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July 2025

Ratliff Mandolins

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Scott's Gulf Wilderness:
Tennessee's Newest State Park

the tennessee magazine

Celebrating the Extraordinary Nature of Everyday Life

JULY 2025

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ON THE COVER

Audey Ratliff proudly displays a handcrafted F-style mandolin. The luthier began his career after finding a craftsman to make a specialized southpaw mandolin.

Ratliff Mandolins caters to left- and right-handed musicians alike.

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Mission Statement

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation 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.

Between the Lines

News from your Community



Chris A. Davis

CEMC General Manager

Who owns what

Understanding electric equipment responsibilities

As July rolls in with longer days and rising temperatures, it also brings an increased potential for severe weather. Summer storms can arrive quickly and hit hard, sometimes causing significant damage to essential electric equipment throughout our community. Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is always ready to respond swiftly to outages and restore power safely, but it's also important for homeowners to know which parts of the electric system are their responsibility and which are maintained by the co-op.

CEMC maintains the lines and equipment leading to your home, including utility poles, distribution power lines, electric meters and pad-mounted transformers. CEMC members are responsible for the equipment between the meter and their home or business. This includes underground service lines, the service panel, the weatherhead and the service mast.

If any equipment the homeowner is responsible for is damaged, a licensed electrician must make repairs before our crews can restore power. Knowing this in advance can help speed up

the process and keep everyone safe.

Trees and landscaping add beauty to our community, but regular trimming is essential to ensure reliable electric service and minimize damage from severe weather. CEMC routinely trims trees near distribution lines to improve reliability. If you spot a tree limb obstructing a distribution power line outside your home, please contact us so we can evaluate it.

Any overgrown limbs or vegetation around the service line is the homeowner's responsibility, and in these cases, please call a professional tree trimming service to assist.

By working together to understand the essential equipment that powers daily life, we can be better prepared to start the repair and restoration process if severe weather impacts our community.

If you have any questions about your electrical equipment, we're here to help. Please contact CEMC at **800-987-2362**.

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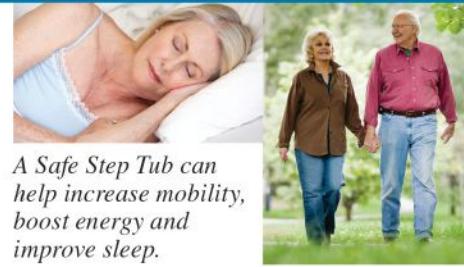
Personal Checklist:

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

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By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association

Too much is not enough

The summer heat. That is one thing we have no shortage of in Tennessee. And the humidity. Oh, the humidity. Many of my friends who are new to the state find the sticky summer air harder to acclimate to than the number of the thermometer. Our neighbors on the Cumberland Plateau and in the Smoky Mountains do get a bit of a reprieve compared to the rest of us.

For most of us, heading indoors for the modern marvel of air conditioning is a welcome retreat. But that comfort does require a significant effort. Cooling your home and your business consumes a lot of energy. And there is only one significant way to power all those air conditioners: electricity. This is different from the winter, since you might use natural gas, propane, wood or fuel oil to generate heat.

In the summer, the A/C needs to run. And the hotter it gets, the harder it has to work. So let me suggest a couple of tips that might help you save some energy and save some money. First, call a local HVAC technician and get your equipment serviced. By cleaning the coils that exchange heat, ensuring proper drainage of the condensation that is created and checking the refrigerant levels and lines, you can be certain that your unit will run as efficiently as possible.

Second, change the filter in your air conditioner. It is easy to do and will allow the fan to effectively move the air that is being cooled. Having an old, dirty air filter is like covering your mouth while you try to run a marathon. Though you will be able to breathe, you will have a hard time running very far because

you are preventing air from getting to your lungs. Your A/C's dirty air filter could be doing the same thing.

Third, understand that most residential HVAC systems can only cool the air by about 20 degrees. So if it's 95 degrees outside, the best you can probably hope for is about 75 degrees inside. Turning the thermostat down further won't actually make it cooler inside; it will just cause your machine to run longer and longer without much effect — costing you more and more money for a poor result. So resist that instinct to turn the temperature down further.

Lastly, you might not know about everything that is required to power all those air conditioners. But know this: When you think about everyone using energy all at once, remember that the co-op has to build its equipment capable enough to serve everyone all at once. Plus more. That extra is called reserve margin. So whatever the maximum amount of electricity that might get used by you and your neighbors, there needs to be around 20% more capacity to ensure that the grid continues to operate.

And that's what I meant by the title of this column. It can be a challenge to ensure that there is enough electricity on a hot summer day, plus more. But you can be sure your electric co-op is thinking about how to do that every single day. Even when it's nice and cool outside.

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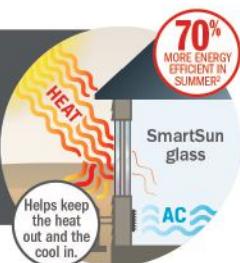
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From the Editor



By Chris Kirk

Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

Staying cool during the dog days

We asked for the heat. Well, I did, back in January and February when I was eagerly anticipating warmer weather. The grass is always greener, as they say. They should look at my lawn.

Anyway, we're entering the dog days of summer, and as I put the finishing touches on these thoughts, there's a dog flaked out on the office floor beside me, napping and enjoying the ceiling fan's hum and breeze.

Similarly, my kids have settled into a summertime routine that doesn't involve much of anything at all. They're real pros at rest and relaxation. But it's about time to shake off the laziness and get moving again.

If you're looking for something to do and find yourself near our capital city, consider lining up a tour of the Tennessee Residence. Amber Weaver stopped by a few weeks ago to get all the details on the history, art, symbolism and beauty of the mansion our governors have called home since 1949. See her feature beginning on page 28.

Speaking of history, when Bill Carey pitched a column about a Ford plant in West Tennessee, I thought of BlueOval City being built in Haywood County. Well, Bill found another interesting footnote of history in a Ford assembly plant in Memphis. It closed in 1957, and Bill has the info. See page 16.

Back to summertime activities: How about a hike in a true natural wonderland? Check out

Tennessee's newest state park — Scott's Gulf Wilderness (pages 32-34). It was dedicated in May and includes long-standing outdoor draws like Virgin Falls and Lost Creek. Work up a sweat on the trails, and cool by the streams and falls.

A leisurely afternoon under the fan is typically my speed, and if you're like me, you'll enjoy kicking back and reading about a true craftsman, Audey Ratliff, who makes beautiful mandolins, among other stringed instruments. Turn to page 12 to learn about him and his business.

Well, the dog has stirred, and now's a good time to stretch our legs for a bit. It's a beautifully sweltering summer day. Just what I wished for a few months ago!

Thanks for reading,

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Dream keepers

Live music, classic cheeseburgers and military uniforms turned an ordinary Thursday night into an unforgettable glimpse at the American dream

Aaah, summer. Songbirds are everywhere. Each morning, finches and warblers and Carolina wrens can be heard in the trees heralding another sunrise. I love waking up to their melodic chatter.

Middle Tennessee, being home to migrating musicians, introduces another breed of summer songbird heard in places once void of their music during the winter months: the outdoor patio.

Burger Republic¹ has a great menu, a stellar on-tap beer selection and a casual, dog-friendly patio. But yesterday, it fed more than our tummies. There was a songbird there whose music, message and flock fed our souls.

We had family visiting from out of town, and they wanted to hear some locally grown live music. We came to the right place. We asked to be seated at the patio where a young woman with a pink guitar was in the middle of her set.

Mattie Taylor² was singing a song about Knoxville when we walked in. I love Knoxville almost as much as she does, so she caught my ear immediately. And as she sang, I saw a kindred spirit.

It doesn't seem that long ago that I was a young singer-songwriter playing any place that had a stage — or a patio with a corner I could squeeze into. Like her, I added music to a diary of hope and heartbreak, drawing from the mighty adventure of being young.

Now, all these years later, with a lot of work, a lot of help from friends and mentors and no shortage of dumb luck, I've been able to achieve my dreams as a singer-songwriter. I'm still having more fun than I should be allowed to have. As interested as I was in the musician on the patio, I was most smitten by her fans: a group of matriarchal pride appearing to span three generations. They were at two tables pushed together 3 feet away from the singer's microphone,

and they were glued to her every word. These women adored her. They sang along to every song and requested their favorites.

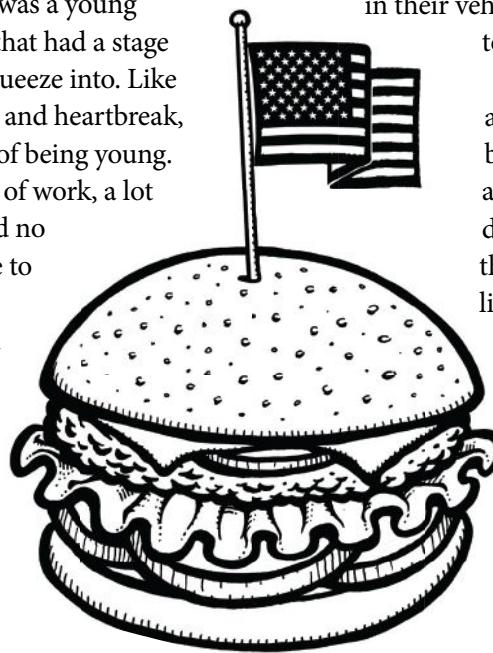
It was clear these women were not just watching a confident young singer-songwriter in adulthood; they were seeing the little girl they had raised, the kid who loved to sing, who made up her own songs, who made them gush with pride at elementary school recitals and high school talent shows. This was not a one-off patio performance at a Wilson County burger place; this was a culmination of events that took years to get here, years they were thrilled to be a part of. How could they not support her? How could they not get behind her with every beat of their hearts? This was their Mattie, and they were sharing her with the rest of us.

When she stopped to fix a broken guitar string, I got up for a bathroom break. On the way in, I happened upon some young men in Army camo waiting for their to-go order. I thanked them for their service as I always do, and they reacted, as these stoic soldiers always do, with grace and humility. Back at my seat later, I saw them pile back

in their vehicle, bags of food in hand, and head toward the freeway.

The juxtaposition of Mattie's music against this scene gave me goose-bumps. Here were soldiers and a singer, about the same age, going about their day. One is fulfilling her dream while the others are sworn to protect a way of life that makes sure these dreams can be pursued, whatever yours and mine happen to be.

My thoughts naturally pivoted to my father, uncles and countless friends who took the path of military service when they were young, with dreams of their own that would have to wait until they got back home. And I thought of a neighbor, a



Vietnam vet who was part of a story I wrote for this magazine about how music and songwriting can help veterans deal with PTSD.³ We became friendly and found ourselves at a local buffet talking tenderly about our families, our homes, our dreams. I cannot forget these large souls, many of whom are gone but whose legacy of love and honor lives on in me and the people I love.

As America's Independence Day approaches and we commemorate the origin story of our nation, I realize these concepts of freedom, loyalty and honor are too big for the words I have. I don't possess enough vocabulary to give them the justice they deserve.

But here in my little corner of America, I can sit under an umbrella at a favorite burger place with family and friends — and a few dogs — where a talented young singer with a pink guitar sings about home, hope and a little heartbreak. And I have a lot of people to thank for this privilege. And our remembrance is all any veteran has ever asked in return.

And this reminds me of a favorite moment on the patio last Thursday, when the young singer pulled up a stool for her niece, about 7 years old, to sit beside her and sing a favorite song together. Her niece's face was flushed, her eyes starstruck, in awe as she looked up at her aunt, tall, confident, living her dream.

That little girl is all of us. We grow up with our eyes wide open, taking in every word, every note, surrounded by people who are larger than life.

They are our family. We come from them. No matter what happens as we pursue dreams or chase careers, we know we will always belong with them. And sometimes that family will ask the waitress to push a few tables together so they can cheer us on and make requests.

The singer sang, her family sang with her and I took another bite of my classic cheeseburger, smiling the biggest smile I've had in days, unashamed by the tears in my eyes. Another day in Tennessee.

Now, that's what I call classic.

Listen to Antsy's song, "If This Ain't The Big Time, What Is?"

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist. Go to unhitched.com for his books, music and events. Use this QR code to download "If This Ain't The Big Time, What Is?" **FREE** to readers of *The Tennessee Magazine*. It's a song that speaks to what's really important when pursuing our dreams.



The footnotes below have caused ponderous glee in countless readers. Results may vary.

¹ Burger Republic is a local chain with four locations: two in Nashville, one in Chattanooga and one in Mount Juliet. The menu focuses on burgers, chicken, salads and sides, conscientiously including a Beyond Burger option and gluten-free buns to accommodate everyone's dietary predilections.

Drew Jackman and Jeff Warne, two Tennesseans with business savvy and a knack for putting a twist on an American classic, opened the first restaurant in Lenox Village off of Nolensville Pike in 2012. Their 96 Burger won top honors at the World Food Championships. I've had it. More than once. It's the balsamic-glazed bacon and horseradish-garlic aoli that push it over the edge for me. The last time I ate one, I was accused of making Homer Simpson noises.

They have several crazy-good takes on the theme, but if you're a purist, the Classic Burger will take you back in time. One bite and you're cruising Main Street in your dad's Chevy Impala with a pretty girl who has your class ring on her necklace. It's that good.

The history of the cheeseburger is complicated, with food historians pointing to several places and people of origin.

Many say the first time ground beef was put between two slices of bread was in Germany around the turn of the 20th century. Others say it was Pasadena, California, in 1924, and yet others credit Louisville, Kentucky, with the invention in the early 1930s.

Whatever its origin, I confess to having an almost prayerful moment of gratitude when taking those first bites of a good cheeseburger. I imagine the people who invented this delicious combination standing over me, in spirit form, hands clasped, smiling lovingly as I enjoy their invention.

I don't do this when using a cellphone or driving a car, both remarkable inventions that impact my daily life in immeasurable ways. No, I just do it with cheeseburgers.

National Burger Day is May 28. National Cheeseburger Day is Sept. 18. For heaven's sake, do not confuse the two and walk into a cheeseburger joint on May 28, wearing a T-shirt or waving a banner of some kind with the wrong designation. As a journalist, I feel a responsibility to make these observations for the good of the community.

Incidentally, National Cheeseburger Day falls on a Thursday this year. I'll see you on the patio at Burger Republic.

² Mattie Taylor: mattietaylormusic.com

³ "When Music Becomes Medicine" is one of the pieces I'm most proud to have written, and it bears a repeat reading during this time of reflection. Here's the link, from December 2018: tnmagazine.org/operationsong.



Audey Ratliff smiles in his shop with one of the F-style mandolins he created. Opposite page, around the shop you'll find some of the molds and tools Ratliff uses to build his instruments, top, and countless supplies labeled and stored, bottom.

The Left-Handed Mandolin Man

How one man took a challenge and strummed himself into a self-taught, world-renowned luthier

Story and photographs by Amber Weaver

Few in life are able to discover a passion, turn it into a hobby and then make more than a four-decade career out of the same craft — but Audey Ratliff has done just that. Since 1982, Ratliff has handmade more than 1,200 mandolins in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, and those time-honored traditions of the South can be found all over the world.

"You've heard the saying, 'If you like what you do, then you'll never work a day in your life,'" Ratliff shared. "Well, I'm one of those fortunate guys. I've never worked a day in my life doing this, and that's the truth."

From strumming to a purpose

Ratliff was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, but spent his childhood traveling the nation. His father worked for the Federal Aviation Administration, and that led them to various stays in the Southeast as well as ventures in Alaska and Panama. While many things changed as the Ratliffs moved, music was always a constant. His father, Tom, was a talented Dobro player and shared that zeal with his son.

"My earliest musical memory is being carried backstage on my father's shoulders to meet Uncle Josh Graves at a Flatt and Scruggs concert in the early 1960s," Ratliff said.

When he was 12 years old, the family made their way back to the Appalachian Mountains, and Church Hill, served by Holston Electric Cooperative, has been home ever since. From that time on, Ratliff spent his time playing the guitar in several bands. One opening for a mandolin player in his dad's band changed the course of his life forever.

"I didn't really know how to play, but I borrowed a teardrop mandolin from a friend," Ratliff recalled. "I turned the strings over to make it left-handed. One of the guys in the band knew enough to teach me the songs on the set list that we had. So, I didn't know how to play anything except for those songs."

After a few shows, Ratliff wanted to return the borrowed mandolin and find one of his own. Being a lefty, this was easier said than done, though, as many instruments, especially mandolins, are built for right-handed musicians. He soon found a man in Virginia who was up for the unique challenge.



"I can remember it like it was yesterday," Ratliff said about meeting the luthier. "It was a little old country store, and you had to shove the door open and push the sawdust out of the way. It was a step back in time, but he built a wonderful instrument."

Ratliff played that instrument for years, and that interaction inspired him to have many more "left-handed mandolin man" conversations. But now he's the one building the treasures.

A passion turned into a business

Ratliff's curiosity was peaked after that connection. He began studying and learning how to make stringed instruments. Soon enough, he was creating a space in his spare bedroom so that he, too, could make both right- and left-handed mandolins.

"That man in Virginia got me interested in the process," Ratliff said. "I bought some books on guitar, fiddle and mandolin building. I then built one and sold it. Built

another and sold it. And here I am 43 years later."

It didn't take long for Ratliff Mandolins to outgrow the extra bedroom. He built a small shop out behind the house to continue his work. In 1994, he moved to the building he has today off Main Street in Church Hill to fulfill a contract for a warehouse distributing company. He hired seven employees to help him complete the 500-instrument job, instructing each one about the craftsmanship of making the bluegrass staple. Several of those men even went on to become prominent luthiers themselves.

All about the craftsmanship

As you can imagine, a lot of attention, time and skill go into making a fretted, stringed musical instrument. It takes Ratliff around 100 man-hours to build one single mandolin with eight strings arranged in four courses.

He generally makes two different styles of mandolins: A-style and

F-style. Through those two styles are endless customizable opportunities. Ratliff considers his RA-5 "Master Model" to have all the features of the finest instruments of the golden age of lutherie. Those mandolins are bound all over with three-ply binding, genuine mother-of-pearl inlays, ebony bridge and fingerboard and top-quality hardware. His "Country Boy" mandolins include white binding around the top, ebony bridge, genuine bone nut and a satin finish. They are still high quality, just without the fancy embellishments.

In the beginning, Ratliff would create 10 custom mandolins in a batch. Each instrument still goes through the same general steps. First, he plans and designs, meaning Ratliff gathers the wood and molds he needs to make either the teardrop-shaped instrument or the more ornate, fancier style. He prepares the body by bending the sides and placing them in the appropriate molds. Then, he carves

From left, a close-up reveals the detail found in an F-style mandolin Ratliff so carefully crafted, a few of Ratliff's creations hang in a row in the finishing room and Ratliff shows how one mandolin body begins.



the top and back out and glues the two mirror-image pieces of wood onto the sides with spruce on the front and maple on the back. Sound holes, either F-holes or oval holes, are cut, and after some cleanup, the neck of the instrument is built and attached. Ratliff then installs binding and the fingerboard and does custom inlay. From there, he does the final sanding and applies the finish. The mandolins are then left to cure for several weeks before hardware and strings are installed. The last step is to attach the decorative tailpiece cover, and each one is hand engraved.

"I think I may have practiced on 1,000 pennies and quarters when I was learning how to engrave," Ratliff said.

While the process is tedious, Ratliff enjoys sharing the steps with others and has even put together a YouTube channel demonstrating it. He posted his first videos almost 20 years ago. For a period of time, he did a weekly production diary

showing every step that goes into the construction.

"I could tell a customer that their mandolin was No. 3 in my batch," Ratliff said. "That way when I made my videos, they could tune in and see how far along I was on their project and see each step along the way."

Ratliff made those videos every single week for four years. Now he uses the channel to highlight unique creations he has for sale and connect with his beloved music industry.

1,280 mandolins and counting

Since 2001, Ratliff Mandolins has been a one-man show. Ratliff has cut back his batches to five mandolins at a time to ensure the utmost quality in his products now that he is the one making them entirely. His sales are done primarily through music stores or private orders. On average, he handmakes around 20 mandolins each year — with his best record being 28 in a year.

Over the past four decades, Ratliff has made 1,280 mandolins, more than 200 dulcimers, six guitars and a couple of violins. Many you will find here in the U.S., but some are being strummed across the world as Ratliff has shipped mandolins to Europe, Australia, Japan and South America. Some of those instruments were even made from lumber he cut down himself out of his own yard.

"It is indescribable that feeling you get when you play something and can remember when what you put into it was standing there in your yard," Ratliff said with a smile.

"Even after all this time, when I put strings on (a mandolin) and play that first tune, it is still a pretty cool feeling that I never want to forget and always want to share."

— Audey Ratliff



Contact Ratliff Mandolins

Phone: 423-357-4381

Email: audey@ratliffmandolins.com

Website: ratliffmandolins.com

Address: 440 W. Main St., Church Hill

Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.



History Lesson

by Bill Carey

The Tennessee History Guy



Memphis factory made 1.5 million cars between 1913 and 1957

The most overlooked factory in Tennessee history managed to survive the Great Depression and World War II, only to be annihilated by the Edsel.

Today there are three automobile assembly plants in Tennessee: Nissan in Smyrna, General Motors in Spring Hill and Volkswagen in Chattanooga.

I used to think that these three assembly plants were the only such factories in Tennessee history, other than a short-lived establishment in Nashville called Marathon Motor

Works. However, a few years ago, I stumbled across an article from the 1920s about the Ford assembly plant in Memphis.

The Ford plant opened in November 1913 and within a year had 500 employees. Like all assembly plants, it didn't make car parts, but its workers put together parts that had been made elsewhere and delivered to Memphis by rail, river and highway.

The Ford plant was one of the highest-paying manufacturers in Tennessee for decades. It was originally in

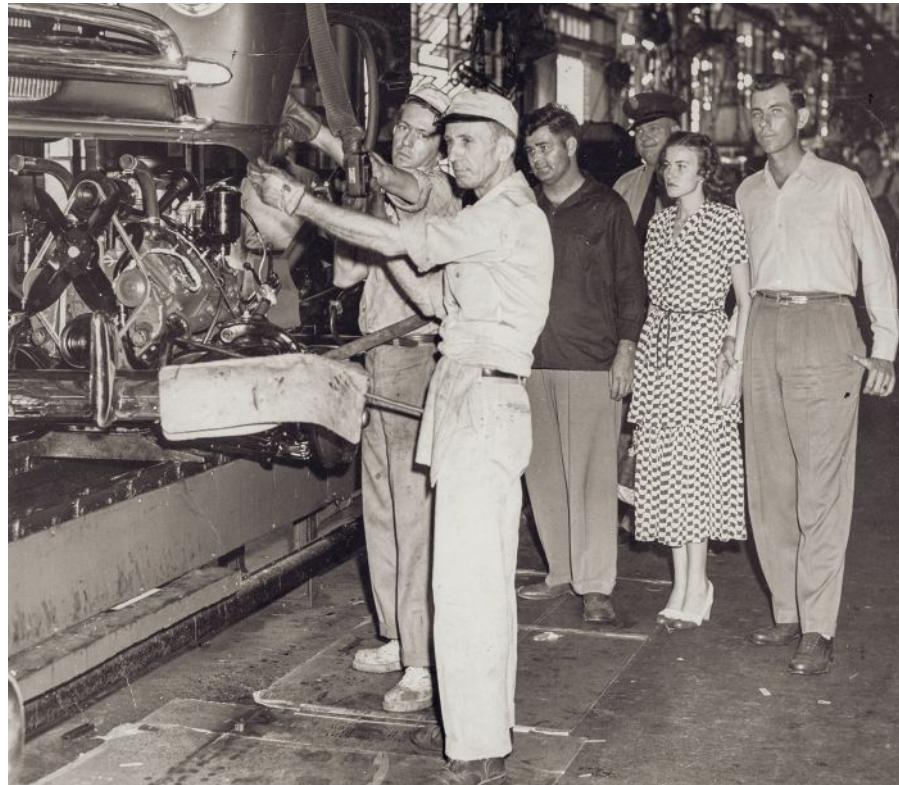
a five-story building at 495 Union Ave., which later became home of the *Commercial Appeal* and *Press-Scimitar* newspapers.

Ford left its original Union Avenue building in 1924 for a much larger plant on Riverside Drive, about 2 miles south of downtown Memphis. By 1930, the plant had nearly 2,000 employees. Some of them bought small houses in a working-class neighborhood developed near the factory known as Fordhurst.

Memphis' 250,000-square-foot plant made more than 300 Model T's per day in the early 1920s. It continued to make cars as the Ford company released new models such as the Model AA truck, the Model B and the Model 18.

The Great Depression caused the Memphis Ford plant to close from early 1933 until March 1935 (the closing date is hard to come by). In the late 1930s, labor strife sometimes affected the Memphis Ford plant. Sometimes the plant would shut down because of strikes at factories in the Midwest that made car parts. Sometimes, workers aligned with the United Auto Workers (UAW) would try to organize employees, and there were occasional acts of violence when they tried. That stopped in June 1941, when all Ford plants became union as a result of a management agreement with the UAW.

During World War II, new car production was halted because metal,



Two workers at the Ford assembly plant lower the front end of a new car onto an engine in 1949 while plant visitors watch.

Memphis Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis



A group photo of the Memphis Ford plant employees from 1937.

Memphis Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis

gasoline and rubber were in short supply. Ford shifted its Memphis plant to make Pratt and Whitney aircraft engine parts and, like many Tennessee factories, hired a lot of women to work the assembly lines. After the war, the plant underwent a 75,000-square-foot expansion and was producing cars and trucks again.

Memphis' Ford plant continued to thrive through most of the 1950s. It was a high-profile employer whose employees gave tours to visitors and school groups and contributed to local fund drives.

Then, in 1956 and 1957, Ford invested \$250 million in a sedan called the Edsel. It was named for Henry Ford's son Edsel Ford, who was (it turns out) named for a former Vanderbilt chemistry professor. "(Edsel) was named for Dr. Edsel A. Ruddiman, a friend of the late Henry Ford, and a pharmaceutical chemist who was teaching at Vanderbilt at the time of Edsel's birth," the *Nashville Banner* explained in November 1956. (Henry Ford and Ruddiman were childhood friends. After teaching at Vanderbilt, Ruddiman worked as a chemist for Ford Motor.)

Advertisements for the Edsel car appeared in hundreds of American newspapers and magazines in August 1957, in advance of a Sept. 4 official release. The ads boasted about its powerful engine, brakes that tightened themselves, gears that shifted automatically, contour seats and even a "warning light that flashes when you exceed your pre-set speed limit."

However, American consumers didn't take to Edsels because of a litany of quality, design and engineering failures. "(The Edsel) was the colossal failure to which all future failures would be compared," a *New York Times* op-ed piece said 50 years later.

At 4 p.m. on May 5, 1957, Ford told the 952 employees at the Memphis assembly plant that they would all be laid off a few weeks later. At the time, the company said that the factory was outdated and too small. But "the real reason for abrupt termination of the Ford assembly plant in Memphis," wrote *Press-Scimitar* reporter Alfred Andersson, "was failure of the \$250 million Edsel."

On June 6, the 1,573,709th — and last — Ford ever made in Memphis rolled

off the assembly line. "Everybody in the plant except the switchboard operator moved into the plant to watch the (last) car come off the line," the *Press-Scimitar* reported. "Nobody said much."

A few days later, many of the former Ford employees had a subdued picnic, paid for by union dues. A lot of the laid-off workers said they had found new jobs; some said that they had "iron in the fire"; a few talked about moving.

Today these workers and their factory are a blind spot in the world of Tennessee history. The Ford plant used to be mentioned in Memphis obituaries, but almost everyone who ever worked there died long ago. *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* has entries about Nissan, Saturn and the short-lived Marathon Car Factory but none on the Memphis Ford plant. And a few years ago, when Ford announced that it intended to build a massive electric car assembly plant in Haywood County, there was hardly any mention of the fact that the same company used to have an assembly plant nearby.

Tennessee Events

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

West Tennessee

JULY 4 **Firefighters Freedom Festival**

Jackson Regional Airport.
[visitjacksontn.com/event/
firefighters-freedom-festival](http://visitjacksontn.com/event/firefighters-freedom-festival)

JULY 4–6 **All-American Weekend**

Graceland, Memphis.
877-777-0606 or graceland.com

JULY 9–12 **Jackson Sings the Gospel**

Carl Perkins Civic Center, Jackson.
941-756-6942 or billbaileyconcerts.com

JULY 22–27 **“The Wiz” (Touring)**

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis.
901-525-3000 or
orpheum-memphis.com/events/the-wiz

AUG. 2 **National Mustard Day**

Downtown Dyersburg.
731-325-5359 or
themustardcompanystore.com

Middle Tennessee

JULY 12 **Fishing Tournament**

Centerville Park. 931-777-9240 or
facebook.com/people/Hickman-County-Rescue-Squad/61573040521888

JULY 12 **2025 Tennessee Pickle Festival**

Putnam County Fairgrounds, Cookeville.
southernmarketevents.com

JULY 17–19 **Tennessee-Kentucky Threshermen Show**

Historic Adams.
facebook.com/TnKyThreshermenShow

JULY 19–20 **24th Annual Tennessee Elegant and Depression Glass Show and Sale**

Gallatin Civic Center. 615-856-4259 or
fostoria-tennessee.com

JULY 19–20 **Upper Cumberland Family Friendly Art Fair**

Hyder-Burks Agricultural Pavilion, Cookeville.
931-526-2424 or cookevilleart.com

JULY 23–26 **James D. Vaughan Quartet Festival**

Crockett Theatre, Lawrenceburg.
931-762-4231 or vaughanfestival.com

JULY 25–26 **171st Annual Irish Picnic**

St. Patrick's Church and School, McEwen.
931-582-3493 or irishpicnic.com

JULY 25–27 **Tennessee Antiquarian Book and Ephemera Fair**

The Factory at Franklin.
tennesseebookfair.com

JULY 26 **Swiss Celebration**

Stoker-Stampfli Farm, Gruetli-Laager.
931-235-3029

JULY 26 **Upper Cumberland Family History and Genealogy Festival**

Historic Granville. 931-653-4151 or
granvilletn.com

East Tennessee

JULY 11–19 **Scopes Trial Centennial Celebration**

Dayton. info@scopes100.com or
scopes100.com

JULY 18–26 **Fun Fest**

Kingsport. info@funfest.net or funfest.net

JULY 19 **Run Santa Run Christmas in July Night Run**

Bicentennial Greenbelt Park, Maryville.
865-300-6722 or jay@runrhino.run

JULY 29–AUG. 3 **“Les Miserables”**

Historic Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville.
865-684-1200 or tennesseetheatre.com/events/detail/les-miserables

AUG. 2 **RC Airshow Over Summit Airfield 2025**

Summit Airfield, Ooltewah.
404-437-6320 or vonzarainc.com

AUG. 3 **Summer Sizzler**

Camp Jordan, East Ridge. 760-669-6471 or
support@bodiesrc.com

AUG. 9–10 **Cherokee Cultural Celebration**

Red Clay State Historic Park, Cleveland.
423-478-0339 or
tnstateparks.com/parks/red-clay

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.

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CEMC director candidates must meet July 22 deadline

The 87th Annual Meeting of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation will be held Saturday, Sept. 20, at Rossview High School in Clarksville. Members are invited to attend, vote in director elections and register for prizes.



An election will be held for the following director positions: Cheatham, South Robertson and South Montgomery.

CEMC members interested in serving on the board of directors must contact the general manager's office to obtain a petition. Petitions must be signed by at least 15 members and returned to the general

manager's office by the deadline of **Tuesday, July 22**, which is 60 days prior to the annual meeting.

Anyone with a valid membership in good standing as of July 22 can vote in director elections. Those applying for membership after July 22 will not be eligible to vote in this year's election but are welcome to attend the meeting and register for prizes. (CEMC Bylaws Article 3 — Section 3.05)

Portland's ninth annual Farm to Table Dinner returns to Main Street

The Portland Chamber of Commerce will host the ninth annual Farm to Table Dinner on Saturday, Aug. 23. The event will take place in the middle of Main Street and will feature great food, local drinks and live music.

The evening begins at 7 p.m. with appetizers and live music from the acoustic duo Dean & Jerry. A multi-

course dinner prepared by A Catered Affair will be served at 7:30 p.m. Guests can also enjoy a fantastic selection of local beverages from Sumner Crest Winery.

Tickets prices are \$100 per person and include everything — dinner, drinks, entertainment and photo opportunities. RSVPs are required by Thursday, Aug. 14, and the event is

likely to sell out. Guests with dietary restrictions are encouraged to contact the chamber in advance to discuss menu options.

To purchase tickets or for more information, please contact the Portland Chamber of Commerce at **615-325-9032** or by email at kristen@portlandcofc.com.



2026 CEMC calendar will feature local students' artwork

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's 2026 Calendar Art Contest was held this spring, and once again, we were amazed by the incredible submissions from talented young artists across our service area. Judging this contest is never an easy job, and this year proved no different.

The winners have been selected and notified, and while the calendars

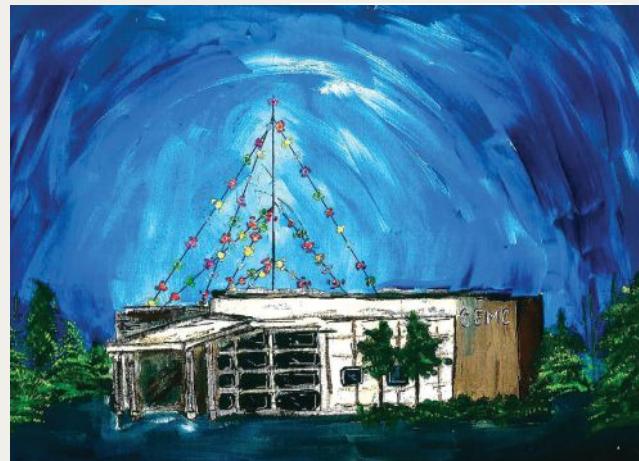
won't be available until later this year, we're excited to give you a sneak peek at some of the winning artwork.

Contest winners receive cash prizes, and their artwork will be featured in one of three calendar editions being offered this year. As always, calendars are free and will be available at all CEMC district business offices starting in November.

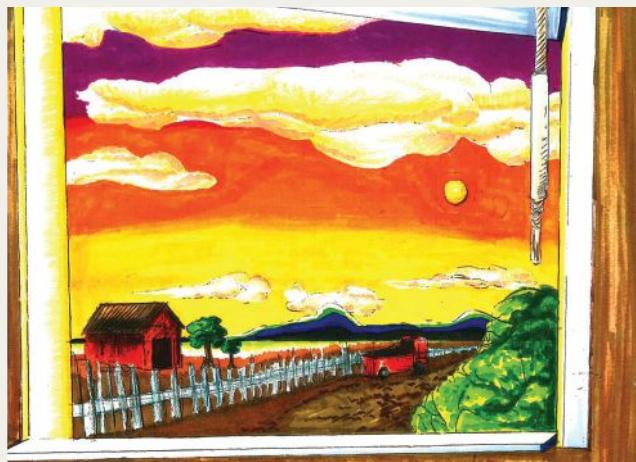
A big thank you goes out to all the gifted students who entered as well as the teachers and parents who supported their participation. Don't forget to check out the January 2026 issue of *The Tennessee Magazine* for information on how to enter next year's contest. We're already looking forward to seeing what next year brings!



Overall winner – Brystolyn French
Kirkwood High School



Cover – Karley Sugg
Clarksville High School



Pocket Calendar Cover – Abbigayle Hlynosky
Stewart County High School



Pocket Calendar Cover – Olivia Lambert
Cheatham County Central High School

Energy efficiency myth busting

“Don’t go outside with wet hair — you’ll catch a cold,” “Wait an hour after eating before swimming,” and “Coffee stunts your growth,” are all old wives’ tales you’ve likely heard throughout your life. Just like these common misconceptions, there are many you will come across when it comes to energy efficiency. Here are five myths to watch out for when it comes to saving money on your electric bill:

MYTH NO. 1: It’s more energy-efficient to hand-wash your dishes instead of running your dishwasher. In most households, the dishwasher is more energy-efficient and uses less hot water than hand-washing. Filling the average kitchen sink can take 4 to 6 gallons of water, depending on the size and depth of the sink bowl. A running kitchen sink can use 2 gallons of water per minute, depending on the faucet type. A standard Energy

Star-rated dishwasher uses around 3 to 4 gallons of water per cycle.

MYTH NO. 2: Running longer cycles on appliances will use more energy.

Even though using a quick cycle mode means your dishwasher or washing machine will run for a shorter amount of time, this mode doesn’t actually save you energy or money. Instead of using these speed wash or speed dry cycles, wait until you have a full load of laundry or dishes to wash and dry. Today, most technologies use significantly less energy when they are running a full cycle.

MYTH NO. 3: Not adjusting your thermostat will save you money on your electric bill. We all have that family member who is adamant about the thermostat’s temperature staying the same. While they mean no harm, it is a good idea to adjust the temperature every now and then. If you are leaving to go on vacation,

bump up the thermostat a few degrees. This way, you aren’t wasting energy but are keeping appliances like your refrigerator cool.

MYTH NO. 4: Ceiling fans keep your home cool while you are away.

Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. They circulate room air but do not change the temperature. Running a ceiling fan when no one is home or in the room only adds to your electricity use cost.

MYTH NO. 5: Reducing energy use is too expensive.

Many believe that reducing energy use requires expensive upfront costs like purchasing new appliances or construction upgrades to an older home. However, there are many things you can do without spending a fortune that will help lower your bill. Turning off lights when you aren’t in the room, sealing air leaks and unplugging devices when they aren’t in use can all reduce consumption.



Member Appreciation Day

Around 1,000 Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation members attended the co-op’s annual Member Appreciation Day on Friday, May 15. Members who attended the event, which was held at each district business office, were served grilled hot dogs, chips, cookies and soft drinks and received small giveaways as a token of our appreciation for their business. A drawing was also held at each location for an electric grill. Pictured at left are members who enjoyed the event in Springfield.

Play it safe this summer: 5 electrical safety tips for kids

Summer is in full swing, and chances are your children are heading outdoors to play as soon as you give them the go-ahead. Before you open the door and feet start running out, though, make sure they understand these five electrical safety tips.

Point out overhead power lines.

Make sure your kids know where overhead power lines cross your yard and neighboring ones. More importantly, help them understand what the lines do and the severity of a potential hazard if anything comes in contact with power lines.

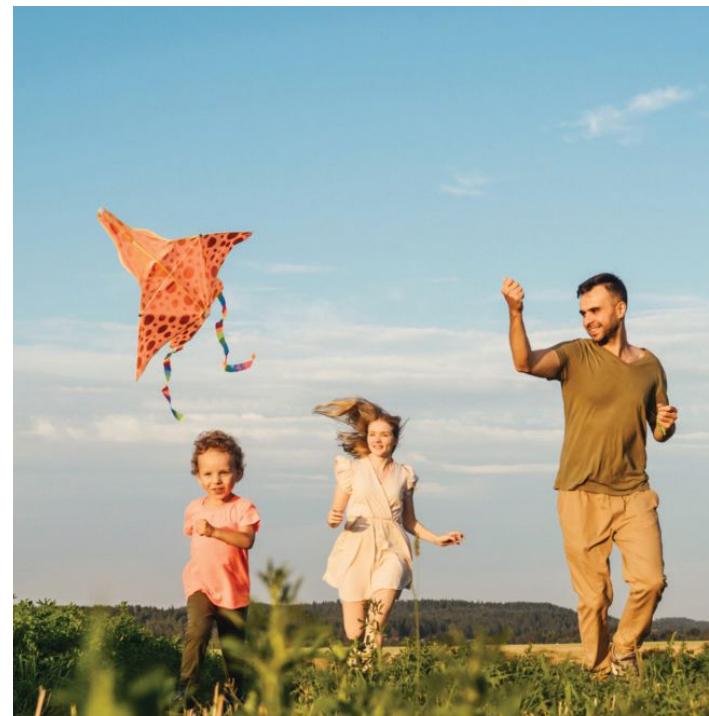
Fly toys in large open areas. Kites, drones, model airplanes and any other flying toys need to be flown far away from power lines in places like fields or parks. If the toy gets stuck in an overhead power line or tree that's near power lines, do not attempt to get it down. Contact your co-op for assistance.

Never climb a utility pole or tower. Climbing is fun and appealing for children, but make sure they understand to keep away from utility poles, towers and trees near lines. The electricity carried through this equipment is extremely high voltage and could cause an injury or a fatality.

Keep water and electricity apart.

Summer days often involve pools, sprinklers, water guns or maybe even water balloons. While water days are fun for all, make sure the kids understand to keep all water away from electrical devices or outlets.

Call for help. Have your children come and find you or another adult if any-



thing seems out of the ordinary when it comes to electricity or power lines.

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation wishes you a safe and happy summer break!



Leaders from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of the Tennessee congressional delegation and discuss issues that matter to electric co-ops and the communities they serve.

Electric cooperative leaders discuss pressing issues with D.C. lawmakers

Leaders from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation were in Washington, D.C., April 27 through 29 to meet with members of the Tennessee congressional delegation. CEMC directors Bryan Watson, Shela Williams, Eddie Swan, Rodney Swearingen, Wes Aymett, Rex Hawkins and Ed Oliver, General Manager Chris Davis, Administrative Division Manager Annebelle Pittenger, Engineering and Operations Division Manager David Abernathy and Manager of Member Experience Beau Baggett met with Sen. Marsha Blackburn and Sen. Bill Hagerty.

More than 50 electric co-op leaders from Tennessee traveled to Washington, D.C., to make these visits during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual

legislative conference — a time where electric cooperative leaders gather from around the country to hear from members of Congress and administrative officials and to discuss timely and pressing legislative issues affecting electric co-ops and their member-owners.

“Opportunities like this are so valuable,” Davis says. “We have a responsibility to make sure our members here at home have what they need. Making these connections and having these conversations allow us to better advocate for policies that benefit our communities and the betterment of our members.”

Lawmakers were encouraged to support broadband and other investments in rural infrastructure as well as other legislation that would

reduce costs for electric co-ops and co-op consumers. Lawmakers were also invited to visit their local co-ops to meet employees, attend annual meetings or tour co-op facilities.

“This is the only NRECA conference all year that provides the opportunity to hear from key government officials, then engage directly with your representatives in Congress,” says Ryan King, TECA’s vice president of government affairs. “We were able to advocate for federal legislative and executive branch policies that benefit our electric cooperatives and our member-owners. With new leadership in the White House and Congress, this was a great chance to create new relationships while cementing the ones we’ve had through the years.”

What's next for fiber?



Cumberland Connect's future roadmap

As we all know, technology evolves at lightning speed. Luckily, our team at Cumberland Connect is working to stay ahead of the curve. Our all-fiber network has already brought reliable, high-speed internet to thousands of homes across our communities — but we're not stopping there.

We recently celebrated our five-year anniversary — a moment that's not just about celebrating what we have accomplished but about what the future holds. Our team looked back at five years of keeping rates steady, growing our fiber footprint and listening to what our members need most. Now, it's time to look forward.

One of the most exciting frontiers for the internet industry is multi-Gig internet. Multi-Gig speeds take things to the next level, delivering service that can double or even triple the speed and bandwidth of standard 1 Gig connections. But what does that mean for you?

While higher speeds might sound like faster downloads for a single device, the real advantage of multi-Gig service is increased bandwidth for your entire network. Most devices — like your smartphone, smart TV or gaming console — can't use multi-Gig speeds by themselves. However, with so many connected devices in your home, that extra bandwidth ensures they can all simultaneously operate at their best without slowing each other down.

No matter how many people are online, multi-Gig speeds keep everything running smoothly — even during the busiest hours of the day.

As devices become more advanced and data-hungry — think 8K video, virtual reality and whole-home smart systems — multi-Gig speeds ensure your network has the capacity and reliability to handle it all. Multi-Gig internet is all about creating a bigger pipeline for your data — one that can handle whatever the future throws at it. Multi-Gig service is already available in some areas of Cumberland Connect's service territory, and we plan to expand multi-Gig service availability to all our members in the future.

Another exciting project coming down the pipeline is outdoor Wi-Fi solutions. Imagine extending your reliable fiber connection beyond the walls of your home to your back patio, workshop or even the garden — with no dead zones or dropped connections. Outdoor Wi-Fi is all about making your home's connectivity truly seamless.

Like multi-Gig, these outdoor Wi-Fi solutions are in the early stages of development. We're committed to bringing them to life in a way that's secure, reliable and tailored to the unique needs of our members. These future enhancements are possible because fiber itself is already future-proof. Fiber isn't just faster — it's the most reliable and advanced

delivery method available, designed to handle the increasing demands of modern life and whatever technology brings next. Symmetrical speeds mean uploads and downloads happen simultaneously, perfect for sharing large files, video calls and cloud backups. And because fiber doesn't rely on aging copper lines, it's immune to the slowdowns and bottlenecks that hold back cable or DSL networks. Fiber's resilience and scalability make it the backbone for future innovations that lie ahead.



The past five years have been about laying a solid, future-proof foundation for connectivity in our communities. Now, we're looking ahead to the next five years and beyond. Multi-Gig speeds. Outdoor Wi-Fi. Smarter homes. Stronger communities. These aren't just ideas; they're part of Cumberland Connect's roadmap for the future. We're proud to be your trusted connectivity partner, and we'll keep working to ensure that our fiber network remains a step ahead — so you're always connected to what matters most and ready for anything the future brings.

A smarter future starts here.
Scan to learn more about
Cumberland Connect!



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Making the case for professional HVAC tuneups and duct maintenance

Q: Are professional HVAC tuneups and duct sealing really worth it?

A: Yes! By the time July rolls around, your air conditioning unit has already been hard at work, keeping you cool and comfortable. Knowing Tennessee, though, the days are about to get even hotter! Professional HVAC tuneups and duct maintenance reduce the likelihood of unexpected failures and keep your heating and cooling systems running effectively and efficiently.

Avoid costly emergency calls

Licensed and insured heating and cooling contractors not only clean your system, but they'll also make sure everything's in good working order. Preventive care can help you avoid costly emergency calls in the heat of the summer or the heart of winter.



A professional tuneup typically includes a general safety inspection as well as cleaning and checking evaporation and condenser coils, refrigerant levels, blowers, electrical connections and wiring, thermostat calibration, parts lubrication, burner assembly (for combustion systems), defrost cycle and reversing valve (for electric heat pumps), and system airflow and efficiency measurements.

Improve energy efficiency

Heating and cooling systems that aren't properly maintained can be less efficient and could be driving up your energy bills. During a routine residential HVAC maintenance call, technicians optimize your system to make sure it's running as efficiently as possible. This also helps lower energy costs.

Even the most efficient HVAC system can't perform well if your ductwork is poorly sealed. Energy Star reports that 20% to 30% of the air that moves through a typical home's duct system is lost as a result of poorly connected ducts, lack of insulation and other leaks.

That means your heating and cooling system has to work harder — and use more energy — to deliver conditioned air to your rooms. Professional duct sealing can significantly improve airflow, comfort and efficiency. In some cases, sealing and insulating ductwork can reduce your total energy bill by up to 20%.

Enhance indoor air quality

Typically, maintenance also includes checking and changing air filters. Clean air filters help your system run more efficiently, and they can help keep dust, allergens and other particles from circulating around your home, leading to a healthier indoor environment.

Changing the air filter inside your home frequently is an easy way to help your system and improve indoor air quality. Plus, it's easy to do it yourself! If you're not sure how, ask your contractor who will be happy to show you what you need to do.

Extend the lifespan of your heating system

Performing regular maintenance is a great opportunity to identify small concerns before they become major emergency problems. Tuneups can minimize the likelihood of costly emergency service calls and help ensure that your system works when you need it. When your system is running efficiently and smoothly, it'll last longer too.

Keep you and your loved ones safe

Heating systems, especially older models, can pose health and safety risks. Routine maintenance is a great opportunity for your heating and cooling experts to look for leaks and check electrical connections, inspect heat exchangers and make sure that all safety mechanisms are working properly.

Peace of mind

If your heating and cooling equipment is more than 10 years old and your utility bills are going up, a professional inspection is the way to go. If it is time to consider a new system, be sure to ask your contractor about HVAC rebates that might be available.

Save money

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a well-maintained HVAC system can operate up to 15% more efficiently than an unmaintained system. That could mean significant savings over the course of a hot Tennessee summer or a chilly winter season — especially considering that heating and cooling account for nearly 50% of a typical home's energy use.

Professional HVAC tuneups ensure heating and cooling systems are running efficiently and can identify needed repairs before they become emergency problems. Don't forget to replace or clean the filters too!

HVAC tuneups and duct maintenance are the perfect example of spending money to save money. Avoiding emergency service calls, improving energy efficiency and prolonging the functional lifespan of your heating system are all great ways to save.

Brad Wagner is a programs operations manager at TVA EnergyRight, and he's committed to helping people make informed decisions and lower their energy costs.



The People's House of Tennessee

How a nearly century-old mansion has become a welcoming point for hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans



In 1929, William Ridley Wills, the founder of National Life and Accident Insurance Company, built a 15,500-square-foot Georgian-style home in Nashville for him and his wife. The three-story, 16-room structure that sits upon 10 beautiful acres has since been home to many notable Tennesseans, including Govs. Gordon Browning, Frank Clement, Buford Ellington, Winfield Dunn, Ray Blanton, Lamar Alexander, Ned Ray McWherter, Don Sundquist, Bill Haslam and, currently, Bill and Maria Lee.

"Both the Governor and First Lady feel strongly that this is the people's house," said Allyson Huddleston, the Tennessee Residence director. "It is not just the governor's mansion to them. It belongs to the people of Tennessee, and they treasure opening its doors to welcome guests."

The history

The Volunteer State governor resided in two other locations from 1907 to 1949. The first being the current location of the War Memorial Auditorium, found directly across the street from the Capitol. The next residence was on West End Avenue. Both have since been torn down. The South Curtiswood Lane property officially became the Tennessee Residence when the state purchased it in 1949 following Wills' death.

The gardens

Before entering the house, the landscape will catch any eye no matter the season. The grounds, home to more than 175 trees that represent 27 different families and 63 species, are certified by the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council as a Level 2 Arboretum.

Aside from the tulip poplars and Southern magnolias, there are also several gardens across the property that each hold a special meaning. The oldest is the Iris Garden. It is original to the house and is filled with gorgeous flowers just steps from the mansion.

"The irises you see today are grandbabies of the originals that the Wills family put in," Huddleston said. "While there have been many changes over the years, this garden has held its place in history."

Just steps from the fountain in front of the home, there is a door that leads to the Secret Garden. During her time as First Lady, Crissy Haslam dedicated her time to upgrading the grounds of the residence. Named from the beloved book, this secluded space was de-



Beautiful hydrangeas are found in the oldest garden at the Tennessee Residence leading to the Governor's home. Below, beds planted in the Kitchen and Cutting Garden grow food for the first family and their visitors.

signed by Haslam for more private gatherings. It is surrounded by tall shrubs with a path of steppingstones that leads to a simple table and chairs. The space is cornered by four statues that were found at different areas on the property, and Haslam thought it would be best to bring them all together.

"First Lady Haslam created this beautiful garden, and we all think it is just so special," Huddleston said.

While beauty and privacy are the focus of the first two spaces, the Kitchen and Cutting Garden at the Tennessee Residence is for growing, learning and, of course, eating. First Lady Haslam added the garden in 2013 as part of her landscape restoration project. It was designed to match how a garden might have looked when the residence was built.



Well-defined paths lead visitors through the 2,800 square feet with 10 garden beds and a greenhouse. Organic and fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown year-round and enjoyed by the first family and their visitors.

“Part of the beauty of putting our own garden in and doing our own plantings is that we can cut straight from here and either make incredible dishes or beautiful flower arrangements,” Huddleston said.

School groups are even able to participate in hands-on activities like planting basil or pulling carrots when they come to the property.

The house

Upon entering the mansion, the foyer greets guests with the classic black and white checkered floors, beautiful pillars, intricate light fixtures, a solid limestone staircase and iconic photographs from throughout history.

Below, the nearly century-old solid limestone staircase greets visitors in the foyer. Right, Elvis Presley poses on the staircase in a photo found today in the foyer. Far right, some of the many books and photographs Gov. Lee has in his home office.

“This is truly the heart of the home,” Huddleston said.

The foyer is likely the most well-known room in the house as it is the common meeting space for events held at the residence. Aside from a staircase that only touches in three spots and took seven attempts to build correctly, the Tennessee Residence is a normal home enriched by items showcasing state history.

The dining room has a beautiful wooden table that when extended can seat up to 22 people. Each chair has a different seat cover that was hand done in needlepoint. Each design represents a different wildflower found in the state of Tennessee.

“We are in the Volunteer State, and all of these chair designs were done by volunteers,” Huddleston said. “You just have to love that!”

While Gov. Lee usually does his work at the Capitol, he does have a home office inside the residence. The

room stands out compared to the rest of the architecture as it is paneled in knotty pine that is original to the house.

“It is kind of funny because you have this fancy Georgian-style mansion, and then you come in here and you have this knotty pine,” Huddleston said. “But this is so Tennessee. It is so ornately carved, but it is still hard pine. It is a fun juxtaposition.”

The room is filled with books, fun memories and paintings of the Lee family’s farm.

The drawing room with a portrait of former President Andrew Jackson has become quite popular in the home, especially during the holiday season. The Tennessee Residence is open to the public for viewing during Christmas, and this room is decorated with an enormous tree.

“We have 6,000 to 7,000 people come through here every Christmas, and this room just always blows me





The atrium within Conservation Hall, located underneath the front lawn of the Tennessee Residence.

away," Huddleston said. "It's really something everyone has to see."

The walls, shelves and tables of the Tennessee Residence are decorated in unique displays of antiques and artwork that demonstrate the rich and robust history of the state. The art comes from the Tennessee State Museum, and each first lady gets to pick what's in the home. First Lady Maria Lee has chosen many pieces highlighting children and farm scenes as a reflection of both hers and the Governor's previous professions and passions.

The second floor of the residence is completely private as it is where the Governor and First Lady live.

The meeting space

While much of the estate has been left unchanged, the Tennessee Residence underwent a renovation during Gov. Phil Bredesen's term, which was led by First Lady Andrea Conte and the Tennessee Residence Foundation. Through those changes, ADA standard bathrooms, an elevator and an event space were added. Conservation Hall is a 14,000-square-foot subterranean meeting and banquet facility, but one wouldn't know it by first glance.

"The event space is under the front lawn," Huddleston said. "Since it is

underground, they built an atrium for daylight. Students on field trips like to take guesses and ask if it's a helicopter landing pad, a swimming pool or a skating rink, but it's really the top of the garden."

The space is used for large events and can seat up to 160 guests. It is decorated with artwork crafted by Tennessee artists, and the floor of the space was put together using wood from old barns across the state.

The people

While the house and grounds themselves at the Tennessee Residence have fascinating stories to tell, the one the Lee family sees as the most important one to share is that this is a home for everyone. That passion is clearly seen during the holiday season but also through the first lady's Tennessee Serves initiative, through school field trips and tours, and through the company they continually invite and welcome to the mansion.

"Ever since they were elected, I have seen them both live out Luke 14:13-14," Huddleston said. "They both take those verses to heart. There are people here regularly that wouldn't normally get an invitation to the governor's residence, and that is so special."

Schedule a historic tour

Phone: 615-399-4254

Email: Tennessee.Residence@tn.gov

Website: tn.gov/residence



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Scott's Gulf Wilderness State Park

Story by Trish Milburn | Photographs by Stuart Carroll

What's the best way of describing Tennessee's newest state park? Quite simply, awe-inspiring. Awe is definitely the feeling that overcomes many visitors to Scott's Gulf Wilderness State Park, whether they're standing atop Welch's Point Overlook, witnessing the uniqueness of Virgin Falls or hiking through the park's more than 9,500 lush acres.

Scott's Gulf Wilderness became Tennessee's 60th state park when it was dedicated on May 9 of this year. Even though the park is new, the sites within its boundaries are familiar to many outdoor enthusiasts. That's because the park brought together already established public areas under one management umbrella. Those areas include the previous Virgin Falls and Lost Creek state natural areas, Dog Cove Historic Area and the Hardie Trailhead.

And the person who was named as the park's first manager is also likely to be familiar to those who have visited those areas. Stuart Carroll has worked at helping preserve and

The Rylander family donated their property. Pam Hardie, Bob Ragland and the family of Beecher Wallace all held onto their property and/or sold it below market value in order to see it set aside as a state park. Groups such as TennGreen Land Conservancy, the Open Spaces Institute, the Nature Conservancy, the Conservation Fund and others helped put together those pieces. The Bridgestone Tire Corporation also donated land earlier that eventually became part of the park. Area residents such as Ross and Brenda Cardwell, Chuck Womack, Paul and Pam Miller and others helped galvanize local support for the project.

ties range from the easy-to-moderate Lost Creek Falls Trail (0.2-mile loop) to the strenuous Caney Fork Trail (12 miles round-trip).

One of the more strenuous hikes also has one of the biggest payoffs. Virgin Falls is unique in that it comes out of a cave, drops 110 feet and then disappears into another cave. Reaching it, however, requires an 8.6-mile round-trip hike that loses 1,000 feet in elevation going in and, thus, gains that much coming back out.

"Virgin Falls is one of the most magical waterfalls in Tennessee," Carroll says.

This particular area around Virgin Falls has been protected since 1970



highlight Tennessee's public lands for decades. He started out as a seasonal naturalist at Old Stone Fort State Archaeological Park, spent about 30 years at Fall Creek Falls State Park as a ranger naturalist and later managed several areas — including Virgin Falls, Lost Creek and Dog Cove before they were brought together to form Scott's Gulf Wilderness.

"It has been a great project," Carroll says. "Working with local folks, the state and conservation groups, we have put together the acreage that we now know as Scott's Gulf Wilderness State Park. It's as if we were putting together the pieces of a puzzle."

"Working with these different groups and people has been a rewarding endeavor," Carroll says.

Within its expansive acreage, visitors to the park can indulge in a variety of popular outdoor activities.

Hiking

Don't let the park's size intimidate you. Yes, there are strenuous hikes to be had — such as the one that takes visitors to Virgin Falls, one of several waterfalls in the park — but there's also plenty of easily accessible beauty to be enjoyed.

Sixteen different trails totaling nearly 40 miles of hiking opportuni-

when the Bowater Paper Company set it aside as a pocket wilderness.

If difficult hiking isn't something you can manage or simply don't have the time or inclination to undertake, there are still plenty of beautiful views to enjoy. The Welch's Point Overlook lies only a few hundred yards from the nearby parking area and provides stunning views of Scott's Gulf stretching out below.

Another easy hike is the 1-mile (2 miles round-trip) Yellow Bluff Trail, which takes visitors to another impressive overlook that gives views of Caney Fork Gorge and Gunstock Branch Falls.

The Homestead Trail (4.5-mile round-trip) is “an easy ramble out by some historic homesteads,” Carroll says.

The park’s website has detailed descriptions of each trail in the park, including length, difficulty level and what you can see from various points along the trails.

Dark sky viewing

In a world full of electric lights, it’s become something special to be able to see a truly dark sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. But if you’re part of a special Dark Sky viewing program at the park or staying in one of the primitive backcountry campsites, you’re in for a treat if the sky is clear. To get the most out of the experience, the park has provided useful tips for dark sky viewing on its website, including using a red low-light flashlight so that you can see things such as star charts without messing up your night vision as it adjusts to an environment with no artificial white lights.

Hunting and fishing

About 6,500 acres of the park are open to hunting. The park also shares boundaries with two units managed by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency — Bridgestone Firestone Centennial Wilderness Wildlife Management Area, which includes

the Big Bottom Unit of the WMA. The park and these TWRA units also share a couple of trails. It’s important to know that the park and the wildlife management areas have different rules and regulations regarding hunting, so be sure you are aware of these before heading out.

If your idea of an enjoyable time is finding a good fishing hole, then Scott’s Gulf Wilderness has you covered. Whether you choose a nice spot along the Caney Fork River or the park’s creeks, you’re likely to have a pleasant outing. Fish that you might hook at different points include bass, bream and muskellunge.

You can even combine hiking, camping and fishing during a trip to Amber’s Den Hole on the river. Access requires a 2-mile hike that loses 800 feet in elevation on your way to the fishing hole.

Paddling

Though there are a few different options for paddling in the park, the main access point is at Mitchell Ford on the Caney Fork. It’s important if you’re going to go beyond this point to know the conditions of the river and to arrange for a shuttle to pick you up on the other end. While some sections of water in the park are flat and calm, others can be rougher and thus more dangerous, especially if you’re not experienced with whitewater.

Camping

Throughout the park are 14 primitive campsites divided among four different areas. All of these campsites require a hike in. There is no water or electricity at these sites. You have to pack in everything you need (and pack it back out), though water can be collected from the Caney Fork River or Big Laurel Creek but must be treated before consuming it. Reservations for a campsite can be made on the park’s website.

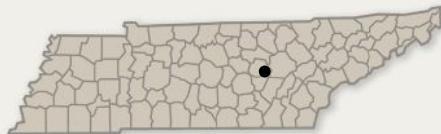
Plans for the future

Carroll says that improvements to the new park are in the planning stages. The park’s current visitor center is in downtown Sparta. An on-site visitor center will come in the future, but there is not a timeline on building it yet because the location has not been decided.

“We do hope to open some more trails and overlooks,” Carroll says. “Since the park will be emphasizing its wilderness aspects, buildings will be kept to a minimum. However, park staff will be looking for increasing opportunities for folks to interact with these beautiful areas, so hopefully access to the park will improve, especially from areas on the south side of Scott’s Gulf. Also, expect more nature and history programs as park staff shares the area’s diversity with visitors.”

Scott’s Gulf Wilderness State Park

For more information, call the park office at **931-739-6747** or visit tnstateparks.com/parks/scotts-gulf.



Call for Entries

Shutterbug Showcase

In the next installment of our Shutterbug Photography Contest, *The Tennessee Magazine* is partnering with the Wilson County-Tennessee State Fair to highlight **“95 Reasons to Celebrate Tennessee.”** The topic is general, giving you plenty of room for creativity; we do want to know the town and county where each photo was taken.

There is much to celebrate across Tennessee, and we'd love to see each of the state's 95 counties represented among the entries. *The Tennessee Magazine* will name first-, second- and third-place winners as well as honorable mention recipients in each division — **Shutterbug, Junior Shutterbug** (ages 17 and younger) and **Professional**.

As a bonus this year, the fair will bestow additional honors upon entries highlighting the spotlighted agriculture commodity — pork. Go hog wild in exploring this additional theme.

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.



SHUTTERBUG ASSIGNMENT

“95 Reasons to Celebrate Tennessee”

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 Tuesday, July 15. Winners will be published in the September issue.

PRIZE PACKAGES

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

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* and the Wilson County-Tennessee State Fair permission to publish the winning images in print and digital publications, to social media and on websites.

Shell Game

Recipes by Tammy Algood | Food styling by Cynthia Kent | Photograph by Robin Conover



Vacations are important.

They give us a chance to enjoy the moment and make memories. Take a little kitchen vacation by choosing ready-to-use phyllo dough. This rich, flaky pastry dough forms a shell around other ingredients to turn any food into finger food. Even if you can't get away this summer, treat yourself to a change of tabletop scenery with these recipes plus some imagination.

Summer Spanakopita

This Greek dish can be served any time of the day but makes a particularly nice lunch. The filling can be made the day before. Just refrigerate overnight.

Yield: 12 servings

- 2 (10-ounce) packages frozen spinach, thawed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 3 large garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup small-curd cottage cheese
- 1 (6-ounce) container crumbled feta cheese
- 2 heaping tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic or onion salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 16 sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted

Place the spinach in a colander and with paper towels, squeeze as much excess moisture out as possible. Set aside.

Place the vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onions, garlic and green onions. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Generously grease a 13-by-9-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

Stir the reserved spinach along with the eggs, cottage cheese, feta, parsley, dill, chives, salt, garlic or onion salt and pepper into the onion mixture. Blend well.

Place 2 sheets of the phyllo dough in the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Brush the top with melted butter. Repeat 3 more times using 2 sheets of phyllo and brushing the top layer with butter.

Spread the spinach mixture evenly over the phyllo dough. Repeat with the remaining phyllo as you did with the bottom layer. Cover with 2 sheets of phyllo, brush with butter and repeat,

using all the phyllo sheets. If any butter remains at the end, drizzle over the top.

With a paring knife, cut into 12 equal portions. Bake 40-45 minutes or until the top is golden-brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Easiest Appetizers Ever

Use frozen phyllo cups to have guests satisfied until dinner is served. See the notes at the end of the recipe for plenty of options!

Yield: 15 cups

- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 1 package (15 cups) frozen phyllo cups
- 5 tablespoons pepper jelly (either red or green)
- 15 pecan or walnut halves, toasted
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley, chives or thyme

Place the cream cheese in the freezer for 20-25 minutes. Meanwhile, remove the phyllo cups from the freezer and place on a rimmed baking sheet. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Remove the cream cheese from the freezer and cut into 15 small squares. Place a cube in the center of each phyllo cup and bake for 6 minutes. Remove from the oven and place a dollop of pepper jelly on top of the cheese. Add a pecan or walnut half and return to the oven for 3 minutes. Garnish with the fresh herbs and serve warm or at room temperature.

Alternatives:

Substitute a couple of small cooked salad shrimp for the pecans.

Use sliced green onion tops for the garnish and substitute cooked chopped ham for the pecans.

Add crumbled fried bacon before topping with the pecans.

Substitute caramelized onions for the pepper jelly. Instead of cream cheese, use cubed brie.

Fill the cups with pimento cheese and bake 5 minutes before serving.

Substitute diced roasted chicken for the pecans. Omit the pepper jelly and pecans. Use chopped pepperoni and garnish with red pepper flakes.

Instead of cream cheese, use herbed Boursin, feta or shredded gouda cheese.

Substitute diced prosciutto for the pecans and fig jam for the pepper jelly.

Fill the cups with spinach artichoke dip and bake 5 minutes before serving warm. Garnish with cayenne pepper.

Omit the pepper jelly and pecans. Top the warm cream cheese with fruit and drizzle with honey.

The Only Baklava Recipe You Need

Welcome to your new best friend!

Yield: around 20 pastries

- 4 cups chopped nuts (pistachios, pecans or walnuts)
- ¼ cup + ⅓ cup sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 14 sheets (12 ounces) phyllo dough, thawed if frozen
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

In a medium bowl, stir together the chopped nuts, ¼ cup of the sugar and the cinnamon. Set aside. Grease the bottom of a 13-by-9-inch baking pan. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Keep the phyllo sheets covered with plastic wrap and a kitchen towel. Place a phyllo sheet in the bottom of the baking pan and brush with butter. Repeat the process until you have 7 sheets of phyllo in the pan. Top with the nut mixture, evenly distributing across the phyllo. Repeat the process of topping with phyllo, making sure you cover the top completely.

Using a knife, cut the baklava lengthwise into 4 strips with each strip being a bit less than a couple of inches. Make diagonal cuts to divide the baklava into diamond shapes. You will have odd pieces at the edges. Drizzle any remaining butter over the top.

Place the pan in the middle of the oven and immediately reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees. Bake about 1 hour or until golden in color.

Meanwhile, place the remaining sugar, water, honey and lemon juice in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to simmer and cook,

stirring, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and keep warm.

As soon as the baklava comes out of the oven, evenly pour the warm syrup over the pastries. Place on a wire rack then cover and allow to stand at room temperature for 12 hours. Store at room temperature and enjoy within 5 days.

Chocolate Mint Puff Pastry

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tablespoons crème de menthe (white if available)
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1 small box (4 servings) instant chocolate pudding mix
- ½ cup whipping cream, firmly whipped
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen puff pastry shells

Place the sweetened condensed milk, crème de menthe and water in a mixing

bowl and beat on low to combine. Add the pudding mix and beat well. Cover and refrigerate for 5 minutes, then stir in the whipped cream. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Follow the package directions for baking the puff pastry shells. Split in half and fill with the chocolate mint mixture. Serve immediately.

Spiced Pecan Roll

Yield: 12 servings

- 8 sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- ⅔ cup packed brown sugar
- ⅓ cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup chopped dates
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- Juice of 1 lemon

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Lightly grease a jellyroll pan with cooking spray. Place one sheet of the

phyllo on the pan and brush with butter. Place another sheet on top of the first and continue as above until all the sheets have been brushed.

In a medium bowl, combine the brown sugar, pecans, dates and cinnamon. Sprinkle evenly over the phyllo, leaving 1 inch along the edges. Tightly roll, jellyroll style, pressing the ends to seal. Brush any remaining butter over the top. Bake 20 to 22 minutes or until golden brown. Remove and cool slightly.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the powdered sugar and juice. Drizzle over the warm roll. Cut into 4-inch slices and serve 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.

Ask Chef Tammy

Bonnie asks, "Could you tell me how to make creamed pearl onions?"

Bonnie, purchase them frozen and allow to thaw in the refrigerator. Then sauté them in a tablespoon of butter for around 10 minutes. Add a heaping tablespoon of brown sugar and stir just until melted. Serve warm with a garnish of chopped fresh parsley.

Raymond writes, "I have started using kosher salt and wonder if it can be used in any recipe calling for salt."

Raymond, absolutely it can! Keep in mind that ordinary table salt is saltier than kosher salt, so you might notice a slight difference. A teaspoon of table salt is the equivalent of 1¼ teaspoons of kosher salt.

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

Tips & Tricks

Frozen, unopened packages of phyllo or puff pastry will keep in the freezer for up to a year.

Opened packages of thawed phyllo should be kept tightly closed and refrigerated. Use it within four days.

Melted butter is the greatest lubricant to use between phyllo layers. It allows the sheets to stay separated and crisp as they bake.

Follow the package directions for thawing frozen phyllo and puff pastry. Typically it is best to plan ahead and allow it to thaw in the refrigerator overnight.

As delicate as it is, many recipes require that you work with only one sheet of phyllo at a time. To make sure the remaining sheets don't dry out in the meantime, have a clean damp towel to use as a cover.

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(Offer may vary, \$100,000 coverage not available in all states.)

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Community Corner

- What our neighbors are up to -

Find the Tennessee Flag



We have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured above. 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 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/flag or email flag@tnelectric.org. Entries must be postmarked or received via email

by Friday, Aug. 1. Winners will be published in the September issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

May flag spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the location of the flag, left, which was found on the Bazooka Joe comic on page 10.

Winners are drawn randomly from each month's entries. May's lucky flag spotters are:

Gina Melendez

Beech Bluff, Southwest TN EMC

Dennis Henley

Linden, Meriwether Lewis EC

Danny Harrison

Newland, NC, Mountain EC

Artist's Palette Assignment for September

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 — September, 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 Friday, Aug. 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:

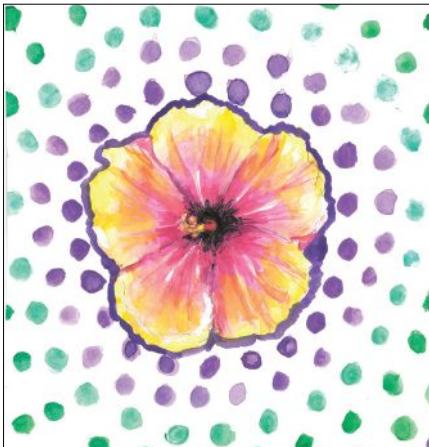
You may send multiple entries in one envelope along with one SASE with sufficient postage.

Winners will be published in the September 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 July Winners

14–18 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Sophia Mendoza,
15, Middle Tennessee Electric

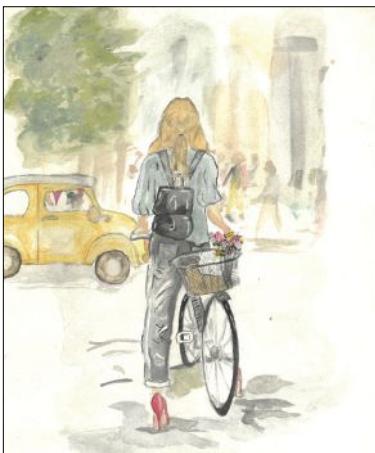


SECOND PLACE: Samantha McNabb,
16, Tennessee Valley EC



THIRD PLACE: Eva Guy,
15, Middle Tennessee Electric

9–13 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Penelope Nicosia,
13, Duck River EMC



SECOND PLACE: Elliana Shaw,
13, Mountain EC



THIRD PLACE: Mary Elizabeth Graham,
10, Middle Tennessee Electric

8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Lucy Gardner,
7, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Nico Higgs,
6, Duck River EMC



THIRD PLACE: Ava Haughey,
8, Middle Tennessee Electric

Point of View

by Robin Conover



“We delight in the beauty of the butterfly but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” — Maya Angelou

Flitting about the landscape from flower to flower, butterflies add an air of wonderment, freedom and artistry to the landscape. Their life cycle from egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and then to adult is an amazing transformation few creatures go through on planet Earth.

The life cycle of Eastern tiger swallowtail spans only six to 10 weeks from egg to adult with the adult butterfly stage lasting only about two weeks. As you can see, this specimen is beginning to show wear and tear on its wings and is missing its namesake tails.

I found it feeding on the nectar of individual blooms in a patch of milkweed at Radnor Lake State Park. Milkweed is a favorite plant for several varieties of moths and butterflies, including monarchs and swallowtails.

These beautiful winged insects rely on specific plants and habitats to

support their life cycle. In Tennessee, several native plants and trees are beneficial to butterflies and moths.

Milkweed, butterfly bush, lilac, phlox, ironweed, coneflowers and wild cherry are a few of the flowering plants that attract butterflies to their nectar. Where you find these plants, you will find several varieties of butterflies from spring through early fall in Tennessee.

Butterflies are struggling across the country to survive loss of habitat, a warming climate and application of insecticides. If you have the space and a green thumb, creating a pollinator-friendly space in your yard or garden will help to increase their survival rates and your opportunities of seeing and photographing a variety of beautiful butterflies.

Once you find them, capturing a sharp photograph of an adult butterfly isn't easy, but it can be done.

Using autofocus, a longer zoom lens and a fast shutter speed will help you get closer to your subject and freeze the action of the frenetic flight and movement.

Observing their movement can help you predict where they might land next and allow you to prepare for the shot. Using a long zoom will also help to isolate the subject from the background, focusing your viewer's attention on the subject.

To find out more about attracting or raising butterflies and their habitats, check out the North American Butterfly Association website at naba.org.

“Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Feeding on Milkweed”

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 100-400mm f4.5-5.6L IS USM at 400mm, ISO 500, f5.6 at 1/1000th second, Gitzo tripod

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