than five decades, he became known for his strong work ethic, reliability and willingness to serve, playing a key role in supporting the hospital's daily operations.

In addition to his work at the hospital, Hoffman has been active in community service, including longtime involvement with the Lions Club, Relay for Life and Remote Area Medical clinics. He was also a familiar volunteer at hospital-sponsored health fairs and outreach events.

Pictured, left to right, are **Deborah Vaughn**, RN, MSN, CNO; **John McLain**, CEO, **Herb Hoffman**, receiving clerk; **David Alley**, CFO; and **Lee Perry**, Director of Materials Management.

"Herb's legacy is one of dedication, humility, and heart," said David Alley, chief financial officer at Starr Regional. "We are deeply grateful for his 53 years of service and for the countless ways he has supported both our hospital and our community."

Hospital leaders said Hoffman's retirement marks the end of an era, but his impact on colleagues and the community will be long remembered. *Source: Brandi Armstrong, Starr Regional Medical Center*

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Monday, March 02, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

ACT to Host "Murder on the Orient Express" Table Read March 10



Athens Community Theatre will continue its 2025-26 Table Read season with a reading of *Murder on the Orient Express* on Tuesday, March 10, at 7 p.m. at The Arts Center.

The reading will be led by ACT director Michael Webb and is free and open to the public.

The mystery, written by Agatha Christie, follows detective Hercule Poirot as he investigates a murder aboard a snowbound luxury train. When an American passenger is found stabbed in his locked compartment, Poirot must determine which of the isolated travelers is responsible before the killer strikes again.

ACT's table reads offer a casual opportunity for participants to experience live theater. Attendees may volunteer to read a role or simply listen. Organizers say the events provide a fun way to preview potential productions and welcome newcomers interested in getting involved with community theater.

Additional table reads are scheduled for April 28, May 19 and July 14, all at 7 p.m.

Those interested in receiving updates may contact them via email at: operations@athensartscouncil.org to be added to the notification list.

Women's Conference

March 7, 2026
10:00am-2:00pm

Join us for a powerful time of testimony, uplifting music, and delicious food as women come together to share, grow and celebrate faith and sisterhood.

Guest Speakers: Stephanie Dunn
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Monday, March 02, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 26, 2026

Cody McDellen, 34 of Cleveland, charged with violation of probation and restitution, Bond \$2956.90.

Hannah Hurst, 35 of Athens, charged with 2 counts of violation of probation, shoplifting, and failure to appear for driving on a suspended license, Bond \$4658.83.

Steven Borden, 51 of Athens, charged with criminal trespassing, Bond \$500.

Travis Savage, 32 of Athens, charged with failure to appear in Blount County, schedule 2 fentanyl, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$10,000

Karen Lowry, 45 of Benton, charged with simple possession of schedule 2 and schedule 4, possession of meth for resale, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$64,000.

James Inman, 43 of Sweetwater, charged with evading arrest, resisting stop, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$7000.

February 27, 2026

Tiffany Munoz, 35 of Etowah, charged with violation of probation for possession of fentanyl.

Tristan Wilson, 28 of Philadelphia, TN, charged with theft of property, motor vehicle, above \$1000, Bond \$5000.

Casey Helton, 33 of Athens, charged with felony aggravated assault, reckless endangerment, leaving the scene of an accident, and failure to have turn signals on, Bond \$17,000.

Clifford Dockery, 40 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for possession of a firearm by a felon.

William Clowers, 47 of Loudon, charged with theft of property.

Jeremy Wattenbarger, 36 of Athens, charged with simple possession of schedule 2 fentanyl, and drug paraphernalia.

John Ross, 53, charged with aggravated assault, disorderly conduct, and violation of implied consent.

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

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Monday, March 02, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 6

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Bettie Carroll Elwood, 95 of Etowah, passed away on Friday, February 27. She served with the Presbyterian Church alongside her husband, Rev. Douglas J. Elwood. They retired to Etowah in 1991 and rejoined the First Presbyterian Church. She earned a B.A. in Sociology from Maryville College, an M.A. in Developmental Psychology from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of the Philippines. She also completed graduate work at Cornell University. Her professional journey included working for the U.S. occupation forces in Austria and serving as an assistant professor of Psychology at Silliman University in the Philippines. She founded the Peace Shelter for homeless children and was a co-founder of Little Children of the World (headquartered in Etowah, TN) and its affiliate, Little Children of the Philippines. She served as president and CEO of Little Children of the World International leading its U.S. branch, including the Camp Etowah program. Bettie was a founding member of the Anti-Drug Coalition Aiding Teens (MADCAT) in 2006. In 2010, the National Association of Professional Women named her Woman of the Year. Funeral service will be held at 10:00 a.m., Saturday, March 7 in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home. Interment will follow in McMinn Memory Gardens. The family will receive friends Friday, March 6 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the funeral home. Bordwine Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

Shirley Joines, 79, of Madisonville, passed away on Friday, February 27. She was an active member of Chestnut Baptist Church. She was a hairdresser for over 50 years. She was a devoted mother and grandmother and great-grandmother. Shirley's favorite things to do were working in the garden and preparing meals for the ones she loved. Everyone was welcome at her table. Our hearts are breaking but our souls are rejoicing for she has reached her eternal reward. Graveside Services & Interment will take place at 12:00 P.M. on Monday, March 2 at Joines-Wilson Cemetery. Arrangements by Biereley-Hale Funeral Home, Madisonville.

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