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Obituaries

Vesta Watson Melton, 89 of Riceville, passed away at her residence on Sunday, February 23. She was a member of East Athens Baptist Church and was a former member of the Evening Pilot Club. She was associated with AT&T as an operator for 31 years. A funeral service will be conducted 1:00 pm, Friday, February 28 in the chapel of Smith Funeral Home. Interment will follow in McMinn Memory Gardens. The family will receive friends from 11:00am-1:00pm Friday, February 28 at the funeral home prior to the service. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Vesta Watson Melton.

Ella Jean Blevins, 95, known as Jean, passed away on Saturday, February 22 in Riceville. For nearly sixty years, Jean played the piano at Sanford Church, attending every service and special event, where her musical talents brought joy to many. A Funeral Service will be held on February 25, 2025 at 7:00 pm at Sanford Baptist Church. A Visitation will be held prior from 5:00 pm-7:00 pm. A Graveside Service will be held Wednesday, February 26 at Sunset Memorial Gardens in Cleveland, TN at 1:00 pm. Arrangements entrusted to Companion Funeral and Cremation Service.

Eva Grace Thomas Oaks, 91 of Athens, passed away on Thursday, February 20. Eva was the last graduating student from Manilla Grammar School (McMinn County), she attended Englewood High School and was a graduate of American School in Chicago, IL. She was a 35-year member of Allen Memorial United Methodist Church in Athens. A funeral service will be conducted, 2:00 pm, Saturday, March 1 in the chapel of Smith Funeral Home. The committal service will be 11:00 am, Monday, March 3 at McMinn Memory Gardens. The family will receive friends from 1:00-2:00 pm, Saturday, March 1 prior to the service. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Eva Grace Thomas Oaks.

Jerry "Pappy" Homer Freeman, 75 of Niota, passed away on Sunday, February 23. He was a member of Cambria Baptist Church in Etowah. The family will receive friends at Cambria Baptist Church from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on Saturday, March 1. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 PM at the church. Interment will follow directly after funeral services at Cambria Cemetery. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Jerry "Pappy" Homer Freeman.

More Obituaries on Page 4

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OPEN INTERVIEWS

Saturday, March 8, 2025
8:00 AM - 3:00 PM
5020 Highway 11 South
Calhoun, Tennessee

Registration
8:00 AM - 8:30 AM

JOB DETAILS

- Entry Level Production
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Tuesday, February 25, 2025 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 3 Athens, Tennessee

State announces funding for Rural Healthcare Initiatives



The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) has awarded \$10.7 million in grant funding to support rural healthcare initiatives across the state.

Beginning July 1, 2025, 38 organizations across Tennessee will receive funds to strengthen healthcare workforce development in every rural county in the state. Through the Rural Healthcare Initiatives Program, local partners will use these funds to bolster 51 health-related occupations across 91 of Tennessee's 95 counties that are not considered metropolitan

areas.

This initiative aims to expand the state's healthcare workforce by leveraging existing training structures and increasing apprenticeship opportunities. This investment in workforce development will help ensure rural communities have access to skilled healthcare professionals, improving the quality and availability of care statewide. The program's financial support will be directed to sponsoring entities, which will facilitate training programs, certification courses, and apprenticeships. Additionally, grant funding will help address essential ancillary costs such as transportation, childcare, and examination fees, factors that often prevent workforce entry and advancement.

Through the Rural Workforce Initiatives, TDLWD remains committed to supporting local efforts that enhance training opportunities and expand employment options in rural Tennessee. To ensure the continuation of this critical component of rural workforce development, Gov. Bill Lee has included a second year of funding for the program in his proposed budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Local agencies receiving funding are Cleveland State Community College, Sweetwater Hospital, and Tennessee Wesleyan University, among others.

A complete list of the grantees and the counties they serve can be found [HERE](#)

Source: Chris Cannon, TN Chief Communications Officer, Assistant Commissioner

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Today's News...This Morning

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Obituaries

Kenneth Earl Elliott, 94 of Athens, passed away on Saturday, February 22 at Dominion Assisted Living in Athens. He was a member of Sewee Church of God having served on the Board of Directors. He was a SSgt serving in the U. S. Air Force during the Korean War. Funeral services will be at 7:00 P.M. Thursday in the Chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Interment will be 11:00 A.M. Friday in Sewee Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 5-7 pm Thursday at the funeral home. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home Athens, Tenn. in charge of arrangements.

Tawana Ann Howard, of Sweetwater, passed away on Saturday, February 22. Funeral arrangements will be announced at a later time. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Tawana Ann Howard.

Brush Fire Burns One Acre in Etowah



A controlled burn quickly got out of hand Sunday afternoon around 1 p.m. when a large brush fire spread to a grassy area, burning approximately one acre on County Road 805.

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Etowah Rural Fire and Englewood Rural Fire Departments responded to the scene and worked to contain the fire before it could spread further.

No injuries or structural damage were reported. Authorities remind residents to exercise caution when burning outdoors, especially in dry or windy conditions.

Photo by Lynn Ingram, Englewood Rural Fire Department

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Tuesday, February 25, 2025 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5 Athens, Tennessee

Cleveland State: Beta Omicron Nursing Honors Society Induction

Community News You Can Use



Front row left to right: Destiny Bookout, Sara Pirtle, Sydney Delmotte, Chelsea Stuart. Back row left to right: Melissa Coyne, Kendy Shaw, Rachel Moore, Freny Lopez, Stephanie Davis, Lauren Hulsey. Not pictured Tasha Woody and Marie Pierre.

- The City of Athens Board of Zoning and Appeals will be meeting on Wednesday, February 26 at the Athens Municipal Building (Burkett L. Witt Council Chambers) located at 815 North Jackson Street, Athens beginning at 1:00 pm.
- There will be a called meeting of the Athens City Council will be held at the Athens Municipal Building (Burkett L. Witt Council Chambers) located at 815 North Jackson Street, Athens beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 27. The purpose of this meeting is to Discuss and Authorize Negotiations for a Proposed Real Estate Purchase and Discuss Legal Issues. There will be an opportunity for citizens to comment. Prior to commencement of the meeting, all citizens intending to address the city council must sign-in on the sheet located at the entrance of the council chambers. The speaker must abide by the Public Comment Rules. For more information, please contact the Office of the City Manager at (423) 744-2702.

Morning Fax Cleveland State Community College recently inducted 12 students into the Beta Omicron Chapter of the Nursing Honors Society. Students must earn a B or better in all coursework in the nursing pathway, demonstrate conduct that reflects integrity and professionalism, and complete an educational, service, or recruitment project to meet membership eligibility.

MOMENTS of Praise

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