

the tennessee magazine

February 2026

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APPALACHIAN ARTS

TASTY TURKEY

THERE'S A PLACE

Lynchburg



the tennessee magazine

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Celebrating the Extraordinary Nature of Everyday Life

FEBRUARY 2026

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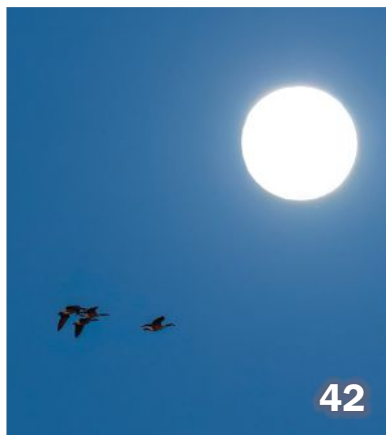
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the
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magazine

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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.

Between the Lines

News from your Community



Chris A. Davis

CEMC General Manager

Preparing for winter storms

February often brings some of the coldest and most unpredictable weather of the year here in Tennessee. While winter can be beautiful, it can also challenge our electrical system and all of us who depend on it with ice, heavy snow, high winds and freezing temperatures. This month, I'd like to share how winter storms can impact your electric service and how Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation prepares for and responds to them.

Winter storms affect electricity differently than summer storms. Ice accumulation on power lines and trees can add tremendous weight, causing lines to sag or break and tree limbs to fall into our system. Strong winds can compound the problem, and freezing rain is often the most damaging of all. When these conditions occur, outages can happen quickly and sometimes affect large areas.

Please know that your cooperative plans for these events long before the first snowflake falls. Our crews closely monitor weather forecasts, stage equipment and materials, and ensure that trucks and supplies are ready. During a storm, our priority is always safety, both for the public and our employees. Lineworkers often work long hours in harsh conditions to restore power as quickly and safely as possible, and we are grateful for their dedication and professionalism.

When outages do occur, restoration follows a specific order. First, we

address any situations involving public safety. Next, we work to restore power to substations and main distribution lines that serve the largest number of members. From there, crews move to smaller lines and individual services. While this means some members might be without power longer than others, this approach allows us to restore service to the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time.

You can help us during winter storms by being prepared. Have flashlights, batteries, blankets and a way to stay informed if the power goes out. If you use alternative heating sources, please do so safely and never operate generators or grills indoors. We also encourage members to report outages through the SmartHub mobile app or by calling 800-987-2362.

Finally, I ask for your patience and understanding during severe weather. Winter restoration can be slower due to icy roads, difficult terrain and dangerous working conditions. Please know that when the lights go out, our crews are already on the way.

Thank you for being a valued member of CEMC. We are committed to serving you through every season, every storm and every challenge winter might bring.

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By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association

Just around the corner

For most of my life, I have heard the phrase “from Memphis to Mountain City” used as a metaphor for anything that applies to all Tennesseans. Whether it was in a political speech or the radio broadcast of a football game, just hearing those words was a simple way to stir thoughts of the striking differences and varied attributes of our state. Not to mention, it often evokes a healthy dose of nostalgia and the warm emotions that come along with memories of your hometown or Grandpa’s farm.

And the metaphor works because Tennessee’s geography and culture really are so different from one end of the state to the other. While the party crowd around Beale Street on a Friday night might actually be

larger than the entire population of the state’s highest incorporated town (elevation 2,418 feet), there is tremendous grandeur in both and at countless points in between.

Perhaps we should all learn some new phrases to really cement more of Tennessee’s amazing places into our lexicon. I’m sure that Alamo to Auburntown, Bluff City to Bells, Copper Hill

to Collinwood or Dyersburg to Ducktown would convey the same message as the more iconic phrase. Who needs a European vacation when you can plan a road trip

from Milan to Athens or Sparta to Paris? All are cities here in Tennessee, of course.

Before I had the good fortune of visiting all of our 95 counties, I knew from that famous phrase that there are a lot of beautiful places and unique experiences to enjoy. I have a love of scenic landscapes and breathtaking views, and as I travel across the state, I often take the two-lane road rather than the interstate, seeking out a new vista to behold.

Those same two-lane roads can take you for a first-time visit to one of our magnificent small towns, which is where I have really grown to appreciate the people of our state. The kind words of a server in a town square cafe or the thoughtful wave of a passing farmer on his tractor can calm your anxious and hurried mind.

Starting this month, we hope to give you a few ideas for new places to explore in our new series titled “There’s a Place.” You can find the first installment beginning on page 14. Please consider these featured towns as upcoming destinations of your own, but my advice is to take the long way there and stop often as you go. Say hello to the people you meet. You won’t regret it.

“The kind words of a server in a town square cafe or the thoughtful wave of a passing farmer on his tractor can calm your anxious and hurried mind.”

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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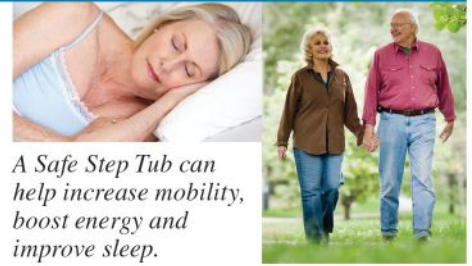
Personal Checklist:

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

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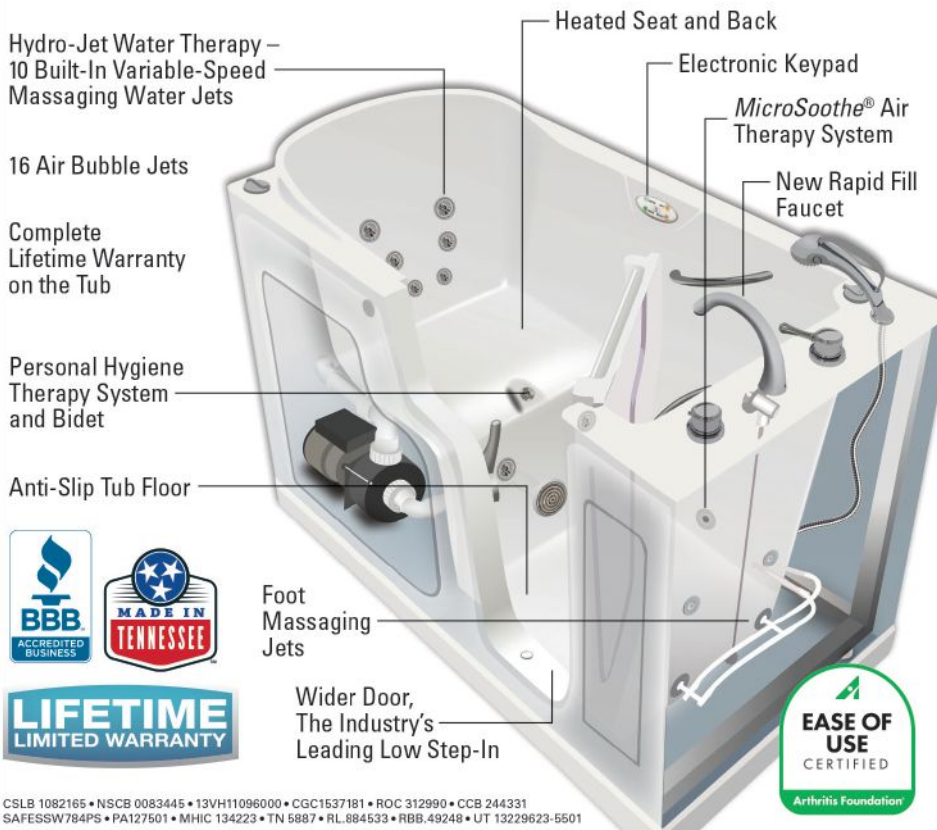
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By Chris Kirk

Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

You have to check it out! There's a place ...

If you're anything like me, you follow a similar script when you fill someone in on the latest discovery you've made. Mine goes something like this:

"I was (doing some ordinary thing), and I stumbled across something cool," I say in hushed tone, closely guarding the secrecy of the sensitive information to follow. "You see, there's this place ..."

From there I dish on the latest greatest cheeseburger I've eaten or wacky general store I wandered through or beautiful stretch of back road I meandered down. It's fun being part of that exclusive in-the-know crowd — no matter how manufactured that exclusivity might be in the tale-teller's mind.

Tourism is one of the greatest drivers of Tennessee's economy, and *The Tennessee Magazine* sees that reflected in surveys and general feedback we receive from readers. You love to travel, you're excited when your hometown is featured in the magazine and you want to know more about all sorts of destinations — booming cities and respite getaways alike.

As our staff journeys across the state to chase down features for *The Tennessee Magazine* or visit electric cooperatives, we've learned about countless extraordinary cities, towns and communities. And with our latest series, we get to let you in on our secrets.

This month we're debuting "There's a Place," and for the next several months, we're going to explore some of the neatest towns you'll find just down the highway.

The features will read as if you're getting the details from a friendly, knowledgeable, local tour guide. We'll hit some famous can't-miss items, but we'll also reveal more hidden gems, those nice surprises that make it all worth the trip.

I'm really excited to take you along on these jaunts. Our first stop is Lynchburg, for which your first thought is likely Old No. 7. Yes, the Jack Daniel Distillery is a reason all its own to check out the Moore County town. But there's so much more to do while you're there.

You see, there's a place, and you can find out more this month beginning on page 14.

Thanks for reading and traveling with us,

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Biscuits, bluegrass and the power of relationships



Early Tuesday morning, Jan. 13, nearly 500 lawmakers, legislative staff and guests gathered in Nashville at the Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum for Biscuits & Bluegrass, a welcome reception presented by Tennessee's electric cooperatives.

The timing and location are intentional. Biscuits & Bluegrass is held at a meaningful moment — just before lawmakers head across the street to begin a new legislative session at the Capitol. By gathering early in the day, the event creates a chance to connect before busy schedules take over.

Electric cooperatives are consumer-owned, not-for-profit utilities serving communities across the state. That structure shapes how co-ops engage with public leaders. Rather than focusing on politics, cooperatives focus on people — building relationships based on trust, understanding and a shared commitment to the communities they serve.

"Relationships matter," said Mike Knotts, CEO of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association. "When

lawmakers understand who electric cooperatives are and who we serve, it leads to better conversations, better decisions and better outcomes for our consumers."

Biscuits & Bluegrass is designed to encourage those conversations in a relaxed, welcoming setting. Over warm biscuits and live bluegrass music, co-op leaders visit with members of the General Assembly and the governor's cabinet, share perspectives and listen as the session begins.

Those relationships carry forward throughout the year. When lawmakers

know and trust the people behind electric cooperatives, it helps ensure co-ops have a seat at the table when important decisions are made — decisions that many times influence the reliability and price of energy.

Biscuits & Bluegrass is just one of the many ways electric cooperatives work behind the scenes to keep power reliable and rates affordable. By taking time to build relationships and understanding, co-ops help avoid costly misunderstandings and keep the focus on what matters most: serving Tennessee's rural and suburban communities well.

For readers of *The Tennessee Magazine*, the event is a reminder that your electric cooperative works on your behalf in ways you might never see. Sometimes, keeping the lights on and rates low begins with a handshake, a shared meal and a conversation that sets the tone for the year ahead.



Written by Antsy McClain

Coffee goes down better with good friends

A love song to our local diners and eateries that feel like home

They were there every Tuesday morning at the local diner: a table of five or six gray-haired men, farmers who had turned the hard work of running a farm over to sons and grandsons whose bodies could withstand the grind. They had put in their time; they had paid their dues — a phrase no one truly understands when you're in the act of paying. It's a phrase that sticks to your ribs, though, when you've retired from the work that defined you, gave you purpose. Old men know this, that dues are collected eventually, and no one gets through a long, fruitful life without paying what you owe.

These old guys held themselves with a confidence I couldn't understand as a young boy barely out of mid-

dle school. My voice had only recently left the shrill, cracking stage to what would one day become a baritone. Acne was putting a dent in my social life, and a summer growth spurt had left my ankles in full display to the world. What would I know of confidence?

These old guys had lived in their skin for decades. Mine was still new to me. I marveled at how easily they would glide through the door, smiling and greeting their neighbors. They would collapse effortlessly in their booth with a noise most old guys make when they get up and down out of chairs: a quiet, satisfied groan* that at once curses the gravity we are made to endure and thanks the inventor of soft chairs, whoever that might be.

The diner was on my way to school, and I'd sometimes spend my lawn-mowing money on a breakfast sandwich to go. I'd sit on the spinny stools at the counter



Tuesday morning at The Paper Mill.

Waitress Josie Hire (standing) visits for a moment in between food and coffee deliveries. Seated from left are Marv Treutel, Niles Ingalls, myself, Chris Long and Tim Thompson. For years, I've seen tables of "distinguished older gentlemen" at diners, and now, it appears, my friends and I are joining the club. These are some of my favorite people on the planet, and my corner of the planet always feels more like home when they are around. I couldn't belong to a better club. The Paper Mill gives us a space for gathering and nourishment, not just for our bodies but for our souls.

and look around at the patrons. The old guys' table would trigger my curiosity. I wished I could hear their stories.

On busy days, a younger waitress, a single mom in her 20s, would come to help, and the farmers' table seemed to gain a few extra volts of electricity.**

There on that spinny stool, a young boy with acne, my voice sounding like a rusty porch swing, I would watch the table of old guys like they were visitors from another planet — a planet I, myself, would never step foot on. It would take me decades to discover just how wrong I was.

I am in my 60s now and still a boy at heart. I'm forever fascinated by magical places like diners and hardware stores. I am an unapologetic romantic, and living in this rapidly changing world, I'm surprised how often I get homesick for authenticity. Anything that's "real" seems to have a gravitational pull on me, and I don't fight it.

As a young father, I would take my own children to Reeves-Sain Drug Store in Murfreesboro. They had a counter in the back with spinny stools, sandwiches and a milkshake machine. I remember the wide eyes of my kids that first Saturday afternoon. They were so excited. The counter area has been there since



Solace and sustenance at sunrise. *The Paper Mill opened in Mount Juliet in 2022 and quickly became a favorite gathering spot for locals and visitors alike.*

1980, but it felt, well, timeless, like we were walking onto the set of a good movie. And they had comic books. My kids loved it as I did.

It closed for a few years but is open again and now called The

Soda Bar. It serves a wide array of deli style sandwiches, soups and enough ice cream to satisfy anyone's inner child. Van Horn's Cookies has given the counter new life since reopening in 2023.

My wife, Michelle, has her own memories of such a diner in the little Iowa town where she grew up. It was also her first job, waitressing there as a young teen. My first job was also at a restaurant, washing dishes before moving up. It was dirty, thankless work and happened to be the backdrop to some of the most fun I ever had as a teenager.

So, when Michelle and I got wind of a new locally owned restaurant in town, we were there. The Paper Mill in Mount Juliet is real. We could tell when we walked in: home-cooked (not homestyle, there is a difference) recipes made to order and served with smiles that make you feel like family. I felt my

Living in this rapidly
changing world, I often
find myself homesick
for authenticity.

These footnotes, when taken with food, can enhance heart health

* Not all old men groan quietly. My grandfather would groan so loudly, we would anticipate a medical emergency. But, no, it was just his way of acknowledging a life well lived. He was entitled to every decibel of that groan.

** When old guys flirt, it's most likely harmless, lacking, as it does, the intensity of a younger, hungrier man. Everyone is safe; the waitress is protected by the kindly patriarchal order of her

hometown, and he is protected — rewarded, as it were — for time served. An old guy flirts knowing he is not likely to be taken seriously, but it still satisfies his younger, wilder self who knew he wasn't able to get away with it back then.

It's cute when an old guy flirts. "Cute" is an adjective used for babies and old people. Most 35-year-old men take great umbrage at being called cute. But when it comes around full circle on us, we don't seem to mind so

much. It kind of becomes a badge of honor, part of that whole "paying your dues" thing nobody quite understands.

*** I've worked in restaurants. It was years ago, but what I learned from food service has stuck with me. I don't wash a dish — ever — without reminiscing. And how I interact with waitstaff and bartenders today is forever shaped by my kitchen work experience, from dishwasher to prep cook to waitstaff.

I have, for instance, broken off new, startup relationships — like, totally ghosted them — after I saw how poorly she treated our waitress.

If you would allow an old dishwasher/waiter to dispense a bit of advice: Beware of these ugly traits in people, especially when you're dating them. It will save you a lot of heartache down the road.

In my book, being mean to a waitress is right up there with parking in a handicapped spot or cheating on your taxes.

homesickness for authenticity start to subside. I felt, well, at home.

We are regulars now. It feels good to be a regular. Michelle gets hugs from Avery, the hostess, and the staff greets us from across the room with familiar nods or waves. We always see someone we know there, a neighbor or a shopkeeper where we do business, drawn to the menu and atmosphere as we are like moths to a warm porch light.

Once in a while I've come in and noticed a group of older gentlemen in a booth in the corner. They have the confidence of the men I remember from my

youth, a quiet grace that words can't describe. Again, I want to hear their stories (you know they have some doozies), and again, I shy away, that awkward boy inside me observing from the sidelines.

A few weeks ago, homesick for authenticity, I called a handful of good friends to see if they might want to meet at The Paper Mill. Given some of their work schedules and an 8 a.m. dentist appointment, we agreed for 7 a.m. on a sunny winter morning.

While we aren't quite in the age bracket of the older gentlemen I've seen in diners over the years, a few of us are certainly within a stone's throw. That planet

'It's about each other and the food'

Meet Justin Ragan and Erika Tucker, the 'mom and pop' behind this popular family-owned and -operated restaurant

The Paper Mill, opened in Mount Juliet in 2022, serves breakfast and lunch from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. every day of the week. There's brunch on Sunday, and it's open on Monday nights to host an open mic with the Middle Tennessee Bluegrass Jam, when the restaurant serves a meat-and-three-featured dinner menu. You might see Michelle and me there. It's our neighborhood hang on a night when not much else is going on.

Owner Justin Ragan and his partner and restaurant manager, Erika Tucker, have put their hearts and souls into this place, and it shows.

"For us," says Justin, "it's about each other and the food."

"I come from roofing," says Justin. "I had zero experience with restaurants when I started. Zero. My family's in roofing. That was my college, really. I learned how to work hard, and I was good at it."

Over the years, however, Justin felt the need to slow down.

"I wanted to know what's going on internally, inside me," he says. "I came to Mount Juliet 10 years ago, my daughter and I, and there was something special about the area."

Erika, on the other hand, is well known in the culinary world. Graduating from culinary school in New York City, she went to work in Beverly Hills at top-tier restaurants. She was chef on a private yacht in the Caribbean, and she has been featured in countless food blogs, podcasts and television shows.

"I was needing to move," says Erika, "and after looking around, Mount Juliet just felt right."

"When I came here four years ago, it was really different," says Erika. "It was quieter and smaller, just what I was looking for. Mount Juliet has changed a lot in the last few years."

"We've had to grow with the community," Erika adds. "And that's been great. Working here and doing what we love, it gives us goosebumps. It really does."

"This is in my blood now," says Justin. "My first job here was doing the dishes. And the same satisfaction I had at the end of the day when I was roofing, I have it now. I think a lot about the families enjoying their time together, eating food that we made for them. I love it."

"People mean something. Everyone is important to us, and they deserve a good plate of food and good atmosphere, the best we can give them."

"When you feel good coming here," continues Justin, "that's the staff. I leave them alone to do their thing. That's their pride, their passion, so I don't go butting into what they do. Our staff is the best."

Justin touches on an early memory, revealing what could have likely led him here.

"I remember when my grandmother made a simple sandwich out of the refrigerator," he says, "and it was the best thing I ever ate. It was because she loved us, you know? And it's that way here."



These footnotes, when taken with food, can enhance heart health, continued

A little more about my friends in the first page photo because they're cool and I love them:

I met **Chris Long** through a mutual friend in 2002 or thereabouts. Our drummer was leaving for law school and recommended Chris, who quickly became one of my best friends and most enjoyable travel companions. He's one of the funniest and smartest people I know. We've traveled all over the U.S., Mexico, Canada, England and parts

of Texas together. He has the ability to put you in a trance with his eyes but rarely, if ever, uses the power.

Niles Ingalls is my next door neighbor, a husband and father of six with a deep admiration for craft beer, hard-driving music and the automobile. He is currently in a relationship with eight vehicles, three of which are rather complicated. An experienced tech guru by day, Niles is a longtime musician. We have jammed

together many times and recently collaborated on my latest album.

Marv Treutel was raised in Wisconsin and played bass in his father's wedding band from the age of 7. He moved his family to Nashville in the '90s and became one of the town's busiest recording engineers. He has collaborated with me on my last four albums. His state-of-the-art home studio allows him to work in his socks. He plays several instruments

and loves, I mean *loves*, the Eagles.

Tim Thompson is a world champion guitar player who cuts his own hair. A composer, producer, songwriter and singer, Tim's accomplishments would make guys like me angry if he wasn't such a nice guy. I once saw him pay for an old guy's lunch. (It was mine.) He performs with his son as the cleverly titled Tim & Myles Thompson. Check them out. They're amazing.

I swore I'd never step foot on is starting to come into focus.

We all come from farming families — a century past and a couple generations ago. We are not farmers, but the work ethic remains. We are artists, romantics, musicians. We have toured together, made albums together and now find ourselves settled into a rich, wild community of poets and troubadours we call family.

As we sat down, Josie, one of the waitresses who's been with the restaurant since it opened, greeted us with a smile, addressing each one of us as "friend."

"What can I get you, my friend?"

It seems like a little thing here when it's just words on paper, but said aloud at 7:15 on a Tuesday morning, it hits a bit deeper. Friends — even the idea of friends — become more precious as we get older, and those who bring you coffee can be right up there with one who saves your life. If you're having a bad day, good coffee and life can feel like the same thing.***

We went through two pots of strong, black coffee, my friends and I, as we solved some of the world's problems, especially as it pertained to the music business, which, these days, has a lot of problems to solve. But we know full well we won't actually solve anything. That world won't listen to us. We're approaching a different planet now, remember? And that's too bad because we have the best solutions for everything. Just ask us. We'll tell you.

But the overarching feeling I had as I sat there with my friends that morning was gratitude. I gratefully listened to their familiar voices and their laughter

that somehow sounded more like music than the actual music I've heard them make.

And this recurring daydream came to me again. These days, I continuously have a desire to visit my awkward 14-year-old self, that kid with the flood pants who sat on those spinny stools and wistfully watched the old guys awash as they were in their mighty confidence.

I would tell that kid to hold on. Just wait till you're in your 60s, kid. It gets so much better. Life will be sweeter because you know there's less of it. Food will taste better. Love will be better, deeper, richer. Music — and the laughter of your friends — it will all sound better.

You're gonna want to give up. It's gonna be hard at times, really hard, but just keep going. All the little heartaches, the bruises, the aches and pains of getting older, none of that's gonna matter because one day, you're gonna be at a table with friends, and you'll know you've paid your dues to be there. And that's gonna mean something — something that takes a lifetime to understand.

Download Antsy's song "A Life Like Ours 2.0" for FREE

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist. Go to **unhitched.com** for his books, music and events. Use this QR code to download "A Life Like Ours 2.0" **FREE** to readers of **The Tennessee Magazine**. It's about enjoying a slower season of life and hanging with dear, old friends.



Lynchburg

Not all about Jack

Although Lynchburg revolves around its famous distillery, the tiny town itself is an intoxicating destination

Story by Mark Johnson • Photographs courtesy of Designsensory

There's a place in southern Middle Tennessee called Lynchburg, and I had the good fortune to spend two glorious fall days there back in early November.

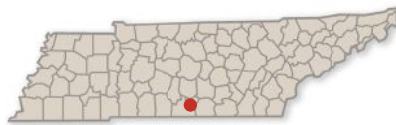
Lynchburg, found in the service area of Duck River Electric Membership Corporation, is probably better described as a village. It is celebrated worldwide for its famous hometown boy, Jasper Newton Daniel — better known as “Jack” — and his beloved Tennessee whiskey. As a brand, “Jack Daniel’s” is as synonymous with whiskey as “Kleenex” is with facial tissue or “Frisbee” is with flying discs. Most enthusiasts don’t even bother with the entire name. To them, it’s just “Jack.”

With some 300,000 visitors annually touring the famous distillery and many of those enjoying lunch at the almost-as-famous Miss Mary Bobo’s Restaurant, the diminutive town seems nowhere large enough to support the influx of tourists — yet somehow does. It is perfectly imagined for single-day tourism and, at the same time, peaceful living for its locals.

I approached Lynchburg via Highway 55 from Manchester and

Tullahoma. Upon entering the town, the highway widened, and I passed the manicured grounds and parking areas of the Jack Daniel Distillery, the whole area framed by autumn leaves, bright green lawns and an absurdly blue sky, as if a scene from some 1950s travel postcard. I continued past Miss Elizabeth’s Place — the two-story, Greek Revival home where I’d be staying the night — before turning left onto Mechanic Street and rolling into the town square.

Take a visit to Jack’s town



Lynchburg Welcome Center
Contact: 931-464-4127
whiskeytrailhead.com

One of my favorite things about Tennessee is its wealth of town squares. While many of Tennessee’s town squares are very old, renovation has nonetheless made them somewhat modern centers of their respective towns. Not so in Lynchburg. It

is small, almost claustrophobic, and comes off more as a period-piece movie set than a 21st-century town.

I pulled onto Short Street and parked in front of the Moore County Courthouse, a two-story brick structure circa 1885, one of only four surviving 1880s courthouses in Tennessee. Among other county business, folks have been receiving their marriage licenses, birth certificates, land deeds and justice in that building for 140 uninterrupted years.

I was anxious to take a stroll around the square, a proposition that lasted all of about 10 minutes at a lazy pace. Among the stores I walked past were the Lynchburg Hardware and General Store, Velma’s Candy, Southern Perks coffee shop, Lynchburg Harley-Davidson, the Ice Cream Shoppe, American Steel Co., Baker’s Antiques and BBQ Caboose Cafe, along with several Jack Daniel’s souvenir establishments.

After studying its loud red, black and yellow facade and cartoon-like logo, I settled on the BBQ Caboose Cafe as my lunch spot of choice.

The Caboose is exactly what you want in a small-town barbecue joint. Its cozy dining area is cluttered in a



MOORE COUNTY

Moore County was created by an Act of the Tennessee Legislature December 1871, and was named to honor General William Moore. Born in Kentucky, he settled on Mulberry Creek, and was a Captain in the War of 1812, and a Militia Major. He was a member of the State Legislature from 1840 to 1844, and is buried in the Moore family cemetery.

TOGETHER WE SHARE

WELCOME TO
LYNCHBURG
TENNESSEE

35.2830° N, 86.3740° W



Photo by
Matt Morrison,
Experience TN



most pleasing way with dining tables covered in the classic red-and-white-checked tablecloths and exposed brick walls crowded with off-kilter framed photos, vintage signage, railroad Americana art, neon signs and racks of branded apparel and barbecue sauces.

After ordering a lunch plate of pulled pork barbecue, potato salad, baked beans and sweet tea, I was joined by owner Lori Frame. While I enjoyed the fare, Lori related the odd history of the BBQ Caboose, now in its 28th year.

“My dad, Ken Fly, opened it in 1996,” Lori said. “Back in the ’60s, he worked on a railroad as a signal-box checker. One day in 1968, he was on the job and was struck by a passing train and knocked 22 feet through the air. Miraculously, he survived with only a broken wrist; he left the railroad business but kept his love of railroads. Years later, he ended up in Lynchburg and began selling barbecue from a wagon built to look like a train caboose. People loved his food, so he moved into this building, and the rest is history.”

Aside from the obvious draw of the famous distillery, Lori theorized that visitors are attracted to the quaintness of the town.

“It’s just a sweet little place,” she said with a shrug. “I think people are looking to get away from the big cities these days, if only for a few hours, and Lynchburg is the perfect place for that.”

After visiting with Lori, I was joined at the table by Lynchburg Mayor Sloan Stewart, who simply walked across the street from the courthouse upon receiving my text.

“Our town has a few quirky things about it,” Sloan pointed out as we sipped our sweet teas. “For example, did you know that Moore County is one of only three metropolitan

governments in the state, at the same time being the second-smallest county in Tennessee?”

He explained that despite its relatively tiny size and population, Moore County operates under a consolidated “metropolitan style” city-county government (Lynchburg-Moore), which is why the term “metro” appears in its official governmental title, exploding my long-held notion that “metro” must refer to huge cities like Nashville.

The other surprising tidbit that Sloan noted is that despite boasting (arguably) the world’s most famous distillery, Moore County is dry.

“By Tennessee law, counties are dry by default until voters approve a local ‘wet’ referendum, and in Moore County, no such measure has passed,” Sloan explained. “Because of our small size, mobilizing a successful ‘wet’ vote has, so far, been impossible — you must have a minimum of 2,500 voters. We still don’t have that many. Unless you purchase a souvenir bottle on the distillery grounds, you can’t buy Jack Daniel’s whiskey in Jack’s own county.”

After my chat with Lori and Sloan — and polishing off my delicious Caboose meal — I wandered around the town square for a while longer before making my way to Miss Elizabeth’s Place to check out my night’s lodging. After keying in my code at the back door, I entered the vast home.

Clearly a vintage structure, everything about Miss Elizabeth’s was restored to perfection. The interior was spotless and tastefully decorated with a combination of period and modern-but-appropriate furniture with a variety of framed artwork and accent pieces. The floors were either marble or refinished wood, and an elegant spiral staircase led upstairs from the main foyer. Lamps were lit in apparent anticipation of my visit.



BBQ Caboose Cafe



The Hopestead Bed & Breakfast



Lynchburg Hardware and General Store

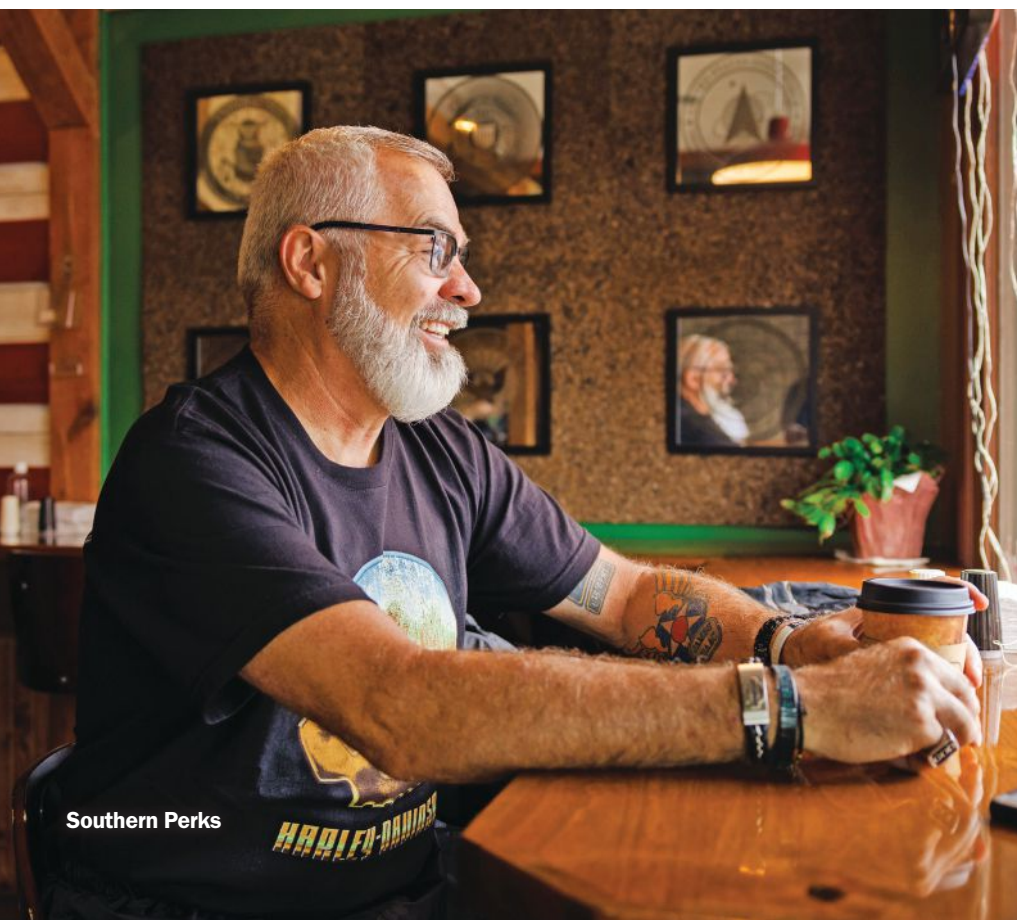
Despite all of this, I was a bit freaked out. The home slept at least eight, and I was the lone guest.

“There’s no way this place isn’t entirely haunted,” I told myself aloud. A framed article in the family room stated that the home dates back to 1847. That represents a whole lot of people living and dying within those walls.

You wouldn’t think that a 59-year-old man who was raised in a variety of old farmhouses would be bothered by this sort of thing, but I challenge you to put yourself in a similar situation and not be at least a little spooked. After all, Halloween had only just passed, and there might have been a few residual ghosts lingering about in this old mansion, waiting to do their worst.

I decided to escape back to the human activity of downtown and wandered into the Lynchburg Hardware and General Store. The handsome establishment — once an actual hardware store and now a large, well-designed Jack Daniel’s gift shop — was about to close for the evening, but after I introduced myself to manager Ashley Mitchell, she agreed to a chat. She explained that the store originated with Jack’s nephew and business partner, Lem Motlow, as an alternate way to keep cash flowing after Prohibition closed the distillery in 1909.

“Lem sold mules, farm equipment and anything else you could think of,” Ashley told me. “Nobody knew how long Prohibition would last, so folks who had previously worked at the distillery did what they could to survive. Today, people who tour the distillery often come here after to purchase their official Jack souvenirs, and they get to interact with the locals at the same time. Since most shopping is done online these days, it makes us locals happy to be able to visit with people face to face.”



Southern Perks



After my conversation with Ashley, I headed back to my exquisite-yet-creepy lodging, which I made less eerie by watching “Monday Night Football” at a high volume on a large, wall-mounted TV. At bedtime, I locked both doors of my bedroom under the faulty logic that a locked door would somehow deter a ghost. I guess it worked, because I made it through the night unscathed.

The next morning, I left Miss Elizabeth’s either nonexistent or well-behaved haints and boogers behind and drove back to the town square, grabbing a cup of java and a tasty breakfast croissant from Southern Perks — a cozy coffee shop on Short Street — before heading to the distillery for my scheduled tour.

I could go on and on about the tour itself, but that’s not what this story is about. In a nutshell, it was extraordinarily entertaining and fascinating, and my tour guide, a 14-year Jack Daniel’s veteran named Leslie Phelps, was a wellspring of information. (Speaking of wellsprings, it’s worth the price of admission just to see the limestone cave that prompted Mr. Daniel to locate his distillery at that spot due to the naturally filtered spring water that flows from it to this day.)

I’ve never been on a manufacturing tour that was as well-designed or professional while retaining a casual, hometown feel. Even as a nonwhiskey drinker, I can’t recommend it more.

But my trip was far from over. I left the distillery and made the quick drive back to the town square where I parked and walked to Miss Mary Bobo’s restaurant for my 1 p.m. lunch reservation.

Miss Mary Bobo’s is far more than just a restaurant; it is ground zero of Lynchburg history. Now a sprawling white Greek Revival-style structure



that dates mostly back to 1867, the original home was a smaller, two-story brick building built in the 1820s by Lynchburg's founder, Thomas Hart Roundtree. It was raised adjacent to a spring over which Roundtree built a cistern that still exists today. Mary Evans Bobo and her husband, Jack (no relation), purchased the property in 1908, first as a boarding house and, later, a restaurant. "Miss Mary" would operate the restaurant until 1983, when she died at the impressive age of 101.

Moore County historian Mike Northcutt — who also works part-time as a host at the restaurant — described Miss Mary as a "tee-totaler" who forbade alcohol in her establishment.

"If she was cleaning the room of a boarder and found a bottle of whiskey, that guy would come back to find all his belongings in the street," Mike told me and my 10 new friends as we sat around a large round table.

As Mike related a variety of stories, restaurant staff kept the rotating lazy Susan in the center of the table filled with Southern favorites like meatloaf,

fried chicken, candied apples, cabbage casserole, fried okra, buttered potatoes, cornbread and chess pie.

After the meal was finally over — much to both my relief and disappointment — Mike and I walked the short distance to the Moore County Old Jail Museum. The two-story brick structure was built in 1875 for the princely sum of \$255, according to town records.

The cramped rooms were chock full of memorabilia, signed photos from celebrities like Johnny Cash and local hero Bill Dance, military and law enforcement collectibles, and a variety of kitschy items. If you visit, give yourself at least an hour there.

Still full on Miss Bobo's cuisine and Mike's tall tales, I finally said my goodbyes and left Lynchburg with a solemn promise to return with my wife. As a longtime agricultural writer in Tennessee, I've spent time in most every corner of the state, but my two days exploring Jack's town have convinced me of this: No small town is more representative of the grit, warmth and incomparable history of the Volunteer State than Lynchburg.



Miss Mary Bobo's

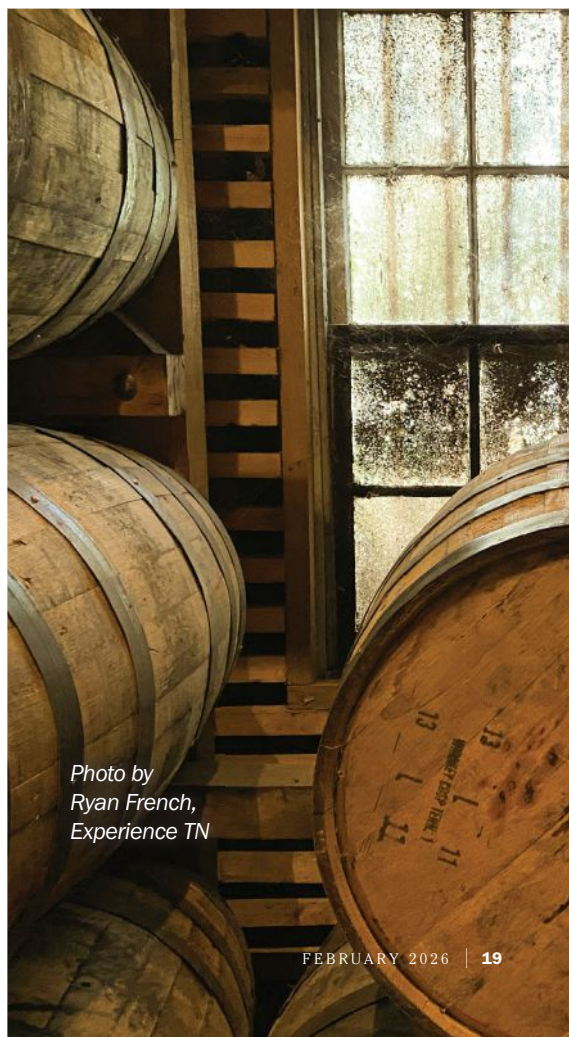


Photo by
Ryan French,
Experience TN

CEMC youth programs deadline approaching

Students interested in submitting short stories for the Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, applying for the Senior Scholarship Program or entering the 2027 Calendar Art Contest, mark your calendars for **Friday, Feb. 27**, which is the deadline for each of Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's youth programs.

Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest

The Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest is open to high school juniors within CEMC's service area. To enter, students must write short stories explaining how co-ops are "Energizing Every Moment" by providing communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more. Each writer of the top 12 entries

will win an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in June. Additional details about the 2026 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest can be found online at **cemc.org** and **youthtour.tnelectric.org**.

2027 CEMC Calendar Art Contest

The 2027 Calendar Art Contest is available to students in grades kindergarten through 12 who live within CEMC's service area. Winning entries will receive cash prizes and be featured in CEMC's 2027 calendar.

Entries will be accepted through participating schools, and each grade has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate: **January**, sixth; **February**, seventh; **March**, eighth; **April**, ninth; **May**, 10th; **June**, 11th; **July**, kindergarten; **August**, first; **September**, second;

October, third; **November**, fourth; and **December**, fifth. Seniors will design the cover.

Senior Scholarship Program

CEMC's Senior Scholarship Program will help graduating seniors pay for college by awarding 12 scholarships of \$1,000 each to qualifying students. Each interested student must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference and an original essay of at least 300 words describing what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. Applicants must have also attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade-point average, enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college (Murray State



A promotional graphic for the Washington Youth Tour. It features a blue background with a white silhouette of the U.S. Capitol dome and the Washington Monument. The text "WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR" is written in white. Below this, the phrase "900 WORDS CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING" is written in large, bold, white letters. Underneath, in smaller white text, it says "The Tennessee electric cooperative creative writing and scholarship competition for high school Juniors". At the bottom, there is a red button with a white right-pointing arrow and the text "LEARN MORE". Below the button, the website "YOUTHTOUR.TNELECTRIC.ORG" is written in white.

and Western Kentucky universities are included) and be a graduating senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence.

Applications are available online at **cemc.org**. Children of CEMC, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association or Tennessee Valley Authority employees, directors or attorneys are not eligible to apply.

For additional information about any of CEMC's youth programs, contact Susie Yonkers, community relations coordinator, at 800-987-2362, or by email at syonkers@cemc.org.

SENIORS: WIN A \$1,000 SCHOLARSHIP

APPLY ONLINE AT **CEMC.ORG**



Project Help: Neighbors helping neighbors

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation, in partnership with local energy assistance agencies, offers Project Help, a program designed to support individuals facing challenges in paying their utility bills.

Through this initiative, participating members can contribute \$1 or more each month to assist elderly, disabled or economically disadvantaged individuals in their communities. Every dollar donated to Project Help goes directly to local energy assistance agencies, which manage the distribution of funds to those in need. The program is entirely voluntary, allowing members to make a meaningful difference by simply adding a small contribution to their monthly electric bill.

To participate in Project Help, mark the designated box on your bill stub and complete the Project Help section on the back of your bill, or call CEMC at 800-987-2362.

Your \$1 monthly donation can provide much-needed relief to those struggling with utility expenses.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

PROJECT HELP

**DONATE \$1 A MONTH
TO HELP THOSE IN NEED**



Students power community food drive

Last fall, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation partnered with 12 schools across our service area to collect donations for local food banks. Students and staff at Cheatham Middle, Clyde Riggs Elementary, Coopertown Elementary, East Montgomery Elementary, East Robertson Elementary, Jo Byrns Elementary, Millersville Elementary, North Stewart Elementary, Portland Gateview Elementary, Sango Elementary, Watt Hardison Elementary and

West Cheatham Elementary showed an inspiring commitment to helping others by collecting thousands of nonperishable food items.

Thanks to the generosity of all participating schools, organizations including Loaves and Fishes, The Storehouse Ministry, Bethlehem Baptist Church, United Ministries Food Bank of Robertson County, Gallatin CARES and Hands of Hope Food Pantry received much-needed donations to support local families through the holiday season.



Cheatham Middle School



Clyde Riggs Elementary School



Coopertown Elementary School



East Montgomery Elementary School



East Robertson Elementary School



Millersville Elementary School



North Stewart Elementary School



Portland Gateview Elementary School



Sango Elementary School



Watt Hardison Elementary School

Considering a career as a lineworker?

APPLY FOR OUR NEW SCHOLARSHIP



CEMC offers lineworker scholarship

Are you considering a career as a lineworker? Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is excited to offer a new Lineworker Program Scholarship to support individuals pursuing this essential and rewarding career.

This year, two applicants will be selected to receive one-time awards of \$2,000 to help cover the

costs of an approved lineworker training program. The scholarship is open to CEMC members and their dependents, providing a valuable opportunity to gain the skills needed to join the electric utility and communications industry.

Applications and full details are available on the Community

Programs page at cemc.org or by contacting CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at syonkers@cemc.org.

The deadline to apply is March 31, so don't miss your chance to take the first step toward an exciting and in-demand career!

Financially friendly energy efficiency tips

If you're looking for practical ways to save money, making small changes at home can have a meaningful impact. There are many simple energy-saving practices you can adopt in every room of your house that won't cost you a penny and can help lower your electric bill.

In the living room:

- Use natural daylight instead of turning on lamps or overhead lights.
- Turn off lights, TVs and other electronics when you leave the room.

- Unplug devices like gaming consoles that aren't in use.

In the kitchen:

- Use lids when cooking with pots and pans to trap heat and cook food faster.
- Match pot and pan size to the burner to reduce wasted heat.
- Run the dishwasher only when it's full, and use the air dry setting instead of heat dry.

In the bathroom:

- Take shorter showers to save hot water.
- Turn off the faucet while brushing teeth.

- Unplug hair dryers, electric razors or other devices when done using them.

In the laundry room:

- Wash clothes in cold water.
- Run full loads instead of several smaller loads.
- Clean the lint filter before every dryer cycle.

In the bedroom:

- Let sunlight warm rooms during the day during the cold weather.
- Layer blankets on the bed before adjusting the thermostat.
- Turn off the lights and ceiling fans when leaving the room.

Staying safe online

How to spot common internet scams



As helpful and convenient as the internet is, it also requires a healthy level of caution. Scammers are constantly finding new ways to target personal data, and as more of our daily lives move online, the opportunities for fraud continue to grow.

In the most recent FBI Internet Crime Report, Americans reported more than \$16 billion in losses to internet-related crime and online scams last year, a record high. Those losses continue to rise as scammers adopt more sophisticated tactics, including fake social media accounts, text message scams and AI-generated phone calls that sound convincingly realistic. Awareness remains the strongest defense, and understanding how common online scams work can help reduce your risk significantly.

Phishing

Phishing remains one of the most widespread online scams because it is effective. In a phishing attempt, a scammer poses as a trusted organization and tries to trick you into sharing personal information. These messages often arrive via email, text message or phone call and might appear to come from a bank, insurance company, delivery service or government agency.

Once information is shared, scammers might gain access

to financial accounts, personal records or login credentials.

Real-life example: Amber received a phone call from someone claiming to work for her insurance company and asking her to confirm her address and phone number. Instead of providing the information, Amber told the caller she would hang up and contact the company directly using the phone number listed on her insurance card. The legitimate insurance representative confirmed the company had not placed the call.

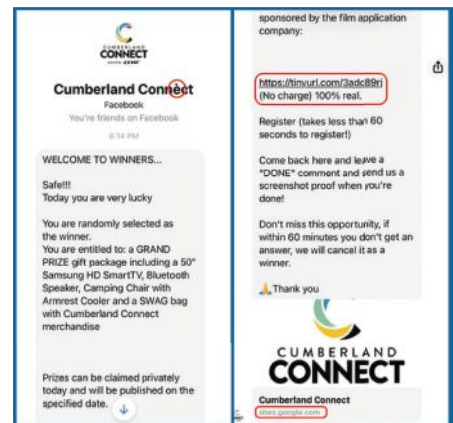
What to watch for: Be cautious of unexpected messages or calls asking for personal information. Legitimate organizations rarely ask for personal details without prior notice. Avoid clicking links in unsolicited texts, and verify requests by contacting the organization directly through official channels.

Spoofing

Spoofing occurs when scammers impersonate a real person or organization to make a message appear legitimate. This can happen through phone calls, emails, websites or social media accounts and is often used to spread malware, request payments or gather personal details.

Real-life example: In the image at right, a Cumberland Connect subscriber received a message

from what appeared to be an official Facebook account promoting a giveaway. The scammer used the same profile images and branding as the real Cumberland Connect page. However, closer inspection revealed subtle red flags, including a misspelled account name, poor grammar and vague links.



What to watch for: Look closely at usernames, spelling and grammar. Be wary of messages that create urgency or ask you to act quickly. Before clicking links or responding, verify the account by visiting the organization's official website or contacting them directly.

Staying informed is one of the best ways to stay protected. The Cumberland Connect team is committed to helping members navigate the online world safely by sharing tips, resources and up-to-date information on digital security.

Add an extra layer of digital protection with our Peace of Mind Package. Scan to learn more!



CEMC + **CUMBERLAND CONNECT**
powered by CEMC
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Cooking up energy savings



Q: Do you have any recommendations for ways I could save energy in the kitchen?

A: Whether you're looking to save electricity or time in the kitchen, I have a few ideas to help keep your energy costs in check while you whip up something delicious.

The kitchen might be the heart of your home, but it's also the source of some pretty hefty energy eaters — I'm thinking about cooking ranges, ovens, refrigerator and dishwashers, for starters. I'm excited to serve up a few tips and smart appliance options for your consideration.

Burner basics: Bigger isn't always better.

If you've ever put a small pot on the big burner, you're pretty much watching your energy costs go up in smoke. Using the right-sized burner for your pots and pans makes a surprisingly big difference in energy consumption: Putting a 6-inch pan on an 8-inch burner wastes more than 40% of the heat produced by the burner. It also increases the risk of injury by leaving the heating element exposed.

Put a lid on it!

Whether you're simmering soup or boiling pasta, using a lid traps heat inside the pot, enabling you to use a lower heat setting and reduce cook-

ing time. Using lids also reduces humidity and keeps your kitchen cooler — something you and your HVAC system will appreciate in the summer months. Not only that, but it also cuts energy use by up to 66%!

Another easy win: Avoid peeking in the oven. Each time you open the door, the temperature can drop by 25 degrees or more, forcing your oven to work overtime. Instead, use the oven light and keep that hard-earned heat where it belongs.

Splurging on energy-efficient appliances and gadgets is a no-calorie treat.

Today's Energy Star-rated kitchen appliances are designed to save ener-

gy without sacrificing performance — or presentation. If your appliances are nearing the end of their lifespan, upgrading can be one of the most cost-effective improvements you'll make.

- Refrigerators: New models use about half the energy of those made 15 years ago.
- Dishwashers: Modern dishwashers use less water and energy than hand-washing. Run a full load whenever possible!
- Ranges and ovens: Induction cook tops heat quickly and deliver precise temperature control while using less energy than standard electric stovetops.

The magic of scratch batch cooking.

If you're firing up the oven, make it count! Batch cooking — preparing more than one dish or cooking in quantities suitable for freezing leftovers — can stretch your energy dollars and maximize your time in the kitchen.

When you bake multiple dishes at once such as roasting a big sheet pan of vegetables for the week alongside tomorrow's casserole and tonight's dinner, you're getting three times the bang for your energy buck.

Put slow cookers, pressure cookers and air fryers on the menu.

If you'd rather let dinner cook itself, energy-saving appliances like slow



cookers and pressure cookers are worth their weight in gold.

- Slow cookers: These countertop wizards are energy-sippers, especially if you use the lowest setting and a slow cooker that's the right size for your meal.
- Pressure cookers: They're great for tough cuts of meat, beans and soups on the quick. Not only do they drastically reduce cooking time, but they also slice energy use.
- Air fryers: These modern marvels heat quickly and use less energy than a conventional oven — especially when you're cooking smaller portions.

Fridge and freezer tips for tip-top performance.

Refrigeration accounts for a significant portion of your kitchen's energy use. Keeping your fridge and freezer

in tip-top shape is an easy way to save:

- Set your refrigerator between 35 degrees and 38 degrees and your freezer at zero.
- Keep both at least two-thirds full for optimum efficiency.
- Check door seals a couple of times a year to make sure cold air isn't sneaking out.
- Clean refrigerator coils annually so your unit doesn't have to work harder than necessary.
- Avoid putting hot leftovers directly into the fridge — let them cool first so your fridge or freezer doesn't have to work overtime to cool them.

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.



Hands and Heritage in the Heart of the Smokies

How an Appalachian educational institute enriches lives through art and craft

Story and photographs
by Amber Weaver



Skilled hands work deftly during a sweetgrass basket weaving workshop offered at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts.

Tucked away on a wooded hillside amidst the bustle of a popular tourist destination, a creative escape from the everyday awaits. Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts has been combining culture and heritage in the heart of downtown Gatlinburg for over a century.

“Arrowmont really is that arts and crafts community where everybody is welcome to sit down at the table and start creating, learning and sharing together,” said Trudy Hughes, the chief executive officer at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts.

Discover.

The 13-acre campus just steps away from the Gatlinburg Parkway has a rich history that dates back before the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established. In 1912, the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women founded the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School in Gatlinburg. It was a service project that commemorated the fraternity’s 50th anniversary and lifted its mission of literacy as there was no public school in the area at the time. At first, the community was hesitant to allow the school, but a dream — or, as some would call it, a nightmare — had a swaying influence.

“The story goes that one of the women in the community had a dream, or really a nightmare, where she saw the children drowning in the river,” Hughes explained. “They were drowning of ignorance, though. So, she woke up her husband and shared the need for the school. The man then mounted a horse, tracked the women down and the deal was struck.”

The Pi Beta Phi Settlement School provided public education, healthcare and instruction on the arts. The artistic residents of Gatlinburg combined with the school led to an economic lift for the area.

“The families in the community were the ones weaving on the looms at home to make coverlets that covered the beds of the students,” Hughes said. “The families were even making the beds and the other furniture and dishes that were utilized here.”

The artisans donated those items to help provide for the students, but so much was donated that there was a surplus. The Pi Beta Phi used its alumni chapters across the country to sell the extra goods. In return, money came back to support not only the school but also to the craftsmen for the first time.

In 1945, a shift happened after the end of World War II. The growth of tourism around the national park and changes to educational governance led Pi Beta Phi to refocus the mission solely on arts education.

“It was a natural transition to become an arts and crafts center so that the great families here who had been



The view from a catwalk shows students hard at work in the fibers studio.



Internationally recognized instructors help teach the workshops at Arrowmont.



Students listen in on instruction in a clay workshop.



Open all year, the Arrowmont Supply Store is Gatlinburg's only full-service art supply shop and features a curated assortment of art and gifts from Arrowmont-connected artists in its Showcase Gallery.

making for generations and those who came from afar could all come here, become a community and share the creative process together," Hughes said.

The first summer arts and crafts workshops were held on the premises in June 1945. That two-week session hosted 50 students from 19 states and established a collaborative relationship with the University of Tennessee that lasted over three decades.

"That was a catalyst to everything that Arrowmont is today," said Bekuh Browning, the director of marketing at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts.

Create.

Today, Arrowmont continues to be an internationally recognized visual arts education center.

"Folks have the opportunity to come here as a part of their arts and crafts journey," Hughes said. "You could literally be the beginner who has never attempted any sort of craft before, all the way through to the most advanced creative artist who just wants to learn a different media or be a part of a close community. All are welcome at Arrowmont."

Every day looks different at Arrowmont, and no two workshops or workshop seasons are alike. During the spring, the campus is typically rented out by different groups or organizations that use the campus for more focused crafts. In the fall and summer, immersive workshops are in full swing in most if not all nine professionally equipped studios. Students of all ages can learn and create — just like the craftsmen who helped supply the settlement school — in the ceramics, wood, fiber and paper, textiles, metals, multimedia and 2D art studios for a full week.

"Even though the instructors stop teaching at supper time, the studios stay open until midnight," Hughes said. "Often, we will see students and instructors alike back in the studio because they are so excited about what's being created."

During the workshop, students have the opportunity to stay on campus for the week and truly immerse themselves into the Arrowmont community.

"It's almost like summer camp for adults," Browning shared. "There's a constant creative energy here at Arrowmont combined with great food and fellowship 24/7 that you won't want to miss."

If students can't stay for a full week, weekend and one-day workshops are also offered seasonally. Family workshops are also taught for students ages 5 and older. All class sizes are no larger than 12 students to ensure the best experience.



Experience.

Arrowmont remains engaged with the community that has uplifted it all these years. Nearly half of the students enrolled in the past year received some kind of financial aid to attend, with 200 scholarships and fellowships awarded. Plus, over 1,000 Sevier County students come and spend a day in the studio with art instructors every year.

“I think that has helped the younger generation understand and appreciate the importance of their local craft heritage,” Browning said. “It has helped continue the story for those families who have been here for generations, and it has helped the new folks who are coming in feel connected to the local history and economy.”

That effort has expanded across five states and even has led to Arrowmont taking arts and crafts on the road. The team will load up vans with materials and instructors and take the learning to rural schools across Central Appalachia.

“While we are there, we also get to know the local artists and craftspeople in that community,” Hughes said. “We work to engage them as instructors; that way, young people are meeting these experts in their own community. We hope to be building bridges in that sense.”

Aside from workshop experiences, art lovers and appreciators far and wide are also welcome to come and experience Arrowmont. Year-round, visitors are invited to tour the campus free of charge. Just steps behind Anakeesta and inside the Turner building, the public can shop in the Arrowmont Supply Store, which is Gatlinburg’s only full-service art supply shop. Featured inside is a curated assortment of art and gifts from Arrowmont-connected artists in the Showcase Gallery. Throughout the campus, visitors can also immerse themselves in art by exploring four galleries and over 30 art installations featuring Arrowmont’s instructor artists, artists in residence, pieces from the permanent collection, and national and international craftspeople. Arrowmont also has an off-campus exhibition space in downtown Knoxville on Gay Street.

Onward.

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts has overcome a tremendous amount since its beginning, including the Spanish Influenza, the Great Depression, both World Wars, a major wildfire and the COVID-19 pandemic. As it looks ahead, the goal is simple — working to offer the best programming possible while optimizing and sustaining the success already present.

“What is going to help sustain that culture and heritage while at the same time sparking energy so that new artists and makers feel the creative energy here? We want them to be able to use that to continue propelling their work,” Hughes said.

While Arrowmont isn’t your typical touristy attraction in Gatlinburg, it does hold something far greater.

“We appreciate, respect and elevate the culture and heritage that started this way of life in this region,” Browning said. “Arrowmont is a major hub for arts and culture. The quality of the instructors, work and exhibitions we have are world class. You aren’t going to find this just anywhere. In fact, there’s nothing else quite like it.”

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts

Donate to Arrowmont or register for 2026 summer and fall workshops at arrowmont.org.

Visit Arrowmont at 150 Baskins Creek Bypass
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Contact: 865-436-5860 or
info@arrowmont.org



Tennessee Events

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

FEB. 13-16

The 2026 Great Backyard Bird Count

Across the world.

birdcount.org

Join the world in connecting to birds this month during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Each February since 1998, bird lovers around the world have united, counted and reported as many birds as they can. Findings help give scientists a better understanding of bird populations around the world.

This year the global event takes place Friday, Feb. 13, through Monday, Feb.

16, right from your favorite places. Watchers of any age can join in by themselves or with others. For 15 minutes, identify all the birds you see or hear at your planned time and location. Then, use the best tool for sharing those findings:

- Beginner bird admirers can use the Merlin Bird ID app.
- Experienced participants can use the eBird Mobile app or enter your bird list at secure.birds.cornell.edu/cassso.
- If you already use Merlin or eBird, all entries over the four days will count toward the event.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an interorganizational effort among

the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society and Birds Canada. For more information, visit birdcount.org.



Photographs by Robin Conover

West Tennessee

FEB. 12

John Mulaney

Graceland, Memphis. 877-777-0606 or gracelandlive.com/shows

FEB. 21

2026 Posh Bridal Show

Discovery Park of America, Union City. 731-885-5455 or discoveryparkofamerica.com/posh-bridal-show

Middle Tennessee

FEB. 5-13

Mayberry Valentine Dinner Theatre

T.B. Sutton General Store, Granville. 931-653-4151 or granvilletn.com

FEB. 15

Fashion for a Fraction Boutique Warehouse Sale

Factory at Franklin's Liberty Hall. events@nashvillescene.com or fwpublishingevents.com/fff-winter-2026

FEB. 21

2026 Hot Chocolate Run Nashville

Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park. info@hotchocolate15k.com or hotchocolate15k.com/city/nashville

FEB. 27-MARCH 1

Nashville Ballet: 'Swan Lake'

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

East Tennessee

JAN. 30-FEB. 1

Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

Reelfoot Lake State Park Visitors Center, Tiptonville. tnstateparks.com/parks/events/reelfoot-lake

FEB. 22

Caffeine Run

Tennessee Riverpark Hubert Fry Center, Chattanooga. 865-300-6722 or raceroster.com/events/2026/113400/be-caffeinated-caffeine-run

MARCH 7

A Taste of Ireland

Paramount Bristol. 423-274-8920 or paramountbristol.org



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.

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Amusing origins of the ‘Volunteer State’ nickname

As everyone knows, or seems to know, Tennessee got the nickname “Volunteer State” because so many Tennesseans volunteered to fight during the War of 1812.

You can read this in the *Tennessee Blue Book*. “The nickname (Volunteer State) originated during the War of 1812, when thousands of Tennesseans enlisted in response to Governor Willie Blount’s call for volunteers,” reads the *Blue Book*’s “Tennessee Symbols and Honors” section.

You can read much the same thing on the website of the Tennessee Historical Society, on the Pathway of History at the Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park and in countless Tennessee history books that have been written during the last 150 years — some of which I wrote!

But I recently discovered that this might not be true.

‘Tennessee Volunteers’

To be clear, I need to differentiate between two nicknames: “Tennessee Volunteers” and “Volunteer State.”

In the aftermath of the War of 1812, newspapers across the country reported about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and Battle of New Orleans. Many of them referred to the actions of the “Tennessee Volunteers” in these articles.

The (Vermont) *Columbian Patriot* newspaper of March 9, 1814, had this to say about the Battle of Horseshoe Bend: “The American force consisted of 800 Tennessee volunteers and other troops, in all 390, besides about 300 friendly Indians.”

On July 18, 1815, the *Nashville Whig* quoted Gen. John Coffee saying “2,500 brave Tennessee volunteers rushed to the standard of their country,” speaking about the recent war.

But I should point out that in the early 1800s, *all* state militias were referred to by the name of the state and the word “volunteers.” There are hundreds of references in newspa-

pers across the country to “Kentucky volunteers,” “Pennsylvania volunteers,” “Virginia volunteers,” “New York volunteers,” “Ohio volunteers” and so forth.

‘Volunteer State’

The story behind the phrase “Volunteer State” is harder to pin down.

A few weeks ago, I researched the phrase “Volunteer State” on a newspaper search engine. I started in 1800 and went through 1840. My search included thousands of newspapers published in Nashville, Knoxville, Jackson, Greeneville, Jonesborough and Athens — along with cities in other states such as Louisville, Kentucky, and Huntsville, Alabama. (Since Memphis and Chattanooga were created later than the



Tennessee has proclaimed its status as the “Volunteer State” frequently. At the top left is the 1977 license plate; above, Gov. Gordon Browning poses with a Volunteer State float in 1952. Tennessee State Library and Archives photo

other cities listed here, it's hard to find newspapers from either of those places before 1840.)

What I discovered surprised me.

According to my research, the first time the phrase “Volunteer State” was used to describe the Tennessee was *not* during or immediately after the War of 1812 but a generation later. Also, the phrase didn't first appear in a Tennessee newspaper, but in the Oct. 11, 1836, *Huntsville* (Alabama) *Advocate*.

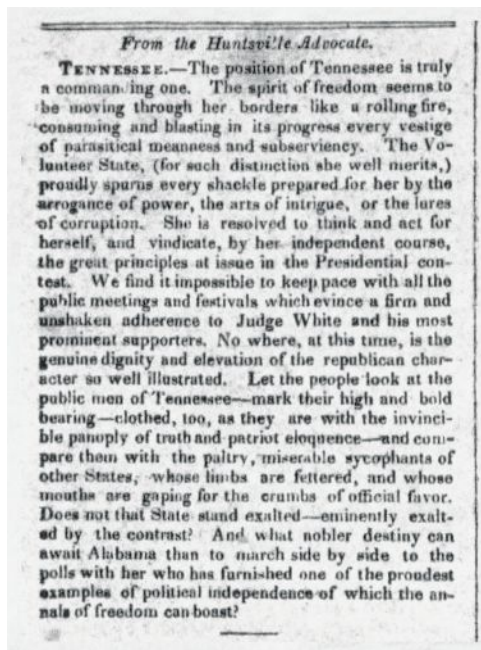
Furthermore, in that first article, the expression had nothing to do with Tennessean's eagerness to volunteer for military service but Tennessee's willingness to stand up against Andrew Jackson, of all people.

As background: By the end of his second term, Andrew Jackson was not as popular in Tennessee as you might think. Jackson's chosen successor was Democrat and New York native Martin Van Buren, while many Tennesseans preferred Whig and Knoxville native Hugh Lawson White. The *Huntsville Advocate* said Tennessee's citizens should be proud that the state's “spirit of freedom” gave it courage to stand up against the “parasitical meanness and subserviency” of the Democratic Party and support White over Van Buren.

“The Volunteer State (for such distinction she well merits) proudly spurns every shackle prepared for

her by arrogance of power, the arts of intrigue or the lures of corruption,” the *Huntsville Advocate* said.

In those days, it was common for newspapers to publish editorials that previously appeared in other publications. Both the (Nashville) *Republican Banner* and the *Nashville Whig* re-



On Oct. 19, 1836, the (Nashville) *Republican Banner* reprinted the editorial that had appeared eight days earlier in the *Huntsville Advocate*.

published the *Advocate* editorial later that month, and it is shown above.

The *Advocate* published other editorials disparaging Van Buren and praising White in the weeks leading up to the November 1836 presidential election. However, on Election Day, Van Buren won 15 states (includ-

ing Alabama), while Hugh Lawson White won only two states (including Tennessee). It was a crowded ballot that year, with four Whig candidates winning at least one state, led by William Henry Harrison, who finished in second behind Van Buren.

About two years later, Tennessee newspapers began occasionally referring to Tennessee as the “Volunteer State” in a context of its citizens being willing to volunteer for military service. In June 1838, for instance, the citizens of Wilson County put on a festive dinner to welcome soldiers who had returned from the Seminole Wars in Florida. According to the *Nashville Union*, Lebanon attorney Samuel Yerger proposed a toast at the event to “The Volunteer State,” citing the historical willingness of young Tennesseans to volunteer for wars against England and against Native Americans (maybe the first time the Volunteer State nickname's association with military volunteers was published in any newspaper).

In any case, I don't think this discovery disparages Tennessee's nickname as the Volunteer State. Since the 1840s, it has meant that people from Tennessee are not afraid to volunteer for military service, among other things.

But I do believe this is yet another reminder that history is not as simple and logical as many people believe.

Dear folks:

My first column in The Tennessee Magazine ran in February 2006 — 20 years ago! My topics that first year were the Donelson Party journey, the Battle of Shiloh, naval heroes of Tennessee, Andrew Jackson, the Dixie Highway and the Ducktown Basin, among other subjects.

I want to thank all of you for reading. I also need to thank the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association for publishing my column and for sponsoring Tennessee History for Kids.

**Here's to another 20 years!
— Bill Carey**



Turkey makes the cut

We're deep in the comfort food season. This winter, take comfort in turkey, which is versatile, nutritious, affordable ... and doesn't add unwanted calories to the dishes that warm your heart during cold days. Put a few of these terrific turkey-centric dishes on your table to get you through February. Spring will be here before you know it!

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



Turkey Sausage Tortellini

Turkey Sausage Tortellini

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (1-pound) package turkey Italian sausage, room temperature
- ½ cup julienned fresh spinach leaves
- 1 (9-ounce) package fresh cheese tortellini
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 scallion, peeled and chopped
- 6 sun-dried tomatoes (packed in oil), drained and sliced into thin strips
- 1 (6.5-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained with the liquid reserved
- ½ cup sliced pitted black olives
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons white wine or champagne vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
- 1 teaspoon dried basil or Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon seasoned, garlic or onion salt
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Preheat the broiler to low and place the sausage links on a lightly greased broiler rack. Broil 4 inches from the heat source for 6 minutes, then turn and broil another 6-7 minutes until done. Remove from the oven and allow to cool, then cut into quarter-inch slices.

Place the spinach in a large serving bowl and set aside.

Meanwhile, cook the tortellini according to the package directions, being careful not to overcook. Drain well and transfer to the serving bowl on top of the spinach to wilt. Toss with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Add the scallions, tomatoes, artichoke hearts (slice if large) and olives. Toss in the sliced turkey sausage and feta and set aside.

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the reserved artichoke liquid (2 tablespoons), remaining oil, vinegar, garlic, basil or Italian seasoning, salt, oregano and pepper. Cover and shake to emulsify. Pour over the sausage mixture and serve immediately.

Alternative Serving: Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours and up to 6 hours. Serve at room temperature.

Lemon Herb Turkey Piccata

Yield: 4 servings

- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 (1-pound) package turkey cutlets
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Lemon slices or wedges for garnish

In a shallow dish, combine the flour, rosemary, paprika, salt and pepper. In a separate shallow dish, combine the lemon juice and lemon zest. Dip the cutlets into the lemon mixture, then flour mixture, making sure each side is evenly coated. Place on a waxed paper or parchment lined baking sheet and refrigerate at least 15 minutes.

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and add the oil. Add the cutlets, working in batches if necessary, and cook 3 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. Drain on paper towels and serve warm with lemon.

Almond Turkey Meatballs

You have cooked leftover turkey that has lingered in your freezer since the holidays. This recipe provides a great use for it — whether you host a gathering and need appetizers or paired with sliced apples or pears for a light lunch.

Yield: 3-½ dozen meatballs

- 3 cups cooked finely chopped turkey
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup fruit chutney (I use mango!)
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup finely shredded sharp cheddar cheese (select white cheddar if you can find it)
- 1 heaping teaspoon finely grated lime zest
- 1 cup slivered almonds
- Additional chutney for dipping

Place the turkey and onions in a food processor and pulse until minced. Transfer to a mixing bowl. In the same food processor bowl, combine the cream cheese, chutney, curry powder, ginger, salt and pepper. Pulse until blended and add to the turkey mixture. Stir in the cheddar cheese and lime zest and thoroughly combine. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Place the almonds in a single layer on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven for no more than 4 minutes, shaking the pan halfway through. Remove and place on a wire rack to cool completely.

Place the almonds in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Transfer to a shallow dish and set aside.

Remove the turkey mixture from the refrigerator. Place a sheet of parchment paper on a rimmed baking sheet and set aside. Using your hands, roll the turkey mixture into 1-inch balls, then roll in the almond mixture to lightly but evenly coat. Place on the baking sheet and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving cold or at room temperature. Have additional chutney for dipping.

Two-Turkey Meatloaf

Yield: 10 servings

- 2 large slices ciabatta (crusts removed), diced
- ½ cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 pound ground turkey
- ½ pound spicy turkey sausage
- ½ cup marinara sauce

In a large bowl, stir together the breadcrumbs, milk and egg. Set aside for 10 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Grease the paper with olive oil cooking spray and set aside.

Add the Parmesan, salt, paprika and oregano to the bread mixture. Stir well and add the ground turkey and sausage. Mix with your hands until well combined.

Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and form into a rough loaf. Make sure it is as evenly formed as possible for even cooking.

Bake for 30 minutes, then spread the marinara sauce over the top. Bake for 15 minutes longer or until an instant-read thermometer reads 165 degrees. Remove from the oven and allow to rest 10 minutes before slicing and serving warm.

Chutney Turkey Burgers

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup finely chopped red bell peppers
- ¼ cup plain panko
- 2 tablespoons pineapple or mango chutney
- 2 tablespoons Durkee sauce or Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon onion or garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons soy or teriyaki sauce
- 4 hamburger buns
- 4 slices pineapple

Preheat the grill to medium-high.

Place the turkey, onions, bell peppers, panko, chutney, Durkee sauce or Dijon, salt and pepper in a mixing bowl. Gently stir to combine and divide the mixture into 4 patties. Place on a waxed-paper-lined tray. When the grill is ready, place the patties on the grill grate and close the lid. Cook, turning only once, for 7 minutes per side or until done.

During the last 2 minutes, brush the patties with the soy or teriyaki sauce. During the last minute, place the buns cut-side-down on the grill to toast.

Place the cooked patties on each bun bottom, top each with a pineapple slice then the top bun. Serve immediately.

Fruit-Glazed Turkey Tenderloins

Yield: 4-6 servings

- ¾ cup apple or apricot jelly*
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons champagne or white wine vinegar
- 1½ pounds turkey tenderloins (2 per package)
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ½ heaping teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon paprika

Place the jelly, mustard and vinegar in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk until the jelly melts and the mixture is smooth, around 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and pull ¼ cup of the mixture to use later for a serving sauce. Set the remaining mixture aside.

Preheat the grill to medium-high. Place the tenderloins on a waxed-paper-lined tray and brush both sides with the oil. In a small bowl, stir together the salt, pepper and paprika. Sprinkle evenly on the tenderloins.

Place the tenderloins on the grate and grill 10 minutes with the lid closed. Brush the tenderloins with the reserved jelly mixture and grill 2 minutes longer or until completely done. Remove from the grill and wrap in foil, drizzling with any remaining jelly mixture. Allow to rest 10 minutes before slicing. Serve alongside the ¼ cup of jelly glaze.

**If using apple jelly, add ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper to the dry rub mixture.*

Marinated Honey Teriyaki Turkey Tenderloins

Yield: 4-6 servings

- 2 cups teriyaki sauce
- ½ cup honey
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 2 large garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 2 teaspoons coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1½ pounds turkey tenderloins (2 per package)

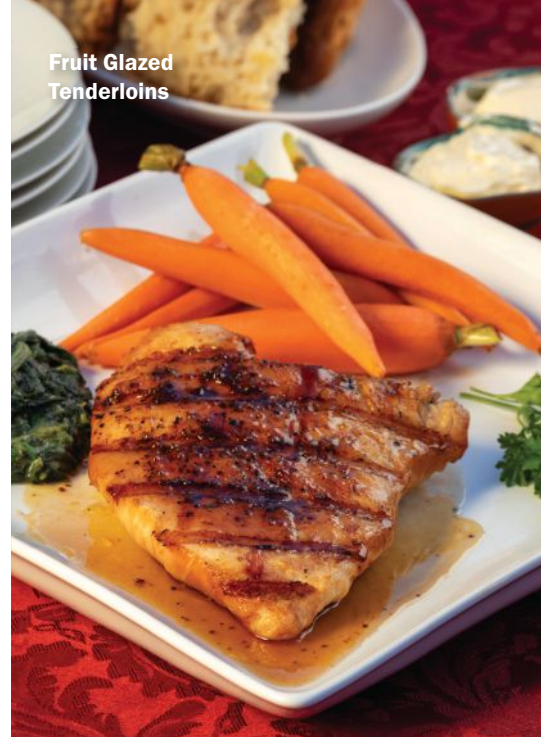
Place the teriyaki sauce, honey, onions, garlic, pepper and ginger in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Cover and shake to emulsify. Pour over the tenderloins and marinate 8 hours or overnight.

Preheat the grill to medium-high. Remove the tenderloins from the marinade and shake off the excess. Discard the marinade. Place the tenderloins on the grate and grill 12 minutes or until completely done.

Remove from the grill and wrap tightly in foil. Allow to rest 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

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.

Fruit Glazed
Tenderloins



Ask Chef Tammy

Jimmy writes, "I have an old family cookie recipe that calls for shortening. Can I substitute butter instead?"

Jimmy, you can, but keep in mind that you might get a different end result. Butter melts quicker than shortening, so the cookies could spread out more than they do with shortening. Make sure to completely cool the baking sheet between batches to help with this a bit.

Jocelyn asks, "Can I use a flat beater for everything done with my mixer versus the wire whip?"

Jocelyn, the flat beater is certainly the most versatile of all mixer attachments, but the wire whip is aptly named. Use it for anything that needs to be whipped like meringue or cream. Think of it as an electric version of a whisk.

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

Tips & Tricks


- Ground turkey is just as versatile as other ground meats, but you will quickly discover that it has far less fat. It releases very little fat as it cooks, so there is practically no draining needed.
- When selecting ground turkey for burgers, pick one that has at least 7% fat to make sure the burgers don't end up being dry.
- Thin turkey cutlets cook quickly and are perfectly suited for sauteing or stir-frying.
- Turkey tenderloins can be substituted for any recipe calling for chicken breasts.
- Never partially cook any type of poultry. Cook it completely and refrigerate leftovers.
- For the most dependable result, use an instant-read thermometer to measure doneness.

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Community Corner

– What our neighbors are up to –

Find the Tennessee Flag

We have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured above. It could be larger or smaller than this, and it could be in black and white or any color. If you find it, send us a postcard or email with the page number where it's located. Include your name, mailing



December's flag location

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 Monday, March 2. Winners will be published in the April issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

December flag spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the location of the flag, left, which was found behind the \$20 bill near Nashville on page 18.

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

Clarence Garcia

Byhalia, Mississippi, Chickasaw EC

Danny Gross

Lafayette, Tri-County Electric

Suzanne Kelly

Dandridge, Appalachian EC

Artist's Palette Assignment for April

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 — April, 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, March 2.

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 April 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 February Winners

14-18 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Ace Walters,
15, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Hazel Jochim,
15, Middle Tennessee Electric



THIRD PLACE: Addie Van Neste,
17, Upper Cumberland EMC

9-13 AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Reva Prashant Shanbhag,
11, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Sienna Baker,
11, Duck River EMC



THIRD PLACE: Eva Esandi Rohrbeck,
11, Cumberland EMC

8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: Alexandra Disla,
7, Middle Tennessee Electric



SECOND PLACE: Caden McCombs,
6, Middle Tennessee Electric



THIRD PLACE: Nigel Watson,
6, Caney Fork EC

Point of View

by Robin Conover



“Geese By the Light of a Supermoon”

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 200-400 mm
f4 L IS USM 1.4 Ext at 240mm, ISO 2500,
f-5 at 1/250 second, handheld

As a nature photographer, certain seasons, days and times stand out to me — seasonal solstices, the sun and moon cycles and annual migrations are just a few of the factors I use to help plan times and locations for photo shoots. When you are dealing with the weather and nature, planning can only take you so far. Sometimes simply being in the right place at the right time, witnessing the end of the day, is when the magic can happen.

While I had planned this shoot to be at Radnor Lake State Park in Nashville the evening before the supermoon last November, I had not planned on catching a bucket list photograph. I chose the night before the full moon as the moonrise and the sunset coincided with each other. This only happens on the night before the full moon, allowing you to capture the moon low in the sky with enough ambient light from the sun cast on the foreground to see some color and detail. In other words, you have more options for an interesting composition rather than just a white moon in a black sky.

I planned to capture the moon rising at Radnor Lake while the fading sun still illuminated the fall color on the ridge. If there was enough light and little to

no wind, I would also have a chance to capture the reflection of the moonrise and fall color in the foreground of the image.

Observing the end of the day alone in nature is where I meditate and reset. As the sun sets, the noise of the day dims, and you naturally focus on what's right in front of you. With little wind, the lake becomes still and quiet. As the golden hour fades into twilight, the wildlife tends to have a burst of activity. Along the lake's edge, beavers start their patrols, eagles make one last pass to hunt fish, barred owls call to each other in the distant woods and birds can be heard and seen returning to roost for the night.

Low-hanging clouds obscured the sunset on this night, which had somewhat disappointed me as I wouldn't get the image I set out to capture. But I had witnessed two groups of geese flying in from south of where I was standing, giving me no opportunity to photograph them due to trees.

As the light faded quickly, I was packing up to head to the truck. My large lens and camera were already off the tripod when I heard another flock of geese coming in from the north. I grabbed my

camera with the large lens, which had been preset to capture birds flying a few minutes earlier, and started shooting. I had no time to look at the exposure and had to trust autofocus. This resulted in the images being somewhat underexposed. I knew I would have to process them in Photoshop to reduce the noise caused by the higher ISO.

What struck me later, looking through the images, was how quiet they felt. No color, no distraction — just contrast and movement. The moon, ancient and unmoved, held steady while the geese passed through its light like a sentence spoken and already gone. It was a reminder of how much beauty exists in the ordinary if we take the time to notice it.

That's the thing about photographing nature in Tennessee. The best moments aren't staged. They happen when you're patient, when you listen, when you let the land and sky do what they've always done. A supermoon will rise whether we're watching or not. Geese will migrate on their own schedule. All we can do is stand still, look up and be thankful when those paths cross — if only for the length of a heartbeat and a shutter click.



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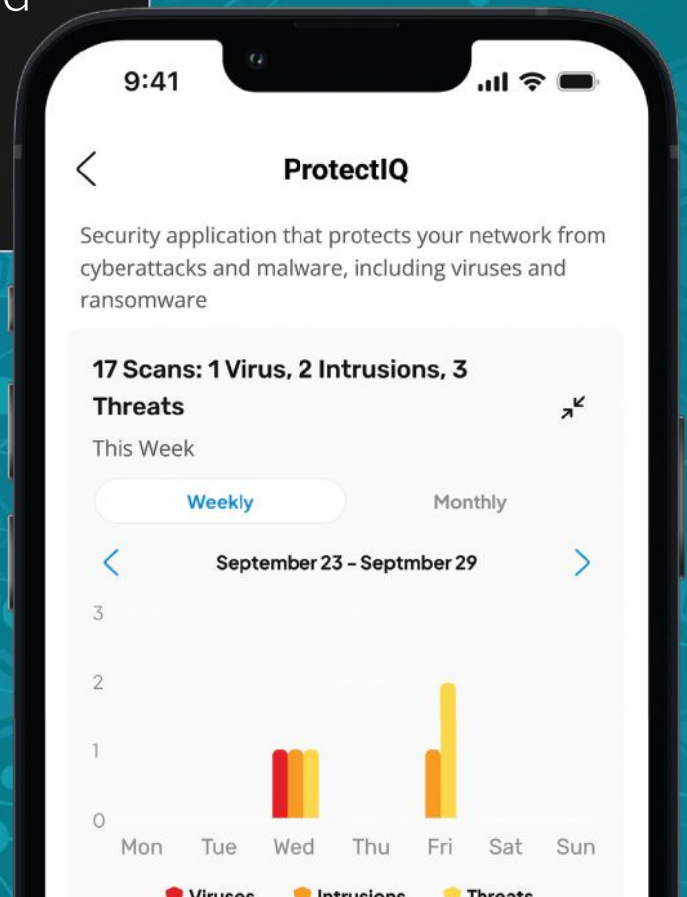


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