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McMinn County High Schools Installing New Weapons Detection System



McMinn County Schools will soon begin using a new weapons detection system as part of an effort to enhance campus safety.

According to Justin Wallace, safety supervisor for McMinn County Schools, the district is installing the CEIA OpenGate screening system at both high schools. The technology is designed to detect weapons while allowing students and staff to move quickly through building entrances.

Wallace said student safety remains the district's top priority and the new system adds an additional layer of security while minimizing disruptions to the start of the school day. During the first few days of implementation, school officials expect longer lines while students and staff adjust to the new procedures.

Under the system, students will walk through the detection gate with backpacks while removing certain items — including laptops and three-ring binders — and carrying them separately. Most items such as notebooks, phones and water bottles may remain in backpacks. If the system alerts, students may be directed to a designated area for a brief bag check.

School officials are encouraging students to arrive a few minutes earlier than usual during the first week of use to allow time for the screening process. Students will not be marked tardy as long as they are on campus before the bell rings.

District officials said the new system is part of a continued effort to strengthen school safety while maintaining an efficient entry process for students and staff. Morning Fax staff reached out to McMinn County Schools for an official timeline and it was described as "tentative". Source: [McMinn County Schools Facebook](#); Photo Courtesy of [CEIA USA](#)

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TIME CHANGES THIS WEEKEND!



Clocks will shift forward one hour at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 8.

Friday, March 06, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Brush Fire in Delano Burns About Six Acres



A brush fire that spread out of control Tuesday evening in the Delano area burned about six acres of woodland and drew a multi-agency response.

The West Polk Fire Department requested mutual aid around 5 p.m. on Hiwassee Trail Drive. Crews from the Claxton Fire Department, Bradley County Fire Rescue, and Etowah Rural Fire Department assisted in battling the blaze, which spread to a neighboring property.

Additional support came from the Tennessee Division of Forestry and AmeriPro EMS. West Polk Fire Captain Henry Harden served as incident commander. No injuries were reported.

Photo provided by Etowah Rural Fire Department

Church News & Events

- Thomas Brown will be sharing the Gospel in Testimony and Song at Cambria Baptist Church, 805 County Road 875 in Etowah on Sunday, March 15 at 11 a.m.
- Trinity United Methodist Church will host its first annual "Carry the Cross" event on Good Friday, April 3. The 5K run begins at 8 a.m., followed by a ½K Cross Carry Walk at 9:30 a.m. Early 5K registration is \$25 before March 15 (includes a T-shirt) and \$35 afterward or on race day. No registration is required for the ½K walk. Participants can register online at trinityumcathens.com/goodfriday5k.
- Union Hill Baptist Church will host a revival beginning Sunday, March 8, at 6 p.m. at the church, located at 258 County Road 659. The community is invited to attend.

More Church News & Events on Next Page



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This promo cannot be paired with the Athens Center first-time platelet donor promo.



UPCOMING CHURCH NEWS & EVENTS

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NEXT WEEK
EVERY WEEK

Friday, March 06, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- Mars Hill Presbyterian Church will host the seventh annual "Song for the Cure" fundraiser on March 14 at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. The event features a lineup of performers and will raise funds for the American Cancer Society. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased from Mars Hill Circle II members or at the door. The church is located at 205 N. Jackson St. in Athens. For more information, call 423-745-1403.
- Athens Lutheran Church, located at 710 Forrest Ave., invites the community to attend Lenten Worship services on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. through April 1. A potluck fellowship meal will be held each week at 6 p.m. prior to the service. The congregation welcomes all who wish to observe the Lenten season of repentance and reflection. More information is available at athenslutheranchurch.org.
- 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. There is 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
- [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 and Thursdays at **6:30pm** at [Spirit City Church North Etowah](#).
- [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.*

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Women's Conference

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

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Guest Speakers: Stephanie Dunn
Brittany Duggan
Singer: Cayci Leamon

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Church
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Friday, March 06, 2026 **Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4** **Athens, Tennessee**

ACA Accepting Entries for Annual 'Exposure' Photography Exhibit



The Athens Area Council for the Arts is now accepting entries for its annual photography exhibit, *Exposure Photography Exhibit*, is open to both amateur and professional photographers.

The entry deadline is March 18.

The exhibit includes two divisions—digital and film. Digital entries cost \$10 per photo, while film entries are \$5 per photo. Entry details, including the full prospectus and timeline, are available at the council's website.

This year's exhibit will be judged by photographer Wayne Stetser, a longtime contributor to the show and frequent top prize winner.

The exhibit will be on display April 20 through May 22 in the Willson Exhibit Room and Hallway Gallery at The Arts Center. An opening reception and awards ceremony is scheduled for May 8 at 5 p.m. The gallery will be open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., as well as during special events.

Source: Lauren Brown, Executive Director, ACA

Woman Injured After Medical Emergency Causes Vehicle to Run Off Road in Niota



On Thursday afternoon, a woman in her 60s experienced a medical emergency while driving on County Road 386, causing her late-model Nissan pickup to leave the roadway and enter a culvert.

Responding units from the Niota Rural Fire Department, AMR, and

the Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP) assisted her from the vehicle while awaiting EMS. She sustained minor injuries and was transported to a local hospital for treatment.

The investigation is being led by Trooper Ethan Jones with the THP.

Photo courtesy of David Prater, Niota Rural FD

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Friday, March 06, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

March 04, 2026

Drew Hardy, 30 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for aggravated burglary, and criminal impersonation.

Steven Hicks, 59 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for maintaining a dwelling for drug use, Bond \$1,000.

Casey Villines, 34 of Athens, charged with public intoxication, simple possession, casual exchange of schedule 4, legend drugs, and **drug paraphernalia**, Bond \$6,500.

Mason May, 32 of Athens, charged with drug paraphernalia, and criminal impersonation.

Bridget Robinson, of Athens, charged with aggravated assault, reckless endangerment, use of deadly weapon, robbery, unlawful carry or possession of a weapon, failure to appear for possession of paraphernalia, uses, and activities, Violation of probation for possession of paraphernalia, simple possession casual exchange of schedule II meth, Bond \$70,171.45.

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

Local Movers Partner with Charity for Furniture Donation Event

McMinn Moving N' More, in partnership with Coordinated Charities, will host a furniture donation event on Saturday, March 28, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

During the event, the moving company will provide free pickup and delivery of gently used furniture. Coordinated Charities will then distribute the items to families in need across the community. Organizers emphasize that mattresses and junk items will not be accepted.

Residents wishing to donate furniture are encouraged to schedule a pickup in advance through McMinn Moving N' More's website.

This event provides a great way to get rid of unwanted clutter and get it to people who could get some good use out of it. Enjoy donating to charity without having to worry about transport of those heavy, bulky items. To Schedule your pickup: **Text (844) 431-6683** or scan the QR Code provided [HERE](#)

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Friday, March 06, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 7

Athens, Tennessee

Starr Regional Medical Center Earns Lifepoint Operations Excellence Award



Pictured, left to right: Jason Zachariah, President and COO of Lifepoint Health; William Haugh, President, Central Division of Lifepoint Health; David Alley, CFO of SRMC; Deborah Vaughn, RN, MSN, CNO of SRMC; John McLain, CEO of SRMC; and David Dill, Chairman and CEO of Lifepoint Health

Starr Regional Medical Center (SRMC) has received a top operations honor from its parent company, Lifepoint Health, during the organization's annual awards ceremony held Feb. 24, 2026.

Starr was one of five Lifepoint facilities nationwide to receive the 2025 Operations Excellence Award, recognizing achievements in quality improvement, service line growth, workforce development, financial performance and community engagement.

Hospital leaders John McLain, chief financial officer David Alley, and chief nursing officer Debbie Vaughn accepted the award on behalf of the hospital.

In addition to the facility recognition, McLain received the Fleetwood Award, an honor presented annually to a hospital leader who reflects the leadership values of the late Jim Fleetwood. The award recognizes leaders who demonstrate strong character, collaboration and commitment to community service.

According to Jason Zachariah, Starr Regional has made significant progress in expanding services, improving patient care and developing future healthcare leaders while advancing Lifepoint's mission of improving community health.

McLain said the recognition reflects the work of the entire Starr Regional team and their ongoing efforts to provide high-quality care to patients in Athens, Etowah and the surrounding region. **Source: Brandi Armstrong, SRMC**

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Friday, March 06, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 8

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Marilyn Arnold Rowden, 83, of Athens, passed away on Monday, March 2. Marilyn was an active member of Keith Memorial United Methodist Church since moving to Athens in 1964. She was a former nursery worker, Acolyte trainer and supported Meals on Wheels. Funeral services will be at 2:00 pm on Monday, March 9 in the chapel of Smith Funeral Home. The interment will follow in Cedar Grove Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 12:00-2:00 pm Monday prior to the service. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Marilyn Arnold Rowden.

Grant Douglas Woody, 76, passed away on Wednesday, March 4. Grant proudly served his country and retired from the United States Army, where he worked as a trauma ward nurse during the Vietnam War. Following his military service, he continued helping others through his work as a Senior PC Repair Technician. There will be no formal services at this time. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

Clarence William Sweat, 89, a native of LaFollette and longtime resident of McMinn County, passed away on Wednesday, March 4, 2026. He was the owner/operator of various gas stations in Athens. A graveside service will be held at 11:00 AM Saturday, March 7 at Cedar Grove Cemetery. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Clarence William Sweat.

Shirlene Dyke Raper, 82, a native and lifetime resident of McMinn County, passed away at her son's home in Cookeville on Wednesday, March 4. A graveside service will be held at 2:00 PM on Friday, March 13 at Cochran Cemetery. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Shirlene Dyke Raper.

Charlotte Ruth Emerson Powell, 68, of Charleston, passed away on Tuesday, March 3. She attended Five Point Baptist Church in Decatur. A funeral service will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 9, 2026, at Companion Funeral Home of Athens with visitation from 5:00 p.m. until the service hour. The family will hold a private graveside service. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements.

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