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THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

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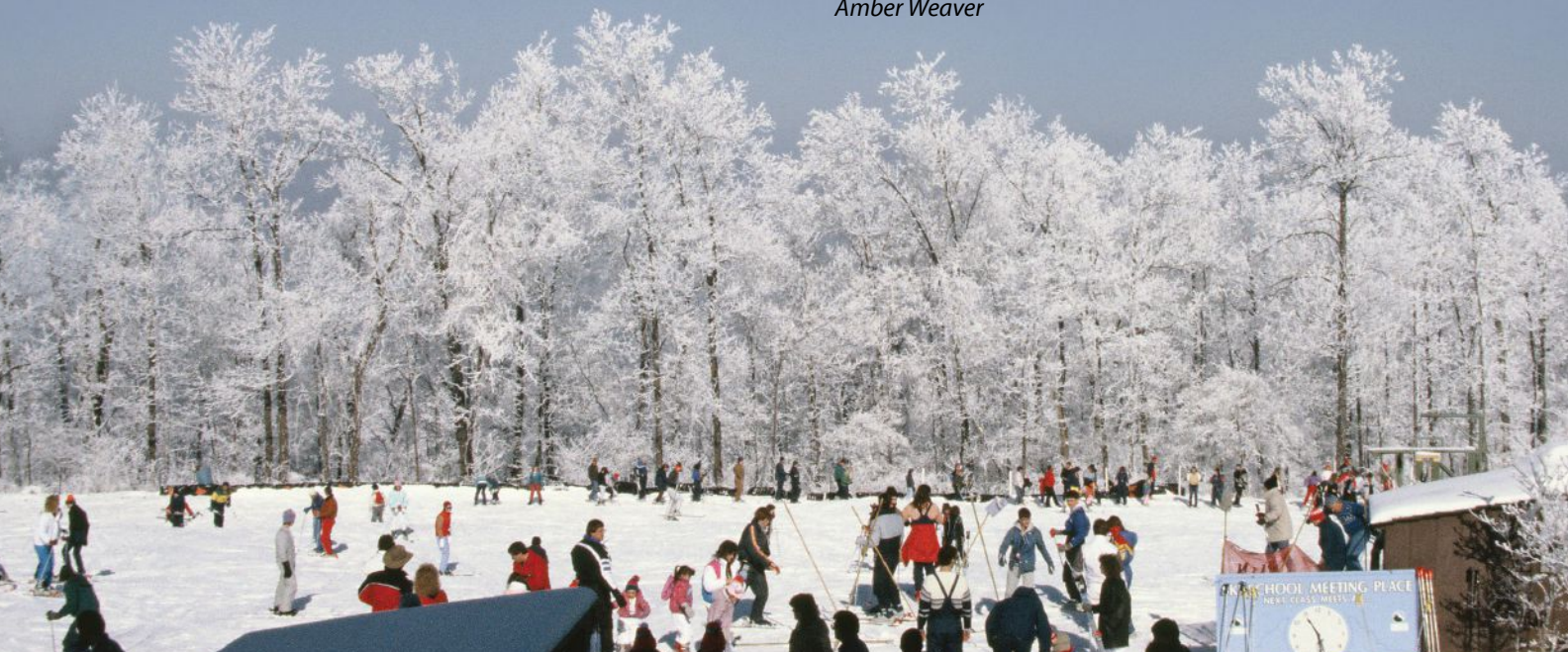
Check out Artist's Palette, and see our Find the Flag winners.

THIS PAGE

Scores of folks are drawn to the slopes of Renegade Mountain in Cumberland County. The now-closed resort promised skiing in addition to activities such as tennis, swimming, hunting and fishing. See page 18. Photograph courtesy of Glenn McDonald

ABOUT THE COVER

Whitney Miller of Whitney's Cookies is all smiles in her downtown Franklin storefront. See page 14. Photograph by Amber Weaver



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Mission Statement

CEMC provides safe, affordable and reliable services the cooperative way by maintaining a dedicated, highly skilled workforce guided by cooperative values and principles and a commitment to excellence.

The Tennessee Magazine

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Between the Lines

News from your community

Balancing electricity supply and demand

Electricity is essential for nearly every aspect of daily life — so essential that we rarely think about how it's produced and delivered to our homes. You might be surprised to learn that behind the scenes, a network of experts is working daily (and even by the minute) to anticipate how much electricity you need before you even use it.

We're all connected to the electric grid, so ensuring the right amount of electricity for all involves a complex process of forecasting energy demand, planning for capacity and securing enough supply to meet Americans' needs.

First, electricity must be generated at a power plant using either traditional sources such as coal, natural gas or nuclear energy or from renewable sources such as solar, wind or hydropower.

At Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, we work closely with the Tennessee Valley Authority to secure enough electricity for our communities, using a diverse mix of energy sources to generate the power we deliver to your home or business.

On a larger scale, across the country, electricity supply and demand are managed through a market that includes long-term planning agreements, where electricity is bought and sold just like other common goods and services.

Electricity supply changes throughout the day because demand fluctuates based on consumers' needs. For example, CEMC knows that we need to ensure more electricity in the mornings when you're starting your day and in the evenings when you're cooking dinner, running appliances and watching TV. Demand also increases when weather patterns change such as during periods of extremely warm or cold temperatures.

In most cases, the amount of electricity generated and how much is sent to specific areas are coordinated

and monitored by regional transmission organizations (RTOs) and independent system operators (ISOs). In other areas, individual electric utilities perform these tasks.

RTOs, ISOs and electric utilities act as air traffic controllers for the electric grid. They forecast when you, your neighbors and communities across a large region will need more power. These organizations take measured steps to ensure there's enough supply to meet demand.

As the energy sector undergoes rapid change, it's important for all consumers to understand the basics of electricity supply and demand.

Electricity use in the U.S. is expected to rise to record highs this year and the next, with the demand for electricity expected to at least double by 2050. At the same time, energy policies are pushing the early retirement of always-available generation sources, which will undoubtedly compromise reliable electricity.

CEMC remains committed to providing affordable, reliable energy to the members we serve. That's why we are preparing now for increased demand and other challenges that could compromise our local electric supply.

Managing the balancing act of electricity supply and demand is a complex job, which is why we have a network of utilities, power plant operators and energy traffic managers in place to direct the electricity we need and keep the electric grid balanced.



By Chris A. Davis
*General Manager,
Cumberland Electric
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TENNESSEE TODAY

Viewpoint

Who could be calling?

It might sound strange to say this, but I'm going to miss the wrong number. No, I don't mean your worthless losing ticket from the latest Powerball jackpot nor the many mistakes I made in math class. In this case, it started with errant text messages that had been reaching me for a couple of years.

It seems quaint to think about it now, but do you remember how the phone ringing at home used to be somewhat exciting? Perhaps it was a distant family member who waited until after dinner time, when they knew you'd be at home and available to answer. If the call came during dinner, it must have been urgent.

A co-worker of mine recently shared the amazing story of his grandparents and how they operated the local telephone exchange — from their own home. If you were one of the 35 subscribers to phone service in Danville, Alabama, in the early 1940s, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Sandlin likely routed your call from one number to another by manually connecting cables in their dining room.

A lot has changed since then. When the cellphone became more prevalent, the phone call became a bit less special. And now that everyone you know carries a phone with them everywhere they go, the phone call has become one of the least preferred ways to communicate. A whole generation of young people commonly and genuinely fear talking on the phone.

Sometimes those phone calls at home weren't all that special, though. Wrong numbers, an occasional cold call from a salesman or even a prank call or two would find their way to your home.

Around two years ago on Christmas Day, I got a text message from a person I had met through work many years earlier. I hadn't been in touch with them in a very long time, so I was surprised to see myself included in a large group message. I didn't recognize any of the other numbers. It was a simple greeting and a photo of the person's ongoing celebration. As the other

replies and greetings came in, I began to realize this was a family to which I had mistakenly been added.

It was the modern-day equivalent of a wrong number. Back then I would have politely told the caller, "I am sorry, but you have dialed the wrong number." Instead, I chose to ignore the messages and assume the sender would soon realize I was not the Mike she intended to include.

I didn't think much of it until Easter, when I had the privilege of seeing the grandchildren's seersucker suits and egg hunt bounty. Beautiful photos of fireworks came during July, along with various birthday greetings and well wishes throughout the rest of the year. The before-and after-game reflections on Georgia football were some of my favorites.

After nearly two years, my status as a false member of this nice family was finally realized, and the messages stopped. There was a great debate in my own house about finally responding in some humorous manner, but I assume this grandmother probably heard a joke or two from the rest of her family who had been wondering about the strange number included in their family messages.

Unlike the wrong number calls of old, I wasn't annoyed or frustrated by the texts. I even missed seeing them at Christmas. But it does cause me to think: Just because communication has become easy and plentiful, doesn't mean it is meaningful. A good, old-fashioned phone call is a great way to tell someone you care, get something done or stand out from the crowd. And for the younger folks among us, you might even grow to enjoy it. ■



By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric
Cooperative Association



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TENNESSEE ALMANAC

Bite-sized news, notes and knowledge — January 2025



21st Annual Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

JAN. 31-FEB. 2

The ever-popular Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival returns to the Reelfoot Lake State Park Visitors Center in Tiptonville Jan. 31-Feb. 2. Learn more about the majestic symbol of our country through special programs and tours. Visitors can also enjoy arts and photography contests, children's activities and vendors. Call 731-253-2007 or visit reelfoottourism.com for information.

The state park also offers eagle tours beginning in early January and continuing through the end of February. Reservations are encouraged; call 731-253-9652.

January is National Slow Cooking Month

Break out the slow cooker in celebration of National Slow Cooking Month. These countertop appliances use significantly less electricity than an oven and are great for producing mouthwatering stews, roasts and other hearty meals. A steaming bowl of chili, its ingredients and flavors left to meld, is the cure for cold January days.





50 YEARS AGO IN THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

The January 1975 edition of *The Tennessee Magazine* included a feature on newly elected Gov. Ray Blanton. Other articles covered Sumner County historic site Cragfont, kitchen safety tips and electric hair care appliances. View the entire issue at tnmagazine.org.

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From the editor



This January issue is the opening installment of Volume 68 of *The Tennessee Magazine*, and we're so excited to welcome you into this latest edition — as well as the new year.

Antsy McClain leads off our first-of-the-year festivities by taking aim at some of his “favorite” New Year’s resolutions. Whether you’re an annual “Resolutionist” or follow more of a “so it goes” attitude toward the practice, I’m sure you’ll find something valuable in his words. See page 10.

I know I overdid it some these last few months. I let my discipline lapse and gave in to indulgences dating back to trick-or-treating Peanut M&Ms, continuing with pumpkin-spiced sweets and concluding the season with *all* the traditional Christmas desserts. But before I really buckle down, maybe I’ll enjoy one last baked treat from Whitney’s Cookies in Franklin. If you’re interested, the plump New York style cookies can be purchased in the downtown storefront or shipped nationwide. See page 14 to learn more about how this bakery came to be.

After those treats, maybe you’re looking for an exciting way to get some exercise. How about heading to a nearby lake for an invigorating dip? Meet Don Winters who last January became the oldest person to complete an ice mile — literally a mile-long swim in icy-cold water. See page 28.

Just thinking about that polar plunge chills me to my bones. A creamy bowl of bisque or bubbly flatbread would warm me right up. We’re all in luck because beginning on page 32, we have a whole spread of delicious recipes featuring Boursin cheese.

Wherever you find yourself this January, we’re glad you’ve brought along *The Tennessee Magazine*. Your electric cooperative publication is closing in on 70 years of celebrating the best of our extraordinary state, and we have some exciting treats lined up for readers in the year ahead.

Happy 2025! And thanks for reading,

Chris Kirk
Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

My TENNESSEE Notebook

Written and Illustrated by Antsy McClain

So it goes

My fickle relationship with New Year's resolutions, gym memberships and book clubs

I approach New Year's resolutions in the same way I approach a feral cat or a plate of asparagus: with some curiosity but not a lot of commitment. The cat doubtless feels the same way. The asparagus — it's anybody's guess.

Regardless of how you feel about it, it's that time of year again when the morning talk shows yammer on and on about the big and little promises we make to ourselves at the beginning of each year. We resolve to stop bad habits and start better ones. Our bucket lists come calling again, and we determine to cross off a few more items to improve our quality of life.

But before I begin, can we all agree that time is made up? Clocks and calendars were invented thousands of years ago by micromanagers who couldn't stand the thought of an unmeasured world. That said, I did just bake cornbread, and it was nice to have a kitchen timer.

But I digress. The last few months turned us into lazy, self-indulgent sloths who grazed on comfort food and binged classic movies until hypertension, high blood sugar and weight gain propelled us, once again, to the solace of self-help books.

Until about March 1, anyway, when jobs, kids, mortgages and bills say, "Yoo-hoo! We're still here! Did you forget about us?" And we realize that going to the gym isn't as exciting as it was five weeks ago; it's actually hard! And we miss bread. And cookies. Just one cookie. One cookie never killed anybody. We can go back to the gym tomorrow.

While I am a bad "joiner" by nature, I'm not immune to the concept of the new year being a desirable mile marker and using it as a launching pad for annual goals. Here are some that I've tried.

Read more. Join a book club.

My one and only book club experience lasted three meetings. It ended after a fellow book clubber named Shirley, (not her real name; her real name was Carol), laughed

uproariously at my observations surrounding "The Brothers Karamazov." I expressed surprise that the book was not actually about a family of circus trapeze artists, as the title suggested to me. Shirley (Carol) was quite rude. That day, I vowed never again to share my thoughts about literature with a circle of people sitting in a stranger's living room.

These days, when I read, I let someone else do it into my ears from an audiobook while I fall asleep ... like a normal person.¹

Get organized.

My garage is where all my physical clutter goes to die.² I just throw it out there and shut the door, pretending I'm in a Disney movie where magic happens and fairy godmothers do all the heavy lifting. My car sits outside in the rain while my garage is a graveyard for past wardrobe regrets, stuff I will need to use again but will never be able to find and weird tools I needed one time to stretch carpet or connect a dryer vent.

A mountain of cardboard from my late-night Amazon purchases is piled in my garage, preventing me from properly closing the door. It's a major trip hazard, and one day this will be the subject of an essay wherein I share details of a hip replacement surgery I needed after falling over the cardboard boxes like a bad late-night infomercial.

For two years now, I've had a goal to finish painting the rec room. I've walked through the two-toned room ("Tuscan Lace" and a color I call "Greige") for so long that I have actually grown fond of it. Even the roller marks that stop a foot and half from the crown molding have a certain charm I call "rustic warehouse." I'm predicting a trend.

I have three closets that haven't been opened in years. I'm afraid to do so. I can't even remember what's in there, but I know what will happen if I pry the doors open: I will be sucked into a black hole of time and space from which I might never return. The process usually goes like this: I pull all the



Time is made up. Clocks and calendars were invented thousands of years ago by micromanagers who couldn't stand the thought of an unmeasured world.

contents from the closet and spread them out on the floor in a circle around me. For the next six hours I spiral so deep down Memory Lane that I begin humming Green Day's "Wake Me Up When September Ends," and my inner voice sounds strangely like Katharine Hepburn from "On Golden Pond."

Soon I am lost in every little nostalgic wave the past can conjure: a refrigerator magnet from Camp Falling Rock Boy Scout Camp, a ninth-grade math paper upon which Dee Dee Christopher drew a big heart with a face on it and gave it googly eyes, a chewed tennis ball from a favorite schnauzer who loved playing catch more than anything else in the world.

Eventually, I notice it getting dark outside (my only notion that time has not actually been standing still, as I had supposed), and the shoebox, along with all the other boxes, goes back in the closet, stacked a bit more neatly than before but otherwise unchanged.

All that exists in the throwaway pile are a pair of ripped work jeans, a couple of odd dress shoes and a mustard yellow afghan made by a favorite aunt. Mom would pull it out of storage and throw it over the back of the sofa whenever she'd visit.

I stand up stiffly and take a long look at the throwaway pile, wondering what kind of sociopath would throw away that afghan. And those work jeans — they're fine. I'll use them when I paint the rec room. And those shoes are perfectly good shoes. They have matches somewhere in this house. I'll find them.

The throwaway pile, in its entirety, goes back into the closet.

Be more outgoing. Make new friends.

I seem to make this resolution every year, but I never make it past February — or two dinner parties, whichever comes first. I'm at the age now where the most casual of get-togethers seems to carry with it the energy of an all-night rave if it were held at Costco on Black Friday but also has a DJ, industrial strobe lights and a conga line with the Mississippi Mass Choir. I might have only interacted with six people, but I return home exhausted from the small talk.³ I sink into my bed under five layers of blankets and whimper like a cold, wet puppy.

Exercise more. Join a gym.

It's the second week of January, and my local gym is as crowded as a Buc-ee's after Sunday church. A few months ago, out of curiosity, I stuck my head in (it's right next door to my cigar bar), and the gym was like a ghost town. Trainers were swiping their thumbs across their cellphones, chomping gum and lounging on the exercise equipment like it was patio furniture. But now, in the wake of New Year's resolutions, business is good.

We've all spent weeks overeating, watching football and napping on the couch, and I'm seeing more handlebars than a bicycle shop. But I think I'll wait to renew my exercise goals till March, when 85% of The Resolutionists have gone back home to their sofas to drink beer and binge the new season of Ted Lasso. By March 15, I'll bet you can practically hear a pin drop.



Self portrait of the artist as "The Old Man." Brush and ink on vellum by Antsy McClain, who still makes New Year's resolutions, despite knowing full well he will likely have forgotten all about them by March.

Like Nashville's Lower Broadway on a Saturday in June, you can spot the tourists from the locals. The gym tourists are decked out meticulously in bright yellow and blue moisture-wicking fabrics. They have brand new, bright white running shoes. Some gym bags still display sale tags, reminding me of Minnie Pearl's hat if it had a Nike swoosh and she was trying to figure out the treadmill. I once noticed a man whose orange UT cap had a piece of scotch tape clinging to a fragment of Christmas wrapping paper.

The well-chiseled gym local who's been coming here for years is adorned in a pair of scissored-off sweatpants and a Reba McEntire T-shirt from her '94 Read My Mind tour. On his feet are a pair of pale blue Crocs over once-white, now-gray socks — one just covering his ankle, the other still clinging valiantly at boot height.

January gym attendees are wide-eyed and determined, their insulated stainless steel water bottles are without dents or scratches, proudly exhibiting stickers that say, "I don't sweat. I sparkle." and "Workout mode!" while the Croc-wearing regular's water bottle looks like it's survived a dozen grenade launches.

But you know what? Who cares? Get on with your bad self. Work out in those shiny new clothes until you become that gym regular with the scissored-off sweatpants and Reba shirt. I know you can do it. I'm proud of you. I'll see you in March.

So it goes.

And so it goes, to quote the author Kurt Vonnegut, who knew a thing or two about indulgences and vice — but also time travel — and who lived through changes I can only imagine.

I've been reading — er, listening to, rather — an audiobook of Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse-Five." Vonnegut uses the phrase, "So it goes," so often that it becomes a mantra, of sorts.

Many of his readers express annoyance at his frequent use of the phrase. But as a survivor of World War II's Battle of the Bulge — where nearly 20,000 American troops were killed

— and as a subsequent prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany (which was bombed by Allied forces while he was imprisoned there), Vonnegut believed that we ultimately lack free will in life and death, that we are virtually in control of nothing. By repeating, "So it goes," to himself in his life and in his writing, he said it helped him "make sense of the senseless." As one who admires Vonnegut not just for his writing but for his service, I appreciate the thoughtful way he worked through life's difficulties with those three small words.

And when things do make sense — like when I look into the eyes of someone I love and see infinity or when I take a walk just before sunrise and feel the stillness of the world before birds have awakened, before the hum of cars fan off in every direction — I sometimes take a deep breath and thankfully say, "So it goes." And I can find sense in the senseless, but I can also find the magic and mystery in life. And I have a sweet little mantra to lead the way.

No matter the darkness we live through, no matter the questions we all have, if we can realize that the clock keeps ticking and the Earth continues to dance around the sun and that we are here to see it all happen, that alone can be a beautiful start to bigger understanding — or it can just be enough. It's a big, mysterious world, and that alone — knowing we're alive — could be all I need to know right now.

Another year. Another sunrise. Another tick of the clock.

Another day at the gym.

So it goes.

Listen to Antsy's "Another Happy Song," here:

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist who hates small talk. Go to unhitched.com for his books, music and events. Use this QR code to download "Another Happy Song" **FREE** to readers of **The Tennessee Magazine**. It was inspired by the writing of Kurt Vonnegut.



Footnotes for your hungry, malnourished soul

¹ The audiobook is one of the 21st century's greatest inventions. We no longer have to rake our eyes over letters and symbols to understand what someone is trying to say, like you're doing here. Imagine if the audiobook had come before the printed word, and cavemen were somehow equipped with devices that told them stories anytime they wanted. The need for written language would be as obsolete as the raisin peeler. Never heard of a raisin peeler? Right. See what I mean?

² My emotional clutter, unfortunately, remains crammed in my brain, never to be thrown away or forgotten. I pull it out indiscriminately on sleepless nights like the flat, wooden drawers of a 17th century typesetter. It's all in there, every little

lowercase letter, every ampersand and exclamation point. None of it, however, can be used to solve a problem or come to any helpful conclusion. It falls out in a jumble, each block evoking feelings of unrequited love, missed opportunities and stupid things I said to a girl in seventh grade. And like the shoeboxes in my cluttered closet, it all gets put back, unchanged. It's just the past on rewind, and I haven't learned a thing in its uncovering.

³ Small talk is my kryptonite. It weakens me, removes all the vitality from deep within the marrow of my bones. There is a photo somewhere of me at a party. My friend thought it was hilarious: me, trapped against the wall between two small-talkers. I'm clutching a double

bourbon with both hands and looking like I'm about to have a panic attack. In that photo, I bear a strong resemblance to Patty Hearst in the early days of her kidnapping. I cannot overstate this. Ten minutes of small talk, and I start to feel like I've been abducted. I nod and smile at my captors, but I can feel the encroaching effects of Stockholm syndrome. As the conversation turns from weather to milk prices, I imagine being led to a heavily bolted door, down some rickety stairs to a bare, striped mattress in the basement. They snap a chained harness around my neck, and I will sit in darkness until the sun pokes through the cardboard on the tiny windows. But this is preferable to an evening of small talk. Given a preference, I will choose the basement without a fight.

How a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can change your life

Remember when...

Think about the things you loved to do that are difficult today — going for a walk or just sitting comfortably while reading a book. And remember the last time you got a great night's sleep?

As we get older, health issues or even everyday aches, pains and stress can prevent us from enjoying life.

So what's keeping you from having a better quality of life?

Check all the conditions that apply to you.

Personal Checklist:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Skin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Back Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Circulation |

Then read on to learn how a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can help.

Feel better, sleep better, live better

A Safe Step Walk-In Tub lets you indulge in a warm, relaxing bath that can help relieve life's aches, pains and worries.



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It's got everything you should look for in a walk-in tub:

- Heated Seat – Providing soothing warmth from start to finish.
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SERVING UP JOY



One Cookie at a Time

Story and photographs by Amber Weaver

**Whitney
Miller**
finds
delicious
purpose
through
the art and
science
of baking.

Cooking has always been a part of Whitney Miller's story. From the time she was 12 years old, she had already decided she was going to be a pastry chef. That passion stemmed from watching her great-grandmother not only in the kitchen but around the dining room table in Poplarville, Mississippi.

"She'd invite people over for any given occasion, and she'd cook for them," Miller recalled. "I would look at their faces after they had tried a bite of her food, and it was just pure joy that exuberated across their faces. I knew I wanted to do that."

Little did she know at that time how far her gift would take her.

Cookie career dreams

As time went on, Miller's dreams of making cooking a career took a back seat. Miller decided to study to become a dietitian at the University of Southern Mississippi; that way, food was still along for the ride. However, her senior year, food became the main driver when she applied to be on the first season of "MasterChef."

"When I saw the chance to audition, I thought to myself, 'Better late than never; this is my chance to really do what I want to do,'" Miller said.

"MasterChef" is a competitive cooking reality television series with none other than British celebrity chef and restaurateur Gordon Ramsay as the host. Miller was one of around 10,000 chefs who auditioned to be on the show — and one of 50 selected to go to Los Angeles for filming.

During one of the challenges on the show, Miller had to make a cupcake. It was the first time she was able to show off her baking skills, and she made it to the top three for that challenge. Later, she won a dessert challenge, and that's what brought on her nickname.

"I knew this was my chance to shine," Miller said. "Somewhere along the way, my competitors deemed me the Pastry Princess."

As she thinks back to that period of her life, Miller remembers having so much confidence in her skills at just 22 years old, and she credits that all to the Lord. It was a confidence, though, that surprised Ramsay.

"I remember Gordon Ramsay telling me that I did

not have as much experience as everyone else on the show," Miller shared. "I told him that I had 10 years of experience because I had been doing this since I was 12 years old. He laughed and told me that was a lot of life experience."

Miller's confidence, determination and, of course, culinary skills led her to winning the entire competition in 2010, leaving with a quarter of a million dollars, a personalized cookbook and the prestigious "MasterChef" trophy in hand.

Creating Whitney's Cookies

Fast forward a few years. Miller, her husband and three children have made their home in Franklin,

served by Middle Tennessee Electric. Aside from raising her family, Miller has spent her years sharing her food with others, even some impressive names.

"In my second cookbook, I have a brownie cookie recipe, and everyone has raved over it," Miller said. "I have served it for a 'Dancing with the Stars' after-party and even the Tim Tebow Foundation."

That single recipe sparked Miller's latest venture — Whitney's Cookies.

"A family friend told me to create a cookie company based off of that cookie alone," Miller said. "I traditionally do Southern cooking, so cookies weren't really on my radar. So, I had to pray about it. After a while, though, I knew this is what the Lord wanted me to do."



In 2019, Whitney Miller began her business, Whitney's Cookies, and in 2023 moved into a downtown Franklin storefront where she produces New York style cookies.

Whitney's Cookies of Franklin offers an array of goodies, but it was all launched from a young girl's dream — and the popularity of a stuffed cookie recipe.



In 2019, Miller began Whitney's Cookies, and in 2020, she began to ship nationwide.

"2020 was a crazy time to get a business started, but the Lord watched over my company," Miller shared. "While other places were closing, we were able to stay open because we weren't seeing people face to face. It was a sweet time because we were able to meet people's needs

to celebrate different occasions when they couldn't be together."

Every year since, Whitney's Cookies has seen growth — especially since opening a storefront in 2023. The shop wasn't originally a part of the plan, especially after having her third baby, but when a spot opened in downtown Franklin, she knew what she had to do.

"It has always been on my heart to have a storefront in downtown Franklin," Miller said. "We did a seven-week turn around and opened at the end of September, right when everyone would want cookies for the holiday season."



At left, standard-bearer chocolate chip cookies are on display in the case at Whitney's Cookies, but other varieties include sourdough cinnamon roll, oatmeal raisin, brownie, stuffed chocolate chip (with brownie cookie dough in the center) and a vegan version of chocolate chip. Above, the storefront wasn't originally in Whitney Miller's plans, but when the space became available, she took the leap, added personality inside (like the "Eat cookies y'all" mural and Tiffany-blue walls, inset) and opened the shop in September 2023.

A cookie for everyone

Whitney's Cookies are not your "average Joe" cookies. You'll quickly understand that as you walk into the Tiffany-blue storefront off Fourth Avenue where a Whitney's Cookies neon sign lights up the room with "Eat cookies y'all" painted on the wall. In the display case, there are New York style cookies.

"I wanted to make cookies this area had never seen before," Miller said.

She did just that. These large, thick and rich cookies are what Miller calls "science."

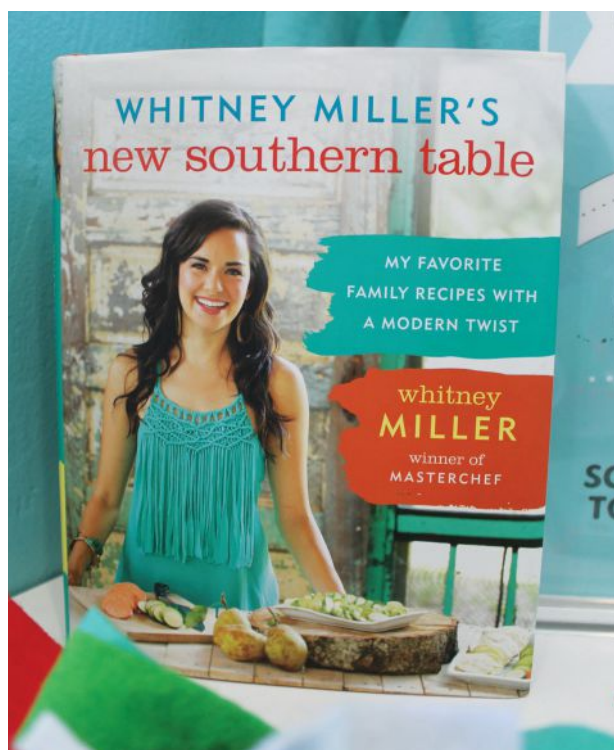
"Baking is a science," Miller said. "Even more so with this particular style because there are so many things that affect a cookie to spread, but I didn't want my cookies to spread. I wanted them to be nice and thick, but not too thick. As a chef, I am big on flavor, and I don't want something overly sweet. I want you to be able to taste the flavor."

The cookies come in a variety of flavors like salted peanut butter cup, celebration sprinkles, oatmeal raisin and — the fan favorite — stuffed chocolate chip cookie. It's a chocolate chip cookie with the brownie cookie dough that started the business in the center.

Miller's favorite, though, is the vegan chocolate chip cookie. When she was first creating the recipes for her cookie company, she couldn't try them.

"My second child had a dairy intolerance," Miller shared. "As I was nursing him, he couldn't have dairy, so I couldn't have dairy. My husband was my taste tester for the four months I was in the development process."

Of course, one day he wanted her to try them



Left, along with earning prize money and a trophy, Whitney Miller was also able to publish a cookbook for winning the first season of "MasterChef." She has since produced a second cookbook. Below left, Whitney's Cookies sells cookies, mini cookies and beverages in the downtown Franklin storefront. Cookies can also be shipped nationwide.

for herself. So, she ended up creating the vegan chocolate chip cookie that is dairy-free. It has a special ingredient, that, as she says, "puts it over the top." Since then, she has also created a gluten-free option because she wanted everyone to have something to enjoy.

"Being able to have literally a cookie for everyone and being able to bring people joy are what bring me joy," Miller said.

Cookies and joy around the country

Since opening, Whitney's Cookies has made more than 1,000 cookies a day in her Thompson's Station kitchen and distributed more than 500 cookies every day throughout her Franklin storefront as well as local coffee shops around Nashville, Thompson's Station and Spring Hill. Some have even been sent to Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii and the Middle East for soldiers serving our country.

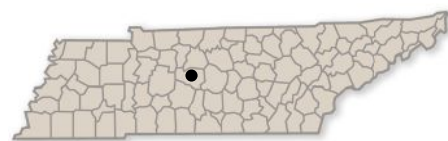
Miller has even had cookie collabs where she has partnered with celebrities like Kimberly Schlapman from the country band Little Big Town and Sadie Robertson from the "Duck Dynasty" family to create and share cookies from their childhood memories.

"I love the story behind food, and I think it speaks to people," Miller said.

As for what's next for Miller and Whitney's Cookies, she hopes to expand her kitchen and, one day, storefront, but most importantly, she wants to continue serving up joy one cookie at a time.

Try Whitney's Cookies!

100 Fourth Ave. N.
Franklin, TN 37064
Order online at
whitneyscookies.co
to ship nationwide.



COOKIES: MENU	
SINGLE	\$
SIX PACK	5.00
DOZEN	24.99
DOZEN	46.99
MINI COOKIES:	
CUP	
SMALL BOX	7.00
BIG BOX	28.00
BIG BOX	84.00
MILK	
SPARKLING WATER	3.00
CHILLED COFFEE	3.50
WATER	4.00
	2.00

Cumberland County's long-lost ski resort



Fifty-five years ago, people were talking about Tennessee's new ski resort.

It's probably not the one you think it was.

In 1967, a group of Crossville investors led by physician Richard Evans acquired 10,000 acres of mountaintop land near Crab Orchard and cleared enough of it for ski slopes and a golf course. Even though the place was called Haley Mountain, they called their resort "Renegade Mountain." They built a restaurant, lodges for people to sleep in and a lift to take skiers to the top of the slope.

Starting in February of 1969, the public began snow skiing there.

Over the years, Renegade Mountain changed hands many times. In 1970, it was purchased by Crossville banker Millard Oakley, who later sold it to out-of-state investors, who later sold it to German investors.

All the owners came to the same conclusion: Even though the mountains of Cumberland County are

higher than most people realize and even though it snows a lot more at the top of those mountains than it does in Nashville, that's still not enough to support a profitable season of snow skiing.

"You need a lot of snow to have a reliable ski resort, and we just didn't have it," says Crossville real estate agent Glenn McDonald, who was once the general manager at Renegade. "We had machines that made snow, but you really need real snow."

"On those times when it did snow a lot, we were overwhelmed."

Renegade Mountain was probably inspired by the ski resort at Gatlinburg, which opened in 1962 and became known as Ober Gatlinburg in 1976.

The original concept of Renegade was to sell \$1,000 memberships to a massive resort that offered snow skiing, golf, hunting, horseback riding, ice skating, tennis and an Olympic-sized pool. "Chill mountain streams that are stocked with rainbow

**"You need a lot of snow to have a reliable ski resort, and we just didn't have it. We had machines that made snow, but you really need real snow."
— Glenn McDonald**



trout,” one ad promised. “As for hunting, there are 6,000 acres of private hunting preserves stocked with deer, wild boar, even black bear.”

Unfortunately, when people showed up in 1969 and 1970, the place didn’t live up to the hype. Some of the amenities described in the ads such as the skating rink and the Olympic-sized pool were never built.

However, that didn’t stop a generation of Tennesseans from acquiring wonderful memories at the 2,680-foot-high Renegade Mountain. “Around 1978, I took a physical education class at Tennessee Tech where we had to ski at Renegade every Thursday night,” said Donna Kay Campbell, a Nashville native who now lives in Virginia. “It took me five weeks before I could ski down the hill without falling, but that class gave me a lifelong love of skiing!”

Cumberland County resident Melinda Hedgecoth has a less graceful but more amusing story about Renegade Mountain. “I was pretty athletic back in those days, but for some reason I couldn’t master this skill and even fell repeatedly off the T-bar as I tried to ride it back up the mountain,” she recalls. “I think the ski instructor was disgusted with me, for he had to catch me as I was barreling down the mountain heading for Crab Orchard the hard way! It was like something out of ‘Laverne and Shirley’!

“Needless to say, that was my first and last attempt at skiing!”

Since a business model focused on snow skiing wasn’t working, Renegade’s German owners eventually decided to focus on golf. “The Schuster brothers spent a lot of money on the golf course,” says Crossville attorney Joe Looney, who represented the German bank that owned the business in the 1990s. In fact, the Renegade Mountain golf course (renamed Cumberland Gardens) was considered one of the best in the state throughout the 1980s and 1990s. However, with the Fairfield Glade and Lake Tansi courses nearby, the mountaintop course suffered from

competition. Also, the high elevation, steep terrain and rocky soil of Renegade Mountain made golf course upkeep challenging and expensive.

The ski slopes shut down in 1988, and the bank took over the property and business about two years later. The ski lodge burned down on Nov. 13, 2000 — in a blaze where arson was suspected but never proven. The golf course closed in 2008.

Today, nature has taken over Renegade Mountain’s former ski slope and golf course. There are, however, condos, chalets and houses that were built in the 1970s and 1980s on the road that leads to the former resorts — plus several residential lots that have never been sold.

The residents of those condos, chalets and houses are part of the unincorporated community of Renegade Mountain — “quite possibly the best place to live in Tennessee,” as its residents claim on its website.

“My wife and I have moved 20 times throughout the U.S. and the world since being married, and we still see some amazing animal, weather or geological events occurring on Renegade Mountain that we have never seen or experienced before,” says John Moore, a resident of Renegade Mountain. “It truly is a magical and unique place to live.” ■

Here are some wonderful photos from the Renegade Mountain ski resort that are now owned by Glenn McDonald. McDonald, once the general manager at the resort, is now a real estate agent with First Realty in Crossville.



‘Energizing Every Moment’

An electric cooperative writing and scholarship competition

High school juniors from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation’s service area have a unique opportunity to earn spots on a once-in-a-lifetime tour of our nation’s capital by participating in the Electric Cooperative Creative Writing and Scholarship Competition.

CEMC will select 12 students who write winning short stories describing the benefits of cooperative power to attend the Washington Youth Tour, an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., this summer. Sponsored by CEMC and the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association, the Washington Youth Tour provides young leaders with an opportunity to explore our nation’s capital, learn more about government and cooperatives, develop leadership skills and network with other young leaders from across the nation.

To enter, students must write short stories explaining how co-ops are “Energizing Every Moment” by providing communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more.

Stories must not exceed 900 words, including articles (“a,” “an” and “the”), and the exact word count must be included on the cover page. Entries, which must be typewritten and double-spaced, will be judged on appropriate treatment of theme, knowledge of the subject, originality, creativity, grammar and composition.

The contest deadline is Friday, Feb. 28, and the winners will be announced this spring. Writers of the top 12 entries in CEMC’s service area will join nearly 2,000 other delegates from across the country for the 2025 Washington Youth Tour in June.

Food, travel and lodging expenses are paid by Tennessee’s electric cooperatives, but the benefits of the Youth Tour go far beyond an expense-paid trip. Youth Tour attendees will qualify for additional trips and thousands of dollars in scholarships. TECA will award \$3,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000 scholarships for the state’s top three short stories. Additional scholarships on the national level will be awarded by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association as well.

Winners can also choose to participate in the Cooperative Youth Ambassador program. Delegates who remain active and engaged with CEMC for 12 months following the contest will qualify for a drawing for a \$10,000 scholarship to the school of the winner’s choice.

The Electric Cooperative Creative Writing and Scholarship Competition is open to high school juniors living in CEMC’s five-county service area. Resource materials and additional information can be found online at cemc.org and youthtour.tnelectric.org or by contacting CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at syonkers@cemc.org.



CEMC’s 2024 Washington Youth Tour delegates and chaperones visit the Washington National Cathedral.

CEMC Senior Scholarship Program

Each year, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation invests in future leaders by awarding scholarships to deserving high school seniors through the Senior Scholarship Program.

Twelve students will be chosen this year to receive one-time awards of \$1,000 that can be used toward their freshman year expenses such as tuition, textbooks and lab fees or to purchase other required classroom materials. The program is coordinated through each school's senior guidance counselor.

To be eligible, applicants must meet these requirements:

- Must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence.
- Must have attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade-point average.
- Must enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college, university or trade school by fall 2025 (Murray State and Western Kentucky universities are included).

- Must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference: one from a teacher or other school official and one from a community leader.
- Must write an original essay of at least 300 words explaining what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. All essays will be judged on the basis of content, composition, grammar and neatness.

Applications are available through the senior guidance counselors at each school and can be found on CEMC's website: cemc.org. Deadline for scholarship entry is Friday, Feb. 28. Children of CEMC, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association or Tennessee Valley Authority employees, directors or attorneys are not eligible to apply.

For additional information, contact CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at syonkers@cemc.org.

SENIORS: WIN A \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP

APPLY ONLINE AT CEMC.ORG



2026 CEMC Calendar Art Contest

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is seeking entries from local student-artists for its 2026 Calendar Art Contest. Winners will receive cash prizes and have their artwork published in CEMC's 2026 calendar, which will be displayed in homes, businesses and schools throughout the co-op's service area. Calendars are free and will be available at CEMC's offices beginning in November each year. (Get your 2025 calendar at any CEMC office while supplies last!)

The contest is open to all students — grades kindergarten through 12 — who reside within CEMC's service area. Entries will be accepted through participating schools and are due by Friday, Feb. 28. Each grade (in which the student is currently enrolled) has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate as follows: **January**, sixth; **February**, seventh; **March**, eighth; **April**, ninth; **May**, 10th; **June**, 11th; **July**, kindergarten; **August**, first; **September**, second; **October**, third; **November**, fourth; and **December**, fifth.

Seniors will illustrate the cover. There is no specific theme for the cover; however, rural scenes,

barns, wildlife and items that illustrate CEMC's service (line trucks, utility poles, etc.) are a few suggestions.

Artwork will be judged on artistic merit, creativity and how well the assigned month is depicted. All elements of the artwork must be the work of the student submitting the entry. Artwork must be on white or light-colored, unruled paper no larger than 11 by 14 inches and no smaller than 8.5 by 11 inches. Original artwork must be submitted (no photocopies), and art must be in the horizontal or landscape position.

First-place winners will receive cash prizes as follows: kindergarten-fifth \$25; sixth-eighth \$50; ninth-12th \$75; and the overall winner will receive \$100.

Complete contest details and instructions can be obtained by contacting CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at syonkers@cemc.org.

Below, the artwork of Clarksville High School student Karley Sugg was the overall winner of CEMC's 2025 Calendar Art Contest.



CEMC mourns the loss of longtime board member David Morgan

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is mourning the loss of longtime board member Charles “David” Morgan Sr., who passed away on Nov. 20 at the age of 74.

Mr. Morgan was born Aug. 14, 1950, to Cecil Morgan Sr. and Martha Bullock Morgan in Clarksville. After his mother’s death, his father married Mary Shanklin Morgan, and she became David Morgan’s second mother.

Mr. Morgan had served CEMC’s board, representing South Montgomery County, since April 2004. During his 20-year tenure, he helped guide the co-op through significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, while contributing to major successes such as the launch of CEMC’s broadband subsidiary, Cumberland Connect.

In addition to serving on CEMC’s board, Mr. Morgan was the president and co-owner of

Morgan Contractors Inc., president of the Central Civitan Club and a member of Salem Community Church.



Charles “David” Morgan

He was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Wade Morgan. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Barbara Morgan; sons David (Kathy) Morgan Jr. and Samuel (Jessica) Morgan; and three grandchildren, Ashley Morgan, Briley Morgan and Colten Morgan. He is also survived by his five siblings, Cecil (Mary Beth) Morgan Jr., Cheryl (Ted) Barton, Margaret (Leo) Adames, Gene (Kathy) Morgan and Don (Sarah) Morgan, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Mr. Morgan’s wisdom and dedication left a lasting mark on CEMC and the communities it serves. He will be remembered not only as a trusted leader but also as a friend to many.

Students power community food drive



Students from East Montgomery Elementary School, above left, and Cheatham Middle School, above right, show off the food they collected during CEMC’s 2024 community food drive. With the help of students, parents and teachers from participating schools throughout our service area, thousands of nonperishable food items were collected and donated to local food banks for distribution. “Thank you to all who supported our community food drive this year,” says CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers. “Once again, your generous donations helped provide meals for those in need this holiday season.”

A new year, a safer and more energy-efficient home

January is a time for fresh starts and New Year's resolutions. Whether your goals include losing weight, improving finances or spending more quality time with loved ones, it's no secret that resolutions can be tough to keep. In fact, a survey by Forbes Health found that most resolutions fizzle out by April. However, there are two resolutions you can commit to this year that are not only achievable but also highly beneficial: enhancing your home's electrical safety and adopting energy-efficient habits. Here's how you can make 2025 the year of a safer and more energy-efficient home.

Electrical safety tips:

1. Regular inspections

Begin the year by scheduling a visit from a licensed electrician to ensure your home's electrical system is in top shape. If you've noticed flickering lights or malfunctioning outlets, an inspection is especially critical to prevent potential hazards.

2. Upgrade to LED lighting

Though LEDs cost more up front, they use significantly less energy, last much longer and generate less heat, which reduces the risk of electrical fires. This is especially important considering that the Consumer Product Safety Commission reports 51,000 electrical fires annually.

3. Reset GFCI outlets

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets protect you from electrical shocks, but they must be tested regularly to ensure they work correctly. Set a monthly reminder to press the test and reset buttons on these outlets. If they fail to trip or reset, call an electrician.

4. Discard damaged cords

Worn or frayed cords can pose serious risks. Check the cords on all appliances and devices, and replace any that show signs of damage to avoid potential electrical hazards.

5. Educate your family

Make electrical safety a family affair. Teach everyone in your household the importance of avoiding overloaded outlets and properly using appliances. Encourage them to report any issues they notice, helping to maintain a safe environment for all.



Energy efficiency habits:

1. Seal air leaks

Drafts around windows and doors waste energy and increase heating and cooling costs. Use caulk and weather stripping to seal leaks for a quick, effective fix.

2. Unblock air vents

Furniture, toys or other items can block air vents, forcing your HVAC system to work harder. A quick walk through your home to ensure vents are clear can save energy and improve airflow.

3. Power down electronics

Even when turned off, plugged-in electronics consume energy. Make it a habit to unplug devices when not in use, or use smart power strips to cut power automatically.

4. Take shorter showers

Reducing shower time not only conserves water but also eases the demand on your water heater, saving energy and lowering your utility bill.

5. Wash full loads of laundry

Waiting to do laundry until you have a full load is a simple way to save water, energy and time. For smaller loads, adjust the water level settings on your machine accordingly.

This new year, commit to resolutions that are easy to maintain and offer lasting rewards. By prioritizing electrical safety and energy efficiency, you'll create a home that's not only safer and more environmentally friendly but also more cost-effective. Let 2025 be the year of smarter, more sustainable living!

Reboot your online routine:

Internet habits to build and break in 2025

The new year is a time for reflection and fresh starts. While many of us focus on resolutions like exercising more or eating healthier, it's just as important to evaluate our relationship with technology. The internet has become a cornerstone of modern life, shaping how we work, learn and connect. By breaking a few bad habits and building better ones, you can set yourself up for a more productive, secure and balanced digital life in 2025.

Habits to break:

1. Procrastination via endless scrolling

We've all been there — one quick peek at social media turns into an hour (or three) of scrolling through memes and videos. Also known as “doomscrolling,” this habit not only eats into your time but can also impact your mental health. To combat this, set time limits on apps or use tools like screen time trackers. Many mobile devices even have this feature built-in, so you can be sent a reminder when you're approaching your limit on screen time. Schedule intentional breaks from social media to focus on real-life interactions and tasks.

2. Using weak passwords

The convenience of reusing simple passwords can come at a hefty cost. Cybersecurity threats are on the rise, and weak or repeated passwords leave you vulnerable to hacking. Break this habit by using a password manager app and using unique, strong passwords for every account. Apps like LastPass or NordPass can generate and securely store your complex passwords, making it easier than ever to invest in your cybersecurity. Your future self will thank you!

3. Ignoring software updates

Skipping those “update now” prompts might seem harmless, but outdated software can leave your devices open to security threats. Make it a habit to install updates promptly or enable auto-updates on your devices. Updates usually don't take too long, and they can make all the difference in keeping your devices safe and secure.

Habits to build:

1. Prioritize digital security

Strengthen your online security by enabling two-factor authentication (2FA) on your accounts. Regularly review your account activity for suspicious behavior and keep your devices protected with antivirus software when able. Cumberland Connect subscribers might want to consider subscribing to our Peace of Mind Package for built-in network protection that helps cover all your connected devices.

2. Schedule internet downtime

Unplugging from screens can boost your mental health and productivity. Create screen-free zones in your home or designate specific times for tech-free activities like family dinners or other hobbies.

3. Leverage the internet for learning

Make your time online more meaningful by exploring educational opportunities. From learning a new language to mastering a creative skill, the internet is packed with resources that can help you achieve personal growth. Skillshare or Duolingo are great apps to get you started!

Staying on track

Forming new habits takes time, but a few simple strategies can help. Use app blockers, timers or reminders to reinforce positive behaviors. Share your goals with friends or family for added accountability, and don't forget to reward yourself for progress, no matter how small.

Breaking bad internet habits and building better ones can improve not just your digital life but your overall well-being. Whether it's managing screen time, boosting security or acquiring a new skill online, small changes can lead to big benefits over time. Take the first step this new year, and embrace a healthier, more intentional relationship with technology throughout 2025.



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Uncover savings with a DIY energy audit

Q: How do I perform an energy audit on my home to find out how we're using energy?

A: An energy audit might sound daunting, but it can be as easy as creating a checklist of improvements based on what you see around your home.

Here's what you'll need to find opportunities to save energy and money: a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and cooking thermometer. I recommend taking notes on your phone or a notepad.



When inspecting your heating and cooling equipment, check the filter and replace it. A dirty furnace filter can cause your system to work harder than necessary, decreasing efficiency and shortening the system's life. Photo credit: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources

First, check the heating and cooling equipment. Determine the age and efficiency of the equipment by looking up the model number on the nameplate. The average lifespan of HVAC equipment is 10 to 30 years, depending on the type of equipment and how well it's maintained. If your equipment is older, it might be time to budget for an upgrade. Check the filter and replace it if needed.

Then, check the envelope of your home, which separates the heated or cooled areas from the exterior, for drafts and air leakage. Feel around

windows and trim for any drafts. Pay special attention to spots where different building materials come together. Check under sinks for gaps around pipes. Seal with weather stripping, caulk or expanding foam as needed.

Make sure to replace incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs with LEDs. LEDs use significantly less energy and last longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.

Check for leaking faucets and make sure aerators and showerheads are high-efficiency models in good condition. The gallons-per-minute (GPM) ratings should be etched onto them. To reduce wasted energy from using more hot water than needed, aerators should be 0.5 to 1.5 GPM, and showerheads should be no more than 2 GPM.

Next, look in the attic, while wearing a dust mask, to make sure it's insulated. You might be able to see enough from the access area using a cellphone with the flash on to take pictures. Use the tape measure to check the depth of the insulation. It should be a minimum of 12 inches deep. This can vary depending on the type of insulation used and your geography.

Insulation can become compacted over time. It should be evenly distributed throughout the attic. Loose fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy and evenly dispersed. Rolled batt insulation should fit tightly together without gaps.

Also, exterior walls should be insulated. If your home is older than the 1960s, the walls are probably not insulated. Homes from the 1960s or 1970s likely need more insulation. Sometimes you can see wall insulation by removing an outlet cover or switch plate and using a flashlight to look for insulation inside the wall cavity. Turn off the power at the electrical panel to avoid the risk of electric shock. Wall insulation can be blown in from the inside or the outside of the home. This is a job for a professional.

If you have a basement or crawl space, head there next. Unfinished basements should have insulation on the rim joists, at minimum. This is the area between the top of the foundation and the underside



LEDs come in a range of color temperatures. For a warm glow similar to incandescent bulbs, buy bulbs with a color temperature around 2700 Kelvin. Photo credit: Mark Gilliland, Pioneer Utility Resources



Start your do-it-yourself energy audit by gathering household tools, including a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and cooking thermometer. Photo credit: Miranda Boutelle, Pioneer Utility Resources

Hot water should be between 120 and 140 degrees. You can reduce the temperature on your water heater to reduce energy waste and prevent scalding.

Once your home energy audit is finished, review your findings and start prioritizing home energy efficiency projects. For step-by-step instructions, visit energy.gov/save.

of the home's first-story floor. Use closed-cell spray foam or a combination of rigid foam and spray foam to insulate rim joists. Crawl spaces should have insulation on the underside of the floor between the floor joists. Insulation should be properly supported in contact with the floor with no air gaps. Water pipes and ductwork should also be insulated.

Lastly, check the temperature of your water by running it for three minutes at the faucet closest to your water heater. Then fill a cup and measure with a cooking thermometer.

Miranda Boutelle is vice president of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She also writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.



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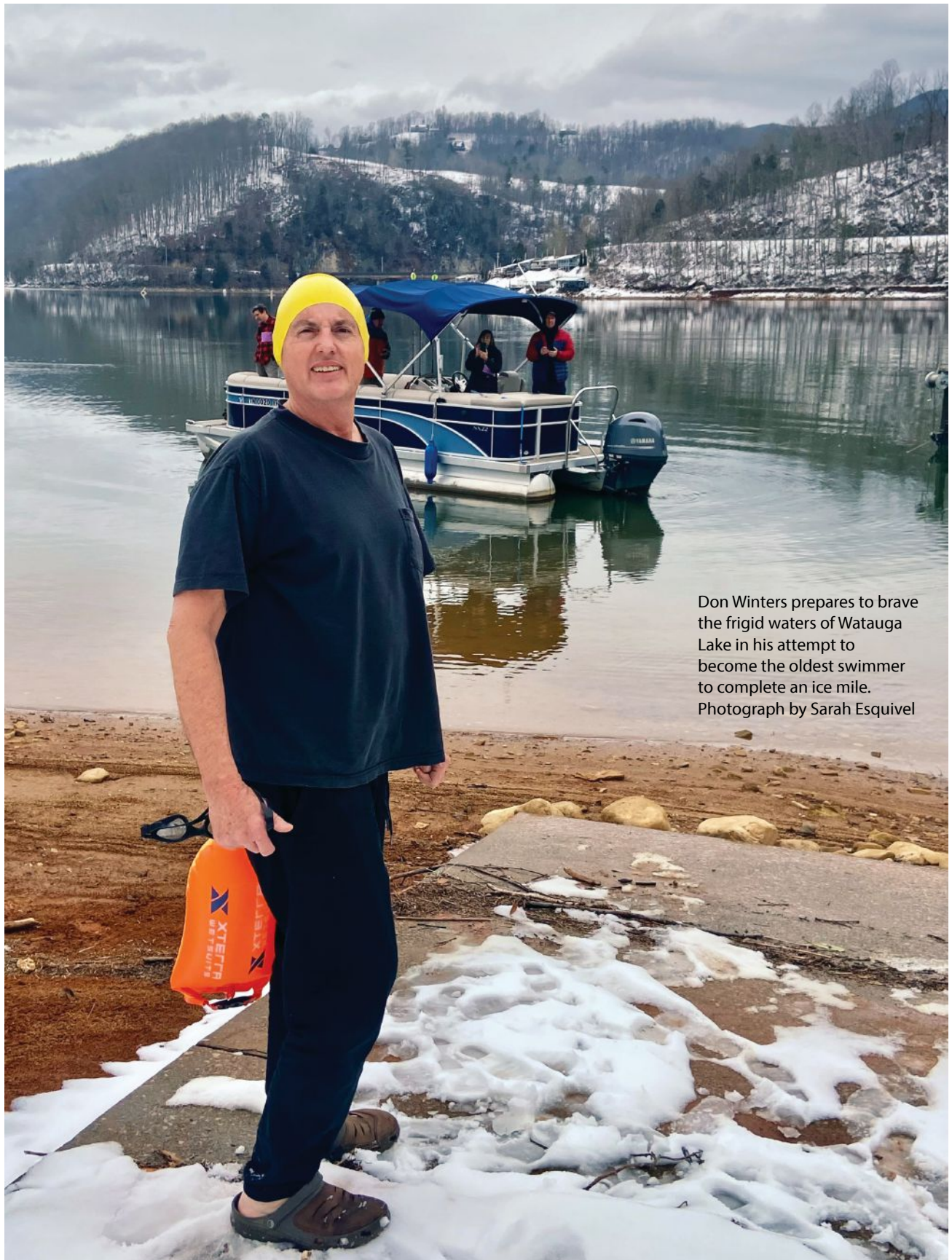
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Don Winters prepares to brave the frigid waters of Watauga Lake in his attempt to become the oldest swimmer to complete an ice mile.
Photograph by Sarah Esquivel

FAITH and FRIGID WATER

How a combination of faith and curiosity
led to holding a world record in ice swimming

Story by Amber Weaver

One year ago, a 66-year-old man swam in the Watauga Lake for 52 minutes, 57 seconds in 38-degree water, completing an ice mile. Not only did Don Winters finish it, but he also set the world record for the oldest man to accomplish such a feat.

“I went out there, meditated and went through Psalm 23,” Winters said. “As you can imagine, there aren’t any other swimmers out. So, it’s really a personal time where I can enjoy the solitude.”

He leads me beside the still waters

The International Ice Swimming Association (IISA) was formed in 2009 with the hopes of making ice swimming a new sport. The group coined the term “ice swimming” and defined it as swimming in water temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or colder, unassisted, wearing one standard swimming costume, one pair of goggles and one standard silicone cap. An ice mile is meeting all those standards at a distance of 1 mile and is deemed IISA’s ultimate achievement.

“I heard about this crazy swim they call an ice mile, which is supposed to be the most extreme swim in the world,” Winters said. “I soon found out why.”

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

Winters, surprisingly, wasn’t born full of faith or with the goal of swimming in frigid waters.

“The Lord got a hold of my life after I got out of high school,” Winters said. “That’s when I got back in church, and I felt Him leading me to ministry.”

Winters spent 30 years traveling the world in his ministry, but about 10 years ago was called back to the mountains where he is now the pastor at Sugar Grove Baptist Church. He, his wife and oldest daughter live in Butler, which is powered by Mountain Electric Cooperative. Winters has another daughter in Alabama and a son in Hendersonville whose families also cheered for Don from a distance.

Soon after joining Sugar Grove, Winters participated in his first triathlon, and that ultimately sparked this ice mile pursuit.

“We’re out in the rural areas of Appalachia, meaning I have to drive an hour to get to any pool,” Winters said. “So, I started swimming in the lake to

see how late in the year I could swim before I had to start driving to a pool.”

Most of Winters’ companions would stop swimming around October, but he would keep going through early December. He had read about ice swimming and polar plunges and knew that as a “mountain man,” he was tough enough to at least try. His first wintertime dip in Watauga Lake was in February 2022. Winters, in a single layer, stayed in for just five minutes. After that, he gradually started swimming and did so three times a week, no matter what.

“I swam regardless of the weather — rain, sleet, snow, cold. Sometimes I’d have to wear a big overcoat down to the lake to just get there, and then I’d take it off to swim,” Winters said.

He never was too phased with cold shock, which is when you experience stiff hands, memory blanks and disorientation from being in such cold waters.



“Not being impacted by those symptoms made me think that maybe the good Lord created me to be able to do this,” Winters said.

I will fear no evil; for You are with me

A swimmer can’t decide one day to attempt an ice mile. A lot goes

into preparation, including getting a physical and EKG. Those results along with a preliminary swim must be sent off to the IISA to be considered.

Once those numbers are approved, two IISA witnesses come for the day of the event to record the swim, GPS coordinates of the distance and digital readings of the water temperature. A medical team also must be present to follow the swimmer by boat — just in case.

Winters’ preliminary swim was nothing short of a success, but he faced some unforeseen obstacles on the actual day of the record attempt.

“In January, we had below-zero temperatures, and the lake actually froze where my swimming lane was,” Winters said. “So, we had to wait for it to thaw. They ran some boats through the lane to break it up so I could swim.”

Winters did well to start off, despite the conditions.

“I was swimming up next to ice sheets and could actually see birds walking on the ice,” Winters said.

As he neared the last quarter-mile, though, he began to slow down, get confused and even swim in the wrong direction from how cold the water was.

“I was starting to get hypothermic,” Winters said. “I could see the bank and the people, and I knew if I could just get a few more strokes and my feet on the ground, I could get out of this. I was scared to death, but the Lord was with us.”

Almost 53 minutes later and feeling what he described as “fuzzy,” Winters’ staggering feet hit the ground. He was met by his wife with blankets and ran toward the heated truck. At first, the medical team couldn’t get his body temperature, but after drinking his normal hot Tang, all was well, and a record had been broken.

My cup runs over

“Watauga Lake lunatic,” “loco” and just plain “crazy” were all used to describe Winters during his ice mile



At left, Don Winters makes waves in the wintry-cold waters of Watauga Lake. Photograph by Carolyn Curtis. Above, Winters secures his swim cap and goggles before his ice mile on Jan. 23, 2024. Photograph by Emily Ball, Bristol Herald Courier



Some of the members of Don Winters' support team gather for a group photo the day of his record-breaking swim. From left are Lena Winters, Ginny Lapin, Katharine Adams, Carolyn Curtis, Abigail Esquivel, Bill Stover, Lance Thieme and Sarah Esquivel. Below, a focused Winters swims through the icy lake. Official records of the Jan. 23, 2024, swim list the water temperature at 3.75 degrees Celsius (38.75 degrees Fahrenheit). Photograph by Emily Ball, Bristol Herald Courier

journey. Despite the playful banter, he was surrounded by so many loved ones during this achievement.

"I had a lot of good church members, several doctors in the church and, of course, my family who were willing to support me," Winters said.

Some of those members were also the ones on the boat behind him to ensure his safety.

"I was very happy to be able to have the health at 66 at the time and 67 now to be able to get out and do something like this," Winters said. "But I am very thankful it is over with."

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life

As for what's next for Winters, he plans to continue swimming in cold waters. However, he doesn't plan to challenge anyone if they beat his record.

"I was told it would improve your cognitive abilities, and it did. It taught me to never do this again!" Winters said. "If anybody else wants the title, they can have it."

Winters said he is proud he was able to leave his mark in ice swimming, but if anything comes out of this record at all, he hopes it is to share what he has in Christ.

"If this record goes out and it can open up a door for me to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, then that's all I care about," Winters said. "I don't really care if anyone knows who Don Winters is. Everything I do, I hope it reflects the grace of God in my life."



A

Whether you call it 'gourmet' or Gournay, Boursin cheese is sure to bring a smile to your face.

heesy NEW YEAR



Butternut

Boursin Bisque

Recipes by Tammy Algood

Food styling by Cynthia Kent

Photographs by Robin Conover

Resolve to make 2025 a cheesy new year — specifically, start this year with Boursin. Boursin is party ready. This spreadable cheese is available everywhere and comes in several boldly seasoned varieties. A simple cracker or toast point is transformed with a smear of Boursin. Just imagine how great it will make these recipes.

Butternut Boursin Bisque — *This luxurious meal starter can be mostly made ahead, then finished and kept warm as guests arrive.*

Yield: 10 to 12 servings
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 (3-pound) butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into chunks
 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium chicken stock, divided
 1 pound medium uncooked shrimp, peeled and deveined
 2 teaspoons curry powder
 1 teaspoon dried thyme
 1 (5.25-ounce) package Boursin cheese (any flavor)
 ½ cup whipping cream (room temperature) plus more for garnish, if desired
 ½ teaspoon garlic salt
 ¼ teaspoon red, white or black pepper
 Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

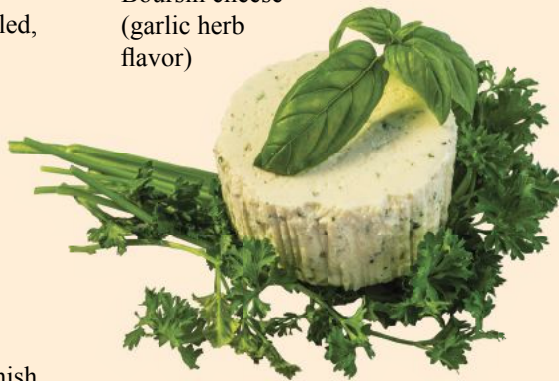
Place the butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. When melted, add the onions and sauté 8 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add the squash. Cook, stirring frequently, for 15 minutes.

Add half the stock as well as the shrimp, curry powder and thyme. Cook 3 minutes or just until the shrimp turn pink. Remove from the heat. Add the remaining stock, stirring until blended. With an immersion blender, puree the mixture until smooth. (At this point, you can remove from the heat and allow to cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate until ready to finish. Bring to room temperature at least 30 minutes before continuing.)

Return the pot to medium heat and bring to a gentle boil. Stir in the Boursin, whipping cream, salt and pepper. Reduce the heat to low and simmer 5 minutes before serving warm. Garnish with a drizzle of whipping cream, if desired, and a sprinkle of parsley.

Red Grape and Cheese Flatbread

Yield: 12 servings
 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
 1 medium sweet onion, peeled and thinly sliced into half moons
 Pinch each of salt and black pepper
 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
 2 cups red seedless grapes, halved
 1 (12.7-ounce) package Naan mini rounds or flatbread
 1 (5.25-ounce) package crumbled Boursin cheese (garlic herb flavor)



Place 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onions, salt and pepper, tossing to evenly coat with the hot oil. Reduce the heat to medium and cook the onions, stirring only occasionally for 20 minutes or until the onions are golden brown. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Stir in the thyme and grapes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper and place bread rounds in a single layer (using 2 pans if necessary). Brush the tops lightly with the remaining oil. Top with the onion/grape mixture evenly and then sprinkle with the cheese. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Serve warm.

Caramelized Onion Boursin Grits — *Top with grilled shrimp if you like for a complete meal.*

Yield: 4 to 6 servings
 1 cup grits
 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 cup half-and-half or milk
 4 ounces caramelized onion Boursin (or another flavor if you desire)
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 3 large ears corn with kernels removed (or ½ cup whole kernel corn)
 1 green onion, green tops thinly sliced (save the white bottom for another use)
 ¼ teaspoon paprika

Place the grits, stock and butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to medium-low. Stir in the half-and-half or milk, Boursin, salt and pepper. Continue stirring until the cheese is completely melted.

Reduce the heat to simmer and add the corn. Cook, stirring frequently, for 7 minutes or until the liquid is absorbed and the grits are creamy. Serve in small warm bowls topped with green onion tops and a dash of paprika.

Boursin-Stuffed Dates

Yield: 8 to 10 servings
 20 large pitted dates*
 ½ cup Boursin (any flavor), softened
 1 (8-ounce) package prosciutto, sliced in 20 strips

Slice each date in half lengthwise. With a small spoon or gloved hands, stuff each date abundantly with the cheese. Top with the other half and wrap tightly with a slice of prosciutto. Secure with a decorative toothpick.

Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to enjoy.

**If the dates aren't pitted, simply remove the seed with a small paring knife after slicing away one half.*

Bosc Pear and Boursin Salad — *Serve with grilled chicken or fish.*

Yield: 6 to 8 servings
 ¼ cup olive oil
 3 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
 1 teaspoon honey

½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon chopped thyme
 ½ teaspoon chopped parsley
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 1 (5-ounce) package baby arugula
 2 large Bosc pears, peeled, cored and thinly sliced
 ½ cup roasted and salted pumpkin seeds
 3 ounces herbed Boursin, crumbled

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the oil, 2 tablespoons of the juice, honey, salt, thyme, parsley and pepper. Cover and shake vigorously to emulsify. Set aside.

Place the arugula in a large salad bowl. Peel, core and thinly slice the pears. Place in a medium bowl and toss with the remaining lemon juice as you work to prevent discoloration. When completely sliced, drain any juice and add along with the pumpkin seeds to the arugula. Toss to mix and add the dressing. Toss again to evenly coat. Top with the crumbled cheese and serve immediately.

Mushroom Pasta with Boursin Sauce

Yield: 4 servings

2 tablespoons light olive oil
 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 1 (8-ounce) package sliced mushrooms
 1 teaspoon dried tarragon or thyme

¾ teaspoon salt, divided
 ¼ heaping teaspoon black pepper
 ¾ pound fettuccine
 1 (5.25-ounce) package Boursin (any flavor), softened
 ½ cup grated Parmesan
 ½ cup milk or half-and-half
 1 green onion (green part only), thinly sliced
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Meanwhile, place the oil and butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When the butter has melted, add the mushrooms, tarragon or thyme, ½ teaspoon of the salt and pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and continue cooking until the liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are browned, around 5 minutes.

Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook according to the package instructions until al dente, around 10 minutes.

In a medium bowl, stir together the Boursin, Parmesan, milk or half-and-half, and remaining salt until blended. When the pasta is done, drain and transfer to a large serving bowl but reserve 1 cup of the cooking water. Whisk the reserved cooking water into the Boursin until smooth.

Tips and tricks

- Boursin is a triple cream cheese, which is why the texture is so smooth. It is a soft cheese that melts quickly but is also spreadable.
- Keep this cheese refrigerated and leftovers wrapped tightly in plastic. Otherwise it could absorb strong odors that are in close proximity.
- There is a date printed on the outer package to use as your guide for freshness. Opened packages will last at least a week or up to 10 days if kept refrigerated.
- Like other soft cheese, the texture changes if it is frozen no matter how well it is wrapped. It's best to use it fresh, so utilize extra to enhance a soup or casserole or as a wrap or sandwich spread. ■

Add the mushroom mixture and sauce to the pasta and toss until well coated. Garnish with the green onion tops and parsley before serving warm. ■

Tammy Algood develops recipes for The Tennessee Magazine that feature farm-fresh Tennessee food. Those fresh, local ingredients will always add cleaner, more flavorful foods to your table. We recommend visiting local farms and farmers markets to find the freshest seasonal produce.



Email your cooking questions to Tammy Algood: talgood@tnelectric.org.

Robbie asks: “Will you please explain what a smoke point is?”

Robbie, that’s the measure of when an oil (or fat) has reached the maximum amount of heat before it begins to break down. For frying, the higher the smoke point, the better, which is why you want to select vegetable, peanut,

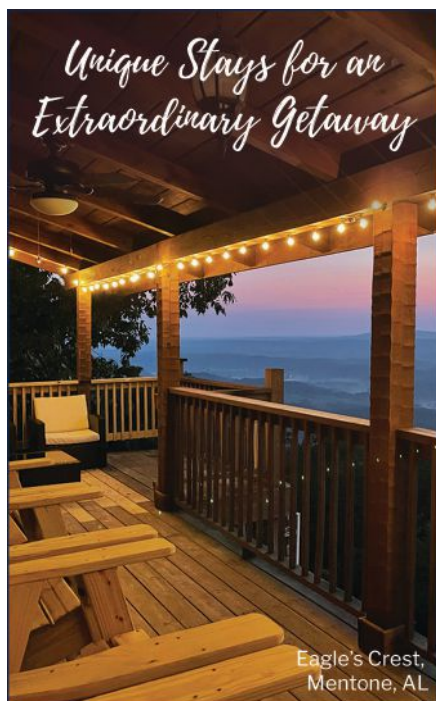
safflower, corn, grapeseed, avocado or sunflower oils for the task. Butter, vegetable shortening and olive oils have significantly lower smoke points.

Cheryl writes: “When a recipe calls for soft peaks, I’m never sure what that is supposed to look like. Would you describe it for me?”

Cheryl, this term is most often associated with whipped cream or beaten egg whites. The most reliable way to judge if the soft peak stage has been reached is to stop the mixer and lift the beaters. The mixture will lift as you pull the beaters out but will then slump and not retain the shape. ■

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Fun for Everyone

Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park offers much to many

Story by Trish Milburn • Photographs by Josh Justice

On any given day, the managers of Tennessee's state parks have interesting interactions with visitors. Some could involve sharing accumulated knowledge about historical sites within their parks. Others include answering questions for campers or hikers. Some of the best, however, revolve around helping shape young visitors' experiences with parks. Some of those encounters leave lasting impressions not only with the children but also the managers, as one such interaction did for Josh Justice, park manager at Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park in Eva (Benton County).

"I have many stories that I could tell, and most of them would be about teaching children about nature," Justice says. "One in particular sort of stands out. I was making my normal rounds one afternoon and stopped by the Folklife Center to see if the clerk needed anything. She was busy with guests, so I helped out by talking to some of them. One family asked

about our captive snakes. I started talking to them and offered to get one out. Most of the family answered with a firm 'NO,' but the youngest daughter, probably around 3 (years old), said she wanted to see one of them. I got out our corn snake and started to show him and talked to her. Before long, the entire family was talking about him and petting him. If we all still had the curiosity of a 3-year-old girl, the world may be a better place. It only took her asking questions to change the outlook of the entire family."

A bit of backstory

Long before that curious little girl wanted to see a snake, long before the Tennessee River Folklife Interpretive Center was even built or the park became a park, this area was home to indigenous peoples. But, like many other parks that blend history and recreation, the history part is what most visitors overlook while visiting, Justice says.

"We are trying to get interpretive signage showcasing this history," he says. "We have the Eva Archaic Site that was used for generations, the Trail of Tears routes that came through the park, Civil War events in the area, CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and WPA (Works Progress Administration) projects on the park, TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) and just the life in the area before it became a park that we want to promote. Some of this is already being done, but we are trying to build on that and tell as many stories as possible."

The Folklife Center is a great place to learn more about the area's history and the ways people living along the river have made use of it in various ways to survive for generations



— musseling, fishing, making crafts and more. Here you can also request to see any of the films available on the river life, park history or the area's Civil War history.

Natural and cultural appeal

Located on the western bank of Kentucky Lake, Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park is different from other parks in the area because it has elevation change.

"Our trail system is not flat like most other West Tennessee parks," Justice says. "Our Tennessee River Folklife Center is located on Pilot Knob, one of the highest elevations in West Tennessee. We have approximately 20 miles of trails that take advantage of this elevation change."

These range in length and difficulty from the 0.3-mile easy Polk Creek Wildflower Trail to the Nathan Bedford Forrest 20-Mile Trail that is rated moderate to difficult. All trails are natural surface.

Because of the park's location next to the river, not only will you be likely to spot or hear forest-dwelling songbirds or raptors while hiking the trails, but you also might see waterfowl such as herons, egrets and gulls.

While the river has been a way to make a living for many in the most subsistence sense, it also provides leisure and ways of making money in catering to the people seeking a day of recreation on the water. Anglers aplenty try their luck at catching bass, catfish, bluegill, redear sunfish and crappie.

Other ways to enjoy the expanse of the Tennessee River/Kentucky Lake are boating, paddleboarding, kayaking or even swimming at the park's Eva Beach site. Granted, it's going to be too chilly to do that for a while, but check it out when warmer temperatures return.

More to offer

The park is one of only a few in the Tennessee State Parks system that offers a disc golf course. Different aspects of this course appeal to different levels of players from the beginner to those who are more experienced in the sport.

Several special events are also hosted in the park each year.

"Along with the normal holiday weekend festivities, we have three larger events," Justice says. "We have the Eva Beach Music and Arts Festival on the third Saturday of September every year. We have the Pilot Knob 10K race in October. And we have our Fall Festival the weekend before Halloween each year."

Ranger-led programming throughout the year allows visitors to learn more about reptiles, owls, history, archery skills, astronomy and various other interesting topics. Enjoy canoe floats, roasting marshmallows and telling stories around a campfire, hikes such as the annual Spring Hike in March, a fishing rodeo in June and Christmas festivities.

If you'd like to stay more than a day to enjoy all the park has to offer, you have in-park options for accommodations. Deluxe two-bedroom cabins overlooking the lake; a refurbished 1930s rustic cabin on a secluded ridge, also with



Photograph by Colton Garner

a lake view; and numerous campground sites are available for rental.

Telling full stories

Students of history will recognize that the park's namesake is a controversial figure. Though named after him, the park land and the history that resides here go beyond and before Forrest, and the full scope of that history is what park staff endeavor to share.

"At Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park and across Tennessee State Parks, we follow a 'Telling Full Stories' process," Justice says. "A full story addresses all the people present on a site or in a culture, including those who have been underrepresented, misrepresented or unrepresented in previous cultural and historical dialogues. We understand that each person who visits the park will have a different idea or perception on Nathan Bedford Forrest. We are not here to change their minds or steer them in any way. We tell the facts of what happened in the area of the park in the fullest way we can. We want all people to learn the history of this park, and that is just one part of it."

Fun for everyone

"We are a family-oriented park," Justice says. "Most weekends here are like a family reunion, only most of them aren't related. We have kids playing in the creeks, kids on bicycles, visitors gathering at campsites for dinner. It almost reminds me of the way neighborhoods used to be: people enjoying being outside and enjoying the company of their neighbors. The staff helps out by planning wagon rides, creek walks and crafts for everyone to enjoy. And we do a kayak float almost every weekend."

"And I want to mention our steps to be more accessible to all visitors.

We currently have an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) fishing pier at Eva Beach, an ADA all-terrain wheelchair that guests can use and an adult changing station at the Folklife Center, and we are updating our campgrounds, which will include many more ADA campsites." ■



Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park

For more information, visit tnstateparks.com/parks/nathan-bedford-forrest or call the office at 731-593-6445.



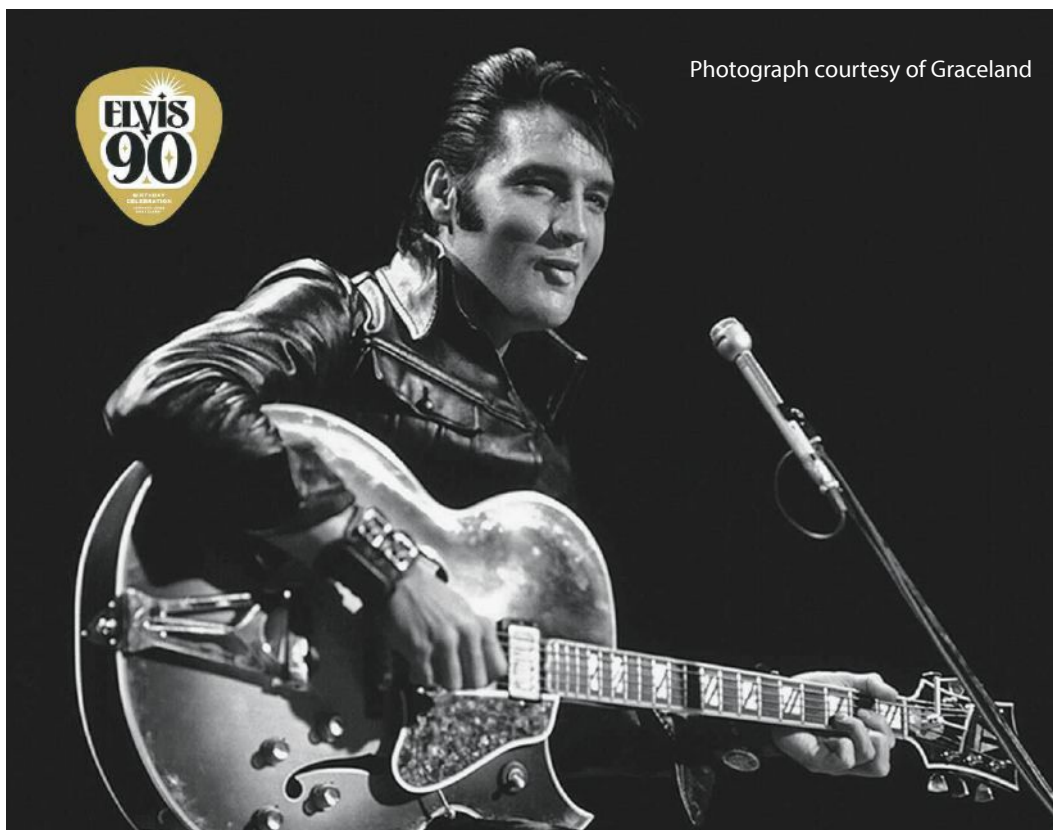
TENNESSEE EVENTS

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

Jan. 8-11 • Elvis' 90th Birthday Celebration, Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com/elvis-birthday

January is always a great time to visit Graceland since it's Elvis' birth month, but this year is extra special since it's his 90th birthday! Graceland will have celebratory events from Jan. 8 to 11, including concerts, panels, tours and more. Some key events:

- **Jan. 8:** Elvis Birthday Proclamation Ceremony; Opening of Yearlong "90 for 90" Exhibit; Elvis 90th Birthday Pops Concert Featuring Terry Mike Jeffrey and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra
- **Jan. 9:** Elvis Music Salute
- **Jan. 10:** Elvis Live On Stage: 90th Birthday Celebration
- **Jan. 11:** Graceland's Rock 'n' Roll Birthday Bash and Mansion Tours



West Tennessee

Jan. 8-11 • Elvis' 90th Birthday Celebration, Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com/elvis-birthday

Jan. 18 • I Do, Dyersburg Wedding Expo, Lannom Center, Dyersburg. 731-442-2650 or idodyersburg.com

Jan. 31-Feb. 2 • 21st Annual Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival, Reelfoot Lake State Park Visitors Center, Tiptonville. 731-253-9652 or tnstateparks.com/parks/reelfoot-lake

Feb. 8 • Shaken and Stirred — Valentines Pops, Carl Perkins Civic Center, Jackson. 731-427-6440 or thejacksonsymphony.org

Middle Tennessee

Now-Feb. 9 • Zoolumination, Nashville Zoo. 615-833-1534 or nashvillezoo.org/zoolumination

Jan. 2, 4 and 11 • Marshmallow Hikes, Owl's Hill Nature Sanctuary, Brentwood. 615-370-4672 or owlshill.org

Jan. 4 • Winter Frolic, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, Hermitage. 615-889-2941 or thehermitage.com

Jan. 7-12 • "Peter Pan," Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville. 615-782-4040 or tpac.org

Jan. 25 • Family Geocaching Day, Owl's Hill Nature Sanctuary, Brentwood. 615-370-4672 or owlshill.org

Feb. 6-14 • Mayberry Valentine Dinner Theatre, Granville. 931-653-4151 or granvilletn.com

East Tennessee

Jan. 12 • Time Travel Half Marathon/10K/5K, Tennessee River Park Pavilion 2, Chattanooga. 760-669-6471 or runsignup.com/Race/TN/Chattanooga/TimeTravel

Jan. 31 • The Frontmen, Niswonger Performing Arts Center, Greeneville. 423-638-1679 or npacgreeneville.com

Submit your events

Complete the form at tnmagazine.org or email events@tnelectric.org.

Information must be received at least two months ahead of the event date, and we accept submissions up to a year in advance. Due to the great demand for space in each month's issue, we cannot guarantee publication. Find a complete listing of submissions we've received at tnmagazine.org/events.

SHUTTERBUG SHOWCASE

The next installment of our Shutterbug Photography Contest tasks readers with the color-focused theme “Something Blue.” Images can be from any year and any place, but they must contain at least one element of the color blue. Enter any subject matter that captures what blue means to you.

The Tennessee Magazine will name first-, second- and third-place winners as well as honorable mention recipients in each division — **Adult Shutterbug**, **Junior Shutterbug** (ages 17 and younger) and **Professional**.

Images can include people or not, and they can be selfies. As you accept this challenge, please stay safe. We don’t want anyone to take a tumble in the name of the Shutterbug contest.

Contest rules

1. The contest is open to amateur and professional photographers. For the purposes of this competition, you are considered a professional if you regularly sell your images or garner more than 50% of your income from photography.
2. Photographs must have been taken by you.
3. A photographer can enter no more than three photographs. There is no cost to enter.
4. All entries must be made online. We won’t accept prints for this contest. Sign on to tnmagazine.org and click on “Entry Forms” under “Contests.” Complete the form and upload your photograph(s).
5. Employees of Tennessee’s electric cooperatives and their immediate families are not eligible to win.
6. Please include the name of each recognizable person, if any other than yourself, in your photograph. It is the photographer’s responsibility to have the subject’s permission to enter his or her image in the contest. You must include the subject’s name and contact information with your submission. Omitting any of this information can result in disqualification.

7. By entering the contest, photographers automatically give *The Tennessee Magazine* permission to publish the winning images in print and digital publications, to social media and on websites.

Shutterbug assignment “Something Blue”

Submissions — online entries only

To enter, visit tnmagazine.org and click on “Entry Forms” under the “Contests” tab.

Deadline

Entries must be entered online by the end of the day on Wednesday, Jan. 15. Winners will be published in the March issue.

Prize packages

Judges will select a first-, second- and third-place winner in each division and age group. These prizes will be awarded: First place wins \$150, second place \$100 and third place \$50.

“Indigo Bunting and Bee at Sunflowers” by Kathy Taylor of Dover received an honorable mention in our September 2021 “A Tennessee Summer” Shutterbug Photography Contest. Send us your photos meeting our next theme, “Something Blue.”



Find the Tennessee flag



We have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured here. It could be larger or smaller than this, and it could be in black and white or any color. If you find it, send us a postcard or email us with the page number where it's located. Include your name, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. One entry per person. Three winners will be chosen from a random drawing, and each will receive \$20.

Note that the icon we hide will not be on an actual flag or historical marker, will not appear on pages 20-25 and will not be placed in any ads. This month's flag will not appear on this page (that would just be too easy).

Good luck!

Send **postcards only** (no phone calls, please) to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Find the Flag, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Or you can fill out the form at

tnmagazine.org or email flag@tnelectric.org. Entries must be postmarked or received via email by Saturday, Feb. 1. Winners will be published in the March issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

November Flag Spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the correct location of the flag, which was found on the wall of Cootie Brown's on **page 18**.

Winners are drawn randomly from each month's entries.

November's lucky flag spotters are:

Tanya Sanford, Alamo, Gibson EMC

Keaton Smith, Doyle, Caney Fork EC

Terry Kemp, Jasper, Sequachee Valley EC



Artist's Palette

Assignment for March

Three age categories: 8 and younger, 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 years old. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners.

Media: Drawing or painting on **8½-by-11-inch unlined** paper, canvas or board. We encourage the use of color.

Please follow these size guidelines. Oversized canvas entries are especially difficult to handle and cannot be returned. Framed pieces will not be accepted.

Entry: Send your original art to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Artist's Palette — **March**, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. (Please make sure you include the month on the outside of the envelope!) Only one entry per artist, please.

Deadline: Art must be postmarked by Saturday, Feb. 1.

Include: Your name (*legibly, please!*), age, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. Leaving anything out will result in disqualification.

Please note: By entering, you give *The Tennessee Magazine* permission to publish your work in print, online and via social media.

Artwork will not be returned **unless** you include a self-addressed, **stamped** envelope (SASE) with your submission. **Only the U.S. Postal Service** will be used for returns. *For best reproduction results, do not fold artwork.*

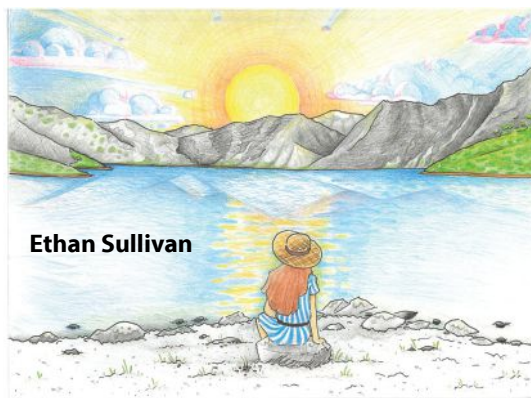
Each entry needs its own SASE, please. Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes. **Attention,**

teachers: You may send multiple entries in one envelope along with one SASE with sufficient postage.

Winners will be published in the March issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*. First place wins \$50, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Winners are eligible to enter again after three months. Winners will receive their awards, artwork and certificates of placement within six to eight weeks of publication.

Artist's Palette *January Winners*

Brycen Ray



Ethan Sullivan

Viviean Upton



WINNERS, 14-18 AGE GROUP: First place: Brycen Ray, age 17, Cumberland EMC; Second place: Ethan Sullivan, age 14, Middle Tennessee Electric; Third place: Viviean Upton, Age 15, Cumberland EMC

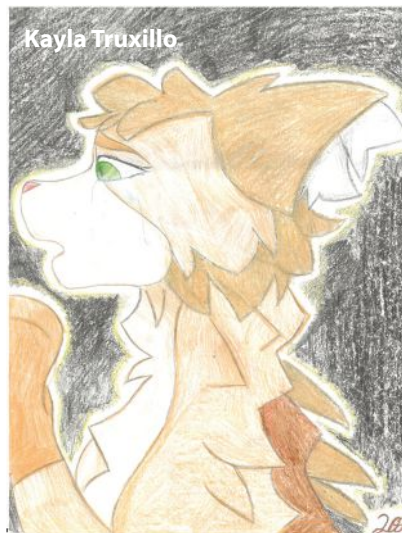


Emmy Wallace

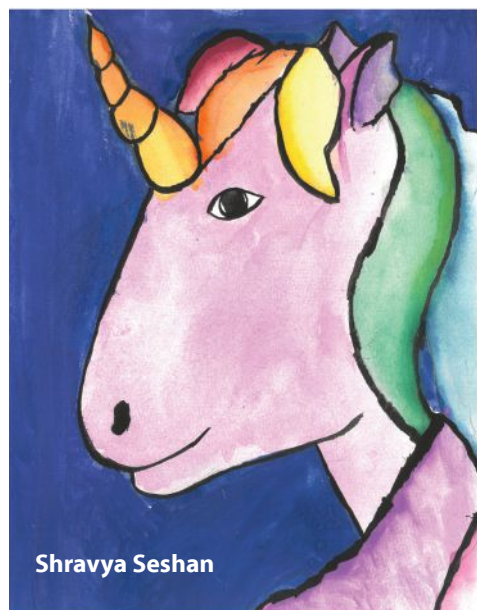
Aaron L. Sworts



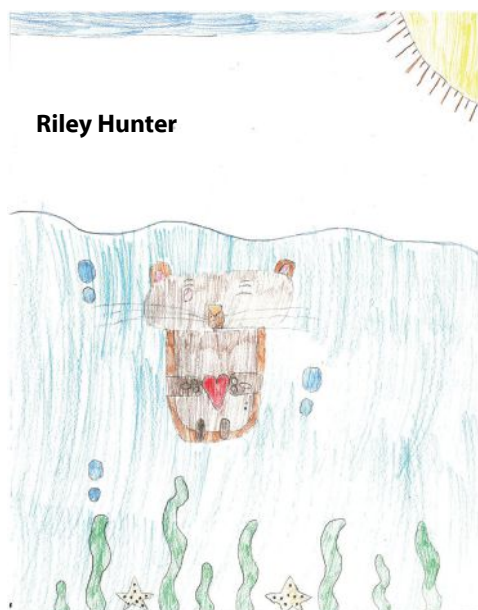
Kayla Truxillo



WINNERS, 9-13 AGE GROUP: First place: Emmy Wallace, age 12, Cumberland EMC; Second place: Aaron L. Sworts, age 13, Middle Tennessee Electric; Third place: Kayla Truxillo, age 10, Holston EC



Shravya Seshan



Riley Hunter



Madelyn Beecher

WINNERS, 8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP: First place: Shravya Seshan, age 6, Middle Tennessee Electric; Second place: Riley Hunter, age 7, Middle Tennessee Electric; Third place: Madelyn Beecher, age 8, Volunteer EC



Point *of* View

By Robin Conover

"Lost Creek Falls"

by Robin Conover, Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
EF 16-35 mm at 30 mm, f5.6 L USM lens,
ISO 200, f22 at 1/15 second, handheld

Last year, I made a resolution to visit at least one new state or national park each month. I started by mapping out a few based on what season I wanted to visit. I chose Lost Creek State Natural Area for the first.

To be honest, several of our Shutterbug Photography Contest entrants had sent in some very nice photographs from this park, and they inspired me to go see it for myself. I left early in the morning on a gray day in January with a two-hour drive ahead of me. Temperatures had been hovering below 32 degrees for a few days, so I was hoping there had been enough water flow to form some ice around the falls.

The midday light was flat due to heavy cloud cover but was decent for photographing the sink beneath Lost Creek Falls. The area's moniker comes from the fact that the creek emerges from a spring that is beneath a collapsed area at the top of this formation. The creek then cascades down about 40 feet to a pool below and disappears again.

Below the falls on the opposite side of the sink is an entrance to the Lost Creek Cave. The cave is extensive with more than 7 miles mapped. It requires a permit to explore and is closed certain times of the year to protect the bat populations living within. I did not venture into the cave this time.

Due to the cold weather and slick trails, I didn't hike with my tripod or other heavy equipment. I took one camera body and a wide-angle lens. To capture this shot, I chose an exposure short enough that I could still hand-hold on the scene without causing camera movement and long enough to still show some blur or movement in the water.

I explored the area and decided on this composition to show the topography of the falls and the pool beneath. It was icy and slick near the bottom of the sink. I was happy to have one essential piece of winter gear to help me stay upright in such conditions — Yaktrax. They are easy to carry and just slip over your hiking boots for better traction in slick environments, especially in ice and snow.

My year of exploring new places included several great parks, but I still have many more on my list, so I am planning my next 12 with my 2025 New Year's resolutions.

See you on the trails in 2025! ■

If you are looking for something to add to your resolutions, check out the First Day Hikes and other hiking events at Tennessee State Parks. For information, visit tnstateparks.com/activities/hiking.

POET'S PLAYGROUND

Inspiring words from your neighbors

We're searching for Tennessee's most talented and gifted poets. Enter our next Poet's Playground contest!

Subject: Poems do not have to include the word "Tennessee" explicitly, but their themes should celebrate our state and what makes it beautiful — whether highlighting something unique to Tennessee, memories of the state or the beautiful nature it has to offer.

Age categories: The competition has six age divisions — 8 and younger, 9-13, 14-18, 19-22, 23-64 and 65 and older. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners. First place wins \$50 and

will be printed in the magazine, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Poems capturing first-, second- and third-place honors will be published online at tnmagazine.org.

What to enter: A poem of *100 words or fewer, including articles*, pertaining to the theme. One entry per person, and please give your entry a title.

Deadline: Entry must be submitted online or postmarked by Friday, Jan. 31. First-place poems will be published in the April issue.

Please note: By entering, you give *The Tennessee Magazine*

permission to publish your work via print, online and social media.

Please enter online at tnmagazine.org or mail handwritten entries to: Poetry Contest, *The Tennessee Magazine*, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Make sure to print your poem legibly, and be sure to keep a copy of your poem as submissions received via mail will not be returned.

All entries must include the following information, or they will be disqualified: your name, age, mailing address, phone number, email address and the name of your local electric cooperative.



Photograph by Robin Conover



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Leave buffering behind in
2025. Upgrade to Cumberland
Connect to power your new
year with unstoppable internet!



cumberlandconnect.org/status-map
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.