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Monday, June 29, 2026

Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Cleveland State Student, 68, Set to Graduate After a Lifetime of Service



At 68, Cleveland State Community College Medical Assisting student Gail Evans is preparing to graduate after a life defined by service and a 32-year U.S. Army career. A retired lieutenant colonel and former physician assistant (PA), Evans enrolled in Cleveland State's Medical Assisting program in 2025 using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, saying she wanted to "get back to helping people." She will complete the three-term program and earn her certificate in July.

Evans, one of 12 children, grew up in New York and first earned a degree in elementary education before teaching third grade. Seeking a new direction, she enlisted in the Army in 1987—choosing to start as an enlisted soldier so she could select her career field. She served eight years as a radiology technician before being selected for the PA program at the University of Texas at San Antonio, graduating in 1997. Over the next 22 years, she served worldwide in Korea, Germany, Egypt, and Iraq, including deployments during Operation Desert Storm and three later tours in Iraq. She spent much of her career with the 3rd Infantry Division, a unit she calls her proudest affiliation. Evans rose from Sergeant First Class to commissioned officer, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 2019.

After her husband's passing and years of missed milestones due to deployments, she moved to Cleveland to be near family. Inspired by the hospice care a friend received, she decided to return to healthcare with a goal of working in hospice.

She has excelled academically, earning a 4.0 GPA and placement on the President's List. Her externship at a local urology clinic gave her hands-on experience with a strong team environment. Program Director Karmon Kingsley praised her work ethic and externship evaluations.

Evans encourages young people to explore career options, consider community college, and not feel pressured to follow a traditional path. She also recommends the military as a meaningful option with significant benefits.



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Monday, June 29, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Set to Celebrate America's 250th With Major July 4th Events

Communities across McMinn County are preparing for a memorable Independence Day as they join the nationwide celebration of America's 250th anniversary with festivals, family activities, and two major fireworks shows.

In Etowah, the annual Old-Fashioned 4th of July Festival will fill downtown with classic Americana traditions. The day features live music, a pageant, local vendors, food booths, contests, and will conclude with a fireworks display and laser show lighting up the night sky.

Athens will continue the celebration at Athens Regional Park, offering activities for all ages, including a retro arcade, splashpad, food trucks, live music, and a large fireworks finale. This year's event adds a special highlight for Tennessee's 250th—an impressive 600-drone light show choreographed above the park.

Organizers say the holiday offers a chance for residents to come together in hometown pride as McMinn County joins the nation in marking 250 years of American history.

McMinn County High School Welcomes New Assistant Principal Matt Gentry



McMinn County High School has announced Matt Gentry as its new assistant principal, bringing a decade of experience within McMinn County Schools to the role. Over the past ten years, Gentry has taught Special Education, Science, and History, working with students across multiple grade levels and learning environments. He holds an Ed.S. in Instructional Leadership from Arkansas State University.

Outside the classroom, Gentry is deeply rooted in the community. He enjoys time with his family, cheering on the Tennessee Volunteers, and coaching his children's sports teams alongside his wife, Kylie. Their family is active in their church and values opportunities to serve and stay connected locally.

Gentry says he is honored to join the McMinn County High School administrative team and looks forward to supporting students, staff, and families while contributing to the school's long-standing tradition of excellence.

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Monday, June 29, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

June 25, 2026

John Carter, 42 of Etowah, charged with DUI.

Tina Parry, 53 of Sweetwater, charged with driving on a revoked license, and failure to have insurance, Bond \$3,000.

Asante Smith, 31 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for Schedule II, failure to appear for DUI, aggravated assault, evading arrest, and felony vandalism, Bond \$54,000.

Laura Ferguson, 37 of Harriman, charged with allowing an unlicensed driver to drive, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, harboring a runaway, and two counts of burglary, Bond \$65,000.

George Waters, 46 of Etowah, charged with interference with 911 call, Bond \$500.

Ryan Koston, 61 of Englewood, charged with driving on a revoked license, and failure to have insurance.

Roy Roberts, 68 of Riceville, charged with casual exchange and possession of meth, and drug paraphernalia.

Alan Randolph, 50 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for tampering with evidence, and violation of probation.

Michael Bucklew, 47 of Englewood, charged with domestic assault, Bond \$5,000.

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



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Monday, June 29, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Junior Richard Smith, 75, of McMinn County, passed away on Thursday, June 25. He was an auto mechanic for Athens Automotive. Visitation will be held on Monday, June 29, from 5:00-7:00 PM at Ziegler Funeral Home. Funeral services will follow at 7:00 PM. Graveside services will be held on Tuesday, June 30, at 2:00 PM at McMinn Memory Gardens. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Junior Richard Smith.

Christine Riggins, 86, of Athens, passed away on Friday, June 26. Funeral arrangements are incomplete and will be announced by Ziegler Funeral Home.

Robert Hunt, 60, passed away on Wednesday, June 24 in a Hermitage, TN medical facility. Survivors and arrangements to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home & Cremation Service in charge of arrangements

Gary J. Dumars, 77, of Niota, passed away at Starr Regional Medical Center on Monday, June 15. If you are a family member of Gary's, please contact the Athens Office of Companion Funeral and Cremation Service at 423-453-2302.

Debora Ann Butler, 68, passed away on Tuesday, June 16. This announcement is made courtesy of M. D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home & Cremation Service

Shirley Carroll, formerly of Athens, passed away on Saturday, June 27. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at this time, and will be announced soon. Smith Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

Rev. Charles George "Dump" Armour, 76, of Decatur, passed away on Friday, June 19. Dump was a proud veteran of the United States Army and dedicated his life to serving his community. He worked as a cattle farmer and was known for his spirited horse trading, finding joy in spending time at the stockyard. Dump also pastored at various churches in the area for many years. Dump was a member of Meigs Lodge #213, F.&A.M. for 46 years and a member of Alhambra Shrine - Chattanooga. A Masonic Funeral Service will be held at 7 p.m., on Monday, June 29 at Walnut Grove Baptist Church, with a funeral service following. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is honored to serve the Armour family.

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