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Page 1

Athens, Tennessee

Autopsy confirms drowning deaths of Chattanooga teens after bridge jump in Loudon County



Autopsy reports released by the Knox County Regional Forensic Center confirm that two Chattanooga teenagers who jumped from a bridge during a police chase in April died from accidental drowning in the Tennessee River.

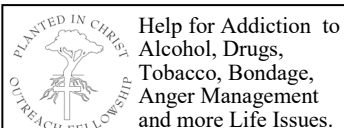
The victims were identified as 18-year-old MaRico Johnson and 16-year-old Mykel Haddox. Both teens fell approximately 100 feet from the I-75 bridge near mile marker 74 in Loudon County and were later found underwater during a multi-day search. Toxicology results showed the presence of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, in both teens' systems.

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The incident occurred early on the morning of April 9, when a stolen vehicle being pursued by law enforcement from multiple counties ran out of gas and stopped on the interstate bridge. Three teens exited the vehicle and jumped over a barrier, reportedly believing it would lead them to the opposite side of the highway. Instead, they fell into a gap between the bridge spans and into the river below.

One of the teens survived and managed to swim to shore, later being found with injuries including a punctured lung. He was taken to Fort Loudoun Medical Center, where he informed authorities of the other two individuals. Search teams recovered the 16-year-old's body on April 11 and the 18-year-old's body on April 13.

The incident is still under investigation by local authorities. *Source: [WBIR](#)*



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Athens, Tennessee

City of Athens Memorial Day Closings



The City of Athens Public Works Department announces the following holiday closure:

The Athens Municipal Building, Public Works, Recycle Center, and Animal Shelter will be closed on Monday, May 26 in observance of Memorial Day. The Municipal Building, Public Works, Recycle Center, and the Animal Shelter will reopen Tuesday, May 27 during regular business hours.

Residential garbage routes for Monday, May 26 will be picked up on Tuesday, May 27. All other residential garbage routes will be on regular schedule. Please place garbage totes curbside Monday night to ensure they are out for pickup. Commercial/Industrial garbage routes will be picked up on a limited basis.

All emergency services will continue to operate on a 24-hour basis. Contact McMinn E-911 Communications in the event of an emergency. For more information, please contact the Office of the Public Works Department at 423-744-2745.

Starr Regional Medical Center Earns National Stroke Care Certification



Starr Regional Medical Center has earned the **Gold Seal of Approval®** from **The Joint Commission** and the **American Stroke Association's Heart-Check mark** for **Acute Stroke Ready Hospital Certification**.

The recognition follows an unannounced, two-day review in March, during which Joint Commission experts evaluated the hospital's stroke care standards, clinical practices, and patient management.

"This accomplishment demonstrates one of the many ways we continually work to enhance and elevate our services," said **Deborah Vaughn**, MSN, RN, Starr Regional's Chief Nursing Officer.

The certification confirms that Starr Regional is equipped to provide high-quality stroke care around the clock, offering life-saving treatment when every minute counts. Stroke occurs every 40 seconds in the U.S., according to the CDC.

Officials from both The Joint Commission and the American Stroke Association praised the hospital for its commitment to quality and patient safety.



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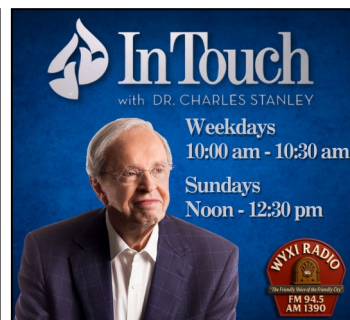


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Wednesday, May 14, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

Gov. Bill Lee Signs Farmland Preservation Act to Protect Tennessee Agriculture



Governor Bill Lee has signed the **Farmland Preservation Act** into law, establishing a landmark program aimed at protecting Tennessee's rapidly disappearing farmland for future generations.

The legislation, which passed with broad bipartisan support, creates a **permanent conservation easement** program and a **grant fund** to support farmers who voluntarily choose to preserve their land. The initiative is designed to combat the alarming loss of agricultural and forest lands—estimated at **240 acres per day** statewide.

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"Agriculture is the top driver of Tennessee's economy," said Gov. Lee. "The Farmland Preservation Act ensures that family farms can be preserved well into the future."

The act was praised by officials across state government and agriculture, including **Agriculture Commissioner Charlie Hatcher**, who called the legislation a vital step in maintaining Tennessee's rural identity and food security. Lawmakers such as **Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson** and **Representative Greg Vital**, who helped sponsor the bill, highlighted the program's long-term benefits for both the economy and quality of life in Tennessee.

Tennessee Farm Bureau President Eric Mayberry applauded the passage of the bill, calling it a meaningful investment in protecting the state's most important industry.

For more information and photos from the bill signing, visit tn.gov/agriculture. *Source: TN Governor's Press Office*



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Wednesday, May 14, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

Verifiable sale of homes in McMinn County in March 2025

Close Date	Price	Street	City
3/3/2025	359000	County Road 754	Riceville
3/5/2025	690000	County Road 264	Niota
3/6/2025	350000	County Road 155	Riceville
3/6/2025	248000	Gentry St	Etowah
3/6/2025	360000	County Road 480	Englewood
3/7/2025	70000	Pennsylvania Ave	Etowah
3/7/2025	157000	Washington Ave	Etowah
3/7/2025	138000	Highway 11 S	Calhoun
3/7/2025	55000	Highway 39w	Athens
3/11/2025	235000	Indiana Ave	Etowah
3/14/2025	535000	County Road 634	Athens
3/14/2025	242500	County Rd 112	Athens
3/17/2025	255786	Vermont Ave	Etowah
3/19/2025	345000	County Road 66	Riceville
3/20/2025	280000	County 255	Athens
3/24/2025	150000	County Road 490	Etowah
3/24/2025	185000	County Road 231	Niota
3/25/2025	280000	Gideon St	Athens
3/25/2025	356000	County Road 568	Englewood
3/27/2025	289000	County Road 312	Sweetwater
3/27/2025	297000	Crestway Dr	Athens
3/28/2025	387500	Shadows Lawn	Athens
3/28/2025	280000	Old Englewood	Athens
3/31/2025	74050	County Road 860	Delano
3/31/2025	194000	County Road 675	Riceville
3/31/2025	180000	County Road 213	Athens

Information provided by: *Tennessee Valley Appraisal Services, LLC.* (423) 746-0027 tvasinc.com

Obituaries

Terry Yvonne Jack Frye, 62 of Athens, passed away, Sunday, May 11 at her residence. She worked as a caregiver for 25 years and she spent her life serving the Lord. There will be private family graveside services. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home in Athens is in charge of the arrangements.

Sonny Gene Standridge, 65, of Benton, TN passed away Monday, May 12. Sonny was a graduate of Meigs County High School. He spent most of his life working in the utility industry and retired from Etowah Utilities after 20 plus years of service. In his spare time Sonny enjoyed long rides on his motorcycle and was an avid fisherman. Funeral service will be held at 7:00p.m., Saturday, May 17, in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home with Pastor Mike Rymer officiating.

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