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Monday, January 19, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Honoring the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



As the nation observes Martin Luther King Jr. Day, communities pause to reflect on the life and legacy of a leader whose vision and moral courage reshaped American history. More than half a century after his death, Dr. King's message of equality, justice, and nonviolent change remains deeply relevant.

Born in 1929 in Atlanta, King was raised in a family of pastors and educated in theology and philosophy, earning a doctorate from Boston University. He first emerged on the national stage during the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott, where his leadership helped sustain a 381-day protest against segregated public transportation. The boycott's success propelled King into the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, King led nonviolent campaigns across the South, including Birmingham, Selma, and Memphis, confronting segregation, racial violence, and disenfranchisement. His leadership and persistence were instrumental in the passage of landmark legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That same year, he became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington remains one of the most powerful addresses in American history, articulating a vision of a nation where people are judged by character rather than skin color. In his later years, King expanded his advocacy to address poverty, labor rights, and economic justice, insisting that civil rights and economic opportunity were inseparable.

Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis in 1968 while supporting striking sanitation workers, but his work did not end with his death. His legacy lives on in continued efforts toward racial equality, social justice, and community service. Each year, Americans are reminded that King's dream calls not only for remembrance, but for action in building a more just and united society.



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Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Community News You Can Use

- Etowah Carnegie Library will be closed on Monday, January 19th in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The Friends of Etowah Carnegie Library will hold their monthly meeting at the library on Tuesday, January 20 at 5:30 pm. The meeting is open to the public. For more information, call (423) 263-9475 or visit www.etowahlibrary.com.
- Volunteers are needed at McMinn Warming Center located at 714 Walters Street, Athens, TN. The McMinn Warming Center is open when night-time temperatures dip to 32 degrees or below. The forecast for the next few weeks is for weather that is below freezing almost every night. All people are welcome. The McMinn Warming Center provides a warm place to sleep on a cot and a hot meal. Volunteers are needed to Register guests, provide a meal, stay overnight or help with cleanup the morning afterwards. Please go to mcminnwarmingcenter.com for more information and to sign up. Please contact Tina Marie Mason (coordinator) at (208) 241-7806 if you have any questions.
- The McMinn Branch of the NAACP will not hold the Dream Achievers Award Program in person this year due to unforeseen circumstances. Students of African American heritage who earned a 3.0 GPA or higher during the first grading period will still receive their certificates at their respective schools. The NAACP thanks TWU, ACMS, Etowah City School, and McMinn County Schools for their cooperation and support.
- The first monthly meeting for 2026 of the Cherokee Beekeepers Association will be held on Thursday, January 22 at 7:00 P.M. The meetings are held at the McMinn Senior Activity Center located at 205 McMinn Ave., Athens. You do not need to be a member to attend. The public is always welcome
- Today, January 19th, is Dolly Parton's 80th birthday. Governor Bill Lee signed a proclamation recently, designating today as "Dolly Parton Day" in Tennessee. In addition to her artistic achievements, Parton is known for her lifelong commitment to service and philanthropy. Through the Dollywood Foundation and the Imagination Library, she has helped provide hundreds of millions of free books to children around the world, promoting literacy and empowering children to reach their full potential.

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Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Athens City Council to Meet Tomorrow

The Athens City Council will meet in regular session Tuesday, Jan. 20, at 6 p.m. in the Burkett L. Witt Council Chambers at Athens City Hall.

The agenda includes proclamations and presentation of the VIVID Award, along with citizen comments related to agenda items. Council members will consider several items on the consent agenda, including the appointment of Mitchell Bryant as Athens City Judge, continuation of HHM as city auditors for fiscal year 2026, a resolution declaring Jan. 25-30 as Athens Flood Awareness Week, and multiple resolutions authorizing applications for state, federal, and public safety grant funding. Proposed fee schedule changes for baseball and softball field rentals will also be considered.

New business includes bid awards for renovating the Regional Park house into Parks and Recreation offices and for the sale of property on Decatur Pike, as well as appointments to the Council Advisory Committee, Athens Municipal Regional Planning Commission, and Athens Housing Authority.

The council will also receive quarterly and annual reports from Community Development, along with monthly reports from the Finance, Fire, and Police departments, followed by a report from the city manager and a final opportunity for public comment.

Steel Magnolia Auditions Announced



Athens Community Theatre (ACT) is excited to announce auditions for the beloved play, *Steel Magnolias*, by Robert Harling, directed by G. David Brown, one night only, Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 6:00 PM at The Arts Center. Show dates for *Steel Magnolias* are April 17 - 26, 2026. Director G. David Brown needs a cast of six women ages 18 and older. Roles range from women in their 20s to 60s+. Auditionees should come prepared to read from the script and be able to take simple direction. Call backs for those selected will be Wednesday February 25. Anyone wanting to audition with an existing conflict on Tuesday February 24 should contact the director or The Arts Center about attending the Wednesday callback. Anyone who wants to help with the production in any capacity should attend auditions. Everyone interested in being a part of the show will need to bring work, school, and family schedules for February 25 - April 26, 2026.

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Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4

Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

January 15, 2026

Jennifer Miller, 51 of Riceville, charged with DUI, simple possession, casual exchange of fentanyl, violation of probation for possession of paraphernalia, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$10,226.90.

Tiffany Munoz, 35 of Etowah, charged with simple possession of schedule 4, drug paraphernalia, and driving on a revoked license, Bond \$200.

Analasia Riveras, 20 of Athens, charged with violation of an order of protection, Bond \$2,000.

Ashley Branham, 42, charged with statutory rape.

Leanne Walker, 43 of Athens, charged with schedule II meth for resale, conspiracy of: possession of schedule II meth for resale, Bond \$200,000.

Brandon Adams, 40 of Athens, charged with schedule II fentanyl, schedule II meth, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$68,207.95.

Shane Fritz, 41 of Englewood, charged with criminal simulation, simple possession, casual exchange of fentanyl, violation of probation for possession of fentanyl, and drug paraphernalia, Bond \$2,696.90.

Sharon Wheat, 49 of Madisonville, charged with criminal simulation, simple possession, casual exchange of fentanyl, driving without a license, and drug paraphernalia.

Jeremy Roberts, 41 of Athens, charged with falsifying a drug test result.

January 16, 2026

Christopher Barbosa, 19 of Athens, charged with schedule 6 for resale.

Mark Landoliver, 35 of McMinn County, charged with failure to appear for driving on a suspended license.

Brittany Campbell, 30 of Athens, charged with failure to appear for schedule II fentanyl for resale.

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

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Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Donna Lynn Wells Lingerfelt, 62 of McMinn County, passed away on Thursday, January 15. She was a hairstylist for 40 years. The family will receive friends from 5:00 -7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 20 at Ziegler Funeral Home, with a Celebration of Life to be held at a later date. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Donna Lynn Wells Lingerfelt.

Frankie Lee Womac, 80 of McMinn County, passed away on Thursday, January 15. Frankie spent his working years as a dairy and tobacco farmer before later raising beef cattle. He also worked as a truck driver. He was a member of Short Creek Baptist Church. Visitation will be Tuesday, January 20 from 12:00 to 2:00 PM at Ziegler Funeral Home. Graveside services will follow at Short Creek Baptist Church Cemetery at 3:00 PM. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Frankie Lee Womac.

Dianne Morrow, 79, passed away peacefully on Saturday, January 17. She faithfully served her church family at Solid Rock Baptist Church for many years. A graveside service will be held at Riceville Cemetery on Monday, January 19th at 11:00 am. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Dianne Morrow.

Effie King, 73 of Athens, passed away on Thursday, January 15. Survivors and funeral arrangements to be announced. M.D. Dotson & Sons Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

Paul Jefferson Hackney Jr., 73 of Athens, passed away at his Decatur home on Thursday, January 15. He served in the Navy for 6 years and the Coast Guard for an additional three. Afterwards, he worked as a funeral director and as a caretaker until his retirement. There will not be any formal services. Instead, Paul will be cremated and his ashes committed to the sea, a place he had longed to return to since leaving. Decatur Funeral Home & Cremation Services is honored to serve the Hackney family

Lois Roberta Runyon, 93 of Sweetwater, passed away on Friday, January 16. She was a member of Union McMinn Baptist Church and retired as an LPN in Athens. Visitation and Funeral Services were held Sunday, January 18 at Union McMinn Baptist Church. A graveside service will be Monday, January 19 at 11:00AM in Reed Springs Cemetery. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of the arrangements.

Phyllis Carol Stanfill Kelsey, 83 of Athens, passed away on Friday, January 16. She was an active member of Westview Baptist Church for over 60 years and a member of the Order of Eastern Star #159 and the Ladies Shrine. Funeral services will be 1:00 P.M. Tuesday in the Chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Interment will follow in McMinn Memory Gardens. The family will receive friends from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Tuesday in the funeral home. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home of Athens is in charge of arrangements.

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