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## Today's News. This Morning.

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**Wednesday, December 31, 2025**

**Page 1**

**Athens, Tennessee**

### Mighty Men of Praise Announce New Single, Release Concert and Upcoming Performances



Local gospel group Mighty Men of Praise will release a new single titled "This Joy" on Saturday, Jan. 10, available on all major streaming platforms.

To celebrate the release, Mighty Men of Praise will host a free single-release concert on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, at Athens City Middle School, 200 Keith Lane. The event will take place in the auditorium, with doors opening at 5 p.m. and the program beginning at 6 p.m. A love offering will be collected to help support recording expenses.

Jasmine Porter-McDermott will serve as emcee for the evening. Featured guests will include The Soul Lifters of Harriman, Shaddi and Family, Nash Ministries, and additional groups. MMOP also announced upcoming appearances, including a performance on Jan. 25 at 3 p.m. at Shiloh Baptist Church in celebration of the church's pastoral anniversary, and the WYXI Burke's Gospel Jubilee Annual Celebration scheduled for Sunday, February 15th at 3 p.m. Community members are invited to attend the events and support the ministry.

### Community News You Can Use

- The January Etowah Library Board meeting has been rescheduled to January 5th. Meetings of the Etowah Library Board are open to the public. Please visit our website for more information: [www.etowahlibrary.com](http://www.etowahlibrary.com)
- The next meeting of the McMinn County Historical Society is scheduled for Sunday, January 4th at 2pm in the Blue Room of the McMinn County Courthouse in downtown Athens. The guest speaker will be Jim Swayne discussing the history of Old Federal Road and its importance in mail and commerce in the aftermath of the Treaty of 1805 between the United States and the Cherokee Nation.
- Athens Community Theatre (ACT) continues its 2025-26 Table Read season with two table reads. The first is Christopher Durang's *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* on Tuesday, January 13, at 7pm led by ACT alum, Blake Chastain. ACT remembers the holocaust in a special table read of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's *The Diary of Anne Frank* on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 (at 6:00 PM), led by ACT director, Colby Pilkey. All ACT Table Reads take place at The Arts Center in Athens.

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Athens, Tennessee

## Cleveland State Community College: Phlebotomy Student Spotlight



Kaelie Evans recently completed the Phlebotomy Technician Bootcamp at Cleveland State Community College and earned the National Healthcareer Association Phlebotomy Technician Certification (CPT), an industry-recognized credential for healthcare professionals.

Phlebotomy is the practice of removing blood from the veins or body for medical testing, donation or other uses. During the 48-hour program, students learn to safely perform venipunctures through classroom lecture and practice on training arms and human arms. Evans is a Registered Dental Assistant at a local dental practice. When she started working at the practice three years ago, she did not have formal training in dental care. Over the years, the dentist has trained her in clinical procedures which led to her current position as dental assistant. Evans enrolled in the phlebotomy bootcamp to enhance her abilities at the dental practice. She said, "This certification will help me to extract blood from patients so the dentist can use the cells for bone grafting to help teeth extraction sites heal better."

Vicky Sullivan, phlebotomy instructor, said, "Phlebotomy is a vital healthcare profession essential for diagnosing illness, monitoring overall health and collecting blood for treatment. Kaelie is a conscientious, hardworking student whose perseverance is truly admirable. Even after long work shifts, she arrived at class prepared and fully engaged. The skills she gained through this program will continue to support her as she grows in her profession."

The bootcamp was funded by the Rural Healthcare Grant that Cleveland State received from the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The grant is a partnership between the Adult Education, Workforce Development, Healthcare departments at the college and local healthcare employers. It expands healthcare programs in the college's five county service area of Bradley, McMinn, Meigs, Monroe and Polk counties.

"My goal is to use these skills as a phlebotomist at my work now," said Evans. "I enjoy doing this, and the program gave me another certification in the healthcare field. This is a great opportunity for people. It was a lot of fun learning, and the hands-on training was really helpful for me." For more information about phlebotomy and other healthcare bootcamps, contact Chelsea Falana, Workforce Specialist, at [chelsea.falana@cscctn.edu](mailto:chelsea.falana@cscctn.edu) or (423) 614-8742. *Source: Andrea Byerly, Communications, CSCC*

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Athens, Tennessee

## Old National Bank Employees Serve Meals, Donate \$10,000 to Grace and Mercy Ministries



Employees of Old National Bank recently volunteered their time to prepare and serve a hot meal at Grace and Mercy Ministries, supporting the organization's efforts to address food insecurity in the Athens community.

Grace and Mercy Ministries provides meals three times each week to individuals and families in need and includes an uplifting spiritual message with each meal. Old National Bank employees regularly support the ministry by serving as board members and volunteering quarterly to prepare and serve meals.

In addition to volunteering, Old National Bank presented Grace and Mercy Ministries with a \$10,000 sponsorship check to support the organization's mission.

**Pictured, from left:** Ray Johnson, Grace and Mercy Ministries volunteer; Chris Adams, Old National market president; Dani Long, Old National small business banking relationship manager and Grace and Mercy Ministries treasurer; Ashley Hall, Old National Bank talent manager; Lisa Franklin, Grace and Mercy Ministries volunteer; and Nikki McConkey, Old National Bank banking center manager and Grace and Mercy Ministries president.

*Source: Chris Adams, Old National Bank*

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Athens, Tennessee

## McMinn County Arrest Reports

12-29-25

**Caitlin Perdue**, 34 of Athens, charged with violation of probation for inciting a riot, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$850.

**Joseph Richards**, 24 of Knoxville, charged with aggravated assault in Knox County.

**Verinda Gentry**, 46 of Madisonville, charged with simple possession of Schedule II meth, simple possession of schedule II fentanyl, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$26,000.

**Jason Wittenmeyer**, 49 of Philadelphia, TN charged with failure to appear for driving on a suspended license, Bond \$4,000.

**Christopher Dawson**, 35 of Athens, charged with domestic assault, Bond \$2,000.

**Dennis Standridge**, 26 of Athens, charged with criminal trespassing, Bond \$500.

**James Cooper**, 27 of Madisonville, charged with simple possession of Schedule II meth, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$34,000.

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

We encourage you to e-mail community events, church news, school sports results or other items of interest for possible use in the Morning Fax. If you take a newsworthy photograph, send it to:

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Athens, Tennessee

## Obituaries

**Alvin Ray Womac**, 66 of Athens, passed away peacefully on Saturday, December 27. Alvin was a highly respected professor of Biosystems Engineering, known especially for his extensive research contributions to the field. His work focused on advancing agricultural systems, machinery, and practical engineering solutions that supported farmers and improved efficiency and sustainability. An introvert by nature, Alvin preferred a quiet, traditional lifestyle rooted in hard work and self-reliance. He spent many years raising beef cattle and took great pride in working his farm. A Celebration of Life Ceremony will be held on Friday, January 2nd, at Blount Community Church, with receiving of friends beginning at 3:00 p.m., followed by a short service at 4:00 p.m. A burial service for family and close friends will be held on Saturday morning, January 3, in McMinn County at 11:00 a.m. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

**Zachary Brown**, 35 of Meigs County, passed away on Wednesday, December 24. A funeral service will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 3, 2026 at Watts Bar Community Church. Interment will follow in the Shiloh Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 12 - 2 p.m., prior to the service. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is honored to serve the Brown family.

**Christine Combs Burgess**, 78 of McMinn County, passed away on Wednesday, December 24. There will be no formal services at this time. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Christine Combs Burgess.

**Jennifer Jones Hubbard**, 77, passed away on Sunday, December 28. She was a devoted wife, a loving mother, and the greatest Nanny ever. Graveside services will be held on Friday, January 2 at 11:00 AM at Green Hill Cemetery in Etowah. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Jennifer Jones Hubbard.

**Edith Shepherd**, 89, passed away on Saturday, December 27. She worked at Thomas and Betts for 27 years until her retirement and was a faithful member of Athens Christian Church for nearly 50 years. She loved any time spent with family and friends whether doing crafts, being outdoors (collecting rocks), or completing puzzles. Services will be held at Ziegler's Funeral Home in Athens on Friday, January 2. Public visitation will be 11am - 1pm. Services will start at 1pm. Graveside services will be at McMinn Memorial Gardens at 2pm. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Edith Shepherd.

**Darrell Mosier**, 55 of Etowah, passed away Monday, December 29. Darrell was a member and deacon of Faith Baptist Church. He loved working on old cars; Mopar and 1969 Roadrunner were his favorite. In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing and mountain trips soaking in God's beautiful creation. Funeral services will be held at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, January 1 in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Thursday prior to the service. Family and friends will assemble at McMinn Memory Gardens on Friday, January 2, 2026, for the 11:00 a.m. committal service. Bordwine Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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