

the tennessee magazine

November 2025

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Restoring Appaloosa Bloodlines

GRAND OLE OPRY TRUE/FALSE
STATE PARKS ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY



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TENNESSEE'S
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Celebrating the Extraordinary Nature of Everyday Life

NOVEMBER 2025



ON THE COVER
Jan Dobson and FVF
Cajun Moonshine, a fifth-
generation Appaloosa
mare, enjoy a sunny
pasture at Foggy Valley
Farms. See page 12 to
learn more about the
farm's efforts in preserving
the Appaloosa breed.
Photograph by Amber Weaver



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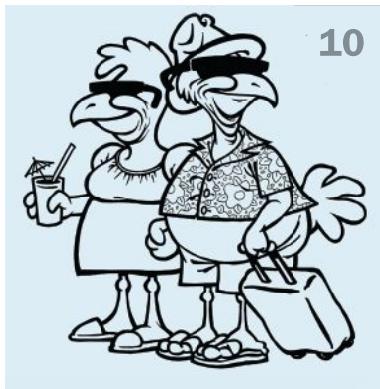
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readers' choice awards.

Celebrating the Extraordinary
Nature of Everyday Life

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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.

Our co-op's gratitude list

The Thanksgiving season is a time to pause and recognize the many blessings in our lives. At Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, we are reminded of the values, people and partnerships that make it possible to serve our members every day. If we were to make a list of what we are most thankful for, a few important themes would stand out.

First and foremost, CEMC would place member support and engagement at the very top. Electric co-ops are owned by the people we serve, so active and engaged members are crucial. We are especially thankful to the members who participate in our annual meetings and provide us with feedback that helps guide better decisions.

Next on the list would be our reliable workforce. Our co-op would not be what it is today without our hard-working lineworker crews, engineers, office staff and leadership team. Each puts in many long hours, and their commitment to safety and service is invaluable.

Technology advancements would also make the list. Our primary goal

is to provide our members with safe, affordable and reliable electricity and broadband services, and technological advancements help us achieve that and more.

Another item we would include is collaboration. Co-ops, including our own, thrive on working together. Whether with our fellow co-ops across the state or throughout our community with local businesses, schools and government officials, we can better serve and support because of those around us.

Finally, we could not leave out our rural community roots. Electric co-ops were born out of a need to serve the communities we grew up in and live in, and we remain closely tied to that mission.

It's safe to say that CEMC has a lot to be thankful for this Thanksgiving season, and we want to thank you for being a part of it.



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?

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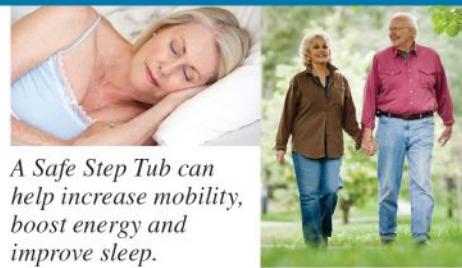
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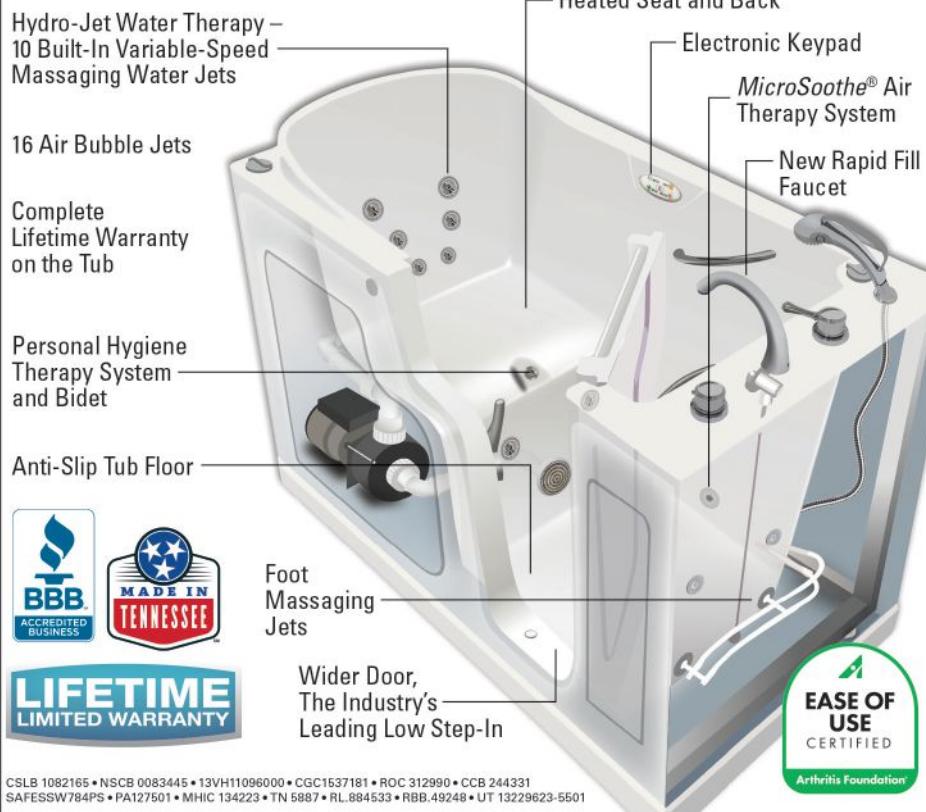
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By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association

What comes first?

As human beings, we all want to be good at something. But one of the truths that stands in the way of just wanting versus actually performing is this: The order in which you do things makes an enormous difference in the success of the outcome. Try as we might, it is really difficult to master a skill or understand a complex idea without first understanding the basics. As a child, you crawl before you walk. In school, you learn to add and subtract before you can multiply and divide.

Sports and other hobbies provide excellent examples of this truth. Except for the miraculous experience of my former boss' son, it is not very likely you will hit a hole in one the first time you play golf. It takes years of practice to master the fundamentals before you can perform at an elevated level and achieve the rare accomplishment of an ace. I was there, though, and it was a really lucky shot!

Each year, sometime around New Year's Eve, I go bowling with my in-laws and all my wife's siblings and their families. It is a fun time. Inevitably, somewhere about halfway through the game, I start to get frustrated that I have only closed one or two frames with a strike or spare. Then I remember that I have not rolled a ball since the previous year, and I should not be surprised that my score is worse than it was when I used to bowl more regularly.

Tennessee's electric cooperatives understand the principle that the basics come first and also care a lot about the future of our state. It is a big part of what makes a co-op different. The seventh and last written principle that unites cooperatives of all kinds says it plainly: "Concern for Community." So your coopera-

tive works with others to act and advocate for a brighter future for our communities.

For example, on Oct. 16, hundreds of electric co-op employees across the state took part in the annual Electric Co-op Day of Service. These men and women put their time, sweat and effort into acts of charity and community service. Whether it was food drives, litter pickups, building a home through Habitat for Humanity or time and care spent with local people in need, thousands of hours of volunteer time were put to use to make lives better.

For the same reasons, electric cooperatives also advocate with elected officials and policymakers. The order of events is important here too. It is essential that candidates for office learn about important issues before they are elected. So the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association co-hosted a bipartisan Congressional District Forum on Sept. 8 with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation, the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Tennessee Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The event allowed constituents from Tennessee's 7th Congressional District to meet and hear from 10 of the candidates running in a special election to replace their recently retired representative.

Co-ops are proud to live by these principles, and hopefully you can see for yourself that taking care of the basics ultimately leads to better outcomes and greater successes for the issues that affect you and your neighbors.



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From the Editor



By Chris Kirk

Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

Drop us a line

Afew weeks ago, the staff of *The Tennessee Magazine* sequestered ourselves in a corner of our Nashville office to focus on editorial planning and take stock of all that the magazine has accomplished through three quarters of 2025. In preparation, I reviewed my production notes on the magazines we've published, and I couldn't shake a feeling that something was missing.

Sure, we'd filled the pages of those issues with compelling, captivating, entertaining stories about all sorts of cool things happening across Tennessee. We provided recipes and cooking tips as well as interesting anecdotes from Tennessee history. Most importantly, we remembered to hide the flag in each edition.

It finally clicked: We were missing *you*! Sure, there were our always-popular contests for art, poetry and photography. But we hadn't included letters to the editor. And as that editor, it's my responsibility to build the campfire, so to speak, around which we can gather to visit and swap stories.

I'm making an effort to save space to share reader feedback in future issues — I hope we can begin in January. I'm also excited to feature a reader-submitted photo as space allows.

There will be some months when we have just too much cool stuff planned to fit it all. But know that I, the magazine staff and our contributors enjoy hearing from you. And I

do want to share your thoughts in the magazine.

To make that easier, you can fill out the form at tnmagazine.org/editormail.

Use the same form to attach a photo you'd like to show us (but not to be entered in a Shutterbug Photography Contest).

Forging bonds through interaction and building community are important to Tennessee's electric cooperatives and *The Tennessee Magazine*. Alongside and thanks to our readers, we're all celebrating the extraordinary nature of everyday life in each edition of the magazine.

Thanks for reading, and we can't wait to hear from you!

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Featuring photos by Robin Conover, these 2026 calendars will be in stock and ready to ship by mid-November!



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Snowbirds

Examining the migration patterns of birds – and humans – during the winter months

I feed birds. I watch them, too, but I don't call myself a bird-watcher. It sounds a bit creepy to me. While I do enjoy seeing them in our backyard, I want the birds to know I respect their privacy. Nobody wants a middle-aged guy in a T-shirt and pajama bottoms gawking at them with binoculars, least of all a blue jay with territorial tendencies.

I'm not comfortable calling myself a "birder," either. While it's shorter and easier to say than "bird-watcher," there are too many r's, and I'm never comfortable saying it. I lived in Murfreesboro for 20 years, and I never got used to all those r's.

So I'm just a guy who feeds birds. And I take it seriously. I just spent \$106 on winter birdseed, which I know will only last til Nov. 15.

And let's not talk about all the money I sank on bird feeding contraptions over the years.

Like most hobbies, 75% of your money is spent in the first six months. With bird enthusiasts, a lot of money is spent until we find the most effective squirrel-proof contraptions.

Every "birder" I've ever talked to has spent more money than they'd like to admit "keeping the #@*%!! squirrels out of the bird feeders." After spending a small fortune on trial and error, I finally settled on simple, spring-loaded, weight-based feeders that work like a charm. They frustrate the #@!! out of squirrels better than anything I ever saw.*

I never dreamed that I would one day be so irritated by squirrels, but it happens when you begin to feed birds. It seems to go hand-in-hand with the hobby.**

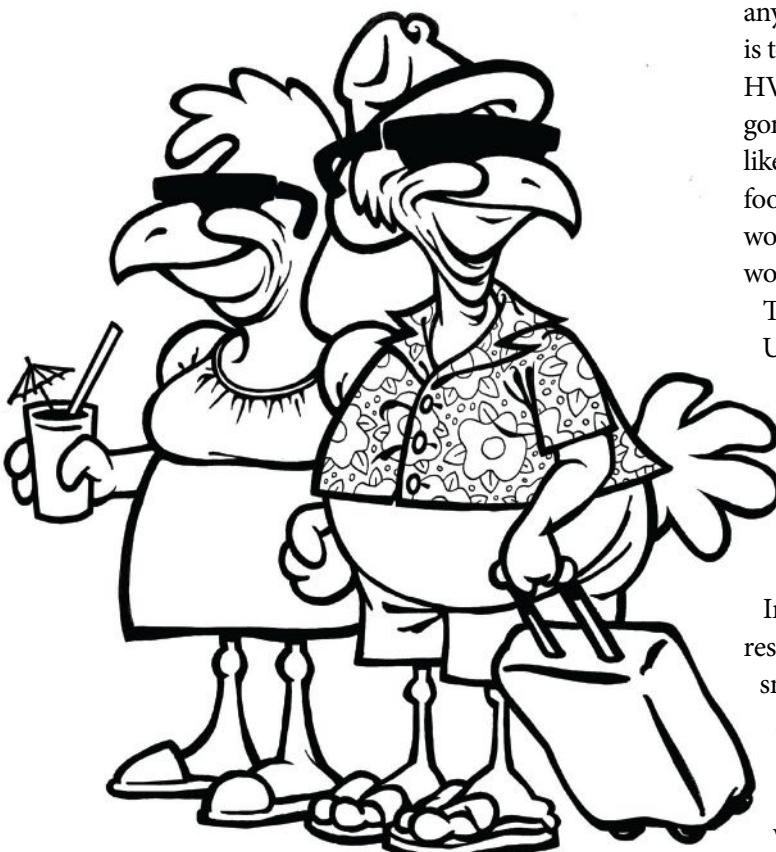
Migration patterns

Birds migrate for two basic reasons: food and breeding. Modern humans — who can eat and breed just about anywhere, anytime — migrate for one basic reason: Winter is too darn cold up here. Thanks to food distribution and HVAC systems, the migratory habits of most humans has gone, well, the way of the dinosaur. The world is populated like it is because humans spent thousands of years chasing food. Food now migrates to us. Our Neanderthal ancestors would doubtless see our cushy life and snarl. But first they would scream in terror at all the Sysco food trucks.***

There are two kinds of bird migration patterns in the U.S.: latitudinal migration (flying north when it's warm and south when it's cold) and altitudinal migration (flying up to the mountains when it's warm and down to the valleys when it's cold).

Human snowbird migration is driven solely by warmth and comfort. Most snowbirds are retired grandparents, long past the breeding stage of life. In fact, most 55-and-older snowbird communities have restrictions on children. No kids allowed. The human snowbird puts up with their kids and grandkids all summer up North. December through May is break time.

A lot of snowbirds are in denial that they are actual snowbirds. They would never utter the word "tourist" when describing themselves. They believe they are lo-



Birds migrate for food and breeding. Human snowbird migration is driven solely by warmth and comfort. Food migrates to us now, and breeding is for the young and more energetic.

cal because they have migrated to this particular location three years in a row now and can locate all the Tiki bars.

I'm guilty of it myself. It comes from our human need to belong, to find a tribe. And when you're in this needy state, it's hard to admit that you're a tourist, that you could be part of any seasonal congestion or traffic problems the locals have to tolerate.

If you've ever muttered, "Darn tourists," while sitting in a hotel bar 500 miles away from where you receive your mortgage bill, you are in denial that you are a tourist — albeit one who hangs around for more than a long weekend — but you're still a tourist, and it's OK. And it's OK to call yourself a snowbird.****

We all want to feel warm. We like feeling welcomed. We like being part of a community. And snowbird or not, nobody likes migrating alone.

Try these footnotes while pondering the mysteries of life

* I'm not a big cuss, but cussing is almost always accepted when A) discussing squirrels, 2) recalling "The One Who Got Away" or D) describing a really good bowl of soup.

And, yes, I've done "The Crisco Trick." It's super fun to watch. For those who might not be aware of this most entertaining (and harmless) squirrel tease, you smear Crisco on the pole of your bird feeder, and watch Chip and Dale (I know. Chipmunks. But the names still work.) leap and then slide down, again and again, never to partake of their would-be snack — until, that is, the Crisco wears off and you're back to square one.

** Squirrels are just doing their thing, storing nuts and seeds for the long winter. I get it. And squirrels are really cute and smart and persistent, which can make them annoying.

I remember my fascination with squirrels when I was a young boy. But if I'd mention that fascination to an older farmer or a serious birder, I'd be met with scorn. The old guys would spit into their yard and mutter something inaudible under their breath. Some would kick the dirt. It was almost as if squirrels were these guys' mortal enemies, chewing through their power lines and destroying property. They did not like squirrels. Well, now I know why. It happens after you've spent an afternoon hanging feeders where you can see them, filling them with feed and then going back inside to watch a family of squirrels attacking the feeder with tooth and nail. After weeks of watching these bushy-tailed rodents swinging from my costly feeders, chewing through the plastic "Squirrel Guard 4000," I've started to take sides with our more elderly progenitors who

I saw a big flock of birds a few weeks ago; they looked to be finches. They were heading south as expected, flying in clumped formation like a rolling cloud.

But I heard them before I saw them, their voices chirping excitedly like a bus full of grade school kids leaving for a field trip.

It gave me goosebumps. We all need an adventure now and then, and these birds get one twice a year. That kind of change is good for the heart. New surroundings, old friends. What could be better than that?

Some might say the breeding.

Well, yeah, there's that.

Have fun, my friends. Travel safe. I'll see you back here in the spring.

Download Antsy McClain's song, "Leftover Birds."

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist. Go to unhitched.com for more. Use this QR code to download "Leftover Birds," **FREE** to readers of **The Tennessee Magazine**. The song draws a parallel between migratory birds and the life of musicians in Nashville's Lower Broadway music scene.



have spent their lives battling the furry, seed-stealing vandals. They are cute, though.

**** Coming from a long line of farmers, I grew up eating "farm-to-table." We just called it food.

***** Like Bill Murray illustrated so deftly in "What About Bob?" when he showed up to a resort island with a T-shirt that said, "Don't hassle me, I'm local," we are never more touristy than when protesting too much. I have been a part of the white and pasty "unsunned throng" who shows up at the beach in December acting like we own the place. Like my other tourist neighbors paying \$38 for coconut shrimp, we feel little shame in it. We are blinded by the tropical sun and brain-fuzzed on sugary rum drinks. We have also been made to feel quite welcome, thank you very much, by the tip-dependent bar staff. And when you're recognized by a bartender when you've been gone for months, it makes you feel good, like you belong, like your tribe is right here, with umbrellas in their drinks, wearing a Panama hat, just like you.

I've watched "What About Bob?" more times than is mentally healthy. When passing a boat dock, I will uncontrollably blurt out, "I'm sailing! I'm really sailing!" I will also yell, "Dr. Marvin? Dr. Leo Marvin?" when stepping off a bus. Anywhere.

If you haven't seen "What About Bob?," none of this will make any sense. But I implore you to watch it, if for no other reason than if we meet at a hotel bar on a beach somewhere, we'll have something interesting to talk about.

The **Appaloosa**



Jan Dobson smiles down on FVF Iron Vittorio, the first registered purebred Appaloosa horse, that was born on Foggy Valley Farms in Auburntown.

Legacy.

Hardworking, versatility and a whole lot of heart. Those are all descriptions of an Appaloosa horse. Those words are also ways to describe the Dobson family who laid the groundwork for the first registered purebred Appaloosa horse in the world.

Getting back to the farm

Before the family reached this monumental day, Stan and Jan Dobson were just lovebirds in high school. The two met at what was the old Donelson High School in Nashville. They graduated in 1963 and were married in 1965. Their first apartment was not far from the school — and if one could believe it, their rent was just \$75 a month. Soon enough, the Dobsons welcomed their first son to their family, but something was missing. Stan had grown up on a dairy farm and always desired to get his family back to that way of life.

“On Saturdays and Sundays, we’d get out and drive around in the country, looking for a farm,” Jan Dobson recalled.

That search paid off soon enough, and the young family moved to a farm off Corinth Road in Mt. Juliet. There they welcomed their second son, but it wasn’t long before Stan wanted to keep growing the farming aspect of their life. They moved to a dairy farm in Lebanon and then

eventually settled where they are now in Auburntown. The Dobsons have been at Foggy Valley Farms, served by Middle Tennessee Electric, for 24 years now.

One particular purchase of an Appaloosa mare at the Lebanon Sale Barn in the early 1970s changed the focus of Foggy Valley Farms.

“Belle was the greatest horse,” Dobson shared. “She got us started in the Appaloosa business.”

Stan used Belle to work cows and other jobs on the farm. Both kids had ponies at the time, but they wanted to ride Belle instead. From there, the family obtained more registered Appaloosas and became involved with the Appaloosa Horse Club. Stan eventually became president of the Tennessee State Appaloosa Regional Club, and the family spent many weekends showing their horses.

“We did pretty well at the shows and had a lot of fun while doing it,” Dobson said. “We traveled all over with them but soon realized the horses that were winning that were supposedly grand champion Appaloosas didn’t have much Appaloosa blood in them at all.”

A solution through genetics

The realization that the blood of the Appaloosa horse was being diluted led to a lot of research for both Stan and Jan. The couple soon learned that

How the first purebred Appaloosa horse came to be right here in Tennessee

Story and photographs by Amber Weaver

since the beginning of the Appaloosa Horse Club in 1938, there had never been a purebred Appaloosa horse due to cross breeding with other breeds like quarter horses, thoroughbreds and Arabians. The Dobsons wanted to figure out how to preserve the Appaloosa blood, finding a solution through conversations with geneticists.

“Scientifically, we found out if you breed like to like — which means registered horse to registered horse — for eight generations, the resulting foal will be a purebred,” Dobson said.



Stan and Jan Dobson pose for a picture as they build the Appaloosa legacy together. Photo courtesy of Jan Dobson



Jan loves on FVF Winter Echo, a 19-year-old gelding raised on the Dobsons' farm.

From that moment, Foggy Valley Farms based their breeding program on that very principle. It didn't take long for Stan and Jan to reach the halfway mark. The couple acquired a stallion that was 77% Appaloosa, meaning 25 of the 30 ancestors counted back in four generations were of the Appaloosa breed, and a mare that was 50% Appaloosa, meaning 15 of the 30 ancestors were Appaloosa. Those two were bred together, and the foal was 87% Appaloosa.

"That was extremely rare at that time," Dobson explained. "That means that for three generations, this horse didn't have anything but registered Appaloosas in its bloodline."

The Appaloosa Horse Club has a program called Foundation Pedigree Designation. The program counts four generations of horses and requires that the ancestors be strictly Appaloosa horses only. According to that program, this foal was 100%

FPD. The program ended there, but the Dobsons knew that wasn't truly the end to this journey.

"We had the first fourth-generation Appaloosa horse here in Tennessee," Dobson said. "But we knew we had more work to do for the bloodline and the registry."

Bridging the GAP

One day in 2004 while mowing her lawn, Jan wrote a book in her head about the fifth-generation colt they welcomed to the farm. She wrote her thoughts down on paper and then presented it to the Appaloosa Horse Club in Moscow, Idaho.

"I took this booklet I put together and handed one to each of the directors," Dobson said. "I explained to them what we were doing and how we had something beyond a fourth generation 100% FPD horse. I explained to them how we wanted a program to recognize the advancing generations."

The new Generation Advancement Program, or GAP for short, was created in 2006 to recognize horses that start at five generations and so on, with the goal of one day reaching an eight-generation purebred Appaloosa. The Dobsons worked hard at accomplishing this goal. They would breed Appaloosa generations together, so one fifth-generation horse with another. Other breeders were interested in doing this too, but they were scattered across the country. The internet, even in its early stages, became a great tool to allow the couple to connect with those breeders to find good quality horses that weren't related to theirs. Soon enough, the farm welcomed the sixth- and seventh-generation Appaloosa horses. Even with the great work being done, some still didn't understand the purpose.

"I was told at one time that the only way to have a good Appaloosa horse was to put a lot of quarter horse into



Jan Dobson and her farm helper, Sarah Hutchings, lead FVF Cajun Moonshine and FVF Lakota Sunrise out to pasture. These fifth-generation mares are half sisters.

it," Dobson said. "I was determined to prove them wrong, and I did. The more Appaloosa blood you put into a horse, the better horse you get. They're easier to handle, better to work with, have great stamina, are extremely versatile and have all kinds of heart."

A great milestone

On March 7, 2025, the Appaloosa legacy was preserved.

"FVF Iron Vittorio was the first documented purebred Appaloosa horse that has ever been born in the whole world, and it was right here in Tennessee," Dobson said. "This marks a really great milestone for the breed."

The few-spot colt was born to two GAP seven horses. The first three letters of his name signify that he is from Foggy Valley Farms. "Iron" honors his mother whose name is Iron Lady. "Vittorio" was inspired by the chief in the movie "Hondo" starring John Wayne. The colt is lov-

ingly known around the farm as "Rio." Right now, Rio is just a baby, so his future is undetermined, but he will be trained and raised to be a breeding stallion to carry on his famous lineage.

"Rio already looks to be very athletic," Dobson shares with pride. "He looks like he will be good for many different disciplines."

"We did something that no one else in the world has ever done. I am really proud of that, and I have been very blessed with lots of help all these years to get to this day."

— Jan Dobson

Continuing the legacy

The Dobsons have fulfilled their goal of reaching purebred status and have shared horses that are now all over the country.

"I've sent Appaloosas to many states," Dobson said. "There are Foggy Valley Farm horses in Vermont, California, Texas, Idaho, Missouri, Michigan and Washington."

Many didn't realize how close the Appaloosa blood was to becoming extinct. Luckily, through the work the Dobsons and other breeders are doing, a new breed of purebred Appaloosa horses is being built. Unfortunately, Stan was unable to see the full effect of his work as he passed away in April 2020.

"I won't live to see very many of them in the world, but I did live to see the first one, and I wish my husband had because he was so very involved in it. He would have been really proud that we continued it," Dobson shared with tears in her eyes. "My family and I have kept his and the Appaloosa legacy going."



TOP LEFT: The first purebred Appaloosa horse is lovingly known as "Rio." TOP RIGHT: An up close look at BCA Yamas Misqualu who is the sire of Rio.

BOTTOM LEFT: FVF Sarazayne, sixth generation, and FVF Oganali Luna, seventh generation, are two fillies born on the farm this year.

BOTTOM RIGHT: FVF Iron Lady is the proud mother of Rio.



Foggy Valley Farms does occasionally have quality Appaloosa horses looking for new homes. If you are interested in learning more about purebred Appaloosa horses, contact Jan Dobson at fvfarms@dtccom.net.



True/false questions about Opry history that might surprise you

As you might know by now, 2025 is the 100th anniversary of the Grand Ole Opry.

But how clear is our knowledge about the early history of the show? Not as complete as you might think since we have few recordings and no detailed written records from the early years of what was played on WSM (the radio station that has broadcast the Opry from the time it started).

The most complete source on this subject is Charles Wolfe's 1999 book *A Good-Natured Riot: The Birth of the Grand Ole Opry*. I recently looked over this book again and went back through old newspapers. And I've prepared seven true/false statements about the history of the Opry that might interest you.

1. WSM was Nashville's first radio station. FALSE!

WSM stood for "We Shield Millions" — reflecting the fact that its original purpose was to sell insurance for its owner, Nashville's National Life and Accident Insurance Company. When WSM went on the air at 7 p.m. on Oct. 5, 1925, it was a big deal. Thousands of people stood outside National Life's headquarters and listened to the first broadcast on speakers.

However, by that time, Nashville had another station. WDAD, which was owned by a business called Dad's Auto Parts and Accessories, went on the air about a month before WSM did. The man responsible for WDAD was Fred Exum, who was known as "Radio Dad" on the airwaves.

WDAD vanished by 1928, when its equipment was purchased by the Life & Casualty Insurance Company (when it started a station called WLAC). However, WDAD did have a long-term impact on WSM. Many of the early Opry musicians, including Humphrey Bate and DeFord Bailey, played on WDAD before they played on WSM. (Also, Bessie Smith, the "Empress of the Blues," appeared on WDAD on Oct. 2, 1925 — but that's a different story.)

2. WSM's original director was George Hay. FALSE!

In 1945, George Hay wrote a 64-page booklet called *A Story of the Grand Ole Opry*; it was sold to tourists for 50 cents. In that book, Hay claims that "your reporter (Hay) who was the first director of WSM, had con-

siderable experience in the field of folk music when the station opened in 1925."

However, Hay wasn't the first director of WSM because he didn't even work for the station until Nov. 9 — more than a month after it went on the air.

The first director of WSM was a woman named Bonnie Barnhardt. We know this because on Sept. 13, 1925, the *Nashville Banner* published a large photo of Barnhardt with the words "STATION WSM DIRECTOR" above the photo — the first of several times that the Nashville papers referred to her by that title. Weeks later, the *Tennessean* had this to say about Barnhardt: "Starting as a studio pianist, she climbed the radio ladder as a singer of Southern melodies, teller of bedtime stories up to the position of studio executive of WSB (Atlanta radio station)."

So why did Barnhardt not remain with WSM? I don't know, but she moved back to Atlanta in 1926 and started her own talent agency. Two years later, Barnhardt was in Cincinnati, working on station WFBE.

According to author Donna Halper, Barnhardt moved to Miami in 1932 to work for station WQAM. It was there that she met and married a former detective named William Beechey. Bonnie Beechey died in 1984.

3. George Hay got his inspiration for the Opry when he attended a funeral in Arkansas. TRUE!

In 1921, when George Hay was a reporter for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, he was covering a funeral in Arkansas. The deceased was a man who had been a



MISS BONNIE BARNHARDT.

Nashville's new radio broadcasting station, WSM, of the National Life and Accident Insurance Co. Inc., will be unique in that it has obtained Miss Bonnie Barnhardt, formerly of WSB, the Atlanta Journal, Atlanta, Ga., as its director. Barnhardt, a very few women.

Miss Barnhardt is a natural radio player, with a covering of international fame. She has won the admiration of thousands of fans young and old, of Nashville and the South, on more

As you can see in the Sept. 13, 1925, *Nashville Banner*, Bonnie Barnhardt was WSM's first director.

History Lesson

by Bill Carey
The Tennessee History Guy



cial Appeal, he attended the funeral of a World War I veteran named Oscar Moore, whose body was being returned from France to Arkansas for burial.

The night before the service, Hay witnessed an old fashioned “hoe-down,” with a fiddler, guitar player and banjo picker playing songs. “They danced, they danced, they danced all night long,” Hay recalled in 1952. “They laughed and yelled and had a wonderful time, and I tucked it away in my mind as the happiest scene I ever saw. Years later, when I got into radio full time, the whole scene came back to me — the music, the laughter, the little Arkansas cabin. It has been my ideal for every performance of the Grand Ole Opry.”

In 2023, Missouri State University professor Brooks Blevins published an article in the *Arkansas Historic Quarterly* called “The 100 Percent American Story of the Arkansas Origins of the Grand Ole Opry.” Look it up if you would like to read more about this.

4. The first person who played hillbilly music on WSM was Uncle Jimmy Thompson. FALSE!

Most of the Opry histories I've seen claim that “Uncle” Jimmy Thompson was the first person who played “old-timey” or “hillbilly” music — as traditional country music was called then — on WSM. However, the first person who probably played that type of music on WSM was a graduate of the Vanderbilt Medical School.

Humphrey Bate was a physician from the Sumner County communi-

ty of Castalian Springs. In his spare time, he played harmonica with a band called the Castalian Springs Barn Dance Orchestra.

When I researched *Fortunes, Fiddles and Fried Chicken* in 1999, WSM's parent company allowed me to access National Life's *Our Shield* newsletter from the early 20th century. According to the newsletter, Bate and his band appeared on WSM on Oct. 18 and 24, 1925 — weeks before George Hay worked there.

5. The show was called the Grand Ole Opry within weeks of it going on the air. FALSE!

At first, the show George Hay spontaneously created was simply called the “Barn Dance.” It went by that name for about two years. Problem was, other radio stations such as WLS (Chicago) and KDKA (Pittsburgh) had similar shows called barn dances.

It wasn't until December 1927 that Nashville newspapers began referring to the WSM show as the “Grand Old Opry.” Two years later, “Old” was replaced by a more colloquial spelling.

“We used to call this affair the Saturday night barn dance and shin-dig,” George Hay was quoted in the July 7, 1929, *Knoxville News Sentinel* as saying. “But Walter Damrosch (conductor of the New York Symphony Orchestra) and his series of operatic music gave me a new idea. Now it's the Gran' Ol' Op'ry.”

The show wasn't the only thing George Hay renamed. He rechristened Humphrey Bate's band the “Possum Hunters.” A band called Paul Warmack and His Barn Dance Orchestra was renamed the “Gully Jumpers.”



Above, Opry stars Pee Wee King and Ernest Tubb (left and right) with George Hay, the creator of the Grand Ole Opry. At right, harmonica player DeFord Bailey was one of several early Opry stars who appeared on WDAD before WSM. Country Music Foundation photos



In fact, according to Charles Wolfe's book, Hay “kept a list of ‘colorful’ names in his desk drawer, and when a new band signed, he chose one from the list.”

6. The first Grand Ole Opry was on Nov. 28, 1925. MAYBE TRUE, MAYBE FALSE?

Official histories claim the Grand Ole Opry started on Nov. 28, 1925. The two pieces of evidence we have of this are:

1. A Dec. 27 *Tennessean* story said the Barn Dance started “about a month ago.”
2. George Hay's 1945 history of the Opry claims the show started on Nov. 28.

As we've already seen, George Hay's history isn't perfect.

Meanwhile, the WSM schedule published by the Nashville news-

papers on Saturday, Nov. 28, was Francis Craig's orchestra at 6:30 and studio concert sponsored by Nashville Lion's Club at 10. (The same night, WDAD had "Humphrey Bate's old-time music" at 7:30.)

WSM's printed schedule for Saturday, Dec. 5, was Francis Craig's orchestra at 6:30, bedtime story at 7 and Columbia Military Academy band at 10. (Meanwhile, WDAD had an "Old Fiddler's Contest" with Humphrey Bate at 8 p.m.)

The WSM schedule for Saturday night, Dec. 12, 1925, was Francis Craig's orchestra at 6:30, bedtime story at 7, piano hour at 8 and the Golden Echo Quartet singing spirituals at 10. (Again, WDAD had an "Old Fiddler's Contest.")

On Dec. 19, 1925, the WSM schedule was Francis Craig's orchestra at 6:30, bedtime story at 7 and studio

program sponsored by American Legion at 10. (WDAD had Humphrey Bate.)

If the Barn Dance started spontaneously on Saturday, Nov. 28, and if listeners embraced it from the start, why did it take more than a month for WSM's published schedule to reflect it — especially when WDAD was scheduling the same type of music?

7. A few months after it began, WSM tried to cancel the show. TRUE!

As WSM became affiliated with country music, many of the Nashville's residents were embarrassed about their station's impact on their image. The criticism from the community got so bad that on May 9, 1926, the *Banner* reported that "WSM will continue the barn dances

through the month of May but beginning June 1 will probably discontinue the old-time music for the summer, unless the public indicates its desire to have it continued throughout the hot weather."

Two weeks of fan letters later, National Life executives reversed that decision. "The proportion is about 50 to 1," the *Tennessean* reported on May 24. "Letters have been received from the surrounding towns in the state signed by scores of residents indicating a decided preference for the old-time music. Several letters have been received from Nashville expressing a decided opinion against the barn dance programs.

"In an effort to please as many people as possible, WSM will continue the barn dance programs on Saturday night, but the time allocated to the old-time music will be cut down."



The Grand Ole Opry is performed at the War Memorial Auditorium in the early 1940s. Roy Acuff stands on the right, while George Hay is seated at the back of the stage, wearing coat and tie. County Music Foundation photo

LEAVE A LEGACY

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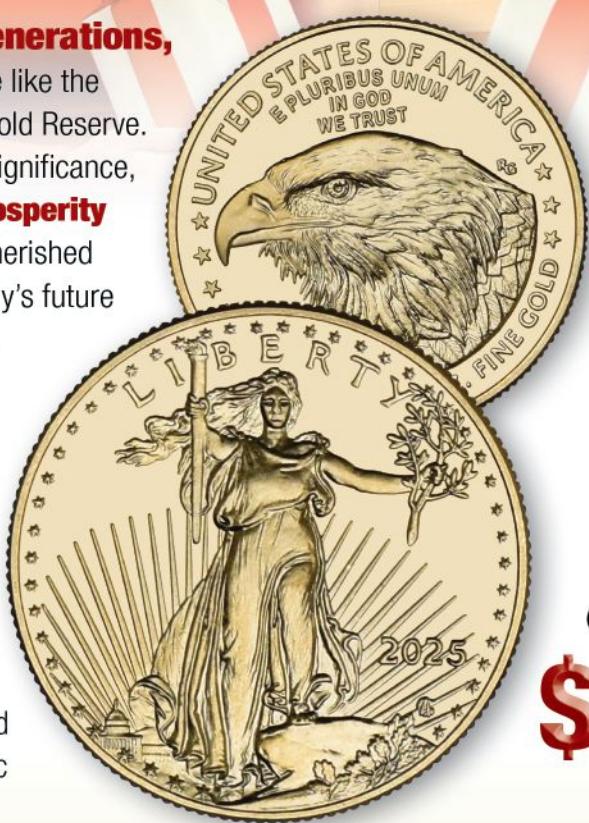


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ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Connecting you to your best life!

At CEMC, our story has always been about connection. For more than 87 years, we've powered communities across Stewart, Montgomery, Cheatham, Robertson and Sumner counties with safe, reliable and affordable electricity — building an infrastructure that supports more than 116,000 homes and businesses.

That same commitment to connection inspired the launch of Cumberland

Connect in 2019. Our vision to bridge the digital divide became reality in December 2024, when we completed construction of our fiber network. Today, every eligible CEMC member has access to world-class fiber internet, and as of September 2025, more than 42,800 members have chosen Cumberland Connect to keep them connected.

Electricity and broadband are

now the lifelines of modern life — powering everything from the first alarm of the morning to the ways we learn, work, stream and communicate. CEMC remains dedicated to delivering our services with the same focus on reliability, value and service that has guided us since day one.

Our mission is simple but enduring: **to connect you to your best life.**

Cost-efficient, safe, reliable electric service

CEMC is focused on providing cost-efficient, safe and reliable electricity to our members as we spent a busy year making improvements throughout our five-county system. Here's a look at some of the most important activity in Fiscal Year 2025.

This year, crews installed 20 miles of new overhead lines as well as 89 miles of new underground lines.

CEMC also completed some major projects this year and has a few upgrades in progress. We opened the

new Clarksville Annex building in July 2025, which houses around 40 employees and has room for future expansion. Construction is also underway for a new substation on International Boulevard in Clarksville.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2025, CEMC spent more than \$8 million clearing rights-of-way through tree trimming and herbicide management. Maintained rights-of-way play a key role in providing safe and reliable power and high-speed internet services to our members.



Construction on the new Clarksville Annex building was completed in summer 2025. This investment ensures we have the space and resources to accommodate future growth and continue delivering exceptional service.



2025 CEMC director election results

Wesley Aymett of Cheatham County and Dr. K. Jean "Jeannie" Beauchamp of South Robertson County were elected to serve new

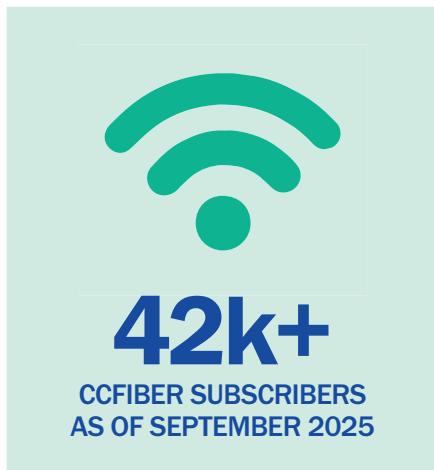
three-year terms on Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's board of directors at the cooperative's annual meeting and early voting

events on Sept. 19 and 20.

Rex Hawkins of South Montgomery County, who ran unopposed, will also begin a new three-year term.

Cumberland Connect: 100% fiber, 100% complete

In December 2024, Cumberland Connect reached a major milestone — completing construction of our 100% fiber-to-the-home network.



What began in 2019 as a vision to close the digital divide is now a reality for every eligible CEMC member across our five-county service area. From first zone to last zone, the buildout was completed in less than five years.

Over 5,300 miles of fiber have been built, bringing world-class broadband access to more than 109,000 homes and businesses. As of September 2025, more than 42,000 members are connected with Cumberland Connect, experiencing the speed, reliability and local service that set us apart.

Looking forward, Cumberland Connect continues to innovate for

members with new tools and services. Real-time scheduling makes it easier and faster than ever to get connected, and Outdoor Wi-Fi service (coming soon) will extend reliable coverage beyond the walls of homes and businesses.

Cumberland Connect also supports the businesses that power our local economy. Today, over 1,500 local businesses rely on CCFiber for their business needs. Our fiber network is helping local businesses stay competitive, connected and ready for growth.

To learn more or sign up for CCFiber services, visit CumberlandConnect.org.



CEMC/Cumberland Connect employees celebrate the arrival of fiber service to the final substation in our fiber buildout, Bledsoe.

Reaching out to help our communities

CEMC's commitment to community extends beyond providing electricity and broadband. Each year, we support local schools, nonprofits and civic organizations through grants, sponsorships and volunteer service.

In addition to the 18 annual student scholarships we've awarded in past years, we launched a new Lineworker Scholarship program in 2025, awarding two \$2,000 scholarships to applicants pursuing a lineworker program of their choice.

CEMC and Cumberland Connect also remain active in programs that

support local youth, including the 4-H Electric Camp, Student Calendar Art Contest, Youth Leadership Summit, Washington Youth Tour and Read Across America. We further serve our communities through initiatives like our annual food drives and the statewide Co-op Day of Service.

Once again, CEMC partnered with the Tennessee Valley Authority to award \$76,000 in Community Care Fund grants to 17 organizations across our service area — helping meet critical needs and supporting local nonprofits.



AD VALOREM & PROPERTY TAX PAYMENTS

Each year, CEMC pays ad valorem and property taxes to the cities and counties in which we have infrastructure. The amount of taxes paid is based on the assessed value of the infrastructure, including buildings, substations, transformers, poles and lines.

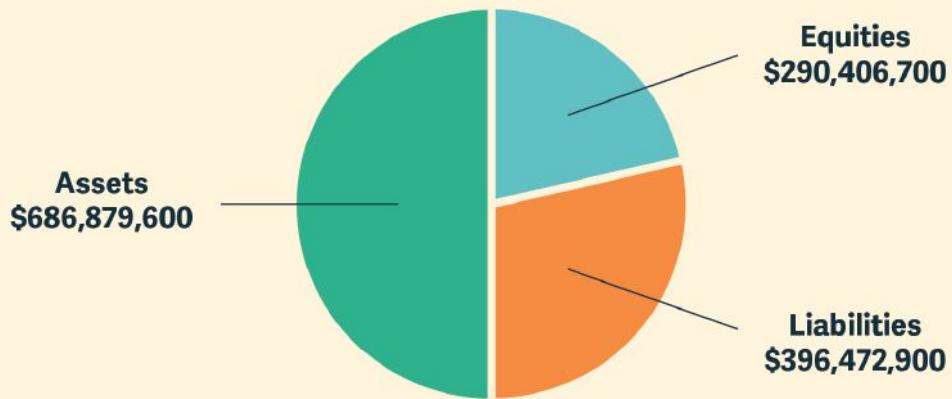
The ad valorem and property taxes paid for the last three years are in the table, at right.

	2023	2024	2025
Counties			
Cheatham	\$ 398,132.00	\$ 365,097.00	\$ 453,922.00
Dickson	5,063.00	3,722.00	4,716.00
Montgomery	1,731,188.00	1,331,281.00	1,624,313.00
Robertson	840,410.00	1,043,562.00	1,178,252.00
Stewart	459,423.00	308,978.00	320,208.00
Sumner	896,302.00	670,997.00	794,415.00
County Total	\$ 4,330,518.00	\$ 3,723,637.00	\$ 4,375,826.00
Cities			
Adams	\$ 5,608.00	\$ 5,280.00	\$ 6,650.00
Ashland City	23,810.00	16,556.00	21,960.00
Cedar Hill	1,548.91	1,352.11	1,387.18
Clarksville	150,641.00	123,161.00	138,681.00
Coopertown	5,647.00	8,625.00	10,135.00
Cumberland City	3,353.58	2,177.77	2,463.60
Dover	55,950.00	38,159.00	40,610.00
Gallatin	22,703.00	17,699.00	19,518.00
Greenbrier	65,580.00	69,945.00	66,169.00
Hendersonville	19,110.00	14,136.00	21,434.00
Millersville	11,665.00	10,720.00	12,012.00
Mitchellville	4,976.89	3,537.00	3,289.00
Portland	81,372.00	67,493.00	90,131.00
Ridgetop	10,484.00	8,823.00	9,072.00
Springfield	14,472.00	16,580.00	17,735.00
White House	51,732.00	59,866.00	73,415.00
City Total	\$ 528,653.38	\$ 464,109.88	\$ 534,661.78
Grand Total	\$ 4,859,171.38	\$ 4,187,746.88	\$ 4,910,487.78

CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(The Consolidated Financial Statements include the operations of CEMC and Cumberland Connect.)

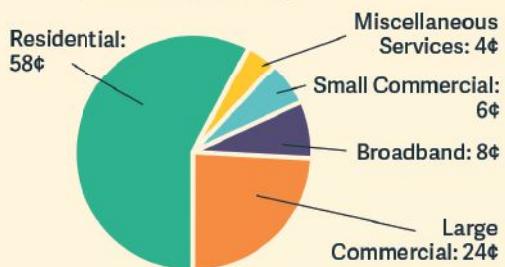
2025 BALANCE SHEET



2025 EXPENSES PER \$1



2025 REVENUE PER \$1



Statistical Information	2023	2024	2025
Member Count	111,227	114,077	116,459
Long-Term Debt	281,041,539	336,727,883	326,059,083
Total Kilowatt-Hours Sold	2,778,936,562	2,833,923,343	2,932,594,147
Residential kWh Consumption	1,357	1,345	1,266
Members per Mile	13.2	13.4	13.5
Miles of Line	8,420	8,537	8,655
Plant Investment per Meter	6,688	6,521	6,873

Auditor's Statement: Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's financial statements are audited by the firm of Stone, Rudolph & Henry, PLC. Copies are available online at cemc.org.

See the full 2025
Annual Report
at **CEMC.org**



Scan the code to visit
our Governance page
at cemc.org.



By Brad Wagner



Traveling for the holidays? Set your home to energy-saving mode.

Q ■ We are planning on a lot of travel over the holidays.

How can I reduce energy use while we're away?

A ■ Terrific question! Here are a few ideas to help you safely reduce energy use while you're off enjoying the holidays.

Happy travels!

Lower your thermostat

It's never a good idea to turn your heat off entirely, but if you're going to be away for extended periods of time, you can safely adjust your thermostat down to 55-60 degrees. It's low enough to reduce energy consumption but high enough to protect your pipes from freezing.

If you have a programmable or smart thermostat, you can schedule changes before you leave or adjust them remotely. You can even program your homecoming time so that your home is nicely warmed up and ready for your return.

If you don't have a smart thermostat yet and you're thinking about purchasing one, check to see if your local power company is participating in a smart thermostat rewards program.

Protect your pipes

You might want to consider opening bathroom and kitchen cabinets that

contain plumbing — especially if they're located on an exterior wall. This will help prevent pipes from freezing and bursting.

If you're going to be away for a month or more, consider entirely shutting off the water supply to your home. Once you've turned off the supply valve, turn on a faucet inside your home to relieve pressure in the lines — this also prevents residual water from freezing. This option also eliminates the possibility of damage caused by hidden or unexpected leaks! When you return, turn the supply valve back on and allow water to flow through your taps to flush the pipes.

Adjust your water heater settings

Speaking of water, you can also save energy by adjusting your water heater settings. Unless your home has an on-demand system, your water heater operates around the clock — even when no one's around to use the hot water it produces. Before you leave, switch your unit to "vacation" or "away" mode (if your system has that setting) or lower the thermostat to 50 degrees.

When you return, temporarily set your system to 140 degrees for a couple of hours and then run the hot and cold taps in your home to flush out stagnant water. This is an effective

way to wash away any bacterial buildup or sediment that might have accumulated.

Time your lights

If you like to leave a few lights on for that lived-in feel, you can purchase a programmable timer with a "random" mode to convincingly vary programmed lights. While you're at it, make sure your bulbs are energy-efficient LEDs.

Unplug unused electronics

Most microwaves, coffee makers, TVs, printers, chargers and gaming systems draw electricity even when you're not using them — this is known as "vampire" or "phantom" energy use. If you're going out of town for more than a week, unplug energy-sucking appliances and gadgets.

See to your fridge and freezer

If you're only going to be away for a week or two, share refrigerated perishables with friends and neighbors, but leave your refrigerator running. If you're leaving for a month or more, consider cleaning out your fridge and setting it to a warmer temperature setting or unplugging it.

Whether you're heading out for a long weekend or for weeks at a time, turn your ice maker off and shut off

the water supply to your refrigerator — this can help prevent costly ice machine repairs and/or leaky messes.

Finally, if your fridge or freezer is less than half full when you're ready to hit the road, stock them with a few gallon jugs of cold water to help maintain proper temperature. Cold, nonperishable items — such as water jugs or bags of ice — can help maintain consistent internal temperatures when the compressor isn't running, therefore reducing the amount of time the compressor has to operate in your absence.

Happy holidays to you and yours! Enjoy your trips, and travel safely.

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.



JUST RELEASED!

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Collectors love "lasts" as no collection is complete without the last coin struck. Last year coins are often hard to find and always in demand. Little did master engraver George T. Morgan know the legacy he was creating when he designed what has become known as "The King of Silver Dollars" but it came to an end 104 years ago with the last-year 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar, the most beloved coin in American history.

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Access 2030 initiative aims to make Tennessee's state parks most accessible in nation

Story by Trish Milburn

Most of us take for granted the ability to enjoy Tennessee's state parks to the fullest. But for the hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans with visual, hearing, mobility or other disabilities, park visits can be more challenging. That's why Access 2030 is such an exciting initiative. The goal is to make Tennessee's state parks the most accessible of any in the nation to those with disabilities by the year 2030. It's a big undertaking, but efforts are well underway.

Striking statistics

According to Census Bureau data, about 15% of Tennessee's population, over 1 million people, have reported

having at least one disability. Mobility was the top reported kind of disability at 7.9%. Whether these disabilities existed from birth or are a result of injury, illness or aging, that's a significant portion of the population who should be able to enjoy Tennessee's wonderful state parks to the best of their abilities. Helping them do so is the worthy goal of Access 2030.

In fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024), more than 7.2 million people, a significant number of those being Tennessee residents, visited the various state parks that now number 61. As the parks become more accessible to those with limitations, visitation numbers could very well increase. Being out in nature can

boost health by reducing stress and anxiety, improving mood, increasing Vitamin D (essential for bone health and mental wellness), helping lower blood pressure and providing many other health benefits that come from physical activity. All of those positive outcomes can also benefit those who might already be facing physical, mental, cognitive or emotional challenges. Plus, there's the positive feeling of being included.

What's changing?

According to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, of which Tennessee State Parks is a part, the major program areas within Access 2030 include:

Physical Accessibility — removing physical barriers to support more meaningful park experiences for all visitors.

Programming and Education — providing safe, quality interpretive, educational and recreational experiences for all park visitors.

Interpretive Media — better connecting people to our natural resources through interpretive technologies so more people can become park stewards.

Meaningful Employment Opportunities — supporting people with disabilities to have meaningful employment in the parks and recreation industry.

To further these goals, here are just some of the additions already in use or coming soon to state parks:

ATV wheelchairs. These special wheelchairs allow visitors with mobility issues to enjoy trails and scenic overlooks that were previously inaccessible to them. They are designed to be operated either by the user or by a caregiver.

Adult changing tables. These allow for those with special needs to enjoy

the parks while providing their caregivers the ability to take care of them in a dignified environment.

Accessible play areas. Children with disabilities just want to play like those who don't have those disabilities, and these specialized playgrounds provide that opportunity.

Colorblind viewfinders. These viewfinders help those with red-green color blindness see the beauty that parks have to offer more clearly and accurately. Currently, 12 parks have these in place for visitors to use. It's often a very emotional experience for those with color blindness when they use devices that allow them to see colors they've never seen before, as shown in this video about the viewfinders: [youtube.com/watch?v=zi7R66sgvfU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zi7R66sgvfU).

Accessible canoe and kayak launches. These allow visitors access to a day on the many beautiful park lakes and other waterways.

Braille installations. While blind and limited-sight visitors might not be able to see the physical beauty that exists in state parks, they can enjoy the sounds, the scents and the textures of nature. Braille installations such as the Lions Narnia Braille Trail

at Warriors' Path State Park in Kingsport, which tells the story of Aslan in "The Chronicles of Narnia," adds to their experience.

Paved, wheelchair-friendly trails.

These allow guests with traditional, non-ATV wheelchairs to travel among trees, flowers, wildlife and other scenery along these trails.

Wheelchair-accessible picnic areas.

Wheelchair-accessible cabins and campgrounds.

Those with disabilities being employed at various state parks.

Putting it into practice

Warriors' Path State Park is one of the parks that is continually adding new aspects of accessibility to better serve visitors, and these changes have been well-received by the public.

"Darrell's Dream, a Boundless Playground, is a unique 3-acre play area designed to provide fun and learning opportunities for children of all ages and abilities," says Park Manager Chris Cole. "It was created through a partnership among community volunteers, corporate sponsors and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation."

OPPOSITE PAGE: **Alex Scogins and Aidan Vogus, members of the AbleVoices Photography Club, take in the sights at Radnor Lake State Park in Nashville. They arrived at the accessible dock via special all-terrain wheelchairs.** Photograph by Robin Conover

BELOW: **Warriors' Path State Park in Kingsport also has an ATV wheelchair available, and the fishing pier is accessible as well.** Photographs by Chris Cole



The playground, set in a beautiful lakeside setting, includes:

- Universally accessible equipment and surfaces.
- A walking trail designed for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- A fully accessible treehouse.
- Sand play area.
- Environmental maze with interactive play stations.
- Amphitheater and picnic pavilion.
- Specially designed restrooms and a pedestrian bridge.

Cole says the playground is one of the park's most popular attractions.

"Nearly any time of day or week, you'll find it full of children and families enjoying the space. It's also a frequent destination for local school groups."

The previously mentioned Lions Narnia Braille Trail was also a joint effort, according to Cole.

"The theme was chosen because the Lions Club approached the Friends of Warriors' Path about the project," he says. "The story aligned well with the Lions Club's name and mission, and they were excellent partners in both planning and funding the Braille Trail."

The park's accessible fishing pier and kayak launch, installed in July, replaced an aging wooden pier. It includes a new ramp from the parking

lot and serves both as a fishing area and a kayak launch.

"It's been extremely popular with visitors," Cole says.

Know before you go

It's important to note that accessible overnight accommodations for the ATV wheelchairs are limited in number, so it's a good idea to reserve them in advance. When reserving a room or cabin, be sure to specifically request an accessible one if you need it. If you have not reserved an ATV wheelchair when you visit a park and it's not already been claimed, you can use it without a reservation. In that case, it's on a first-come, first-served basis.

The number and type of accessibility upgrades could change from one park visit to the next as park administrators, staff and volunteers strive toward that Access 2030 goal. For instance, Warriors' Path is planning to turn the park's old pool area into a new playscape, which is a thoughtfully designed space that encourages imaginative, physical and social play.

"Unlike traditional playgrounds, playscapes often include natural elements, creative structures and interactive features," Cole says. "This new playscape will be fully accessible for children and adults alike."

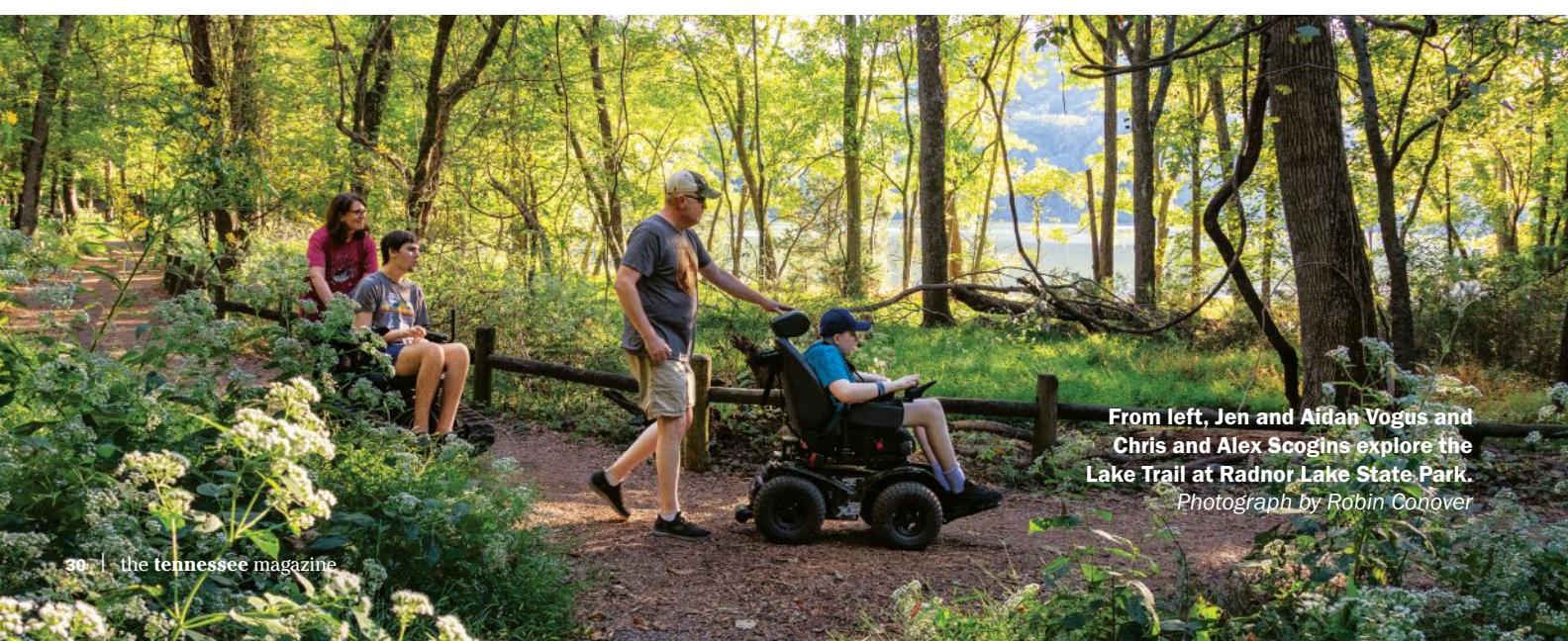
Other plans include constructing a new accessible covered shelter and restrooms where the old pool building now stands as well as an accessible sidewalk that would connect the Moody Bluff Campground to the main area of the park.

"We're always looking for new ways to improve accessibility for all our visitors at Warriors' Path," Cole says.

There is a dedicated webpage with links to the accessible aspects of each state park. You can see what's available at the parks you'd like to visit and check back for new updates as more accessibility is added across the system. You'll find information on many offerings — from the aviary and nature center at Reelfoot Lake State Park in West Tennessee to the wheelchair-friendly Otter Creek Road Trail at Radnor Lake State Park in Middle Tennessee to the colorblind view-finder at Roan Mountain State Park's Chestnut Ridge Overlook in East Tennessee.

Visit tnstateparks.com/accessibility/park-features to view this information.

If you would like to donate to help fund future efforts to make Tennessee's state parks more accessible to all, you can do so through the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy, a fundraising partner of Tennessee State Parks, at tnstateparksconservancy.org.



From left, Jen and Aidan Vogus and Chris and Alex Scogin explore the Lake Trail at Radnor Lake State Park.

Photograph by Robin Conover

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Tennessee Events

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

NOV. 29-DEC. 28

Nashville Ballet: Paul Vaterling's "Nashville's Nutcracker"

Tennessee Performing Arts Center,
Nashville. 615-297-2966 or
nashvilleballet.com/nashvilles-nutcracker

Nashville's Nutcracker is a uniquely "Music City" take on the festive ballet set to the iconic Tchaikovsky music you know and love from the original Nutcracker (performed live by the Nashville Symphony) but adapted to be set in "Music City's past."

Not wanting to make the trek to Nashville? No problem! There are plenty of showings of the iconic ballet

across the state (although they aren't "Nashville's Nutcracker"):

Appalachian Ballet's "The Nutcracker"

Dec. 6-7: Knoxville Civic Auditorium.

Ballet Arts' "The Nutcracker"

Nov. 28-30: Carl Perkins Civic Center, Jackson.

Ballet Memphis' "The Nutcracker"

Dec. 12-14: Orpheum Theatre, Memphis.

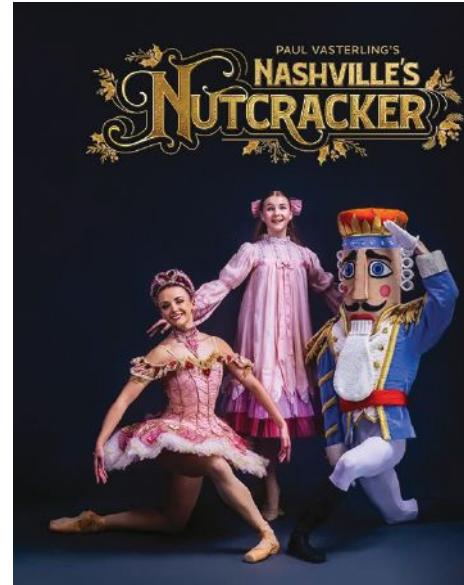
Talmi Entertainment's "Nutcracker! Magical Christmas Ballet"

Nov. 24: East Tennessee State University Martin Center for the Arts, Johnson City.

Dec. 17: Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Nashville.

Dec. 18: Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium, Chattanooga.

Dec. 19-20: Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville.



Photograph courtesy of Nashville Ballet

West Tennessee

NOV. 8

Patriotic Quilt Show

Parkers Crossroads City Park Building.
731-225-2683 or craftynatalie@yahoo.com

NOV. 20-22

Holiday Lighting Weekend

Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or
graceland.com/holiday-lighting-weekend

NOV. 21

Santa, Snow and Cocoa

West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center/Tina Turner Museum, Brownsville. 731-779-9000 or westtnheritage.com

NOV. 25-30

"& Juliet"

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com/events/and-juliet

NOV. 29

"Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas," featuring the Memphis Symphony Orchestra

Graceland Soundstage, Memphis.
901-332-3322 or graceland.com

Middle Tennessee

NOV. 2

Highway 41 Toy Convoy and Show

Coffee County Raider Academy, Manchester, to Wartrace. 931-857-3643

NOV. 7-8

The Christmas Sampler

The Center, Springfield. 615-415-1947 or christmassampler.org

NOV. 7-11

Christmas Open House

Hylabrook Antique Mall, Murfreesboro. 615-907-6066 or facebook.com/hylabrook.antiquemall

NOV. 15

Soulties Conference

Walnut House, Murfreesboro. thesoultiesmovement.com

NOV. 22

Second Annual Murfreesboro Holiday Market

Hop Springs Beer Park, Murfreesboro. 931-952-0472 or brianna-victory-events.com

East Tennessee

NOV. 21-JAN. 4

Shadrack's Christmas Wonderland Johnson City

Appalachian Fairgrounds, Gray.
info@shadrack.com or
shadrackchristmas.com/johnson-city-tn

NOV. 22

First Annual Friendsgiving Dinner

Lavender Hills Venue, Maryville. 865-233-6815 or lavenderhillsvenue.com

NOV. 24

Countdown to Light the Park

Founders Park at Campbell Station, Farragut. 865-966-7057 or townoffarragut.org/784/Farragut-Parks

DEC. 6

Christmas in the Country

Exchange Place Living History Farm, Kingsport. 423-288-6071 or exchangeplacen.org

Visit tnmagazine.org to submit your events and view our complete events listing.

Call for Entries

Shutterbug Showcase

In our next Shutterbug Photography Contest, *The Tennessee Magazine* wants to meet your furry and feathered friends as you showcase your skills in **“Pet Portraiture.”** Show us the personalities, quirks, activities and attributes of your pets.

Animals in costume are not what we are looking for. Your photographs can — but do not have to — include people with your pets. They can be selfies or just photographs of your pets by themselves.

Just keep in mind a few basics: Use natural light, make strong compositions and focus on interesting subject matter.

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 you accept this challenge, please stay safe. We don’t want anyone to take a tumble or any animals harmed

or “embarrassed” in the name of the Shutterbug contest.



“Waiting on a Friend” by Lauren O’Brien, honorable mention in our 2017 “Pets” contest

SHUTTERBUG ASSIGNMENT

“Pet Portraiture”

SUBMISSIONS —

ONLINE ENTRIES ONLY

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

Entries must be entered online by the end of the day on Thursday, Jan. 15. Winners will be published in the March 2026 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* permission to publish the winning images in print and digital publications, to social media and on websites.



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*The Tennessee Magazine
Readers' Choice Awards*

We're searching for the Best of Tennessee

Vote now in Readers' Choice Awards

Our readers are the foremost experts on all things Tennessee, and we need your help naming the Best of Tennessee for our 2026 Readers' Choice Awards. We have further streamlined the contest that will make the entry process easier and quicker for submitting your nominees and allow us to more fully spotlight the winners.

There are two ways to enter. Simply visit tnmagazine.org/BOT26,

or use the form in this magazine. (Online entries will be entered in a drawing for an additional \$250 prize!) Fill out the form with your choices for each category, nominating your favorites from East, Middle and West Tennessee.

"No one knows Tennessee better than readers of *The Tennessee Magazine*," said editor Chris Kirk. "We think that by choosing only a few

categories each year, we can highlight the diverse offerings across the state. And the whole process will be quicker for our busy readers."

Submit your nominations today, and be entered in the sweepstakes for a chance to win some fantastic prizes.

Help us honor your community's local businesses that serve you and your neighbors each day. Join us in recognizing Tennessee's best.



Help us honor Tennessee's most unique eats and destinations:

NOMINATE YOUR FAVORITES!

ENTER ONLINE AT TNMAGAZINE.ORG/BOT26.

OFFICIAL RULES: No purchase necessary. One entry per person. Ballot must be postmarked or submitted online no later than Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026. • To be eligible for the prize drawings, ballots must have a "Best of Tennessee" vote in at least four categories. You can cast votes in any or all of the regions. • Drawing to be held on Friday, Feb. 20. Must be at least 18 years old to win. Grand-prize winners will be notified by mail. • Best of Tennessee results will be published in the June 2026 edition of *The Tennessee Magazine*. • Electric cooperative employees and their immediate families are not eligible for the prize giveaways.

ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN ONE OF THREE GRAND PRIZE PACKAGES THAT INCLUDE:



A \$200 gift certificate to be applied toward a stay at a park cabin or lodge.



A basket of locally made artisan foods from Pick Tennessee Products.



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Name: _____

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Email: _____

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The division of the state in which you live:

West _____ Middle _____ or East _____

All entries must be postmarked by Thursday, Jan. 15. Return the completed forms to:

Best of Tennessee

The Tennessee Magazine

P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224

Bakery

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Burger

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Middle: _____

East: _____

Place for Dessert

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Festival

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Museum/Art Gallery

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

State Park

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Made with love

Gifts they will be thankful for this holiday season

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



Perfect Peanut Brittle

It's not on the calendar, but we all know that the holidays are already here. It's going to be busy and expensive. There's something you can do right now to keep your time and budget under control: Plan to give the gift of homemade foods. These recipes are simple, elegant and delicious. They will be appreciated by anyone lucky enough to receive them, and you'll get to be grateful, too, for the time and money you'll save. Let the holiday season begin!

Whiskey and Dried Apricot Cracked Mustard

Plan ahead because this concoction needs to meld at least 2 weeks in the refrigerator before giving. This recipe can easily be doubled.

Yield: Around 1 1/4 cups or enough for 3 small canning jars

- 1/3 cup mustard seeds
- 1/2 cup whiskey, divided
- 1/2 firmly packed chopped dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Place the seeds in a medium glass bowl and add half of the whiskey and 1/3 cup room temperature water. Cover and allow to soak overnight or up to one day.

Two hours before you make the mustard, place the apricots and the remaining whiskey in a bowl. Cover and allow to macerate.

Drain the seeds, reserving the soaking liquid. Set aside. Place the apricot mixture, vinegar, honey, salt and mustard soaking liquid in a food processor and puree until smooth. Add the seeds and pulse until they are cracked. Transfer to clean jars and cover with the lids. Refrigerate for 2 weeks, then label and gift.

Fall Pear Butter

Yield: 8 half-pints

- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 6 tablespoons lemon juice, divided
- 7 pounds ripe pears, peeled, cored and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 3 cups firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt

In a large, deep Dutch oven, combine the apple juice and 4 tablespoons of the lemon juice and place over medium heat. Add the pears, tossing to coat. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Boil 16 minutes and reduce the heat to medium-low.

Cover and simmer 20 minutes or until the pears are very tender, stirring frequently with a flat-bottomed spatula

to prevent scorching. The mixture will splatter, so make sure to stir frequently and use a deep pot.

Press through a food mill or process in a food processor until pureed. Return it to the pot and add the remaining lemon juice as well as the sugar, nutmeg and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-low heat and simmer about 50 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes to prevent scorching.

Ladle the pear butter into sterilized half-pint canning jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Remove any air bubbles, wipe the jar rims and adjust the lids. Process in a boiling water bath 10 minutes. Cool on wire racks away from drafts.

Lemon Herb Butter Logs

Yield: 2 logs

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Zest from 1 lemon (1 teaspoon)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Place the butter, chives, parsley, lemon zest and salt in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment. Mix until thoroughly combined. Divide the butter in half with a spatula.

Place 2 pieces of plastic wrap on the counter and put half of the butter on each piece. Wrap with the plastic and form into logs. Cover the plastic with aluminum foil, seal and refrigerate. When ready to gift, remove the foil and roll each log in parchment paper. Tie to secure and label.

Chocolate and Dried Cherry Biscotti

Yield: 32 biscotti

- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon pure almond extract

- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/4 cups dried cherries
- 3 1/2 ounces coarsely chopped bittersweet chocolate

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.

In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Set aside. In the bowl of an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, around 2 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the almond and vanilla extracts.

With the mixer speed on low, add half the flour mixture, beating just until incorporated. Repeat and fold in the cherries and chocolate.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured surface and divide the dough in half. Dough is going to be sticky. With floured hands, roll each half into a log and place both on one of the prepared baking sheets around 3 inches apart. Bake for 24 minutes, remove from the oven and allow to stand 10 minutes.

Transfer one log to a cutting board and with a serrated knife saw into 1/2-inch diagonal slices. Return to the baking sheet with each slice placed on their side in a single layer. Repeat with the other log and place on the second baking sheet. Bake 9 minutes, flip each slice and bake another 9 minutes until dried out and golden brown. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before packaging and gifting.

Late Season Green Tomato Pickles

Yield: 6 quarts

- Small green firm tomatoes
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 6 stalks celery, cut into 2-inch lengths
- 6 green bell peppers, seeded and quartered
- 2 quarts water
- 1 quart distilled white vinegar
- 1 cup canning salt
- 6 sprigs fresh dill

Pack the tomatoes in hot quart jars. To each jar add 1 garlic clove, 1 celery stalk and the equivalent of 1 bell pepper. Combine the water, vinegar and salt and bring to a boil. Add the dill and boil 5 minutes. Pour over the tomatoes, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. Remove the air bubbles, wipe the jar rims and adjust the lids. Process 15 minutes in a boiling water bath. Cool on a wire rack away from drafts. Do not use for 6 weeks. Store at room temperature before gifting.

Perfect Peanut Brittle

Yield: 2 pounds

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water
- 2 cups raw peanuts
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Combine the sugar, syrup and water in large saucepan over medium heat. Attach a candy thermometer. Stir constantly until the sugar dissolves. Continue cooking until the mixture reaches 250 degrees on the candy thermometer. Add the peanuts and salt. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally until the mixture reaches 295 degrees on the candy thermometer.

Meanwhile, place a piece of parchment paper on a large rimmed baking sheet; set aside.

Remove peanut mixture from the heat and stir in the butter, baking soda and extract. Working quickly, spread the peanut mixture into the prepared pan. Place on a wire rack to cool. Break into pieces and store between pieces of waxed paper in an airtight container.

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.



Lemon Herb Butter Logs

Tips & Tricks

Clear cellophane gift bags are available in a wide range of sizes to fit gift needs. Craft stores carry them from petite to large, and they simply need to be tied with some seasonal ribbon to finish.

Solid colored tins and gift boxes give you the most options for decorating. You can enhance them with paint pens (a great project for the kids) or with fancy ribbons.

When wrapping the Lemon Herb Butter Logs in parchment, place the butter at an angle on the paper; it will wrap easier and fit better.

Don't forget to embellish finished food gifts with cuttings from outdoors. The last of your woody stemmed herbs add a nice splash as well as aroma to the outer package.

Mini baking pans — either disposable or not — are perfect for homemade breads or for packaging delicate cookies.

Ask Chef Tammy

Ray asks, "Is there a nonalcoholic substitute that can be used for cassis?"

Ray, yes there is, and it is labeled black currant syrup. It is an excellent substitution and can be found online or in supermarkets. Monin and Ribena are both brands I have used that are very good.

Tara writes, "I have a hard time finding whole chicken that is labeled for roasting. Can I use those labeled for frying instead?"

Tara, you most certainly can, but remember the size difference. Roasting chickens are bigger. In fact, they can be up to twice as large as a broiler or fryer. Keep that in mind with your recipe because you'll need to adjust the roasting time.

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

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I hereby certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

— Chris Kirk, Editor

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 Monday, Dec. 1. Winners will be published in the January 2026 issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

September flag spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the location of the flag, left, which was found on the helicopter on page 34.

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

Brenda Caldwell

Jackson, Southwest Tennessee EMC

Jimmy Elrod

Chestnut Mound, Upper Cumberland EMC

Devin Kramer

Maryville, Fort Loudoun EC

Artist's Palette Assignment for January

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 — January, 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 Monday, Dec. 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 January 2026 issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

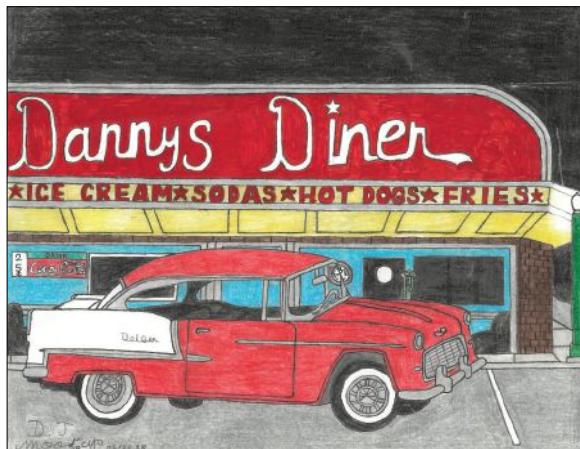
First place wins \$50, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Winners are eligible to enter again after three months. Winners will receive their awards, artwork and certificates of placement within six to eight weeks of publication.

Artist's Palette November Winners

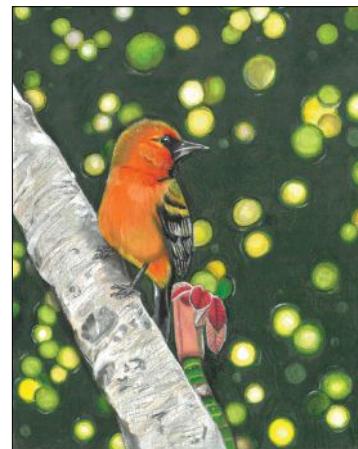
14–18 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Bella Telfer,
14, Southwest Tennessee EMC

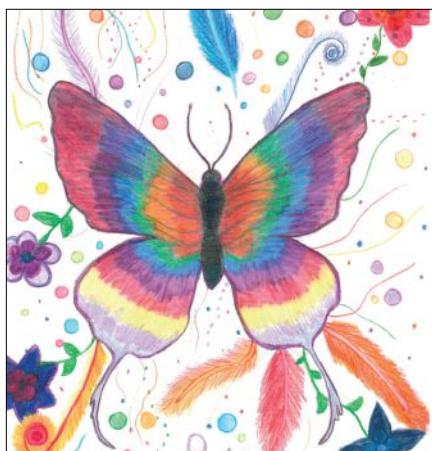


SECOND PLACE: D.J. Moody,
18, Sequachee Valley EC

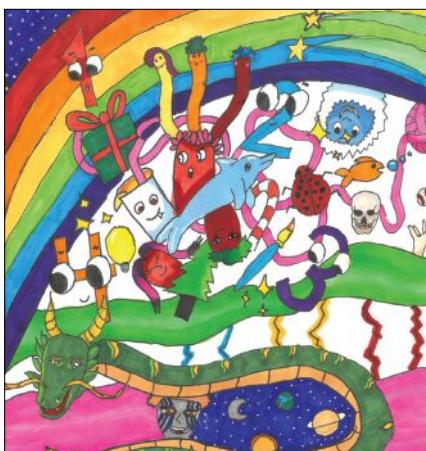


THIRD PLACE: Cheyenne Absher,
17, Southwest Tennessee EMC

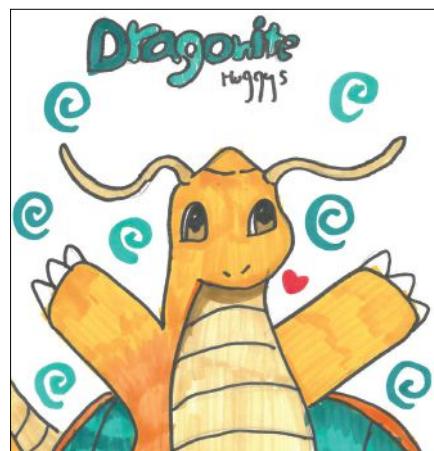
9–13 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Rhema Husk,
12, Volunteer EC

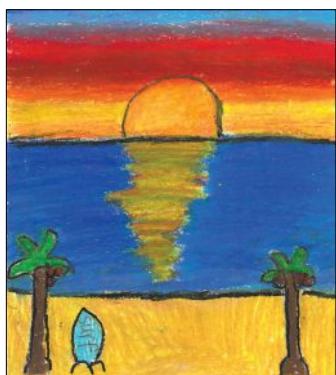


SECOND PLACE: Oliver Wright,
10, Volunteer EC



THIRD PLACE: Avery Spicer,
10, Southwest Tennessee EMC

8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Benjamin Havens,
8, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Fiona Meehan,
7, Middle Tennessee Electric



THIRD PLACE: Dahana Mahina Butler-Beyer,
7, Meriwether Lewis EC



Point of View

by Robin Conover

"Fall Color at Sunset"

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 24-70mm f2.8L USM lens at 27mm, ISO 200, f11 at 1/30 second, Gitzo tripod

With the ubiquitous nature of smartphones in everyone's hands, taking a photograph seems easier today than ever before. But making a great photograph still requires more thought and effort than simply pointing and shooting.

If you want to upgrade your fall photography skills, try focusing on the light, composition and framing of your images. When you intentionally combine these elements, your photographs will convey the essence of your subject with more detail and depth.

Golden hour light. Light is one of the most important elements of a successful photograph, for without it, this art form simply doesn't exist.

Each day begins and ends with a golden hour casting a low-angled, warm glow across the landscape. It happens about an hour after sunrise and again about an hour before sunset. The lower-angled light seen as the sun is close to the horizon accentuates textures and details while the warm glow enhances the deep reds, oranges and golds of Tennessee's fall.

The combination of beautiful light and colorful subject matter is just the beginning of a great image.

Composition. Creating an interesting composition will keep your viewer's eye moving through the photograph. Incorporating traditional composition techniques like the rule of thirds, leading lines and filling the frame will greatly improve your photography skills.

To utilize the rule of thirds, imagine dividing your screen into thirds with two horizontal and two vertical lines, creating a grid pattern. Placing your main subject at one of the intersections of these lines will make your compositions less centered and more interesting.

Most cameras and smartphones have a setting that allows you to see this grid in the viewfinder or on the screen.

Leading lines will also make more interesting compositions. Examples could be a winding road leading into the forest, a split-rail fence leading to a red barn or a branch leading your eye to a red maple leaf.

Filling the frame sounds easy, but it often gets left to the wayside. When I compose an image, I automatically scan the edges of the viewfinder in a clockwise pattern, starting in the upper right corner. I scan each side of the viewfinder to make sure I am including everything I want to have in the image and excluding anything that is distracting.

A pro tip here would be that if the sky doesn't add anything interesting to the image, crop it out as it is a bright area that can be distracting to the viewer.

Framing. Like composition, framing also helps move the viewer's eye through the image. When I frame an image, I always try to address the three depths — foreground, middle ground and background. Being aware of these ranges in an image and thinking through them will exponentially improve your images.

As an example, I framed this image of Radnor Lake and the vibrant trees from a vantage point with a few leaves and branches in the foreground to add some depth to this image. The reflections on the surface are in the middle ground.

This fall, try following great light, carefully define your subject with an interesting composition and then look high and low for different angles and objects that might frame your subject. You will be surprised by the images you will be rewarded with simply by putting a little extra thought, intentionality and effort into your art.



Traveling for turkey time? Set your home to eco mode.

Get your home in shape for the holidays with this quick energy-saving checklist. And don't forget to take a free **DIY Home Energy Assessment** before you hit the road!



Set your heat to 55°F.



Use "vacation mode" on your water heater or turn it down to 50°.



Unplug electronics and appliances like TVs, chargers and kitchen gadgets.



Close curtains and blinds.



Check out our website for more energy-saving recommendations and information about rebates on home energy upgrades.

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