

the tennessee magazine

December 2025

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Historian with a Brush

‘Chuckle Map of Tennessee’
Reinvigorated Traditional Recipes



the tennessee magazine

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Celebrating the Extraordinary Nature of Everyday Life

DECEMBER 2025



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ON THE COVER

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*Photograph by
Robin Conover*



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Celebrating the Extraordinary
Nature of Everyday Life

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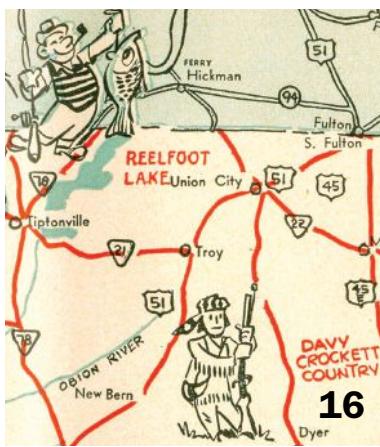
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Mission Statement

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

Celebrating community and connection in 2025

As the year comes to a close, it is the perfect time to celebrate the connections that make our communities strong. This season gives us a chance to reflect on the progress we've made together, the services that keep us connected and the people and places that make our cooperative family so special.

2025 has been a year of growth, progress and community for Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation. In addition to delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity, we reached an exciting milestone by completing our broadband build-out, meaning that every eligible member now has access to dependable high-speed broadband services. These services are connecting our communities in new ways, supporting work, education and healthcare and keeping families and neighbors connected. It is a tangible example of how your cooperative continues to evolve to meet your needs.

This year, CEMC has also made improvements to our infrastructure, promoted energy efficiency and strengthened our commitment to the community through service projects, including participation in the Tennessee

Electric Cooperative Day of Service. The cooperative actively gives back, demonstrating that our mission goes beyond providing electricity and broadband services. We are committed to empowering communities and supporting the places we call home.

As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to innovation, delivering reliable services and providing the highest level of member satisfaction. Your cooperative will continue working to ensure that both electricity and broadband services meet the evolving needs of our members.

From all of us at CEMC, we wish you a joyful holiday season filled with warmth, laughter and the company of loved ones. Thank you for being part of our cooperative family. We are honored to serve you and excited for what the new year will bring.

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WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24
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By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association

Bigger is always better, right?

Each of us depends upon safe, reliable and affordable electricity being delivered to us each second of every day. When the lights don't turn on, you probably call the co-op and expect the problem to be solved quickly.

But with the exception of a few engineers, none of us fully grasps the science behind the miracle of electric energy. One key thing to know, however, is that electricity delivers energy. But it is not a source of energy itself. What does that mean? Some type of fuel or water running through a dam was harnessed in the beginning to convert mechanical energy into electrical energy.

All of these different fuel sources contribute to producing power that is then mixed together and delivered to you via "the grid." Think about it this way. Suppose you filled five different glasses from five different sinks and then poured them all into a pitcher. While each glass had a different source of water, once mixed together in the pitcher, there is no way to tell the water that came from each sink.

The electricity we consume each day comes from multiple sources of fuel. Here in Tennessee on an average day, about 40% comes from nuclear power, 30% from natural gas, 15% from coal, 10% from hydroelectric dams and the remainder from other sources like wind and solar.

You can see that we get a lot of our electricity from nuclear. It is astounding to me

that all of that energy, enough to power over 4 million people's lives, is created from just three nuclear power plants — two in Tennessee and one in Alabama. As amazing as they are, though, nuclear power plants that are big are expensive and time-consuming to build. Since the late 1990s, only three new nuclear units have been built in the United States.

That is beginning to change through the idea that smaller might ultimately be more efficient. The concept of a small modular reactor, built to standard specifications in a factory, is being pursued by companies across the globe. The U.S. Navy has been powering ships this way since the 1950s, albeit with fuel that is not available to commercial plants.

The first permitted location for a new, smaller plant in the United States is in Oak Ridge. The Tennessee Valley Authority expects to get its construction permit by the end of this year and hopes to complete the plant by 2032.

It's big project and needs to be done right. And your co-op is concerned about how a first-of-its-kind plant will be paid for. New tech is exciting. But in the end, smaller cannot result in larger electric bills for Tennesseans. But done right, perhaps these smaller plants will be the answer for lots more electricity.

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

Remember when...

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

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

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

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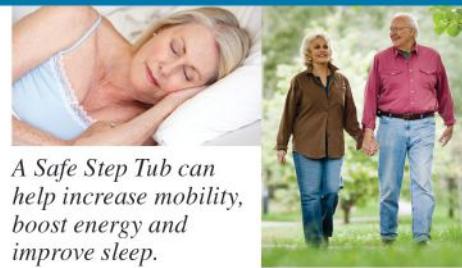
Personal Checklist:

<input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis	<input type="checkbox"/> Dry Skin
<input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety
<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Issues
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Then read on to learn how a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can help.

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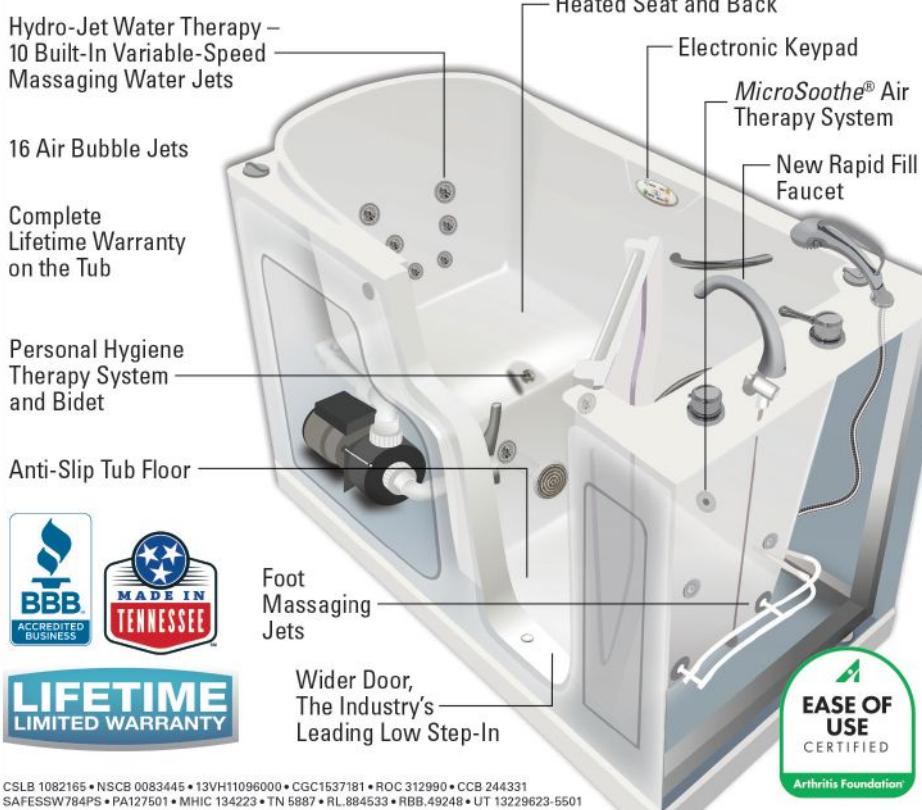
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By Chris Kirk

Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

Reliving and reinventing treasured traditions

As we turn our calendars to December, I hope everyone has embraced the spirit of this holiday season and has not let the stress of the associated responsibilities darken their moods. As I'm writing this column toward the middle of November, the Kirks are wading into the season, happily adding festive decor around our home as we find the time and motivation.

I know I'm not alone in feeling waves of nostalgia as we open red-and-green storage totes to retrieve decorations, lights, garland and all sorts of glitter-loaded trinkets and treasures. Our Christmas tree is a fancy model, prestrung with LED lights capable of twinkling, fading and changing between white and multicolored lights.

Growing up, my mom and dad insisted on the clean, uniform cheer spread by white lights. My wife, Anna, grew up in a family that enjoys the variety and fun brought by lights strands showcasing all the colors of the rainbow. We truly come from different worlds, but somehow we make it work.

Kidding aside, I have been thinking recently about how our traditions — holiday and otherwise — are always evolving and expanding. As dear as I hold my family's customs, it's fun to see how we can add variety while honoring the past. I'm excited to try some of this month's recipes, which offer twists on time-honored staples (see page 36).

While we're on the topic, many of my family's traditions relate to food and sharing it among friends and relatives. While unpacking our Christmas decorations, I unloaded a box from my parents' house and found the vintage Pyrex dish in which Mom always made her corn and green bean casserole. After my wife and I were married, her large family welcomed me and my parents at their Thanksgiving tables, and bringing that casserole soon became Mom's responsibility.

She passed this year, so now it's up to me and Anna. The dish has been cleaned and the recipe located, and we're happy to be the stewards of this evolution of one small holiday tradition. We'll keep the good memories flowing. For Christmas, I'll pull the dish out again to make Mom's signature chicken and dressing casserole. And on New Year's Day, we'll enjoy black-eyed pea cornbread, another one of her recipes.

From all of us at *The Tennessee Magazine* and the state's electric cooperatives, we wish you the happiest of holidays. It has been an eventful year, and we're looking forward to all the fun we'll share in 2026.

As always, thanks for reading,

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My Tennessee Notebook

Written by Antsy McClain

Life's guarantees

Turns out, there are a lot more solids in life than just death and taxes.

Insurance companies are basically in the business of legalized gambling: They bet we won't need them, and we bet we might. And since we're forced to have insurance — on our cars, our homes, our health — I reckon I'll just enjoy whatever contentment insurance can bring me. Insurance is assurance: When we are covered, we feel assured that everything will be OK. Our monthly premium guarantees it. But those of us who've lived long enough know there are no guarantees in life, not really, but we see the insurance premium for what it is: a good bet.

And everybody loves a good guarantee. When we buy something, there is comfort in knowing it's "guaranteed fresh," "satisfaction guaranteed" and "guaranteed or your money back." It's meaningful because there are so few guarantees in life, we take notice when someone backs up their claims.

I've been pondering on what few guarantees there are in life. Benjamin Franklin told us there are only two: death and taxes. But after much thought, I have come up with a few more. I'll share my findings. Here is a short list of things you can absolutely, positively, definitely count on in life:

Everything changes. That's the most obvious guarantee. Ironic, isn't it? Aside from death and taxes, it might be the only good bet we have in life. Children grow up. Old people die. Did you move to a quiet little town 10 years ago? How quiet is it now? Those favorite pants? You'll need new ones eventually because fabrics wear out and, sadly, waistlines expand. Cars break down, and homes need updating. It goes on and on. At least half of all my to-do lists deal with change, things around the house that need maintenance, repair or updating. There is no escaping it.

Positive energy is contagious. So is negative energy. This has been a steadfast rule in my life, and I've never seen it vary. Never have I seen positive energy beget negative results, or vice versa. Energy is like a boomerang; It comes back around to whomever throws it out there, and it never varies from its natural course.

Toxic people create chaos, and if we allow them into our field of gravity, our life becomes chaotic as well. I've seen this play out in real time in my own life and in the lives of others. It's a constant principle we can absolutely count on. Sometimes it can take a while to recognize a person as toxic. They might be completely charming at first, slowly roping us in. By the time we see their true colors, some damage might already have been done, but removing ourselves from their orbit can be done. I have only had to deal with a few toxic people in my life, thankfully. But getting rid of them feels good.*

Mean people get better with practice. So do kind people, but we don't notice them as much. Avoid mean old people. They've spent their whole lives practicing being mean, and they're pretty good at it.

People with the worst taste in music have the loudest car stereos. Just once, I'd love to hear James Taylor's "Your Smiling Face" or Kool & the Gang's "Celebration" coming out of that Dodge Charger at the traffic light, the one with the tinnitus-inducing woofers we can all hear five blocks away.

Most people only change their behavior when faced with fines or when bribed by things like cookies.**

These footnotes have been known to contain healing properties for some readers

- *Three ways to recognize when people aren't right for you:
 - 1.They only talk about themselves and seem to disengage every time you bring up something important to you.
 - 2.They don't bother to remember things about you, your birthday, what you like to eat, how you like your coffee, etc.
 - 3.They criticize your friends and family and try to put a wedge between you and people who are important to you.
 - 4.They often wear turtleneck sweaters.

** I believe there is only one place where leopards actually change their spots: on television soap operas. It's the only place I've seen the bad guy have a change of heart and become a good guy for a while. That does not happen in real life. It only happens on TV because writers and actors get bored. In real life, mean people

do not get bored. They love being mean.

When I was a teenager, I would watch "The Young and the Restless" with Mom for a few minutes every day after school. Victor Newman, played by actor Eric Braeden, was a ruthless sociopath who diabolically sabotaged the careers, lives and romances of virtually every other character on the show. Everyone loved to hate Victor.

I graduated and moved out of the country for a while and saw very little American television. When I returned home, I sat down with Mom for a revisit of our afternoon ritual. I was anxious to get my blood boiling at Victor's latest evil antics but was stunned to see a kindly, benevolent Victor Newman donating his time and money to charity, helping young lovers buy their first home and lending support to characters in a way I'd never seen him do

before. I looked at Mom and asked, "What's up with Victor?" "Oh," Mom said without looking up from the TV, "Victor's a good guy now."

Viewers just accepted this new, albeit less interesting, version of Victor with much the same amnesia NFL fans have when supporting an expansion team. Football games have long been called soap operas for men, so the comparison is apt.

Few Titans fans remember — or even care anymore — about the 1997 uproar when The Houston Oilers moved abruptly to Memphis to become the Tennessee Oilers and eventually to Nashville to become the Titans. It only took a few years to completely redirect the loyalty of millions of people. Victor (and Oilers owner Bud Adams, as it turns out) had us all in the palm of his hand. We love our heroes, and we love to hate our villains.

"Oh," a football fan might've said in 1999, "the Oilers are the Titans now." And so it goes. Teams change, stadiums change, players change — but Hometown Against the World? That's forever, and I don't think any of us would have it any other way.

*** Costco is a fine establishment, but it is only a counterfeit to love. There is a fine line between love and consumerism. The feelings are very similar: comfort food in bulk, people smiling at you and helping you achieve immediate goals like finding stuff on a grocery list, it's all designed to give us a feeling of belonging, that we're part of something bigger than we can be by ourselves. And every Costco shopper knows the smell of hot dogs and pizza creates a woozy disorientation not unlike our first kiss. Costco is amazing, but love is the OG, the granddaddy of them all.

The world is full of idiots, and every one of them has a driver's license. I taught each one of my children how to drive. I made them recite this sentence before fastening their seat belt: "The world is full of idiots, and every one of them has a driver's license." Only then would they start the car and put it in drive. It was a reminder to drive defensively because too many drivers are absent-minded and thoughtless or looking at something on their cellphones. Too many drivers do stupid and dangerous things and cause serious accidents. It has served my children well all these years. I like to think it might have even saved their lives.

Kindness is attractive. I first learned this in second grade, when a favorite teacher, who seemed plain and homely at first glance, became one of the most beautiful women I have ever known.

Uncomfortable tags in the necks of men's dress shirts are bad, and clothing manufacturers who continue this barbaric practice are undermining our evolution as a species. I want my time back — the time I've spent with a pocket knife, pulling at the threads of these annoying tags from brand new shirts and sweaters before they become at all wearable. At least 15 minutes per shirt. Hundreds of shirts over my lifetime. I want that time added to the end of my days. A quick calculation

estimates it to be around 125 hours. That's 5.3 days. I'll spend them in the Bahamas, please. Thank you.

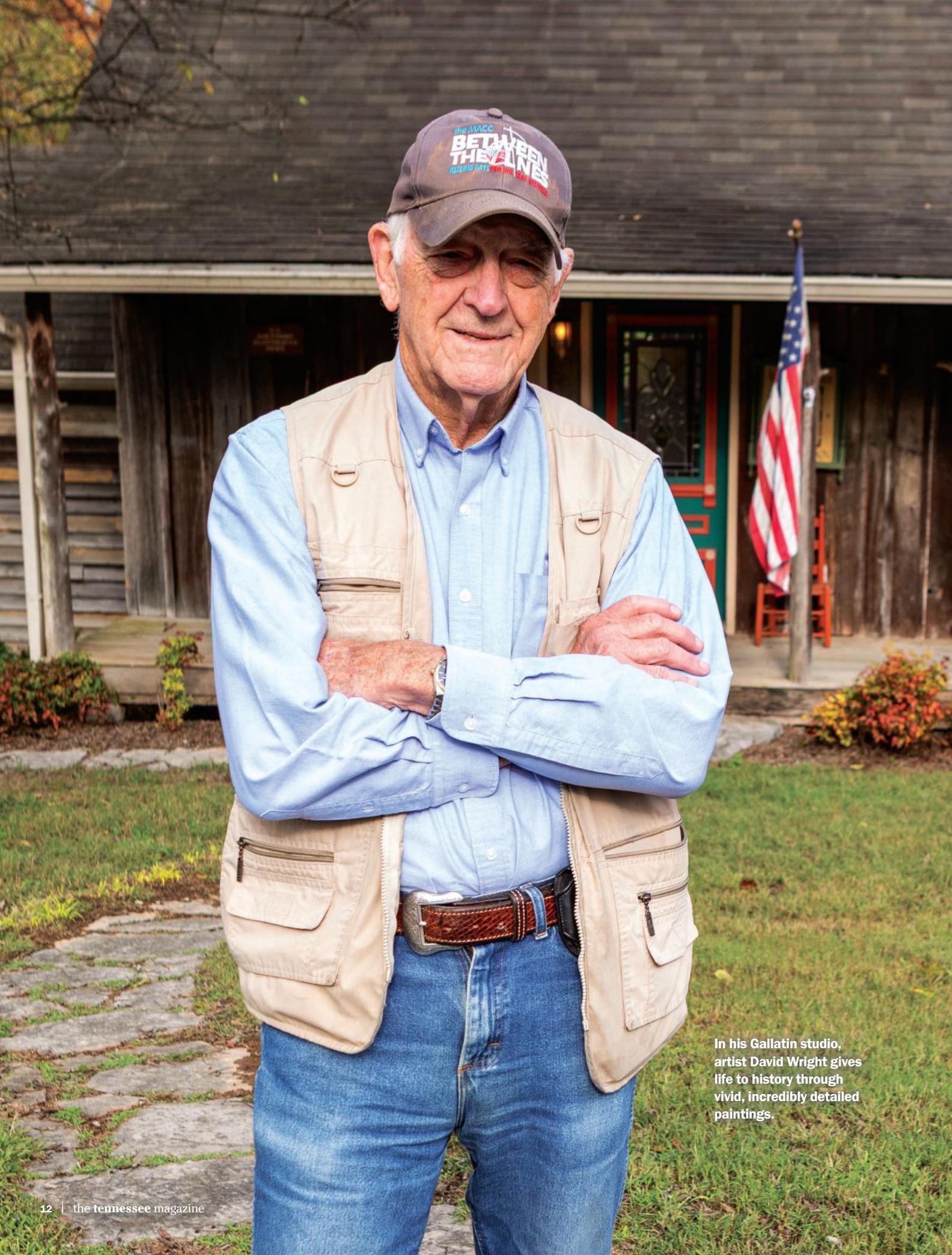
Women's clothing never has enough pockets. This is an age-old truth, and every woman who read this just shrieked/growled a hearty "YES!" and startled everyone else in the room. This has been a problem for as long as women's clothing has been made. Men have more than enough pockets. We have pockets within pockets. Men's jeans have big pockets for our hands, wallets, whatever, and then these little coin pockets we never — ever — use. Ask around. If you know a man over 30 who uses those little coin pockets, I'll become a monk and devote my life to silk weaving.

Love is the best club we can belong to. Its membership is free, and you'll meet the best people there.***

Download Antsy McClain's "Another Happy Song"

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist. Go to unhitched.com for more. Use this QR code to download "Another Happy Song" **FREE** to readers of *The Tennessee Magazine*. The song is about change and our reactions to it.





In his Gallatin studio, artist David Wright gives life to history through vivid, incredibly detailed paintings.

Historian with a Brush



New book looks back at esteemed career of historical artist David Wright

Story by Trish Milburn | Photographs by Robin Conover

For many people, reaching their 80s means kicking back and relaxing, leaving their working years far in the rearview mirror. But that is not the case for Gallatin artist David Wright. Not only is he still painting in his studio, but he's also traveling and working on-site — sketching and painting the scenery and historians in period attire that help make his works so striking and authentic. As recently as September, he spent two weeks painting sites along the Missouri River related to Swiss-born Karl Bodmer, who, according to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, in the 1830s "was one of the first and most accomplished European artists to document the landscape of the North American interior and its indigenous peoples."

"To see and paint those historic river vistas — and at a Lewis and Clark campsite as well — was truly an experience," Wright says.

Wright is also quite accomplished at capturing this country's past — Daniel Boone leading settlers through Cumberland Gap, painted for Cumberland Gap National Historical Park; depictions of the

Civil War era; rugged mountain men braving nature's elements; and some of the same Native peoples that Bodmer and George Catlin, a fellow painter of the West, depicted nearly two centuries earlier.

With a career that spans decades and depicts an America that is much

lished by Grandin Hood Publishers of Franklin. Written by James A. Crutchfield, a successful author and a member of the Western Writers Hall of Fame, the book tells the story of Wright's life and art.

How it all began

Wright said he can remember being interested in making art as far back as when he was 4 years old. Then sometime between the ages of 6



older, it seems fitting that a book would be compiled to highlight the man and his works that hang everywhere from public offices and national parks to museums and private collections. That book is "David Wright: Historian with a Brush," recently pub-



and 8, he earned positive reinforcement for his artwork by winning a Halloween art contest.

“It was of a witch stirring a pot, and as the winner, it hung in a grocery store window,” he said. “I saw it every day on my way to school. I still have that poster.”

It was in his teen years, however, that the direction of his art began to take shape.

“I was interested in history even as a kid,” he said.

But before the interests in art and history combined into a full-time career as a historical painter, he attended art school at the

Harris School of Advertising Art in Nashville, studied Old Masters art in Italy while a student and subsequently worked as an ad artist. Even in 1965 when he was drafted and served in Vietnam for a year as an adviser to the Vietnamese army, he found time to sketch soldiers and the surroundings.

A career grows

After more than a decade as a professional ad artist, painting his own work in his free time, Wright left the advertising world to focus on the art that would make him a respected name in the historical art world.

Though in the earliest years he didn’t keep count of how many paintings he did, he estimates that he’s done more than 2,000. He still completes between eight and 20 a year, depending on the size, topic and the research that goes into the piece before paint ever meets canvas.

While he created landscapes early in his career, he is best known for his work depicting people of the past. Often, a painting includes only a solitary figure who looks so real you wouldn’t really be all that surprised if they stepped off the page.

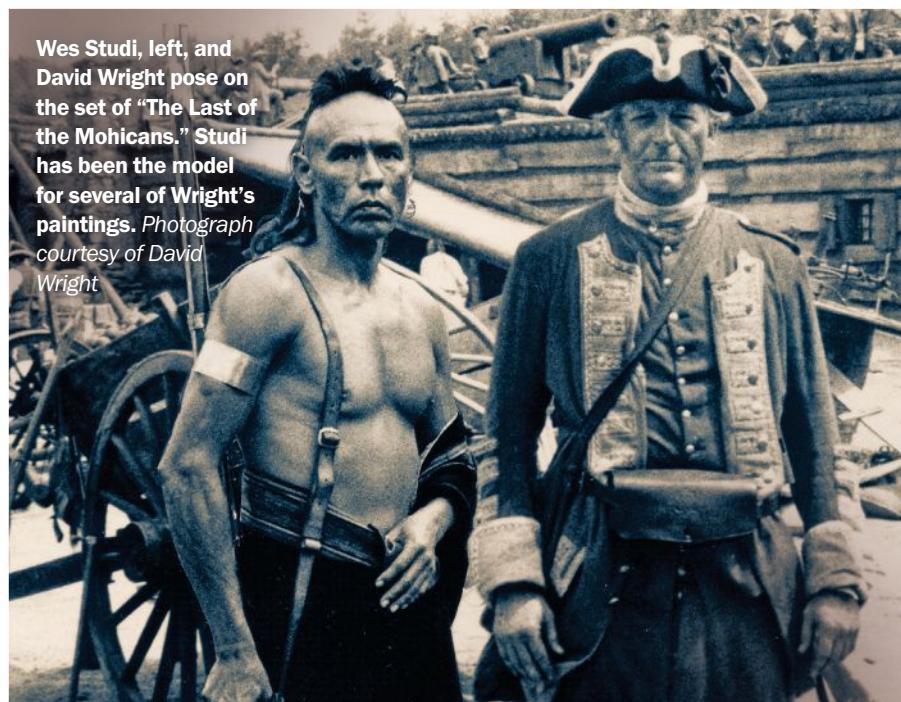
“As a historical artist, he does not paint the grand, sweeping stories of America’s history,” wrote Seth M. Hopkins, executive director of the Booth Western Art Museum, in the foreword of the book. “He prefers to find the poignant moments of reflection, individual interaction between colliding cultures or the calm before the storm.”

This is obvious in paintings such as “The Mountaineer,” “Long Way from Home” and “The Huron.” The last in that list was modeled by Cherokee

all night on a set, I told him I was an artist and would like to paint him. We went to his trailer, and I photographed him. We’ve stayed in touch and did an engagement at the Eiteljorg Museum together, and he and (his wife) Maura have been to our home several times.”

Between the covers

The retrospective of Wright’s life and work was first proposed in 2018 by Crutchfield, who encouraged Wright to create a commemora-



actor Wes Studi, the first of numerous times Studi has modeled for Wright after they met on the set of 1992’s “The Last of the Mohicans.” In the movie, Studi played Magua, a Huron warrior (thus the name of the painting) and the movie’s main antagonist, and Wright was an extra. As you look through the section of the book about American Indians, Studi is easily recognizable in other pieces such as “The Warrior,” “An Osage” and “Algonquin.”

“I met Wes while working on Mohicans,” Wright says. “After working

on the art book. It wasn’t until after Wright’s exhibition at the Booth Museum in 2024 that the project truly got underway.

Early this year, when publisher Robin Hood of the award-winning Grandin Hood Publishers approached him about doing the book, Wright says he thought, “I better do it now. It’s the culmination of a lifetime of my work, and I’m tickled to death with the book — the quality, the process, everything. They did a wonderful job writing and putting it together, and it’s print-

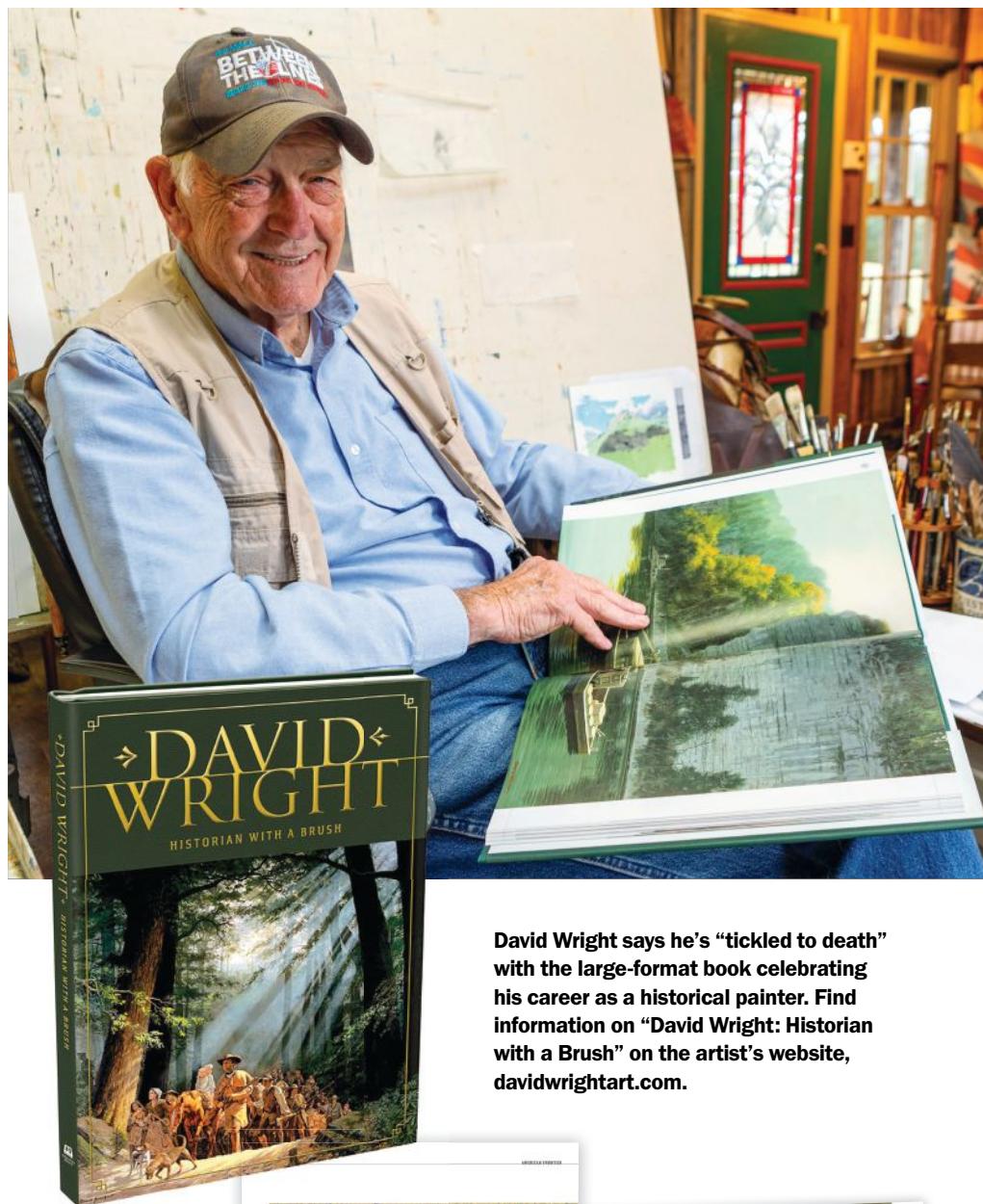
ed beautifully, which is important to depicting an artist's works."

The large-format, coffee table-style book has sections devoted to works depicting pioneers, mountain men and longhunters; Civil War soldiers; American Indians; and even some landscapes.

In addition to standard copies of the book at a cost of \$75, a limited Artist's Signature Edition has been made available for \$300. These 250 signed and numbered copies come in a grained buffalino slipcase with gold foil stamping and include a signed 10-by-14-inch print of one of Wright's paintings. Standard editions can also be signed by Wright upon request.

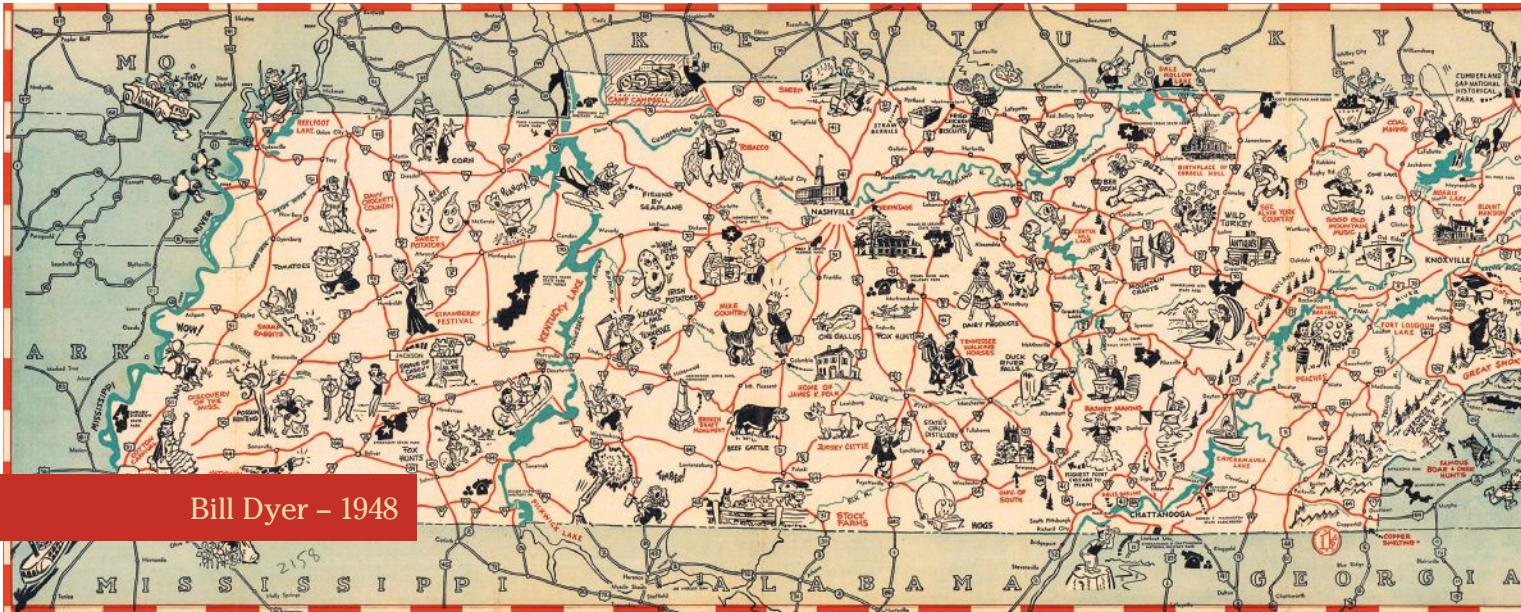
You can find ordering information on Wright's website at davidwrightart.com. Orders can be made by emailing gspnash@gmail.com or by calling 615-504-6996.

To promote the book, Wright holds book signings. An upcoming event will be held at Monthaven Arts and Cultural Center in Hendersonville on Thursday, Dec. 11, where all are invited to meet the artist. Watch Monthaven's website at monthavenarts.org for more details.



David Wright says he's "tickled to death" with the large-format book celebrating his career as a historical painter. Find information on "David Wright: Historian with a Brush" on the artist's website, davidwrightart.com.





1948 'Chuckle Map' inspired 2012 'Kid's Map'



I think it's the most amusing thing ever produced by the government of Tennessee.

In 1948, the Department of Conservation commissioned *Knoxville News Sentinel* artist Bill Dyer to create the "Chuckle Map of Tennessee" — a highway map illustrated with sketches of attractions and activities across the state. The state printed 100,000 copies and distributed them nationwide — advertising them in newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Detroit Free Press*.

The map depicted smiling sweet potatoes in Weakley County, a buzzing bee over Bee Rock in Putnam County, a mule being crowned in Maury County and a bear enjoying a scenic view in Blount County. It also featured fiddlers; canoers;

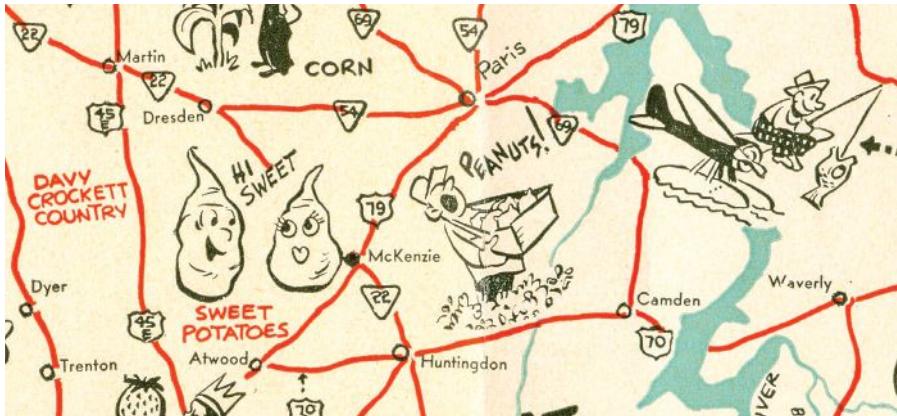
History Lesson

by Bill Carey

The Tennessee History Guy



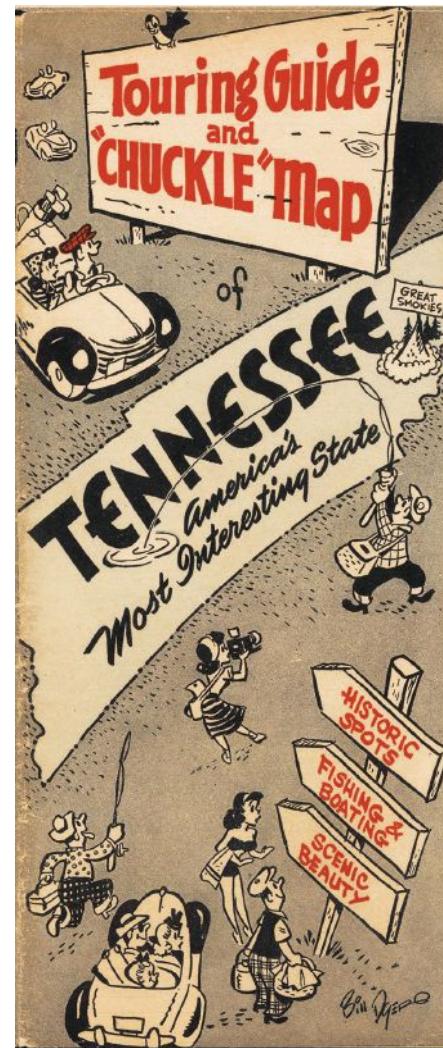
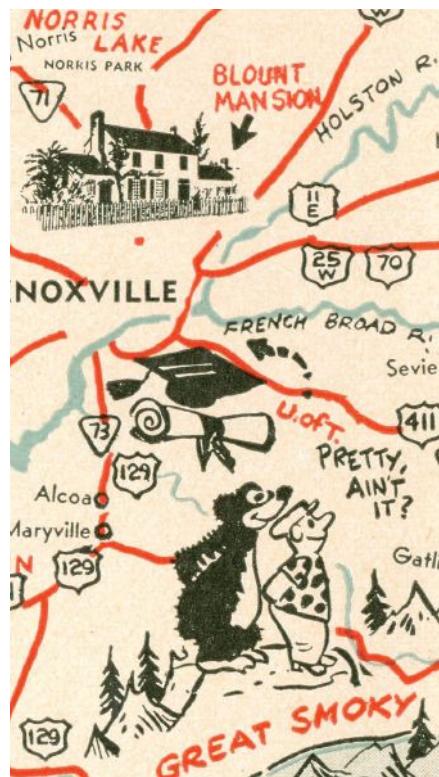
Cartoonist Bill Dyer illustrated the 1948 Chuckle Map of Tennessee. It featured smiling sweet potatoes in Weakley County, below, a bear enjoying the view in Blount County, bottom left, and a mule being crowned in Maury County, bottom right. Tennessee State Library and Archives images



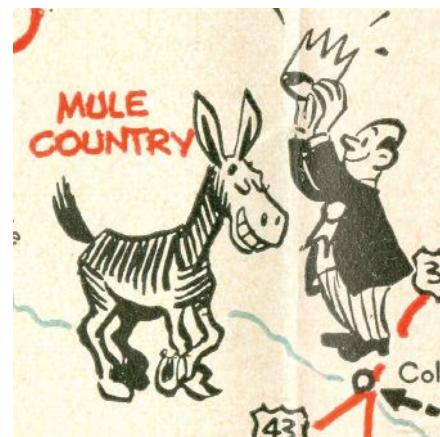
square dancers; apple pickers; trout and bass fishermen; cotton, corn, tobacco, tomato and bean farmers; depictions of Hernando de Soto, David Crockett and Alvin York; and horses, cows, ducks, deer, foxes, dogs, possums, rabbits and wild boars.

I don't recommend teachers use the Chuckle Map anymore. Much of what Tennessee is known for didn't exist or was just getting started in 1948. There are also stereotypes in the cartoons that reflect the era before racial integration that would not pass muster in 2025.

However, I love Dyer's map because it represents something in which I strongly believe: If you make students laugh, they will like learning.



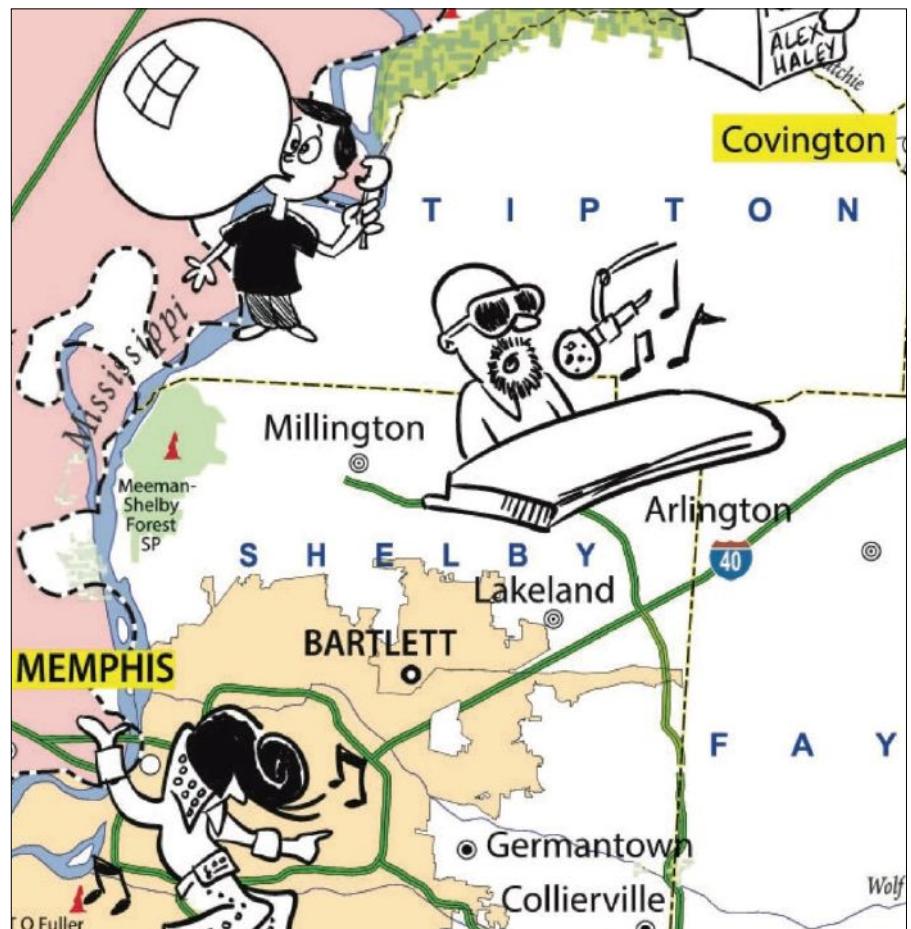
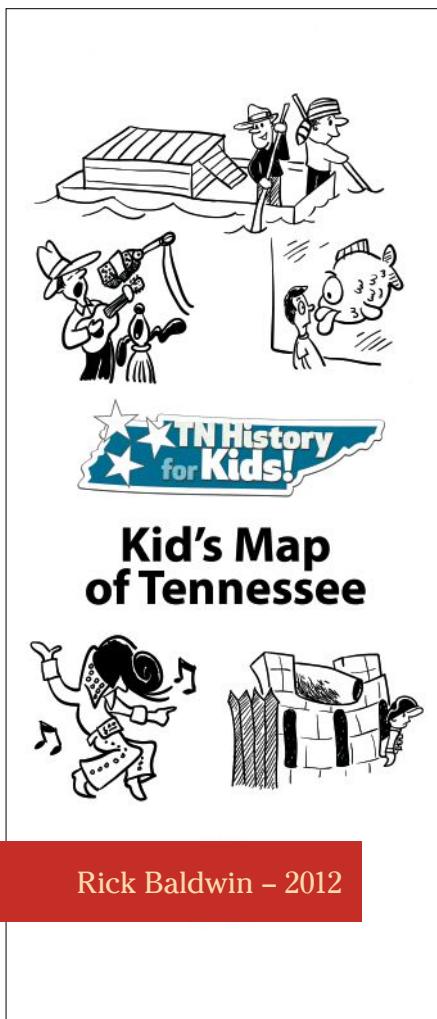
Above, the cover of the Chuckle Map of Tennessee. Tennessee State Library and Archives image





The Kid's Map of Tennessee featured depictions of country singers, Minnie Pearl, Isaac Hayes and Elvis Presley, among others.

Tennessee History for Kids images



A few years ago, the map inspired my organization (Tennessee History for Kids) to create something similar. The 2012 "Kid's Map of Tennessee" was sponsored by AT&T. Angie Jones designed it with help from the mapmaking folks at the state Department of Transportation. It was illustrated by Rick Baldwin, who used to be the cartoonist for the (Knoxville) *Metro Pulse* newspaper.

Rick came up with wonderful sketches, including Dolly riding a log flume ride (for Sevier County), Elvis gyrating his hips in a jumpsuit (for Memphis), a country singer and hound dog twanging into a microphone (Nashville), a witch in a cave (Robertson County), a fainting goat (Marshall County) and a squirrel and teapot (Gibson County).

On the back side of the cartoon map was another map of Tennessee

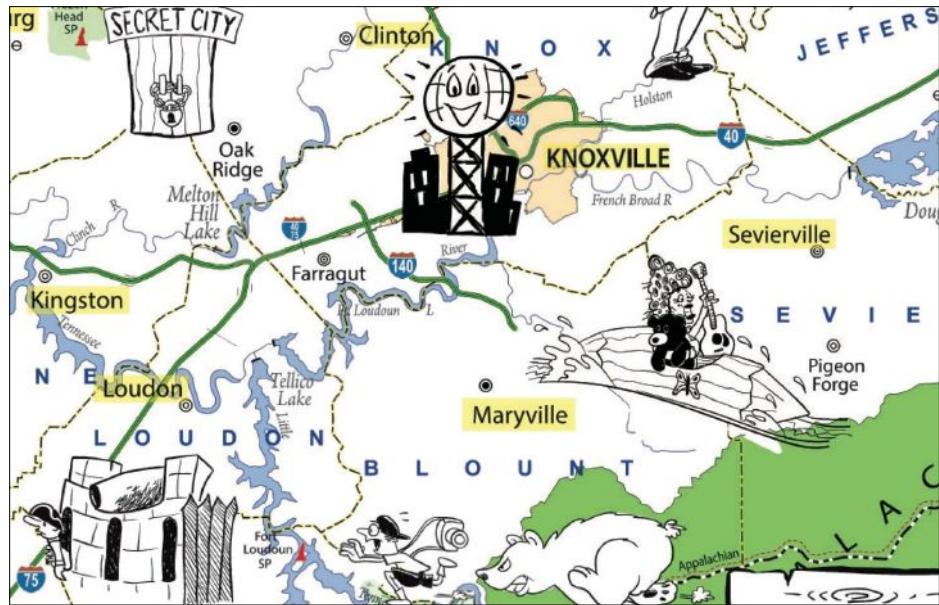
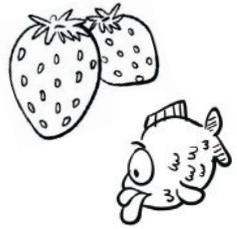
that contained photos of historic sites that I had taken on my many trips across the state. There were also smaller maps that showed the three Grand Divisions, three river systems, six physical regions, a section on Tennessee symbols and a list of counties with their populations.

Tennessee History for Kids printed 20,000 copies of the Kid's Map of Tennessee. They were snatched up by public school teachers within two weeks.

In the years since we published the Kid's Map, I've had many requests from teachers to bring it back. The only way that will happen is if the state's departments of Transportation, Safety and Homeland Security, and Tourist Development adopt and distribute it at welcome centers and rest areas. I've floated that idea several times, but it hasn't gotten anywhere.

However, you can still download Bill Dyer's 1948 map if you go to the State Library and Archives Tennessee Virtual Archive (TeVA) and type the words "Chuckle Map" into the search box.

Below, cartoonist Rick Baldwin even made the Knoxville Sunsphere smile!
Tennessee History for Kids images



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Everything else is
credit."*
- J.P. Morgan

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SUPREME COIN AND BULLION

Your future self will thank you

Members win big at CEMC's 87th annual meeting

Congratulations to all of the winners at Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's 87th annual meeting! Several door prizes, youth prizes, bill credits and the grand prize were awarded during the meeting, which was held Saturday, Sept. 20, at Rossview High School in Clarksville.

Along with the major door prize winners, 12 members were awarded bill credits between \$50 and \$250. Bill credit winners are:

\$250 winners: Kenneth Bone, Clarksville District, and Richard Holabau, Springfield District.

\$100 winners: David Newberry, Clarksville District; Benjamin Faircloth, Springfield District; Stephen Bednar, Dover District; Jerry Allen,

Clarksville District; and Grace Nicoll, Gallatin District.

\$50 winners: James Resha, Clarksville District; Chrisa Pruitt, Clarksville District; Gloria McKinley, Dover District; Hayden Foster, Ashland City District; and Joe Fort, Ashland City District.

Members who stopped by for early registration on Friday, Sept. 19, at CEMC district offices were also entered into a drawing, with several receiving \$100 bill credits: Barbara Sleigh, Clarksville office; Kevin Denman, Springfield office; Geraldine High, Portland office; Joe Wallace, Gallatin office; Harriett Shadowens, Ashland City office; Ronald Wallace, Dover office; and George Fox III, White House office.

Youth Corner prize winners were Aurora Ribble, Andrew Borkowski, Maliyah Newman, Eli Cruise, Riley Thomas, Taylor Stanfield and Caitlin Cooper.

In addition, all active Cumberland Connect subscribers were automatically entered into a special giveaway during the meeting. Ten members were randomly selected to enjoy six months of free gig-speed internet service: Brandi Perry, Kyle Ward, Michael Young, Lori Mangrum, Cheryl Hayes, Douglas Hackney, Danny Thompson, Luke Hobbs, Robert Niebel and David Adams.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners, and thank you for your participation at CEMC's annual meeting!



Tamara Hudson is the grand-prize winner at CEMC's 87th annual meeting. She won a \$1,000 Lowe's gift card.



Gwendolyn Lundy claims the Pick Tennessee Package.



From left, **Bobby Blackwell, David Caira, Fernando Garza, David Trotter and Tiffany Pinckney** are the scholarship winners. Not pictured is Stephen Heath.



The Gatlinburg Getaway Package is awarded to Kaye Smith.



Donn Powers wins the Grand Ole Christmas Package.



The Nintendo Switch 2 goes to Chrisa Pruitt.



Winner of the Power Cycle is Xavier Garcia.

Continued on page 24



CEMC employees volunteer with Habitat for Humanity to help build homes for local families as part of the 2025 Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service.

CEMC lends a helping hand during the 2025 Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation participated in the 2025 Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service, officially observed on Thursday, Oct. 16, by extending its efforts across three volunteer days throughout the month. This year, employees joined forces with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for three families in our communities.

CEMC first partnered with Habitat for Humanity in May for the “Project Playhouse” build in Sumner County. The purpose of this heartwarming project was to create a fun and safe play environment for children in need. Eleven employees from CEMC and Cumberland Connect built, designed and decorated a playhouse for two very excited little girls.

Building on the success of that event, CEMC employees continued their collaboration with Habitat for Humanity

by assisting in the construction of two homes in Sumner County and another in Robertson County.

“We chose Habitat for Humanity because of their outstanding work and love for our community,” said Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers, coordinator of the Day of Service Project at CEMC. “Habitat’s mission to bring people together to build homes, communities and hope aligns perfectly with our cooperative values.”

Projects like the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service are important to CEMC because they allow employees to give back and make a tangible difference in the lives of their neighbors and friends, who are typically CEMC members.

“The day of service is a reminder that electric cooperatives are more than just power providers —we’re

neighbors and community partners,” said CEMC General Manager Chris Davis. “Participating in this effort allows us to live out our cooperative values by giving back, lending a helping hand and making a positive impact right here at home.”

The Tennessee Electric Co-op Day of Service is coordinated by the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association. Thirty-one separate community service projects were completed as a part of this year’s event. More than 700 electric co-op employees devoted more than 1,300 volunteer hours across the state.

Since its inception, the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service has made a significant impact across the state. Over the past nine years, the program has completed 241 projects with the help of 4,871 volunteers who have collectively contributed more

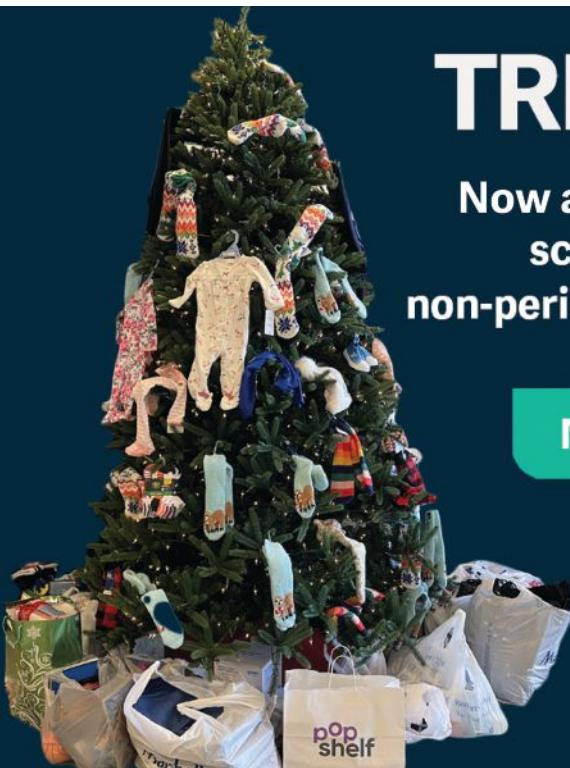


Co-op volunteers are proud to lend a hand at a Habitat for Humanity build in Gallatin during the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Day of Service.

than 12,000 service hours. These efforts have improved local communities and strengthened the bond between electric cooperatives and the people they serve.

“The day of service is a reminder that electric cooperatives are more than just power providers — we’re neighbors and community partners.”

— CEMC General Manager Chris Davis



TREES OF GIVING

Now accepting donations of **NEW hats, scarves, gloves, socks, coats and non-perishable food items** at all CEMC offices

MEMBER DONATIONS WELCOME

Donations should be placed on or under the trees by

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

DEC 12

Members win big at CEMC's 87th annual meeting, continued from page 21



The Meal Subscription Package winner is James Williams Sr.



Gregory Cooke Sr. is the winner of the Outdoor Adventure Package.



Left, the Ring Home Security Package is awarded to Allen Binkley. Right, Brian Davis claims the Amp'd Entertainment Package. Also winning a door prize but not pictured is James Jenkins, who won the Electri-cut Lawn Package.



'Tis the season for smarter Wi-Fi



The holiday season is a time for creating memories, but it can also be a season of digital chaos. With guests in the house and smart devices everywhere, your Wi-Fi can end up working harder than Santa's elves. That's where Cumberland Connect's CCFiber SmartIQ App comes in — helping your Wi-Fi shine like the star on top of the tree.

The SmartIQ App, free for all Cumberland Connect subscribers, gives you complete control of your Wi-Fi experience right from your smartphone or tablet. It's like having your own digital command center for managing your home network, with all the controls and settings you need right at your fingertips. The app recently received a major update that makes it easier than ever to use, with a refreshed look and smoother navigation designed to make managing your connection feel effortless.

If you're hosting family and friends this season, setting up a guest network takes just a few taps. Your visitors can connect quickly while your main Wi-Fi stays private and protected. No need to share personal passwords or worry about uninvited devices showing up on your network, and you can even share network details with your guests right from the app. It's an easy way to keep everyone online while keeping your personal digital space safe.

The holidays also tend to push your connection in a lot of different direc-

tions at once. Someone is streaming a holiday movie in the living room. Someone else is on a video call with family out of state. Packages are arriving on the porch, and your doorbell camera is sending alerts. Kids are gaming online with their friends after school.

SmartIQ helps you keep all of that under control. You can see every device connected to your network, so you always know what is using your Wi-Fi. You can pause a specific profile's connection when it is time to decorate cookies or sit down for dinner, then turn it right back on when family time winds down. You stay in charge of screen time without having to walk around the house, collecting devices from your kids.

For those who want to take their connection to the next level, Cumberland Connect's Peace of Mind Package unlocks premium SmartIQ features for \$10 per month. ProtectIQ provides automatic, advanced network security that helps block online threats before they reach your connected devices. ExperienceIQ offers enhanced parental controls and personalized settings for every member of the household, so you can set content limits and create bedtime schedules that quietly turn off internet access for certain devices at night. MyPrioritiesIQ intelligently manages bandwidth so your most important devices like your work laptop during a

video meeting or the TV during your big holiday movie night always get the speed they need.

As an added bonus, subscribers enrolled in the Peace of Mind Package can receive up to six free in-home service visits per calendar year (up to a \$480 value), so if any issues arise, help is just a call away. Together, these tools keep your Wi-Fi network safe, smooth and worry-free, not just during the holidays but all year long.



This December, give yourself one less thing to stress about. With the CCFiber SmartIQ App, you can spend more time enjoying the moments that matter and less time troubleshooting connections. Download the SmartIQ app for free today from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store and enjoy a smarter, safer and more connected holiday season with Cumberland Connect.

The best kind of peace this season? Peace of Mind. Scan to learn more!



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8 energy-saving gadgets and gifts for the holidays



Q: We're practical gift-givers, and we're thinking about giving the gift of energy savings this year. Do you have any fun suggestions for us?

A: Absolutely! From stocking stuffers to splashy splurges, these eight gift ideas are perfect for the gadget-lovers on your gift list.

Give the gift of savings and comfort

We know sweater weather is here, but let's leave the ugly knits to your cousin, Carol, and light up the sea-

son with smart — and unexpected — energy-saving home technology gifts.

Plug-in smart outlet

Best for: The multitasker and the forgetful

Cost: About \$25 for a four-pack
Smart plugs can help your loved ones rein in energy costs in unexpected ways. Plug any on/off device like a desk lamp, fan or entertainment system into a plug-in smart switch, and control it from anywhere using an app — making it great for those, "Oh no! I forgot to turn off the ..." moments. For added convenience, most models are compatible with other devices such as smart thermostats, motion detectors or smart home platforms like Amazon Alexa, Apple HomeKit or Google.

Smart thermostats

Best for: The budget-wise and comfort-conscious

Cost: About \$50-\$250

Smart thermostats make it easy to control your home's energy use, reduce energy costs and improve your comfort. Energy Star estimates that families can save between \$50 and \$100 each year by using a smart thermostat.



Smart dimmer switches and motion detectors

Best for: The vibe-setter and the traveler

Cost: About \$15 per switch

Smart dimmer switches enable your friends and family to dim groups of lights throughout their homes simultaneously, or they can create an automated schedule to turn on or off when they're not home.

Smart LED bulbs

Best for: The interior designer and the chameleon

Cost: About \$30 for a three-pack

Level up your friends' LED game with smart LED bulbs. Your friends will be able to program their lights to turn on when they detect motion, align brightness to circadian rhythms, select color and color temperature, and schedule or automate individual bulbs to fit your friends' schedules — and control them all via an app or voice command.

Smart ceiling fan switch

Best for: The height-challenged and the comfort-minded

Cost: About \$90 per switch

We know your ceiling fans are already running clockwise for the winter, circulating warm air from the ceiling throughout your home, but are your friends fans of the seasonal ceiling fan direction? Installing a wall switch that controls hard-to-reach ceiling fans makes seasonal adjustments a breeze. Some switches even connect to the internet, a home assistant or a smart thermostat so that the fan turns on when a room gets too hot or cold — or turns off when the room is empty.

WaterSense-certified sprinkler controller

Best for: The green thumb or the brown thumb

Cost: About \$200 for an eight-zone system

Traditional sprinkler systems can be wasteful and inefficient. The EPA reports that WaterSense-certified smart controllers can save the average home 7,600 gallons of water each year! A Wi-Fi smart sprinkler acts like a thermostat for a sprinkler system by telling it when to turn on

and off. They take the guesswork out of watering and can adjust water schedules based on hyper-local weather and soil conditions.

Water leak sensor

Best for: The worrier and the controller

Cost: About \$50 for a two-pack

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that everyday household leaks in the U.S. account for about 1 trillion gallons of wasted water each year! To catch small leaks before they become costly catastrophes, give the worriers in your family a pack of smart leak sensors. They can place the sensors around washing machines, dishwashers, water heaters, toilets and any other leak-prone areas and receive a smartphone alert if a leak is detected.

Whole-home energy monitoring

Best for: The data-driven homeowner and the engineer

Cost: About \$100-\$300

Whole-home energy monitors measure the amount of electricity your home uses — right down to individual circuits and devices. Although the monitor won't help your friends reduce energy use, it will help them identify what's consuming the most electricity so they can make informed energy decisions. Some apps even allow users to optimize the schedules of high-draw devices such as dryers, air conditioners and EV chargers so that they run during off-peak hours.

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.

Poet's Playground

Inspiring words from your neighbors

AGE 8 AND YOUNGER

Tennessee and Me

Tennessee is my homeland,
Tennessee is where I'm meant to be.
You may ask why,
And I'll tell you.
It's beautiful in its own special way.
It's hot in the summer,
And cold in the winter.
Tennessee is perfect,
And it's just right
For me.

Zendaya Stoltzfus,
Duck River EMC



AGE 9-13

Mother Green

She's a hidden gem among 50 stones
A bright pearl in a world gone blue
Her mountains and trees, as strong as bones
She lives in me, through and through

Her sunlight flows beyond her golden plains
Her memories are held within
her pure green heart
Pure as gold and gentle as rain
She gives us her land, a true work of art

Ms. Mother Green gives us our love
She provides beautiful wildlife
that freely roams
Her elegance is one as a spirit from a dove
Oh, hidden gem, Ms. Mother Green,
forever my home

Caroline Zdunek,
Middle Tennessee Electric

AGE 14-18

Tennessee Pines

Tennessee pines are standing tall over the field, casting shade upon the other trees and adding to the scenery. I often stop to watch them swaying in the breeze and think, "What great beautiful trees that God has made for us to see." Throughout the seasons they stay green, never fading to the weather no matter how rough the seasons may be. Oh, what wonderful tall pine trees! Tennessee pines surround the ridge, giving the squirrels a wonderful place to live and forage. They cover the tops of the Smoky Mountains looking so strong and fine. What beautiful Tennessee pines!

Maddie Lyon,
Meriwether Lewis EC

AGE 19-22

Tennessee River Pearls

Forgotten tobacco barns
And white farmhouses,
Crafted by blue collars
And calloused hands,
Line the endless,
Winding roads.
A Mockingbird sings his silky song
That carries through the Cedars
And flows with the creeks
To greet the lonely Iris flower.
The mountains lie still,
Framing the smoky vegetation
Similar to an old photograph,
But much more alive.
Crisp air turned into long nights,
Dancing, laughing and singing.
And when the Southern sun greets the still lake,
Life continues as a pair of old, worn-out boots.

Lillian Conrad,
Middle Tennessee Electric



AGE 23-64

Unique Tennessee

In a vibrant, versatile, Volunteer State
There's a lovely land that borders eight
Established in seventeen ninety-six
Built from clever dreams with stone & stick
In the harmony of country, rock, rhythm & blues
They gathered in Memphis, Nashville & Knoxville too
Blessed with mountains, rivers, caves, & lakes
History lived out on the Natchez Trace
From Graceland to Dollywood, we carry on our traditions
And the future auditions with its own ambitions
Tennessee represents a unique realm of creation
Forming the legacy of a mighty nation

Sabrina Harper,
Meriwether Lewis EC

AGE 65 AND OLDER

The Heron

They stand so proud and regal
On the lakes of Tennessee.
Like statues made of stone,
They wait so patiently.

They know a meal awaits below
The surface near the shore.
They take what's necessary
And ask for nothing more.

Their beauty's undeniable,
Though some may disagree.
And when they take to flight,
They do so gracefully.

They may seem to be loners,
But their home's with family.
High up in the trees are nests
They make from earth's debris.

Those who are observant
Certainly can see
The beauty of the heron
on the lakes of Tennessee.

Teri LoNigro,
Volunteer EC

DO YOU HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS?

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

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

Age categories: The competition has six age divisions — 8 and younger, 9-13, 14-18, 19-22, 23-64 and 65 and older. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners. First place wins \$50 and will be printed in the magazine, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Poems capturing first-, second- and third-place honors will be published online at tnmagazine.org.

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

Deadline: Entry must be submitted online or postmarked by Monday, Feb. 2. First-place poems will be published in the April issue.

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

Please enter online at tnmagazine.org or mail hand-written entries to:

**Poetry Contest,
The Tennessee Magazine
P.O. Box 100912
Nashville, TN 37224**

Make sure to print your poem legibly, and be sure to keep a copy of your poem as submissions received via mail will not be returned.

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



20
26

best

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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.



\$250 to spend while you're enjoying your state park visit.



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

ZIP: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Email: _____

Electric cooperative: _____

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

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Place for Dessert

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Festival

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

Museum/Art Gallery

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

State Park

West: _____

Middle: _____

East: _____

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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Fayetteville Public Utilities Fayetteville, TN	Middle Tennessee Electric Murfreesboro, TN	Volunteer Energy Cooperative Decatur, TN	

Tennessee Events

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

DEC. 13

Wreaths Across America Day

Across Tennessee.

wreathsacrossamerica.org

On Saturday, Dec. 13, Wreaths Across America honors every deceased American veteran by placing live balsam wreaths on their gravesites.

This year, 130 locations across Tennessee are participating in Wreaths Across America Day, and the organization is working to raise funds to place wreaths on the graves of more than 264,400 veterans across the country.

Founded in 2007, Wreaths Across America works to fulfill its mission statement: "Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve. Teach the next generation the value of freedom."

A portion of the funds raised by each wreath sponsored is given back to the communities to support local programs that help veterans and their families.

For more information on Wreaths Across America Day, to support the effort or to find a participating location near you, go to wreathsacrossamerica.org.



Photo and logo courtesy of Wreaths Across America

West Tennessee

NOW-DEC. 23

Christmas at Graceland

Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com/christmas-at-graceland

NOW-DEC. 28

Enchanted Forest Festival of Trees

Pink Palace Museum and Mansion, Memphis. 901-636-2362 or moshmemphis.com

NOW-DEC. 30

"Let it Glow" Drive-Thru and Walk-Thru Light Show

Discovery Park of America, Union City. 731-885-5455 or discoveryparkofamerica.com

DEC. 5-7

Live Nativity

New Harmony Baptist Church, Paris. 901-731-593-5276

DEC. 6

Christmas with C.S. Lewis

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

DEC. 12-14

Ballet Memphis' The Nutcracker

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

DEC. 13

St. Nicholas Festival

St. Nicholas Orthodox Christian Church, Jackson. 731-300-3230 or orthodoxjackson@gmail.com

DEC. 16-21

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

DEC. 20

Magic of Memphis

Cannon Center for the Performing Arts, Memphis. 901-576-1200 or thecannoncenter.com

DEC. 20

Christmas Sports Card and Collectibles Show

Discovery Park of America, Union City. 731-225-3408 or discoveryparkofamerica.com

DEC. 24

World Ballet Company: "Nutcracker"

Cannon Center for the Performing Arts, Memphis. 901-576-1200 or thecannoncenter.com

Middle Tennessee

DEC. 5

Annual Rutherford County Christmas Tree Lighting

Downtown Murfreesboro. 615-898-7831 or mainstreetmurfreesboro.org/celebrate-christmas-downtown

DEC. 5, 12

Christmas in the Country

downtown Livingston. 931-823-6421

DEC. 5-6

A Quilted Christmas

Bell Buckle. 931-808-7640 or bellbucklechamber.com

DEC. 5-7

"Home Alone" in Concert

Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville. 615-687-6400 or nashvillesymphony.org

DEC. 6

Yulefest

Historic Mansker's Station, Goodlettsville. 615-859-3678 or goodlettsville.gov/1420/Yulefest

DEC. 6-7

Bethlehem Marketplace

Southeast Baptist Church, Murfreesboro. 615-896-0940 or sebaptist.org/bethlehem-marketplace

DEC. 6, 13 & 20

Santa Express Excursion Trains

Tennessee Central Railway Museum, Nashville. 615-241-0436 or tcry.org

DEC. 6, 13 & 20

Old Fashioned Christmas

Bell Buckle. 931-808-7640 or bellbucklechamber.com

DEC. 7

Christmas in the Wood

Collinwood Recreation Building, Collinwood. 931-676-7604 or thebearfamilyof3@gmail.com

DEC. 10-11

"Elf" in Concert

Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville. 615-687-6400 or nashvillesymphony.org

DEC. 11

Christmas Open House

Tennessee Agricultural Museum, Nashville. 615-837-5197 or tnagmuseum.org

DEC. 13

"A Charlie Brown Christmas"

5K/10K

Shelby Park, Nashville. erin@medaldash.com or runsignup.com/Race/TN/Nashville/acharliebrownchristmas5k10kNashvilleTN

DEC. 13

North Pole Festival and Shopping Expo

Fountains at Gateway, Murfreesboro. 931-952-0472 or brianna-victory-events.com

DEC. 13

Country Christmas and Parade

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

DEC. 23

Opry Country Christmas

Opry House, Nashville. 615-871-6779 or opry.com

East Tennessee

NOW-DEC. 31

Third Annual Holiday Wine Trail

rockytopwinetrail.ticketspice.com/holiday-wine-trail

DEC. 6

Christmas in the Country

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

DEC. 6

Cirque Dreams Holidaze

Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville. 865-684-1200 or tennesseetheatre.com

DEC. 7

Chattanooga Ballet's Land of Sweets

The Read House Hotel, Downtown, Chattanooga. 423-265-0617 or givebutter.com/LandofSweets25

DEC. 10

Christmas with the Celts

Walker Theatre, Chattanooga. 423-757-5580 or tivolichattanooga.com

DEC. 12

A Holly Dolly Christmas — Music and Food

Songbirds, Chattanooga. info@songbirdsfoundation.org or songbirdsfoundation.org/events/holly-dolly

DEC. 12-13

Candlelight Christmas

Museum of Appalachia, Clinton. 865-494-7680 or museumofappalachia.org/christmas

DEC. 12-14

Chattanooga Ballet's "The Nutcracker"

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium, Chattanooga. 423-265-0617 or chaballet.org/tickets

DEC. 13

Candy Cane Course — Chattanooga

Tennessee River Park Pavilion 2, Chattanooga. 760-669-6471 or support@bodiesrc.com

DEC. 14

Run Santa Run Knoxville Half, 10K and 5K Run/Walk

El Mezcal Mexican Restaurant, Knoxville. 865-300-6722 or run-santa-run.com/knoxville

DEC. 20

Tellico Plains Christmas Parade

Historic Tellico Plains Town Square. 615-347-0086 or jamcdaniel@tds.net

DEC. 20-21

Chattanooga Symphony and Opera present "Home for the Holidays"

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium, Chattanooga. 423-757-5580 or tivolichattanooga.com



Submit your events

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

Kicked up traditions

Leveling up:
Modern takes
on traditional
favorites

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

Have you pulled out that tattered community cookbook yet? The one from 1972 with every recipe your family once used for the holidays? It's bound to happen, and when it does, you might find that the "just right" recipes from long ago now seem too sweet, too bland or too salty for our modern palates. Don't despair: Try these "leveled up" versions of old family favorites. Once you do, they'll be your new go-to holiday standards.



Crazy Good Tuna Casserole

This is nothing like what you grew up with. It's updated, easy and incredibly yummy! Take it to a tree-decorating gathering to get the season started.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

- 1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed cream of celery soup
- 1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 2½ cups low-sodium chicken stock or water
- 1 (11-ounce) package dried pasta shells
- 1 (8-ounce) package sliced button mushrooms
- 2 (5-ounce) cans tuna packed in water, drained and flaked
- 1 (2-ounce) can diced pimento peppers, drained
- 3 cups arugula, divided
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon onion salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup julienned carrots
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Generously grease a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Add the celery soup, mushroom soup and stock, stirring to blend. Add the pasta, mushrooms, tuna, peppers, 2½ cups of the arugula, lemon juice, zest, salt, black pepper, cayenne and paprika, stirring to blend. Evenly distribute throughout the baking dish and top with the cheese and carrots. Lightly press down in the pan, and drizzle with the oil.

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until golden-brown. Remove from the oven and allow to stand at least 10 minutes. Garnish with the remaining arugula and serve warm.



Almond Chocolate Balls

Smoked Meatloaf

Put this masterpiece in the smoker and forget it for several hours while you take care of other holiday tasks. See the note below for alternative preparation if you don't have a smoker.

Yield: 8 servings

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1/4 pound ground Italian sausage or pork
- 1 cup seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onions
- 2 teaspoons garlic or onion salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground sage
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup apple juice

Preheat the smoker to 225 degrees. Grease a half-sized baking sheet with cooking spray and set aside. If desired, line with aluminum foil first.

In a large bowl, combine the beef, pork, breadcrumbs, milk, eggs, onions, salt, sage and pepper. I put on rubber gloves and mixed with my hands to make the process easier. Form into a loaf, packing tightly on the prepared pan. Place the pan directly on the rack in the smoker and cook for 3 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, stir together the barbecue sauce and apple juice. Reserve half for serving with the meatloaf. Brush the other half on the meatloaf in the smoker. Cook another 20 minutes or until a thermometer inserted in the center registers 160 degrees. Allow to rest for 10 minutes before slicing and serving warm.

Alternative preparation method: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the meatloaf in a lightly greased baking dish and cook for 2 hours or until a meat thermometer inserted in the center registers 160 degrees. Allow to rest 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

Prosciutto and Goat Cheese Frittata

Yield: 6 servings

- 8 eggs
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh chives

- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon canola or vegetable oil
- 3 ounces chopped prosciutto (around 1/2 cup)
- 1/2 cup baby spinach leaves
- 1/2 cup crumbled goat cheese

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, chives, pepper, salt and garlic powder. Set aside and preheat the broiler.

Place the butter and oil in a large (12-inch oven-safe) skillet over medium heat. When the butter has melted, add the prosciutto and cook 1 minute. Add the spinach and cook for 2 minutes or until wilted. Transfer the egg mixture to the skillet. When the edges have cooked, lift up with a spatula to allow uncooked eggs to go underneath. When the eggs have set on the bottom, remove from the heat.

Evenly distribute the goat cheese over the top and broil in the oven until slightly browned, about 4 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to stand 5 minutes before slicing and serving warm.

Almond Chocolate Balls

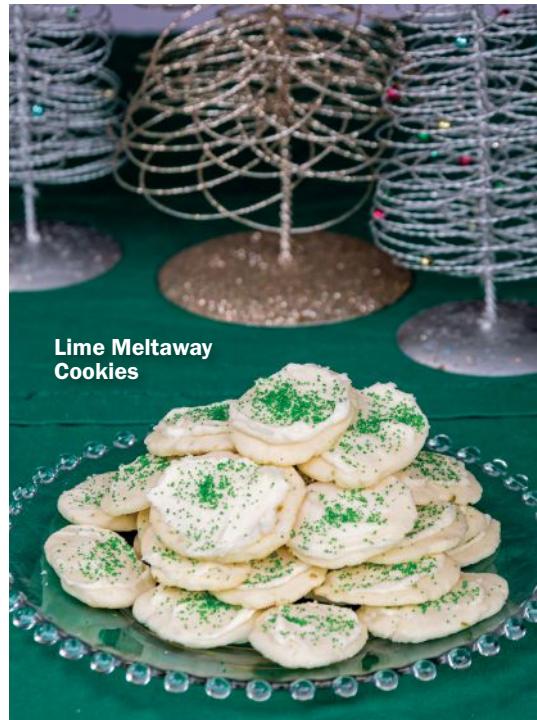
Yield: 5 dozen candies

- 3 (6-ounce) packages semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 3 tablespoons almond syrup or amaretto
- 1/2 teaspoon pure almond extract
- 1 1/2 to 2 cups chopped almonds

Place the chocolate chips and sweetened condensed milk in a large heavy saucpan over low heat. Stir occasionally until the chips are melted and the mixture is smooth. Remove from the heat and add the syrup or amaretto and extract, stirring well. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Place the chopped almonds in a shallow dish. With your hands, roll chocolate mixture into 3/4-inch balls, then roll in the chopped

almonds. Place on a parchment-lined rimmed sheet and chill until firm, around an hour. Transfer to a tightly covered container and store at room temperature.



Lime Meltaway Cookies

Lime Meltaway Cookies

The cornstarch makes these cookies literally melt in your mouth!

Yield: 4 dozen cookies

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup cornstarch
- 1/3 cup plus 3 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar, divided
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, divided and softened
- 2 teaspoons finely grated lime zest, divided
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice, divided

In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine the flour, cornstarch, 1/3 cup of the confectioners' sugar, 1 1/2 sticks of the butter, 1 teaspoon of the zest and 1 tablespoon of the juice. Beat on low speed 3 minutes or until well combined.

Divide the dough in half. Shape each half into an 8-by-1-inch log. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. With a sharp knife, cut each log into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Place the slices 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake 10 to 12 minutes. The cookies will not be brown. Cool completely on a wire rack.

In a small bowl, combine the remaining confectioners' sugar, butter, zest and juice on low speed of an electric mixer. Increase speed to medium and beat 2 minutes until fluffy. Frost the cooled cookies.

Note: Store in cookie tins or any airtight container.

Red Velvet Pancakes

Brought to you by the holiday cake we all love — but in breakfast form!

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup unsweetened cocoa
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $3\frac{3}{4}$ cup buttermilk
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon red food coloring
- Pure maple syrup

Preheat a greased griddle or large skillet to medium heat. In a mixing bowl, stir together the flour, powdered sugar, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In a small bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, egg, granulated sugar and red food coloring. Add gradually to the flour mixture, stirring just until blended.

Using a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup measure, pour batter onto the hot griddle. Cook in batches, making sure they don't touch. Cook just over 3 minutes or until bubbles appear on the tops and the edges are cooked. Flip and cook another 3 or 4 minutes until done. Serve warm with a garnish of powdered sugar and alongside pure maple syrup.

Note: If necessary, place on a parchment-lined baking sheet in a 200 degree oven to keep warm before serving.

Alternative: Substitute unsweetened shredded coconut for the cocoa and omit the red food coloring. Add a teaspoon of coconut extract instead.

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

Kathy writes, "Would you please explain the difference between a roux and a slurry for use in a soup?"

Kathy, both are thickeners, but a slurry accomplishes the task in a lighter fashion. For a slurry, I use equal amounts of cornstarch and cold water. It only needs whisking, then add to the simmering soup.

Bobby asks, "I love chicken spaghetti, but the recipes always make more than I can enjoy in the 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Can I freeze it?"

Bobby, I would make the recipe according to the directions, but divide the recipe in half and freeze half before you bake it. Simply place in a smaller greased casserole dish, cover with plastic wrap, then heavy duty aluminum foil if the dish doesn't have a lid. It will keep up to 3 months in the freezer and only needs to be thawed overnight in the refrigerator.

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

Tips & Tricks



- If you don't like the tang of goat cheese in the frittata, substitute an equal amount of crumbled feta instead.
- The Almond Chocolate Balls not only have a long shelf life but travel well.
- Consider arugula and baby spinach as worthy substitutes for each other. You can use coarsely chopped baby spinach in place of the arugula in the tuna casserole and arugula rather than baby spinach in the frittata.
- Changing or adding an ingredient to a trusted recipe will make it come alive and revitalize the flavor. This can be as easy as swapping out nut varieties.
- Don't forget the garnish! It's the holidays, so food becomes even more special. Make it look that way before serving. Chopped fresh herbs, some diced Roma tomatoes, a drizzle of sour or heavy cream, a dusting of powdered sugar or a sprig of mint will make your food as beautiful as it is delicious.

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@tnmagazine.org. Entries must be postmarked or received via email

by Friday, Jan. 2, 2026. Winners will be published in the February 2026 issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

October flag spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the location of the flag, left, which was found on the book behind the "potion" on page 36.

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

Joy Phillips

Bulls Gap, Holston EC

Michelle Harris

Cunningham, Cumberland EMC

Sloane Nichols

Medina, Gibson EMC

Artist's Palette Assignment for February

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 — February, 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, Jan. 2, 2026.

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 February 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 December Winners

14–18 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Katie Kramer,
18, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Leila Pierce,
16, Middle Tennessee Electric



THIRD PLACE: Ayda Mittelstaedt,
14, Appalachian EC

9–13 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Myra Nazib,
12, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Asa Foust,
11, Gibson EMC

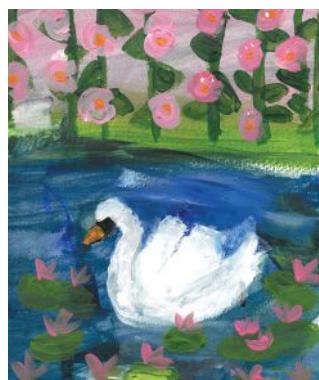


THIRD PLACE: Mithun Sethupathi,
10, Middle Tennessee Electric

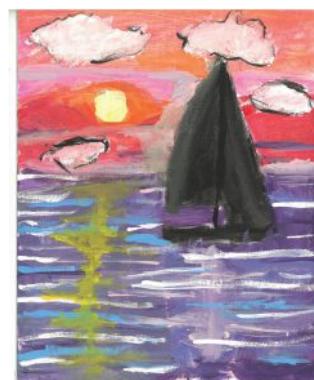
8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Natalie Kramer,
7, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Ivy Armstrong,
7, Middle Tennessee Electric



THIRD PLACE: Kennedy Latham,
8, Caney Fork EC

Point of View

by Robin Conover



“Snowman of the Woods”

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 100-400 mm
f4.5-5.6 L IS USM at 275mm, ISO 1600,
f-8 at 1/1250 second, handheld

Last winter, I ventured out after waking to a beautiful snowfall. The forest and trails always feel different to me when they're blanketed in snow. Perhaps it's because I'm cold and everything else is cold, but after a snowfall, the forest looks and sounds even more peaceful.

This particular day, I was walking with just two cameras: one with a long lens set up to capture migratory waterfowl and one camera with a wide-angle lens for landscapes. For me, I was traveling light without a tripod.

The light was subdued due to low-hanging, thick gray clouds and continuing snow flurries. After shooting for a couple of hours, the cold was setting into my fingertips and my mood. I was ready to call it a day

“Frosty the snowman is a fairytale, they say. He was made of snow, but the children know how he came to life one day.”

— From the song “Frosty the Snowman,” written by Walter “Jack” Rollins and Steve Nelson. Sung by Jimmy Durante in “Frosty the Snowman.”

and go get some hot chocolate when I encountered this little guy: a miniature snowman decked out with bark for eyes, twigs for arms and his nose, and a neatly placed tie made of bark. He couldn't have been more than 8 inches tall, proudly perched atop a tree stump near the trail.

I backed up several feet and focused on him with my long lens. Moving

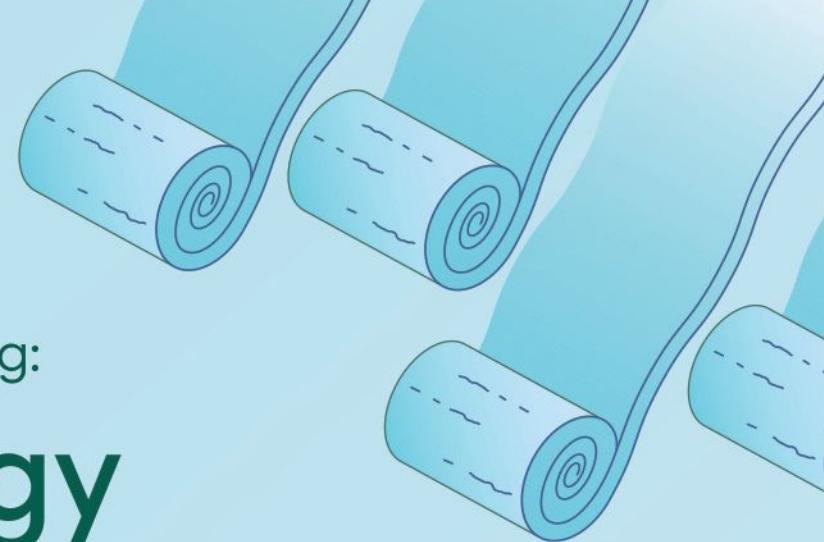
around to simplify the background with a nearby tree, the scene created a nice portrait of the little guy.

My camera was set for something fast, a high ISO to allow for a faster shutter speed, as I was photographing birds in flight just a few minutes earlier.

I literally spent about a minute on this shot. I took three different photos at slightly different angles and left.

I couldn't help but smile at how sweet he was. The scene was stuck in my head as I forgot about the cold and hummed “Frosty the Snowman” all the way back to the car.

If you would like to find your own winter hikes and parks to enjoy, please check out tnstateparks.com for more information.



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