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Today's News... This Morning

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(For More News See Page 3)

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Tuesday, March 05, 2024

Athens, Tennessee

State Senate Advances Legislation

Last week, the Tennessee Senate advanced several bills to increase penalties for criminals, specifically repeat offenders and criminals who target children. State Senator Lowe of Calhoun, brought forth a bill that empowers intrastate commerce in Tennessee and strengthens Tennessee's response to repeat misdemeanor offenders. To address the issue of persistent crime, Tennessee lawmakers are prioritizing solutions to tackle the challenge of repeat misdemeanor offenders who often avoid significant consequences. Senator Bo Watson of Hixson passed Senate Bill 2155 in the Senate Judiciary Committee which would increase the minimum jail time following a fifth qualifying misdemeanor offense. The list includes 37 total crimes ranging from assault to driving under the influence. Under this legislation, a criminal who has been convicted of any combination of five or more qualifying misdemeanors in the past ten years would be subject to a class E felony charge at the discretion of a judge. In the case of certain repeat violent offenses such as domestic assault and child neglect, the legislation would raise the third or subsequent conviction from a class D misdemeanor to a class E felony. A Class E felony is punishable by up to six years in prison and a fine of up to \$3,000. "There are hundreds, if not thousands, of repeat misdemeanor offenders across the state of Tennessee," said Watson. "They are habitual criminals, and the public is tired of them getting off with a simple 'slap on the wrist.' This legislation is one remedy we should consider to curb criminal recidivism." Senate Bill 2155 now awaits passage on the Senate floor.

Community News

✓ The Polling Locations in McMinn County will open at 9 am today and close at 8 pm. Go to your assigned polling location. You will also need a Federal or State issued Photo ID (such as a Driver's License).

✓ Athens Area Council for the Arts is pleased to offer Artsplorations workshops during Spring Break, March 11 - 15, 2024. Artsplorations workshops are educational arts opportunities offered for students in grades Kindergarten through 5th grade on school holidays and in-service days when local schools are closed. The camp day is 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. All materials are provided for each workshop, but students must bring their own lunch. Participants should wear comfy, casual clothes and closed toed shoes. Each day is a separate camp, but patrons can register for individual days or all camp days in one transaction. The camp schedule is as follows:

Monday, March 11: Visual Arts with Emma Stratton in the Visual Arts Studio

Tuesday, March 12: Musical Theatre with Tyler Peaden in the Peggy Dow Center.

Wednesday, March 13: Dance Movement with Olivia Stillwell of Armfield Dance Academy in the Peggy Dow Center.

Thursday, March 14: Singing with Jamey Wright in the Peggy Dow Center. Friday, March 15: Theatre with Jamey Wright in the Peggy Dow Center. Information about pricing tiers, as well as a link to register, is available online at athensartscouncil.org/camps. See Community News on Page 2

IT'S TAX TIME AGAIN FOLKS!
 Time for spring cleaning & fresh new flooring! Times are tight now & we understand that, so as everything else is going up, our flooring prices are coming down. We have carpet specials starting at .69 cents a sq ft. Sheet vinyl .89 cents a sq ft & waterproof plank flooring starting at \$1.49 a sq ft! Also, high end flooring from Shaw & Coretec for drastically reduced prices while supplies last! Ask us about our match & beat any price policy! Also ask about our boat carpets & gorgeous grass yard turfs. We have the largest selection of in stock ready to go floorings at Dalton prices right here in beautiful Athens, TN! Everything we sell can be installed by the best of the best professional installers & most installs within 1 to 2 weeks of purchase! We are & easy to find & absolutely worth the drive!
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Tuesday, March 05, 2024 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2 Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

♦ **Patrick "Ryan" Henson**, age 49, lifelong resident of McMinn County, passed away on Saturday, March 2. At Ryan's request, there will be no formal visitation or services. Ziegler Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

♦ **Margaret Fish**, age 77, of Decatur, passed away on Sunday, March 3. She will be deeply missed by her loved ones, but we will celebrate her new life. Margaret is now reunited with her son, Mitchell, whom she loved and missed dearly. A funeral service will be held on Wednesday, March 6, at 2 p.m. in the Chapel of Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Interment will follow in the Meigs County Memorial Gardens. Visitation will be from 12 noon - 2 p.m., prior to the service. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is in charge of arrangements.

♦ **Josh "Casper" Willis**, age 31, passed away on March 2. Josh was more than a name; he was an embodiment of resilience, a testament to the human spirit's capacity to triumph over adversity. Throughout his life Josh exemplified unwavering determination, earning him the title of overcomer and warrior. He faced challenges head on, never faltering in his pursuit of a better tomorrow. Josh's legacy extends beyond his personal triumphs. He was a mentor to many offering guidance, support and hope to those navigating their own paths of recovery. His life stood as a beacon of possibility, showing others that change is not only possible but achievable through dedication and faith. Josh leaves behind a legacy of transformation, reminding us of the power of redemption and the potential for positive

Continued at top right

Obituaries-Continued

Josh "Casper" Willis, continued: influence. Though he may no longer walk among us, his spirit lives on in the hearts of those he touched, inspiring us to strive for a better world. Josh will be dearly missed but never forgotten, his memory serving as a guiding light for all who knew him. Josh was an employee at Storm Copper and fought diabetes. Visitation will be from 3-8 Wednesday, March 6th at Good Samaritan Funeral Home, Athens. The funeral will be held Thursday, March 7th at Noon at the funeral home with the burial to follow at Union McMinn Baptist Church Cemetery. Good Samaritan Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

♦ **Donna Lee Baggott**, age 55, of Decatur, passed away on Sunday, March 3. A memorial service will be held later. There will be no formal visitation held. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is in charge of arrangements.

COMMUNITY NEWS: Arts Center Please note there is a transaction fee to register online, however, students may register over the phone at 423-745-8781, or in person at The Arts Center, with no transaction fee. For more information about AACA programming visit athensartscouncil.org, or call 423-745-8781, or in person, at The Arts Center. with no transaction fee. For more information about AACA programming visit athensartscouncil.org, or call 423-745-8781, or in person, at The Arts Center. Office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The Arts Center is located in Historic Downtown Athens, Tennessee, in the Main Street District, at 320 North White Street.

I will work hard to support President Trump's effort to stop illegal immigration and drugs flowing across the border. I will seek the maximum penalty possible for illegal drugs pouring into the 10th Judicial District!"

#SaveAmerica!

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for
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Lisa Dotson Passes The Hard Hat

Lisa Dotson has passed the hard hat of revitalization and renovations of Historic Downtown Athens to new director, Sandra Kinney. Lisa has served as the Director of Main Street Athens since its inception in 2016 but decided to pursue another opportunity in August of 2023. After announcing her resignation, Lisa remained in the position to ensure a smooth transition until a new director was in place; she will now serve as a consultant for the program. The Main Street Board of Directors welcomed Sandra Kinney during a recent board meeting, and she will officially begin her role in April. Sandra and her husband, Mike, moved to Tennessee from Georgia in 2016 and she immediately became actively involved in the Kiwanis Club, The Athens Arts Center, and McMinn County Living Heritage Museum. Sandra worked in higher education in Georgia for many years and is experienced in strategic planning, workforce development, data collection & analysis and grant management. In her spare time, she enjoys exploring other communities and their downtowns. Sandra has a passion for tourism and finding ways to enhance communities and their people. "Although the development of downtown Athens has been my baby for the past eight years, I feel comfortable passing the hat to Sandra and our amazing board of directors," states Dotson. "The search committee spent numerous hours trying to find the right person who we felt would build upon the current foundation and carry the program to the next level, so we are thrilled to have found Sandra and her level of expertise" states Marilyn Miller, Search Committee Chair. Being an accredited national program since 2016, Main Street Athens has received grant funding in the amount of \$225,000 to support façade improvements for thirty-two downtown buildings, \$100,000 to enhance operations and entrepreneurial programs for The LITE House Innovation Center which Lisa served as Associate Director for four years, \$24,000 for the upgrades of a vacant space on North Jackson Street which is now known as Pocket Park, \$6,000 to design and install signs throughout downtown and develop a self-guided historic walking tour, \$6,000 towards the historical marker that was installed at J.L. Cook Memorial Park, \$1,500 for the mural/marque at Pocket Park and most recently able to secure \$327,000 for the development of the community kitchen incubator that will serve as a multi-facet co-working space for food and beverage entrepreneurs. With the plethora of changes throughout downtown the first-floor vacancy rate has changed from 40% when the program started to 10%. "People are excited about opening businesses in downtown!" states business owner and Board Chair, Lisa Mayfield. "Although we have managed to gain funding for projects from regional, state, and private foundations, we are very thankful of the financial support from the City of Athens, McMinn County, downtown business partners, and community friends. We encourage others to join in the campaign to support the development of our flourishing downtown district." Main Street Athens works in collaboration with other organizations throughout the year to provide fami-

ly-friendly events for the community, including Friendly City Festivals, The Arts Center, and the City of Athens Parks & Recreation Department. Deb Wallace, City Manager, who also serves as a board member shares, "We are delighted that Sandra considered being our new Main Street Director. She brings a wealth of knowledge and positive spirit to Athens, and we are excited to start exploring more ways to enhance our beautiful city. Lisa Dotson has paved the way for Main Street Athens, and we know that Sandra will have an easy transition. Please help us welcome her to "The Friendly City." Main Street Athens is a 501c3 non-profit organization under the umbrella of Main Street America. Athens has been a national accredited program since its inception in 2016 with the goal of preservation and revitalization of the downtown commercial district. If you have questions or comments, please contact Main Street Athens at 423-333-0329 or email athensmainstreet@gmail.com. The office is located at 3 West College Street. In the photo L-R front row: Lisa Mayfield, Sandra Kinney, Lisa Dotson. 2nd Row: Donna Ballew, Lindsey Ferguson, Deb Wallace, Brianna Baker. 3rd row: Bo Perkinson, Rusty Rollins, Stuart Mason, Jackie Newman, and Mayor Steven Sherlin. Photo submitted by Lisa Dotson.

