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Monday, February 16, 2026

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Athens, Tennessee

Cruz Arrested After Weeks-Long Manhunt; Second Suspect Still Sought



THOMAS L. BURNS

After a weeks-long, multi-agency manhunt across Southeast Tennessee, authorities have captured the man accused of a January stabbing in Athens that left one person hospitalized.

David Rodriguez Cruz, 32, was arrested Friday, Feb. 13, during a coordinated operation within the City of Athens. Police Chief Fred Schultz said the arrest was carried out "without incident" using established tactical and safety procedures, and no injuries were reported. Cruz had been wanted for attempted first-degree murder in connection with a Jan. 22nd stabbing in Athens. The victim, whose name has not been released, survived and is recovering. Additional charges are possible as the investigation continues.

While Cruz is now in custody, authorities are still searching for Thomas Larry Burns, 41, who allegedly fled from officers earlier this month during an encounter in the Kinser Road area of Cleveland as police worked to locate one of Cruz's known associates. Investigators say Burns accelerated his vehicle toward officers, prompting a multi-county pursuit through Bradley and Polk counties that ended when the vehicle was found abandoned near Parksville Road in Benton.

Burns is wanted on multiple felony charges, including three counts of aggravated assault on law enforcement, felony evading, and separate theft charges out of Bradley County. Multiple agencies, including the U.S. Marshals Service and Tennessee Highway Patrol, assisted in the search using K-9 units and drones, but Burns remains at large. Authorities urge anyone with information to contact the Athens Police Department or call 911, and caution the public not to approach him.

Source: Fred Schultz, APD Chief, Facebook

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Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 2

Athens, Tennessee

Goodbye J.P.—Hello B-Man

Listeners to the WYXI RADIO Trading Post today will notice there's a change in the host! J.P. Vasquez, who has been the Host of the Trading Post for almost three years has accepted a full time position with a group of radio stations in Knoxville. Last Friday was his last day to be on the air live with us. JP posted this on his FB page Friday: "It's been a fun (nearly) three years together. In just minutes, I will officially sign off as host of the WYXI Trading Post.



We've had a ton of fun together, Athens. I grew up in this town as a kid and was able to live out one of my childhood dreams. For that, this show will always hold a special place in my memory. I wish my successor can have as much fun with you all as I had and gets to know you, the listeners, as well if not better than I did. Thank you and I'll be seeing you around!"

The new Host of the Trading Post is no stranger to Athens and McMinn County. He is Barry Sullivan also known as B-Man. Barry is a native of Athens and actually worked at WYXI RADIO previously in his youth and in the radio industry for many decades at various radio stations throughout East Tennessee. Welcome back B-Man! Be sure to listen today as "Brother Barry" makes his debut at 8:30 a.m. on FM 94.5 & AM 1390.



Athens Chamber Gets "Creative"



A ribbon cutting was celebrated recently for new Athens Area Chamber of Commerce member, Creative You Studio, located at 203 E. Washington Ave., downtown Athens. Owner Jennifer Freeman specializes in paint parties, window painting, and commissions. Shown here are Chamber and business representatives, family members, government officials, and owner of Creative You Studio: Jennifer Freeman.

Source: Julie Simbeck, Athens Area Chamber of Commerce

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Monday, Feb. 16, 2026

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

Athens, Tennessee

Meigs County Secures \$100,000 for Industrial Park Upgrades



Meigs County has been awarded \$100,000 in state funding to help improve infrastructure at the Meigs County Industrial Park, a move local leaders say will strengthen the county's ability to attract new business and jobs.

State Rep. Dan Howell, R-Cleveland, announced the grant Thursday. The funding comes from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's Site Development Grant program, an initiative aimed at preparing industrial properties for economic recruitment.

The Site Development Grant program operates under the Rural Economic Opportunity Act, created in 2016 to bolster economic growth in Tennessee's rural communities. The program funds planning, grading, infrastructure and engineering work designed to make sites more marketable to prospective employers.

Meigs County is one of 13 counties selected to receive funding this year, sharing more than \$13 million in total awards statewide. Howell said the grant will help position the industrial park to compete for future projects.

"Site readiness is one of the most important factors in attracting new industry," Howell said. "This investment equips Meigs County for future economic growth and job opportunities and helps place the county on a level playing field when bidding for highly competitive projects."

He also expressed appreciation to Gov. Bill Lee and Economic and Community Development Commissioner Stuart McWhorter for their continued support of rural communities across the state.

Local officials say the funding will support targeted improvements at the industrial park aimed at enhancing its competitiveness and long-term development potential. *Source: [WTVC NewsChannel 9](#)*

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Monday, Feb. 16, 2026 Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 4 Athens, Tennessee

McMinn County Arrest Reports

February 12, 2026

Cody Richeson, 35 of Chattanooga, charged with criminal trespassing, Bond \$2,000.

Dalton Massingill, 19 of Birchwood, charged with reckless driving, drug paraphernalia, Simple Possession of Schedule 6, and failure to have insurance, Bond \$6,000.

Amy Parker, 44 of Tellico Plains, charged with simple possession, casual exchange of meth, and drug paraphernalia.

Sharice McBride, 21 of Chattanooga, charged with schedule 4 xanax, schedule 1 mushroom, manufacturing, sale, delivery, possession of meth, open container law, and burglary in Hamilton County, Bond \$52,000.

Holly Morrow, 34 of Athens, charged with child support, Bond \$5,000.

James Osborne, 31 of Athens, charged with assault, and cruelty to animals, Bond \$3,000.

February 13, 2026

Bobby Brakebill, 59 of Niota, charged with state violation of probation for violation of the sex offender registry.

Jesse Appleby, 44 of Athens, charged with state violation of probation for theft of property \$2,500 to \$10,000, and felony vandalism, Bond \$1,500.

Jesse Lowe, 32 of Englewood, charged with violation of probation for domestic assault, Bond \$890.95.

Belinda Loden, 42 of Ten Mile, charged with violation of probation for shoplifting, Bond \$1,030.90.

Angie Shahan, 48 at Decatur, charged with simple possession, casual exchange of schedule 4, violation of registration loss, Bond \$8,000.

James Kanzler, 42 of Etowah, charged with simple possession, casual exchange of schedule 6, drug paraphernalia, failure to appear for simple possession, and possession of a firearm with prior drug offense.

Danielle Roberts, 39 of Dayton, charged with state violation of probation for schedule II meth 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, Feb. 16, 2026

Morning Fax®...Today's News This Morning Page 5

Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Jimmy Lee Moore, 86, of Meigs County, passed away on Thursday, February 12. The family will receive friends from 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM Monday, February 16, 2026, at Ziegler Funeral Home. Graveside services will be held at 2:30 PM at Beta Cemetery in Decatur. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Jimmy Lee Moore.

Clara Mae Robinson, 70, of Athens, passed away on Wednesday, February 11. Clara was of the Baptist faith, and enjoyed cooking, keeping a tidy home, and especially tending to her flower gardens. The family will receive friends at the chapel of Companion Funeral Home of Athens on Monday, February 16 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a funeral service to follow at 4:00 p.m. Burial will take place at Hammonds Cemetery in Athens. Companion Funeral Home of Athens and the Cody family are honored to assist the family with these arrangements

Mary Jane "Mammy" Newman, 83, passed away on Thursday, February 12. Memorial services will be held at 7:00 p.m., Monday, February 16 in the chapel of Bordwine Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., Monday prior to the service. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

Harlan Lawson Breedlove, 88 of Athens, passed away on, Friday, January 20, at Fort Pierce, FL. He was an active member of his community including his long time employment with Midland Ross/Thomas and Betts. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is in charge of local arrangements.

Michael Lynn Bishop, 61, of Athens, passed away on Thursday, February 12. He was a member of MDT Church and was associated with Pioneer Furniture Co. A graveside service will be conducted, Monday, February 16 at Green Hills Cemetery in Etowah immediately following the visitation at the funeral home. The family will receive friends at Smith Funeral Home from 1:00 -2:00 pm, Monday, February 16. Smith Funeral & Cremation Services of Athens is honored to serve the family of Michael Lynn Bishop.

Richard Lee McCoy, 56 of Athens, passed away on Wednesday, February 12. Rick graduated from the University of the Cumberlands with a degree in accounting. The family will receive friends from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. Saturday, Feb. 21 at Allen Memorial United Methodist Church with funeral services following at 5:00 P.M. Interment will be 11:00 A.M. Sunday, Feb. 22 in McMinn Memory Gardens. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home, Athens, TN in charge of arrangements.

David Lamar Giles, 85 of Athens, passed away on Friday, February 13. David was a member of Victory Baptist Church. The family will receive friends Tuesday, February 17, 2026 from 4-8 pm in the chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. The funeral service will be 11 am Wednesday, February 18. The graveside service will be 1 pm Wednesday following the funeral service, at McDonald Cemetery in Ooltewah. Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home will be in charge of the arrangements.

Annissa Brabson, 50, passed away on Friday, February 13 in Athens. Full arrangements to be announced by M.D. Dotson and Sons Funeral Home - Athens, TN.

Kenny Perry, 77, passed away on Friday, February 13. Kenny retired from CSX Railroad. Kenny served in the National Guard. Funeral service will be held at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 17 at Spirit City North Etowah. The family will receive friends from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., Tuesday prior to the service at the church. Family and friends will assemble at Bordwine Funeral Home, Wednesday, February 18 at 12:30p.m. and go in procession to McMinn Memory Gardens for the 2:00 p.m. committal service. Bordwine Funeral Home of Etowah is in charge of arrangements.

Barbara Louise Walden Bartley, 76 of Ten Mile, passed away on Saturday, February 14. She retired from Service Masters and was a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Funeral services will be 2:00 P.M. Thursday, February 19 in Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. Interment will follow in Pritchett Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 5-7 Wednesday, February 18 in the funeral home. Laycock Hobbs Funeral Home, Athens in charge of arrangements.

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