



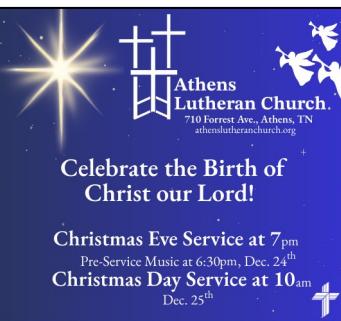
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Friday, December 19, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

Landon Clontz Achieves Prestigious Rank of Eagle Scout



Scout Troop 118, part of the Cades Cove District of the Smoky Mountain Council, proudly announces that Landon Clontz has earned the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest achievement in the Boy Scouts of America program.

Landon, a senior at McMinn County High School, has been an active Scout since 2017. His journey to Eagle Scout reflects years of dedication, leadership, and service. For his Eagle Scout project, Landon refurbished and renovated the McMinn County High School band room, creating a better space for current and future musicians. As a member of the school's marching band, this project was especially meaningful to him and will leave a lasting impact on his peers.

Beyond Scouting, Landon plans to attend East Tennessee State University (ETSU), where he will major in English to become a teacher. He is the proud grandson of Bill and Kathleen Clontz, who have supported him throughout his Scouting journey.

Achieving the rank of Eagle Scout is a significant milestone—only about 5% of Scouts nationwide reach this level. It requires earning at least 21 merit badges, demonstrating leadership, and completing a major service project that benefits the community. Eagle Scouts are recognized for their perseverance, character, and commitment to making a difference.

"We're so proud of Landon," said Doug McCutcheon, Scoutmaster of Troop 118. "Earning Eagle Scout isn't easy—it takes years of effort, leadership, and service. It's more than just an award; it's something that will stick with him for life."

Troop 118 meets every Monday at 6:30 p.m. at Keith United Methodist Church and welcomes youth interested in joining Scouting. *Story Provided by: Diane Hutsell, Scout Leader*

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Athens, Tennessee

Two Residents Killed in House Fire Following Explosion on Hwy. 163



Two residents and a pet dog died Tuesday evening after a house fire that followed an apparent explosion along Highway 163 near Riceville.



The fire was reported around 6:30 p.m. after neighbors heard an explosion and saw flames coming from the residence, with concerns that occupants were still inside. When the first fire units arrived, flames were visible from the highway.

Multiple agencies responded to the scene, including Etowah Rural Fire, Claxton Fire, Calhoun Rural Fire, Etowah City Fire, Englewood Rural Fire, Riceville Fire, West Polk Fire/Rescue, and Bradley County Fire. Additional assistance was provided by the McMinn County Sheriff's Department, Tennessee Highway Patrol, AMR, VEC, and McMinn County Hazardous Materials Air Support. Etowah Rural Fire Capt. Ryland Hearn oversaw scene operations, while Englewood Rural Fire Lt. Caleb Martin was in charge of water operations.

Despite firefighting efforts, two residents and a pet dog were found deceased inside the home. Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Bomb and Arson investigators were called to the scene to determine the cause of the explosion and fire. The investigation is ongoing.

Photos provided by the Etowah Rural FD



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

Athens, Tennessee

Church News & Events

- Mt. Verd Baptist Church will present their children's Christmas play, *Stories of the Savior*, on Sunday, December 21 at 6:00 pm.
- Athens Lutheran Church will host a special Christmas Eve service on Wednesday at 7pm, and Christmas Day service on Thursday at 10am.
- Lane's Chapel A.M.E Zion Church, located at 904 County Rd 264 in Niota, will have their Annual Christmas Program on Wednesday, December 24 at 4:00pm. They will feature the play *Christmas Dirt*.
- 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.
- 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.*
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church will feature the community-wide service of *The Longest Night*, on Sunday, December 21 at 5:00 p.m. This ecumenical worship is a service of hope and healing for those who are experiencing grief, loss, or struggle in the holiday season. Rev. Tiki Dixon of St. Mark AME Zion will be preaching.

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Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

12-17-25

Jeffrey Tudor, 50 of Englewood charged with violation of an order of protection, Bond \$1,500.

Raymond Perez, 38 of Athens, charged with violation of an order of protection, Bond \$4,000.

Aaron Doherty, 45 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for a violation of an order of protection second offense, Bond \$705.95

Adelina Rogers, 45 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for theft of property.

Omar Garcia, 44 of Knoxville, charged with driving on a suspended license, Bond \$4,000

Sean Perkins, 20 of Sweetwater, charged with state violation of probation in Monroe County.

Julia Lieber, 20 of Athens, charged with domestic assault, Bond \$1000.

Sondra Buckner, 55 of Sweetwater, charged with violation of probation for possession of meth, Bond \$2,585.

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

Obituaries

Alphonso Martin, 63, passed away on Wednesday, December 17. Survivors and funeral arrangements to be announced by M.D. Dotson and Sons Funeral Home of Cleveland.

Della Novella Stafford Hines, 95 of McMinn County, passed away at her home, surrounded by her family, on Wednesday, December 17. A visitation will be held from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Tuesday, December 23, at Ziegler Funeral Home, with funeral services at 1:00 PM. Interment will follow at 2:00 PM at McMinn Memory Gardens. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Della Novella Stafford Hines.

Kerry D. Smith, II, 31, has passed away. No arrangements have been announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons is in charge of arrangements.

Merry Christmas!



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