



the  
**tennessee**  
magazine

May 2026

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THERE'S A PLACE:  
PORTLAND

SEWANEE CELEBRATION  
ALZHEIMER'S ADVOCACY

Savor  
The  
Season

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*Photograph by Robin Conover*



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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*

## Safety starts with all of us

Safety is strongest when it's shared. Whether at work, at home or in our communities, the best outcomes happen when everyone plays a role in looking out for one another. That same idea guides everything we do at Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation.

At CEMC, safety always comes first. Our co-op, our employees and our members share a responsibility to one another when it comes to safety, and we all work best when each does their part.

It is our responsibility as your electric co-op to build a safe system. That goes for infrastructure and our daily work. We are responsible for designing, maintaining and operating a system that prioritizes safety. We ensure ongoing training, strict safety protocols and regular equipment inspections happen. We also empower lineworker crews to slow down or even stop work if something doesn't feel safe, even when power is out, and the pressure is high for restoration. Safety isn't something we compromise, even when the work is urgent.

Safety lives in the everyday too, not just in policies. Daily briefings and pre-work safety checks are held for every job. Our lineworkers look out

for one another on the jobsite. In fact, a lineworker is assigned to that job on each crew. This helps make sure every lineworker goes home safely at the end of the day.

As members, you, too, can join this safety partnership. It's not an obligation. It's a way to protect yourself, your family and our lineworkers. Be aware of overhead lines when working outdoors. Call 811 or us before digging. Give crews space when they're working along roads.

Electricity is powerful but unforgiving. A few extra seconds of caution can prevent life-changing injuries. Small actions from every part of this partnership help keep everyone safe.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. It is a perfect time to recommit to the habits that keep us all safe. By staying aware and taking simple precautions, you help protect not only yourself and your loved ones but also the crews who work hard to keep your power on. Together, we can build a safer community for everyone.



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By Mike Knotts

*Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association*

# Electric cooperatives are community-focused

I met a new colleague not long ago who recently moved to Tennessee from California. After lightheartedly thanking her for In-N-Out Burger's recent openings in Middle Tennessee, I asked her about her favorite things she has experienced in Tennessee. She spoke of the kindness and friendliness of her new acquaintances and strangers alike. She told me how surprising it was to learn that Oreos can be deep fried. And she talked about her company and the reasons their business is locating here.

None of those were surprises to me. And I doubt they are to you either. With the exceptions of our friends who espouse "Minnesota Nice," I can't think of a friendlier place than our home. Many businesses continue to see Tennessee as a place they want to be, not only for the company's bottom line but for the health and happiness of their employees. Although, I do have to admit, my first fried Oreo came at the county fair in Brownstown, Indiana.

I was surprised, however, at her reaction to my explanation about working with electric cooperatives. She did not have a clue what a co-op was, other than that she buys camping gear from REI. "When I moved here," she said, "I thought it was strange that the power company in California was publicly traded, but my utility is part of the government here in Tennessee."

It is an interesting quirk of history that many utilities across the state — electric, gas, water and sewer — are owned by cities or counties that you live in. But, as I explained

to my new friend, if your power company has a name like "electric cooperative" or "electric membership corporation," then you are part of a cooperative.

A co-op is a private company and is not part of the government in any way. Unlike a company whose ownership consists of shares of stock, however, a co-op is jointly owned by all of its customers. That means that you, just by paying your electric bill, are part owner of your electric company.

Even better than being an owner, though, your electric co-op is not for profit. So the goal is to provide your electricity at the lowest price possible. And that makes all the difference — not just because none of your money is being used to pay investors a dividend but because the men and women who work at the co-op are focused on service instead of profit, and they take great pride in doing important work that makes our communities better.

So while I am grateful for the amazing work that for-profit companies do each and every day, I'm equally grateful that something as important as electricity is provided to me by local people who care. And after learning more, that was something my new friend from California was just as excited about.



## The work doesn't end at the finish line

A few weeks ago, my son crossed the finish line of the Knoxville Marathon.

If you've ever been around a race like that, you know the finish line is a big moment — but it's not really the end. It's a chance to catch your breath, take stock of what you learned and, before long, start thinking about what's next.

The same could be said for the Tennessee General Assembly — especially this year.

The session began under difficult circumstances as a historic ice storm swept across much of our state. Roads were impassable, power lines were down and communities were dealing with real challenges in real time. Like they always do, electric cooperative lineworkers and crews showed up — working long hours in tough conditions to restore power and serve their neighbors.

That response didn't go unnoticed. It sparked conversations at the Capitol, a few reactionary legislative ideas and a lot of well-deserved appreciation for the men and women who keep the lights on.

By the time you read this, lawmakers will have

wrapped up this year's session. Hundreds of bills were debated — many of them touching issues that matter to electric cooperatives and the communities we serve. Some focused on infrastructure, others on economic development and emerging technologies. Not every bill makes headlines, but many have real implications for the reliability you depend on and the affordability you expect.

Throughout it all, electric cooperatives were there — engaged, present and working alongside lawmakers to make sure your voice was part of the conversation.

Because here's the reality: If you're not at the table, you're on the menu. And I don't know about you, but I'd rather have a seat.

For co-ops, being at the table isn't optional — it's part of our responsibility. As member-owned utilities, we exist to serve you, not shareholders. That means showing up, speaking up and advocating for policies that protect reliable service and keep power affordable.

That work takes many forms — meeting with legislators, working with partners across rural Tennessee and, just as important, listening to our



Kelley, Carson and Justin Maierhofer pose at the finish line of the Knoxville Marathon.

members so our positions reflect real-world experience.

The pace at the Capitol can be fast, but effective advocacy is never rushed. Relationships take time. Trust is built over years, not weeks.

That's why, even as one session ends, the work doesn't stop.

We're already looking ahead — staying engaged, building on what we learned and preparing for what's next. Because ensuring reliable, affordable power isn't a one-year effort. It's an ongoing commitment.

I'm proud to represent Tennessee's electric cooperatives — and even more proud of the communities we serve.

And just like a marathon, we'll keep putting in the miles.





By Chris Kirk

Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

# Projecting steady calm from the passenger seat

**M**ay is a time traditionally for honoring mothers and graduates, remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice to our country and celebrating all sorts of milestones. In the Kirk household, our oldest daughter, Sloan, will take the test to receive her driver's license later this month. I've been working with her over the last year to get her familiar behind the wheel.

It's been tough on this dad, making his firstborn ready to accept this great responsibility. She's done a great job, and our vehicles are no worse for wear. Sure, there have been a few brushes with curbs and small tree limbs. But always in my mind has been the demeanor I saw in the best driving instructor a teenager could ask for: my dad, Jerry Kirk.

Dad and I spent the weekends leading up to my 15th birthday cruising around the headquarters of Tennessee Farmers Cooperative. Dad was editor of the organization's monthly periodical, *The Cooperator*, and the expansive La Vergne campus provided service roads, driveways and parking lots — even a railroad crossing — for practicing all sorts of driving maneuvers. Dad insisted that I learn on a manual transmission, and I soon got the hang of starting, stopping and shifting through the gears of his emerald-green Nissan pickup.

Through all the lessons, Dad couldn't have been more patient, projecting calm through

the cab of that truck when I'm sure he was more than a little nervous.

Dad once told me that Alan Jackson's "Drive" made him think of those excursions. And that's where my mind goes now whenever I hear it.

Dad showed that same confidence in my abilities when I decided to follow in his professional footsteps. For the first 18 or so years of my career, he helped us edit each edition of *The Tennessee Magazine*. (Dad was editor of this magazine for a stretch in the 1980s before returning to *The Cooperator*.) As the years passed, I began to more fully realize the gift it was to work alongside him — not just for the privilege of learning from an accomplished writer, photographer and editor but the opportunity to spend more time with my dad. The lessons he taught me in the office always felt like gentle fatherly advice and never lectures.

Sadly, the effects of dementia forced Dad to step away from the magazine a couple of years ago. After months of declining health forced his move from home to a memory-care facility and then into long-term care, Dad passed away March 3. He was 86.

The folks from *The Cooperator* published a beautiful tribute to Dad. Find it in the May issue at [ourcoop.com/the-cooperator](http://ourcoop.com/the-cooperator).

It's been a tough couple of years. My mom died last March. Dad's passing occurred exactly a week before the anniversary of Mom's.



Dad's face reveals his happiness as well. I'm sure his smile would be bigger if I didn't have two fistfuls of his thick brown hair.

I placed the magnet on the refrigerator at our home just because it needed a place to go. And I'm so happy it landed there. Every time I visit the fridge, I'm reminded of the joy my parents have brought to my life. Frustrations disappear, and I refocus

on being the best dad I can be. In packing up their house last summer before putting it up for sale, I grabbed a photo magnet from the refrigerator. In grainy, mid '80s glory, the picture shows baby me perched on Dad's shoulders. My joy is undeniable, and a close look at

I am blessed that I was able to learn from the greatest.

*Chris*

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## DO YOU HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS?

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

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

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

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

**Deadline:** Entry must be submitted online or postmarked by Monday, June 1. First-place poems will be published in the August issue.

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

**Please enter online at [tnmagazine.org](http://tnmagazine.org) or mail handwritten entries to:**

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

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

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

# Embrace your inner adventurer

*From captain to commander, our childhoods are the gateway to a lifetime of adventure*

**A**t 9 years old, I found myself the captain of a barge. It was a small barge, but I took my sailing responsibilities seriously. It was made from wood pallets I found leaning against our garage and all the empty plastic milk cartons I could find. I tied them together by their handles with a roll of twine and stuffed them underneath the pallets. The barge was guided along a 60-foot length of creek by a long, sturdy tree limb I used as a navigation pole. I loved using the pole to get from one side of the creek to the other.

The barge could hold me and one other small-ish human, which was always my friend Randy, who had accepted the position of first mate. It was an apt title, as he and I were inseparable during those summer months. Playing hard in the summer sun, our dreams were awash with maritime excitement. I would drift off to sleep thinking of how to improve the barge. A canopy, perhaps? A rudder?

The barge came apart one afternoon when the twine rotted and gave way, releasing the milk cartons to float toward unchartered farmland. The waterlogged pallets became walls for a fort we built in the woods a short hike away, where I added fort commander to my expanding resume.

Our fort was a sprawling lumber construction made of limbs, pallet wood and rotted planks from an abandoned barn. We leaned the lumber against the largest sycamore we could find and went up from there. Our design style was Brutalist but could better be referred to as Neanderthal Revivalist. Our building philosophy: Why use one nail when several bent nails would do the trick?\*

My life as a prepubescent adventurer was solely based on reading material I borrowed from the public library next door. My childhood was shaped by the likes of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Encyclopedia Brown

and President Theodore Roosevelt. Teddy Roosevelt was a major fascination to me, and I devoured every young reader's book I could find about him. My favorite was a book called "Meet Theodore Roosevelt." It was illustrated by Mad Magazine's Jack Davis, and I checked it out frequently.

By the time I was 11, I was the head of a motorcycle gang that prowled the streets of my little town with a foreboding and mysterious ominousness. We named ourselves "The Rough Riders" as a nod to the fearless Teddy Roosevelt. We saw ourselves as protectors of the town, really, and I spent the summer of 1973 patrolling Main Street and the smaller alleys on my Schwinn Sting Ray Jr. with the red, metal flake banana seat and after-market sissy bar.\*\*

Throughout my adult life, I have had the vocational titles of artist, designer, musician, educator and clergy — not to mention a miserable but thankfully short period of time when I was called "vice president of sales." I am also a husband, father and grandfather — all of which certainly involve adventure — but it was my 6-to-13-year-old self who first felt comfortable with the title of adventurer.

I can remember getting so excited while watching "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" on Sunday nights, I could hardly contain my enthusiasm. I had spent all weekend exploring the creeks and forests outside, and I felt a kinship with those guys in the pith helmets and beige shirts with all the pockets. I couldn't wait to wake up in the morning and explore some more.

By the time I was 14, I was widening my horizons as an adventurer, and by that, I mean I started to include girls. I had become a traveling troubadour, equipped with a \$75 Sears guitar I bought with lawn mowing money (\$5 per yard); a colorful, woven guitar strap; and a Mel Bay book of chords. I began to learn the songs of a trio of singer-songwriters I now affectionately refer to

## These footnotes have not been generated by AI, except when deemed absolutely necessary.

\* My father's tool belt smelled like a hardware store. It was heavy and stiff, with remnants of nails and screws from past home repairs, and I used them all to secure the planks of our fort. I forgot to bring the belt home with me one night, and it sat out during a thunderstorm. It took weeks to dry, and when it did, it was brittle and misshapen. My father rubbed oil into it to shape it back up. It was the same oil he used on my new baseball glove when I started Little League. It was on a shelf in the shed next to his ever-present bottle of Corn Huskers Lotion. Corn Huskers Lotion was a staple for adventurers of all kinds. Originally used to alleviate dry, cracking skin caused by the shucking of corn

leaves, husks and other agricultural tasks, it had a medicinal smell tempered with a soapy, pine scent. I found an old bottle at a friend's house recently. I opened it, smelled it and traveled back through time. I rubbed a dab on my dry elbows and caught wisps of the fragrance for the next few hours.

\*\* Sissy bars, as they were so misogynistically called, were tall, back brace bars. The accessory could be easily installed on the axle of your back wheel to further give you a chopper-style ride, and, if a girl needed a lift, she could tuck nicely between your back and the bar. If you were without a girl, as I was, you could simply recline against

your sissy bar and look remarkably similar to Dennis Hopper in "Easy Rider," a movie I wouldn't see until cable television's arrival many years later but one I was familiar with due to Mad Magazine's spoof earlier that year. I even had a suede jacket with fringe, just like Hopper's from the movie. I don't have any pictures of me in that jacket, on that bike. The pictures from that Christmas show me beaming for the camera in my fringe suede jacket, sitting on my other gift, a Hoppity Hop, basically a large rubber ball with a handle. I remember thinking I was the coolest guy on the planet, but the pictures reveal a very different scene. It's as strange as you might imagine: a prepubescent boy in a fringed hippy

jacket straddling a large rubber ball. It was the '70s. There were different rules back then. I would find out later how wonderful it is to have a girl holding onto you while you ride with the wind in your hair, but until then, reclining like Dennis Hopper would have to suffice. When I finally saw the long, meandering "Easy Rider," I was so disappointed. I remember thinking the Mad spoof was so much better.

\*\*\* Several years ago, *The Tennessee Magazine's* history guy, Bill Carey, wrote an excellent article about the ferry at Rome, among others in Tennessee. Read it here: [tnmagazine.org/old-rome-ferry-reminder-traveling-days-gone](http://tnmagazine.org/old-rome-ferry-reminder-traveling-days-gone).

as "The Three Jims" — Jim Croce, James Taylor and Jim Stafford, who had a big hit that summer with "Spiders and Snakes." My troubadour kit went with me everywhere and got pulled out wherever I thought girls might show up.

Many of my greatest adventures as a boy were not planned but accidental: taking a turn to see where it went; hopping off my bike to hike an old trail; following the creek as it wound itself farther away from old, familiar ground. And, I have to say, my accidental adventures as an adult have also had the same results.

Some years ago, on a sleepless autumn morning, long before the sun came up, I was feeling restless in every sense of the word. I got dressed, grabbed my keys and drove east out of Wilson County toward a sun I knew would be rising eventually. I had no destination in mind. I just had to move, get from one side to another, somehow, from darkness to light.

On a short stretch of Highway 70 North, in between yet another ubiquitous Dollar General and the Mount Calvary Pentecostal Church, you'll see a sign alerting drivers that they are in the town of Rome — albeit briefly. Smith County's forgotten town with a big namesake, Rome gives one the feeling that something bigger went on here once. But what? And when?\*\*\*

The rusted hulk of a ferry stands at the river's edge there in Rome. A historical marker states that the ferry, in various renditions over the years, hauled people back and forth across the Cumberland River. This steel behemoth was the last rendition to carry souls to the other side. This particular crossing site predates the Civil War, and was once the only way — for miles — to get to the

other side. Bridges and highways eventually made the ferry obsolete. It sits there quietly, majestically, but also sadly, as a relic of time gone by. On a sleepless autumn predawn drive, I'm here to tell you, if you're feeling like a bygone relic yourself, the ferry at Rome makes for good company.

I've visited countless times over the years. With the occasional early commuter driving by overhead and the soft lapping sound of the water on the clay banks, the ferry at Rome makes an ideal place for contemplation. I have found whatever I carry with me to this place is lighter and more manageable. I have climbed to the deck of the ferry to sit for a spell and felt the world lift from my shoulders. I arrive one person and depart as another.

So, as it turns out, the old, relic ferry is still doing its job, after all.

Transportation can be done in many ways. And I realize my life is not much different than when I was a boy. We have to make our own adventures when the adventures won't come to us. And rediscovery of the explorer inside of us can be easy. It starts by getting off our beaten paths and walking through a long forgotten corner of history — sometimes, that history can be our own.

### Download Antsy's song, "The Wreck of the Marcia Brady"

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist. Go to [unhitched.com](http://unhitched.com) for more. Use this QR code to download "The Wreck of the Marcia Brady" FREE to readers of *The Tennessee Magazine*. The poem, which Antsy affectionately calls "A Creek Shanty," chronicles the building — and subsequent demise — of "the barge" Antsy speaks of at the beginning of this column. Names have been changed.



The background of the article is a sepia-toned illustration of a surveyor standing on a map. The surveyor is wearing a hat and a long coat, and is holding a staff. To his right is a surveying instrument on a tripod. The map shows various geographical features and labels. The word 'Dallas' is written in a large, stylized font at the top left. The word 'Columbus' is written in a similar font below it. The word 'Estimacula' is written in a similar font at the bottom left. The word 'New York' is written in a similar font at the bottom right. The overall style is that of an old, hand-drawn map or document.

## The claims made by developers of Tennessee towns

As I wrote in a column a long time ago, Tennessee towns didn't just "happen." Towns were started by investors who pooled their money; sent surveyors to find the best locations; bought and subdivided hundreds of acres; and laid out town squares, roads and lots.

These investors also bought advertisements that — through truth, exaggeration or lies — made their developments sound like the best places in the world to live.

Over the years, I've amassed a large collection of town announcements that were purchased as ads in Tennessee newspapers. Here are 10 things I've concluded based on reading them:

- 1. Rivers in prospective towns were always navigable and deep, according to developers.**

In 1807, when the DeKalb County town of **Liberty** was announced, the Caney Fork River was described a "constant stream, suited for almost every kind of water works and navigable for boats." Six years later, the announcement of the Giles County town of **Elkton** claimed the Elk River "is in no way inferior to the Cumberland." In 1826, the developers of the Haywood County town of **Estanaula** said the Big Hatchie River, on which the town was located, was "the finest navigable stream in the Western District" and is the only river that flows through that part of the state "that can be made permanently and usefully navigable by steamboats."

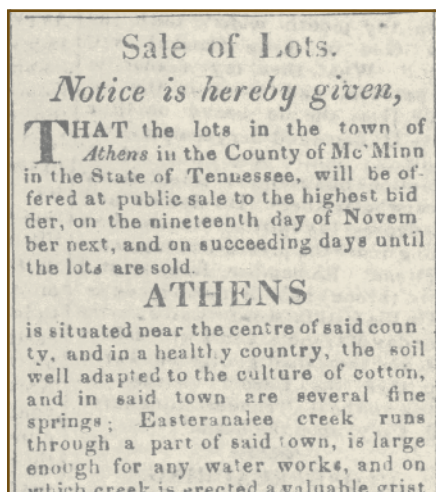
## 2. According to developers, every town had plenty of natural springs.

Many of the ads for towns contained the phrase “never failing springs” — including the Lawrence County seat of **Lawrenceburg** (1821), the Hickman County seat of **Centerville** (1823), the Hardeman County town of **Warnerville** (1827), the Polk County town of **Benton** (1840) and many others.

## 3. Developers would say anything to lure people to their towns.

Three examples:

In 1818, William Nolen was organizing a town called **Nolensville** on land he owned in Williamson County. In his ad, published three times in the *Tennessee Gazette*, he claimed that the part of Tennessee where he was developing a town was “as healthy as any part of the world.” As proof of his claim, Nolen said that he “has lived on the spot for 20 years and raised up a family of 15 children without a single death.”



*Knoxville Register*; Oct. 22, 1822

Two years later, two men announced in the *Knoxville Register* the creation of a town called **Columbus**, in present-day Bradley County. “It is confidently expected that time is not far distant when COLUMBUS



*Clarion and Tennessee State Gazette*; May 19, 1818

is to be the depot for all the produce of East Tennessee,” the ad claimed.

However, the business plan for Columbus depended upon the construction of a canal that connected the Hiwassee River to the Conasauga River, which would, in turn, connect the Tennessee River system with the Coosa River system. The canal was never built because the Cherokee Indians (who still lived in southeast Tennessee at that time) didn’t want it built. That’s why the planned town of Columbus is now in the woods.

In 1836, the organizers of the Coffee County seat of **Manchester** claimed that their prospective town lay in a place “considered no less healthy than those proverbial spots where people never die of disease” — odd wording, no doubt. The organizers went on to claim that, like Manchester, England, Coffee County’s Manchester would turn out to be a “great manufacturing city of this western hemisphere.”

## 4. People would be surprised to know when some towns were organized.

It would seem logical that towns in East Tennessee would have been started before towns in Middle Tennessee and that towns in Middle Tennessee would be started before towns in West Tennessee. But that’s not always the case.

For example, **Springfield, Gallatin** and **Columbia** (in Middle Tennessee) were organized in 1798, 1802 and 1808, respectively. However, the Hancock County seat of **Sneedville** was not subdivided until 1847, the Unicoi County seat of **Erwin** was not organized until 1876 (it was then called **Vanderbilt**) and the Knoxville suburb called **Farragut** was not incorporated until 1980!

## 5. Americans were anti-anything British in early 1800s.

Nashville developer John Overton announced the creation of a town at the southwest corner of Tennessee called **Memphis** in several ads that appeared in the *Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) Weekly* in 1820. It is notable how he described Memphis’ location:

“The situation is handsome, well-watered and healthy,” Overton wrote. “(Memphis) is situated in lat. 35’6” N, 13” W. from Washington.”

Like all Americans of that era, Overton used a longitude system that cited locations west from Washington, D.C. — not Greenwich, England (which is used today).

## 6. Some Tennessee towns were created by the railroads.

In 1839, a group of railroad officials subdivided, auctioned off and organized a town where the Western and Atlantic Railroad reached the Tennessee River. Its previous name was Ross’s Landing. They rechristened it **Chattanooga**.

The East Tennessee town of **Loudon** was organized by the East Tennessee & Georgia Railroad in 1851.

The executives who ran the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad organized at least two towns

— **Tullahoma** (1851) and **Decherd** (1853).

**7. The demand for less expensive homes goes back further than you might guess.**

If you google the words “expensive city Tennessee,” you will read about **Brentwood**, in Williamson County, where the average home price exceeds \$1 million.

However, when the real estate company of Nance & Woodward first announced the development of Brentwood in 1858, it proclaimed “CHEAP HOMES!” and went on to say:

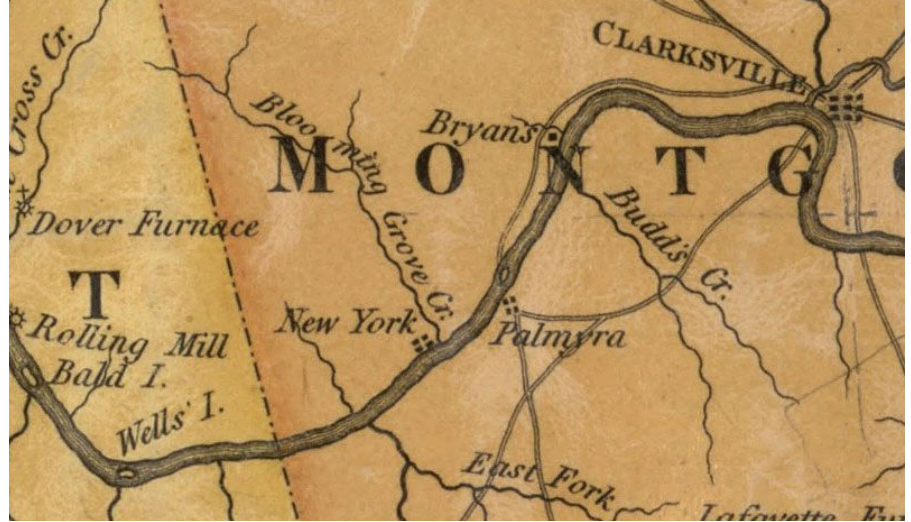
“If you wish to avoid heavy taxes and expensive living, come here and you can get a lot on more reasonable terms,” the ad promised. “Provisions can be purchased at low rates and firewood can be delivered at your door at two dollars a cord.”



**Republican Banner; Sept. 10, 1858**

At the time, there was a passenger train that took people from Nashville to Brentwood. “Cars leave Nashville twice a day and arrive here in twenty to thirty minutes.”

As a longtime resident of Davidson and Williamson counties, I can assure you that there are no passenger trains from Nashville to Brentwood and that homes in Brentwood are not “cheap.”



**Matthew Rhea map of Tennessee, 1832**

**8. It's amusing to see towns in other states announced in Tennessee newspapers.**

In 1810, advertisements for a new Alabama town called **Huntsville** were published in the *Knoxville Gazette*. Eight years later, large ads for another new Alabama town called **Florence** ran in the *Nashville Whig*.

In 1820, ads for a third Alabama town were published in the *Knoxville Register*. The town's name — **Tuscaloosa** — now raises high emotion in Knoxville, but it didn't then.

**9. Tennessee had Dallas before Texas did.**

In March 1830, the organization of the county seat of Hamilton County seat was announced in the *Knoxville Register*. Its name was **Dallas** — which means Dallas, Tennessee, not only predated Chattanooga, it also predated Dallas, Texas.

(So if you know anyone who lives in Texas, tell them that Texas stole the name “Dallas” from Tennessee.)

**10. Despite what developers wanted, some towns never got off the ground.**

I have found glorious announcements for a Wilson County town called **Marysville** (1816), a Williamson County town named **Charles-ton** (1818), a Warren County town

called **Danville** (1818), a Benton County town named **Williamsville** (1819), a Hardeman County town called **Lyonel** (1827), a Haywood County town named **Wesley** (1829) and a Carroll County town called **Batavia** (1832). I don't think any of these places were ever “towns” by any definition.

My two favorite Tennessee towns that never got off the ground were:

1. **Jackson** — Not the city in Madison County but the town of Jackson that was supposed to be started in Bedford County in September 1818. This town of Jackson was to be on a “high bluff” over the Duck River, near the intersection of Bedford and Maury counties (as best I can tell, at or near the present-day site of Henry Horton State Park).

2. **New York** — In 1819, several large ads in the *Nashville Whig* announced the creation of a Montgomery County town called New York, to be located “between the confluence of Blooming Grove and Sugar creeks with (the Cumberland River).” Two years later, the same town was said to be the home of a new school called New York Academy.

But I have no idea what became of the Bedford County town of Jackson or of New York, Tennessee — three words that seem odd to write!

# Tennessee Events

*Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state*

May 8-9

## 85th Annual Middle Tennessee Strawberry Festival

Portland.

[middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net](http://middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net)

**T**his year's Middle Tennessee Strawberry Festival takes place on Friday, May 8, and Saturday, May 9, in Portland. This year's theme is "Berry Proud to be an American," which complements the America 250 celebrations.

Friday is the Strawberry Jam Concert and Fireworks Show, and

Saturday is the main festival day. Saturday begins with the Rotary pancake breakfast. Throughout the day, there will be live music, vendors, KidTown USA and more. And, of course, local farmers will be selling strawberries, which go quickly, so be sure to pick some up early if you attend! The festival concludes with a parade at 4 p.m.

Keep in mind that the festival is free to attend, but some events do have an admission cost.

For more details on the festival, a complete schedule and parking information, go to [middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net](http://middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net).



Photographs by Trent Dobbs

## West Tennessee

MAY 8

### Walk the Block Party for Alzheimer's

Halls. [walktheblockparty@gmail.com](mailto:walktheblockparty@gmail.com) or [facebook.com/people/Walk-The-Block-Party-for-Alzheimers/100085215074940](https://facebook.com/people/Walk-The-Block-Party-for-Alzheimers/100085215074940)

MAY 10

### Mother's Day Brunch

Graceland, Memphis. 901-443-3000 or [guesthousegraceland.com/events/mothers-day](http://guesthousegraceland.com/events/mothers-day)

JUNE 2-7

### "Disney's Beauty and the Beast"

Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or [orpheum-memphis.com](http://orpheum-memphis.com)

## Middle Tennessee

MAY 8-9

### Cannon County Good Ole Days

Courthouse Square, Woodbury. 615-563-5304 or [cannoncountygooledays.com](http://cannoncountygooledays.com)

MAY 9

### Iroquois Steeplechase

Percy Warner Park, Nashville. 800-619-4802 or [iroquoissteeplechase.org](http://iroquoissteeplechase.org)

MAY 16-17

### Half-Toberfest

Breeden's Orchard, Mt. Juliet. 615-449-2880 or [breedensorchard.com](http://breedensorchard.com)

MAY 23

### Heritage Day

Granville. 931-653-4151 or [granvilletn.com](http://granvilletn.com)

## East Tennessee

MAY 15-16

### Bloomin' BBQ Music and Food Festival

Historic downtown Sevierville. 865-453-6411 or [info@visitsevierville.com](mailto:info@visitsevierville.com)

MAY 26

### Chicago

Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville. 865-684-1200 or [tennesseetheatre.com](http://tennesseetheatre.com)

JUNE 7

### Walnut Street Bridge Festival

Coolidge Park, Chattanooga. 404-437-6320 or [vonzarainc.com/the-walnut-street-bridge-festival](http://vonzarainc.com/the-walnut-street-bridge-festival)



## Submit your events

Complete the form at [tnmagazine.org](http://tnmagazine.org) or email [events@tnmagazine.org](mailto: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](http://tnmagazine.org/events).



# Her Fight is Our Fight

How one family is carrying on a legacy through the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association

Story by Amber Weaver • Photographs courtesy of Amy Gammel



Amy Gammel and her nephews, Charlie and Willie Harris, are making a difference in the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association through legislative and community visits, baseball games and organized walks.

A small-town flower shop can be a lovely but hectic place to be on certain days of the year. Valentine's Day is the busiest day for Mayo's Flower Shop and has been since it opened in 1969 in Lauderdale County. Despite the chaos, Myrtle Elder Jackson helped run the shop and provide the utmost care not only for her customers but also her family. That same family is working hard today to carry on Aunt Myrt's legacy — both in the flower shop and through the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association.

"I gave my aunt my word that her fight was going to be my fight, and until there's a cure, I intend to keep my word to her," said Amy Elder Gammel.

### Where her fight began

Gammel is a Ripley native, and her beloved Aunt Myrt helped raise her.

"She was like a mom to me," Gammel said. "My whole life, I was always with her."

On May 9, 2005, Aunt Myrt was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. While she wasn't the first in their family to be diagnosed, Gammel was still unsure what the next steps would be. That's when she began her own research and got involved with the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association.

"I wanted to figure out the best way I could help her," Gammel said.

On Sept. 19, 2015, on Gammel's wedding day, Aunt Myrt passed away.

"She battled for 10 years with such courage and strength," Gammel said. "The legacy she left me is a tremendous responsibility. I don't take it lightly and certainly not for granted."

Fast-forward to today, and Gammel serves as vice chair on the board of directors for the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association and is more involved than ever. She holds her own fundraising walk, partners with the University of Tennessee at Martin for an advocacy softball game, advocates

for the cause with state legislators and is already passing down Aunt Myrt's legacy to the next generation.

"Thinking back to those Valentine's Days in the flower shop growing up, there was never a day or time that I ever felt like Aunt Myrt didn't have time for me. Not one time in my life did I ever feel like I was an inconvenience or a problem," Gammel said. "I want to pass that down to these boys. I want them to know that no matter what I'm doing, they always matter, are important to me and can make a difference."

### A new generation takes up the fight

Charlie and Willie Harris are doing just that — making a difference and carrying on Aunt Myrt's legacy right by their Aunt Amy's side through the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association.

"They're always a part of what I do," Gammel said. "This work will never be about me, and that's the way I intend to keep it. I want people to see that there are kids actually trying to make a difference within this cause."

Charlie is only 13 years old but understands the severity of Alzheimer's disease and wants to help in any way he can because he doesn't want other families to have to watch their loved ones go through this.

"Even though I am young, I believe I can still make a difference," Charlie said. "I can do that by spreading awareness and helping people in my community learn about Alzheimer's disease and the resources available. I hope that by speaking up and getting involved, fewer families will have to experience the pain this disease causes."

This February, Charlie spoke up in a big way for the first time. He attended his first Advocacy Day with the Tennessee Alzheimer's Association in Nashville with Gammel, marking the

youngest person to officially attend the effort. The team advocated on Capitol Hill for better care for Alzheimer's disease in rural areas, which would have been a big help to Aunt Myrt during her battle.

"This has been my favorite event yet," Charlie said. "Getting to meet state officials and other volunteers was a really valuable experience for me. It was exciting to see how people came together to speak up about Alzheimer's disease and share why it's important. It made me feel like even young people can have a voice and make a difference."

Charlie's younger brother, Willie, is 9 years old. He is also paving his own lane in Aunt Myrt's legacy through the Walk the Block Party for Alzheimer's in Halls. Willie has been to the walk every year of his life, and he is the only person in the state to hold that distinction. In fact, he participated in his first walk when he was just 8 months old.

"I like helping with the Alzheimer's disease team and walk because it helps people learn about the disease and support families going through it," Willie said. "Being involved now helps me get experience so I can do even more when I'm older. If there isn't a cure by the time I grow up, I want to keep helping and maybe even run our walk one day so we can keep raising awareness and working toward a cure."

This past year, Willie added something new to their walk with the Myrtle's Turtles Kids Club. In honor of Aunt Myrt, he hides toy turtles around the community weekly leading up to the walk. Kids who find 10 turtles and bring them to the family flower shop will earn exclusive T-shirts to wear at the walk.

"One of my favorite events is our walk," Willie said. "It's such a fun day, and I really love the flower ceremony



**Amy Gammel holds a photo of herself next to her beloved Aunt Myrt — whose legacy Gammel honors in her work as an Alzheimer's advocate.**

where I get to hold my blue flower proudly for all the people who are living with Alzheimer's disease."

At most of the events Gammel attends, Charlie and Willie are right by her side, and she is more than proud to see the legacy carried on.

"My Aunt Myrt didn't have children of her own, but she cared for me and so many others as her own," Gammel said. "When these boys were born, it was a full circle moment for me. I truly understood then and now how much she loved me because of how much I love them. I am honored to have them fight her fight by my side."

### **United in the fight**

Every step counts, and every moment matters. That's how the family fights Aunt Myrt's fight together every year at the annual Walk the Block Party for Alzheimer's. Saturday, Aug.

8, marks the sixth year for the community to walk, celebrate and make a difference. Every year since Gammel created the event, Forked Deer Electric has been a proud sponsor.

"At Forked Deer Electric Cooperative and Forked Deer Connect, we are honored to serve our community not only by providing reliable power and fiber services but by supporting people and events that make a meaningful difference," said Jeff Newman, FDEC general manager. "Alzheimer's disease affects not only those diagnosed but also the families and loved ones who walk alongside them. We are honored to walk with Amy and proud of the work she is doing to bring awareness to this important cause and to support those impacted throughout our community and beyond."

Attendees can lace up their walking shoes and bring the whole family

for a day full of fun, community and purpose. The morning starts with the walk: The whole town of Halls is shut down, and participants are escorted by the local police along a designated route. Then the party kicks off with live music, a petting zoo, food trucks, a car show, local vendors and more. All the money made that day goes toward Alzheimer's care, support and research. The walk has continued to grow since 2020, and Gammel knows that through the support of the community and her family, Aunt Myrt's legacy will live on.

"I know now that everything my aunt went through wasn't for nothing," Gammel said. "The number of people who have heard her story and the rooms that we have been able to be in because of her battle have and will continue to help so many people and this cause."

# Call for Entries

# Shutterbug Showcase



In our next Shutterbug Photography Contest, *The Tennessee Magazine* is again partnering with the Wilson County-Tennessee State Fair. This year's fair theme is "Tennessee Voices and Volunteers: Celebrating America 250," and we're leaning into that spirit with "Red, White or Blue." Winning entries will feature one or more of these star-spangled shades. You can include American flags, but we're

really looking for more creative compositions.

*The Tennessee Magazine* will name first-, second- and third-place winners as well as honorable mention recipients in each division — **Shutterbug, Junior Shutterbug** (ages 17 and younger) and **Professional**. As you accept this challenge, please stay safe. We don't want anyone to take a tumble in the name of the Shutterbug contest.

## SHUTTERBUG ASSIGNMENT

"Red, White or Blue"

## SUBMISSIONS —

### ONLINE ENTRIES ONLY

To enter, visit [tnmagazine.org](http://tnmagazine.org) and click on "Entry Forms" under the "Contests" tab.

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

## PRIZE PACKAGES

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

## CONTEST RULES



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

# Sign up for bank draft for a chance to win a \$250 bill credit

All Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation and Cumberland Connect members enrolled in bank draft before Sunday, May 31, will be entered into a drawing to win one of five \$50 electric bill credits. As a bonus, members who sign up for bank draft at any time during May will be entered into a second drawing with a chance to win a \$250 bill credit.

Bank draft is a convenient way to make electric and internet bill payments automatically. With bank draft, your bill is securely drafted from your checking or savings account each month on your due date, eliminating late fees. You will continue receiving

your electric bill each month — in your mailbox or inbox — and we'll take care of the rest.

To sign up for bank draft, give us a call at 800-987-2362, stop by your local CEMC office or enroll via SmartHub online or in the mobile app. When signing up by phone or in your local office, you must sign an authorization form and provide a voided check.

**Please note:** this contest is open only to members enrolled in bank draft payments. It does not apply to members enrolled in Auto Pay recurring credit/debit card payments.

SIGN UP FOR  
**BANK DRAFT  
AND WIN!**

Enroll in bank draft  
by May 31 for a chance  
to win a \$250 bill credit.



## MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Thursday, May 14 • 10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Free lunch & giveaways at your local CEMC office!

# Young leaders learn about co-ops, agriculture at annual conference

Jesse Jordan of Ashland City joined hundreds of other young adults from across the state at the 2026 Young Leaders Conference, held Feb. 20 and 21 in Franklin. Jesse was sponsored by Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation to attend the annual conference that brings rural Tennesseans together to learn about cooperatives and discuss issues facing the agricultural industry.

The Tennessee Council of Cooperatives co-sponsors the annual conference with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers organization.

The event featured keynote speaker Mike Partin, President and CEO of Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative and current National Rural Electric Cooperative Association president, and a variety of presentations aimed at educating leaders about the benefits of cooperatives, building leadership skills and exploring topics important to rural Tennesseans. Attendees were exposed to ideas and information

that will enable them to add value to their own businesses and meet the challenges of the future with cooperative marketing innovations.

"We were proud to have Jesse representing CEMC at this year's conference," said General Manager Chris Davis. "We are investing in the future of the communities we serve, and that is not limited to infrastructure. Each year the Young Leaders Conference brings together talented young leaders from across Tennessee to learn and share ideas. We are excited to see the impact this will have on our communities in the years to come."

Jesse is a second-generation farmer from Ashland City, where he works alongside his father at Jordan Farms. Homeschooled throughout his education, he grew up in the tobacco patch and developed a fascination with growing and curing tobacco at a young age. "From the planting to the fire-curing aspect, I love how every year is different," Jesse said.

The Jordans primarily raise dark fire-cured wrapper and snuff

tobacco, as well as air-cured tobacco. In addition to his work on the farm, Jesse also owns and operates his own tree service. He hopes to one day take over the family's tobacco farming operation.



Jesse Jordan of Ashland City represented Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation at the 2026 Young Leaders Conference in Franklin.

**All CEMC + Cumberland Connect offices will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day. Personnel will be available in the event of an emergency by calling 1-800-987-2362.**

*Remember And Honor*  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Above, young leaders from across the state meet with Gov. Bill Lee during the 2026 Youth Leadership Summit. Below, from left are, CEMC delegate Connor Dean, Sen. John Stevens, CEMC delegate Payton Bombarger and CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers.

## Young leaders learn more about powering what's next at co-op leadership event

Stewart County High School students Connor Dean and Payton Bombarger had the opportunity to attend the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association's annual Youth Leadership Summit in Nashville March 16-18. The students were proudly sponsored by Cumberland

Electric Membership Corporation.

Throughout the event, the 46 delegates participated in leadership development activities and learned more about what an electric co-op is and does for a community. The students visited the YMCA on Tuesday for team-building and scavenger-hunt exercises.

Lessons were also learned about how to effectively meet and greet state representatives. Those skills were later put into action at the Tennessee State Capitol where they were able to meet elected officials,

watch a mock session and sit on House and Senate committee meetings. Delegates also had the opportunity to partake in some Nashville classics including the Goo Goo Cluster Store, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and the Grand Ole Opry.

"Electric cooperatives are built on serving people, and the Youth Leadership Summit reflects that commitment," said Laura Beth Laden, TECA's member services specialist. "By sponsoring students, local co-ops are investing not only in education, but in the future of the communities they serve. It's inspiring to see students walk away with a greater appreciation for what co-ops do and why it matters."



# Saving you from headaches and hazards

**T**he time is here. It's practically summer, and you have plans to better the outside of your home. Maybe you are considering putting in a new pool, a new mailbox or maybe even some new flowering trees. Whatever the project might be — you need to call 811 before digging any holes. This simple, initial, important and free safety step will save you from headaches and hazards.

**Calling 811 keeps people safe.** Plain and simple, calling 811 before digging helps prevent serious injuries or worse. Underground electric, gas and communication lines aren't always obvious. Hitting one could lead to electric shock, explosions or other life-threatening situations — all that could be prevented by one quick call.

**Calling 811 protects critical infrastructure and prevents outages.** Damage to underground

utilities can knock out power, internet or gas service for the entire neighborhood. Giving 811 a call before starting any projects helps keep the lights on and essential services running for everyone.

**Calling 811 saves time, money and frustration.** Hitting a buried line could lead to costly repairs, project delays and potential fines. Dialing 811 is free, easy and can keep a job on track without unexpected and expensive setbacks.

Tennessee 811 is a nonprofit organization that helps homeowners and contractors locate underground utility lines so that digging can proceed safely. With one call, you can notify the owners of various underground utility lines, who will mark the lines' locations within a few days. Calling is required by law. If you dig without calling and damage utility lines, fines can be

assessed, and repair costs will come out of your pocket.

Keep in mind that a call to Tennessee 811 will not cover private utility lines. Examples of private lines are water and sewer lines that run from your meter to your house. You might need to contact your local or city government, tax assessor or registrar of deeds to help locate these lines. Also not covered are customer-owned lines such as those for invisible fencing, outdoor lighting and irrigation. Tennessee 811 maintains a list of private locators. For a fee, these professionals can help you locate these underground lines.

**DIGGING QUESTIONS?**  
Visit [tenn811.com](http://tenn811.com) or contact us  
for more information.  
**800-987-CEMC (2362)**



**If your warm-weather home improvement projects require digging, remember to call 811 before you begin. This simple step will save you from headaches and hazards!**

# Little changes, real savings

The electricity bill keeps rising. There is a noticeable draft in the living room in the evenings. The primary bedroom is a lot warmer than the guest bedroom across the hall. The desire to improve the home and energy efficiency is there, but there is no desire for a major remodel at this point in life.

The good news? You don't need a major remodel to make a difference because small home improvements matter. Unfortunately, small inefficiencies add up over time, and homes lose energy in sneaky places. However, even minor fixes can improve comfort year-round. Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is here to help members save energy and money while improving comfort with these five tips.

## Seal the gaps.

- **How:** Weather stripping around doors and windows, caulking small cracks and adding door sweeps.
- **Why it matters:** This practice keeps heated and cooled air where it belongs.



## Upgrade to LED lighting.

- **How:** Replace frequently used bulbs first.
- **Why it matters:** LEDs last longer and use less energy. An easy swap leads to long-term savings.

## Adjust the thermostat (yes, we know — thermostat).

- **How:** Turn the temperature down during the winter, especially while sleeping or away from the home. Turn the temperature up during the summer, especially while away.
- **Why it matters:** Heating and cooling are often the biggest energy users, and every degree of adjustment can reduce energy use without sacrificing comfort.

## Improve insulation.

- **How:** Insulate small, overlooked areas like ductwork in unconditioned spaces, attic access doors and pull-down stairs.
- **Why it matters:** This helps maintain consistent indoor temperatures.

## Maintain what you have.

- **How:** Change HVAC filters regularly, clean vents and returns, and check appliance seals.
- **Why it matters:** Efficiency drops when systems work harder than they need to.

Visit us at [cemc.org](http://cemc.org).



Changing air filters regularly can ease up the strain on your HVAC unit during those warm days.

# 45,000 and growing

## How fiber is transforming our communities



**W**hen Cumberland Connect began building its fiber network in 2019, the goal was clear: deliver fast, dependable internet to communities served by Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation. Today, with more than 45,000 subscribers across five counties, that investment is transforming how our members live and work every day.

What started as a multi-year infrastructure buildout has become one of our region's most significant broadband expansions. Since construction began in 2019, Cumberland Connect has built more than 5,300 miles of fiber across Cheatham, Montgomery, Robertson, Stewart, and Sumner counties. The completed network now spans CEMC's entire service territory—more than 100,000 homes and businesses—many of which previously had few options beyond slow or unreliable connections.

For members in rural areas, the change has been immediate. Before fiber, many households depended on cellular hotspots or fixed wireless service that struggled to keep up, with uneven speeds and frequent drops that made working from home, virtual learning, and streaming frustrating. With Cumberland Connect, thousands of CEMC members now have a far more reliable experience.

Dana M., Cumberland Connect's 45,000th subscriber, describes a story that will sound familiar to many. After

years of waiting for service to reach her area, she enrolled as soon as it became available. "I had been watching the maps for years," she said. "The moment it was available, we knew we would be a lifelong customer." Previously, her household relied on cellular hotspots and a local wireless provider. It was enough to get by, but only up to a point. Once the fiber connection was installed, the difference was clear. "Cumberland Connect was an absolute game changer from day one."

As a senior paralegal who works remotely, Dana depends on a strong connection that can handle constant file access, video calls, and time-sensitive work. "Having fast, reliable service is absolutely paramount to my job. It allowed me to work with a level of speed I never had before." Like many households, her internet connection now supports far more than work alone. It provides the foundation for streaming, communication, and the everyday technology people depend on at home.

While speed is often the headline, the benefits of fiber reach much further. Reliable broadband supports remote work, online education, telehealth, small businesses, and day-to-day communication. It helps members stay connected and creates opportunities that were once limited by distance or location. In rural communities especially, that kind of access can be transformational.

"Our goal from the very beginning of our broadband project has been to serve our members with the reliable service and infrastructure they need," said Mark T. Cook, broadband manager at Cumberland Connect. "As a local cooperative, we're here to serve people first, and it's incredibly meaningful to see how this service is making a real difference in people's lives."

What sets Cumberland Connect apart is not only the technology, but who built it. As a subsidiary of CEMC, Cumberland Connect was created to serve the same members who rely on the cooperative for electric service. That local ownership means decisions are made with our members as the top priority. "I love that it's local," Dana said. "Customer service is hands-down better than any of the big providers." That emphasis on service, transparency, and long-term reliability continues to shape Cumberland Connect's approach for future growth.

Reaching 45,000 subscribers is an important milestone, but we are far from finished. As technology continues to evolve and the demand for bandwidth increases, Cumberland Connect's fiber network is built to scale and positioned to support members for years to come. "I'll always be a lifelong customer," Dana said. Now, across our communities, thousands of members are seeing that same shift, one connection at a time.



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## 6 reasons your HVAC system deserves a May tuneup



**Q:** Now that winter's behind us, what should I do to prepare my home for the warmer months ahead?

**A:** As we transition from heating to cooling season, May is a great time to schedule an HVAC tuneup.

Think of an HVAC tuneup like a routine physical for your heating and cooling system. A qualified technician visits your home to inspect, clean and optimize your air conditioning unit. The tech will check refrigerant levels, clean or replace air filters, inspect electrical connections, test your thermostat, clean condenser coils and make sure everything is running smoothly and safely.

The whole process typically takes about an hour, and it's far less stressful and less expensive than dealing with a breakdown on the first 90-degree summer day! Bottom line: A spring tuneup helps get your air conditioning system ready — so you're ready for summer.

### 1. Beat the emergency rush.

May sits in that sweet spot between seasons — after the chill of winter has passed but before the first summer heatwave settles in. Your cooling system has been down for a long winter's nap, and now's the time for a gentle wake-up call.

### 2. Stay cool, calm and air conditioned.

Your family's comfort matters. A

well-maintained system cools your home more evenly and reliably, helping you sleep better and live more comfortably — without constantly adjusting the thermostat or aiming fans at uncomfortable family members.

A tuneup also catches small issues before they become big problems. That small refrigerant leak or worn belt might not stop your system today, but it could lead to a breakdown during the dog days of summer.

### 3. Protect your investment.

Your HVAC is one of the most expensive systems in your home. Regular maintenance can extend its lifespan. Just like changing the oil in your car prevents engine damage, a spring tuneup prevents wear and

tear that can shorten your system's life.

When technicians clean your system and ensure everything operates efficiently, they're reducing the strain on motors, compressors and other components. This means fewer repairs down the road and delaying that major expense of a full system replacement.

#### 4. Use less energy all summer long.

Here's something that really hits home: A well-maintained air conditioning system uses significantly less energy than a neglected one. Dirty coils, clogged filters and other minor issues force your system to work harder and run longer to achieve the same cooling effect.

A tuneup restores your system's efficiency, which translates directly to lower monthly utility bills. Many

families find that the tuneup pays for itself within a single cooling season through reduced energy consumption. And who doesn't want to keep more money in their pockets during those expensive summer months?

#### 5. Better air quality for your family.

Your HVAC system does more than just cool your home — it circulates and filters the air your family breathes. During a tuneup, technicians clean components that affect air quality and check that your system is ventilating properly.

This is especially important for families with allergies, asthma or respiratory sensitivities. A clean, well-functioning system removes more pollen, dust and other airborne irritants, helping everyone breathe easier and feel better at home.

#### 6. Peace of mind when you need it most.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of a May tuneup is simply knowing your system is ready for the weather. You won't lose sleep worrying about your A/C, and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you've taken care of your home and your family.

Scheduling a routine HVAC tuneup is a great way to take care of the people you love. It's a relatively small investment of time and money that helps ensure comfort, reliability and peace of mind for the entire summer ahead.

---

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. Visit [EnergyRight.com](http://EnergyRight.com) for more energy-saving tips and recommendations.

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3B 88

**MOYE GREEN BOARDING HOUSE**  
c.1890-1945

By 1892, later additions included decorative Victorian detailing along with exterior porches for boarding house guests. Significant contribution to Portland's economic growth operated as a local boarding house from c. 1945 under the ownership of the Moye family and their descendants, the Greens. Located near the railroad depot, the boarding house served as a room and board to passengers, businessmen, visitors and strawberry field workers for more than fifty years.

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MOYE GREEN BOARDING HOUSE  
PLACES

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## Portland

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# Crates and Freights

*Now an industrial player, Portland's railroad history and strawberry heritage are still evident*

Story by Mark Johnson • Photographs by Robin Conover and Trent Dobbs

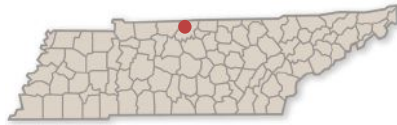
**T**here's a place in upper Middle Tennessee called Portland, which seems oddly named considering there isn't a port — or even a large body of water — in sight. There is, however, plenty of land, mostly in Sumner County and partially in Robertson County. The area is served by Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation.

For many Tennesseans, the mention of Portland probably elicits one distinct image: a strawberry. The town has, after all, famously hosted the Middle Tennessee Strawberry Festival since 1941. When I visited the town in mid-March, I halfway expected to be met with roadside billboards and banners depicting strawberries, to be ceremoniously presented with a crate of strawberries (despite the fact they weren't in season) by the reigning Strawberry Queen and perhaps welcomed into town by a waving strawberry mascot.

None of that happened, of course. But upon entering downtown along the main drag of South Broadway, I did immediately spot clusters of enormous strawberry statuary placed at random street corners along with a huge, 10-foot-tall strawberry crate

---

### Guaranteed to be a berry good time



Portland Chamber of Commerce  
Contact: 615-325-9032  
[middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net](http://middletennesseestrawberryfestival.net)

---

with “Portland” stenciled across the top.

I knew then I was at the right place.

I would soon learn, however, that Portland's connection to strawberries is more a part of the town's proud heritage than an important economic driver today, kind of like Boston and baked beans.

Just before the impressive strawberry display, I turned right onto East Market Street, followed it a short distance and encountered what is one of Portland's other most identifiable features: a railroad track. As it turns out, the area's strawberry production and the town's prominent railway worked together to create its famous identity. More about that later.

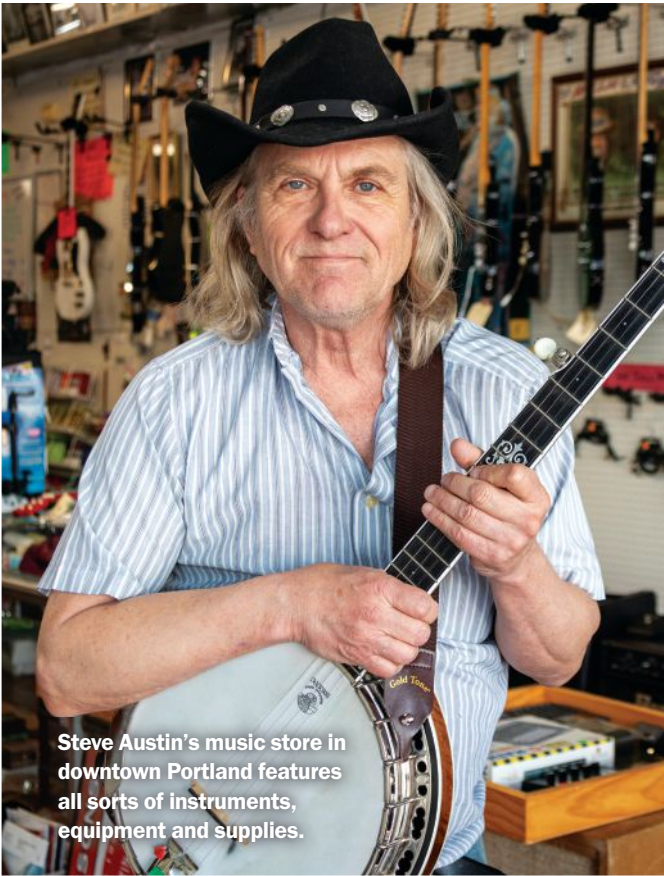
I crossed the tracks and parked in front of the Fred J. White Municipal Building where I met with Mayor Mike Callis, a Portland native who is clearly devoted to his hometown. Mike told me all about Portland's close-knit community, constantly improving infrastructure and growing influence as a hub for industry. He explained that the town was originally named “Richland” after the Richland Station railroad depot opened in 1859.

“But why was it changed to Portland?” I pressed. “With all this fertile farmland around, ‘Richland’ seemed to make more sense, right?”

Mike shrugged.

“Nobody really knows,” he said. “There's lots of speculation, but it's a bit of a mystery to this day.”

After chatting a while, Mike and I walked the couple hundred feet from the municipal building to the recently restored Temple Theatre (purposely spelled the British way) where we met up with City Council member Drew Jennings and former Portland Mayor Ken Wilbur, both of whom serve on the foundation responsible for the Temple Theatre's operation. Drew and Ken



Steve Austin's music store in downtown Portland features all sorts of instruments, equipment and supplies.



led us on a tour of the beautiful facility, which was built in 1930s and closed as a theater in 1956, only reopening three years ago. (See Temple Theatre's schedule at [templetheatretn.com](http://templetheatretn.com).)

Our group then made the short stroll from the theater to the historic Moyer-Green House, which contains the Portland History Museum. There, volunteer Teresa Keen guided us through the fascinating exhibits that focus mainly on the town's railway and strawberry heritage. There are also military items from when the area hosted training maneuvers of the U.S. Army 75th Infantry Division during World War II.

By the time we had completed our tour of the museum, it was lunchtime, and I was assured that only one place would do: 5 Chefs Restaurant. This local favorite is housed in what looks like a large, white, turn-of-the-century farmhouse situated just a block off South Broadway.

"Whatever you do, don't leave without getting a slice of cake," Mike advised as we walked toward the entrance. "They're famous for their cake. If you don't have diabetes now, you might by the time we're done."

Inside, we located "unofficial" town historian Nathan Shadowens already seated. After ordering from the large menu of good ol' Southern comfort food, Nathan provided a little more background about Portland's connection to strawberries.

"Beginning as early as the 1880s, local farmers found that the region's soil and climate were perfect for berry production," explained Nathan, a veterinarian. "With rail access allowing for rapid shipment, strawberries quickly became the backbone of the local economy. By the early 20th century, thousands of acres — by some accounts as many as 2,000 — were devoted to strawberries, and during peak harvests, railcars loaded with berries departed daily,

with a record of 115 cars shipped in a single day."

The industry supported a network of related enterprises, he added, including the Strawberry Crate Company, which at its height employed as many as 200 workers producing up to half a million crates annually. Yet by the mid-20th century, the conditions that had sustained the strawberry economy began to shift.

"Advances in refrigerated trucking, increased competition from large-scale producers in other regions — mainly Florida and California — and other changes in agriculture gradually reduced Portland's role as a national shipping center," Nathan said. "Despite the fact that strawberry production isn't what it once was, Portland has continually hosted our festival for 85 years, and strawberries are still an important part of our civic identity."

While listening to Nathan, I enjoyed an excellent grilled chicken

salad, purposely choosing something light so that I could overdo dessert with a slice of cake I'd been hearing so much about. I decided to buck the strawberry trend and went for banana. The massive slice was so rich, I gave up midway through before boxing the rest for a highly anticipated Round 2 later at my Airbnb.

Upon departing 5 Chefs, Mike and I took a ride out toward the Tennessee-Kentucky state line at Interstate 65. There, along Vaughn Parkway, Mike showed me an important player in Portland's economic development: a vast industrial park. Lining the road, one after another, are manufacturing and distribution facilities, some containing up to 1 million square feet under roof. The companies include Macy's Logistics, Dorman Products, Olhausen Billiard Manufacturing, Daido Corporation and some 14 others.

"We estimate that during the last quarter of the year, there are up to 6,000 employees working out here," Mike told me. "That's a lot of people traveling into Robertson and Sumner counties for work, many of them from Kentucky. It's had a big impact on our local economy."

Indeed. It was difficult to imagine the sheer amount of product moving in and out of that relatively short section of road.

After saying goodbye to Mike, I navigated the roughly 6 miles of rolling farmland to my Airbnb, situated in the basement of a tidy, gray brick home located off a quiet rural road. A flock of chickens pecked at the ground near the entrance, clucking and cooing without concern as I carried my belongings inside.

My lodging, appropriately called "Farmside Apartment," was neatly appointed, clean as a pin and hosted by an affable young man named Tom.

I settled into the couch to work on my trip notes and finish off the banana cake, which was even better the second time. When I realized I'd left home without my phone charger, I messaged Tom on the off chance he might have an extra. Within minutes, he showed up at the door with a charger ... and a dozen fresh eggs.

"My girls are laying more than I know what to do with," he explained with a chuckle. "Thought you could use them."

Yes, Southern hospitality is a real thing.

The following morning, I stopped at Milo Coffee House on Main Street for breakfast. The fella who delivered my omelet was Jossy Rodriguez, brother of Milo owner Daniel Rodriguez. Jossy told me that his family is originally from Honduras and that he and his brother moved to Portland 25 years ago to live with relatives.

"It felt like home immediately when we moved here," Jossy said. "There's a strong sense of community in Portland, and the businesses all tend to be involved with everything that's going on. It's just a peaceful, friendly place to live."

Pleasantly full and caffeinated, I then drove out Highway 52 to the John Crafton farm and met with John and his son, Austin, at a beautifully restored barn the family rents for weddings and community events. The father and son also operate a 2,000-acre row-crop operation but are perhaps better known as one of the area's few remaining strawberry producers.

"We grow about 6 acres of berries," John said. "Honestly, I don't think much about the history of berry production around here — it's just part of what we do and what my family has always done."

Before I left, John gifted me with two Mason jars of his homemade



Lexi Bowman displays a fresh scoop from the Pink Truck Parlor in downtown Portland.



Cranberry Pecan Chicken Salad at 5 Chefs Restaurant

strawberry-jalapeno jam, destined for crackers and biscuits when I returned home later that day.

My other stops after the Crafton farm included Scooter's Coffee, where I chatted with friendly server Heather Cole at the drive-thru window, and the Portland Chamber of Commerce, where President Kristen Hope insisted that I join her and about 30 of her friends for a special project. Huddled against a brisk

March wind, the group — armed with shiny pompoms and homemade signs — stood along South Broadway and cheered as the Portland High School boys basketball team rode past in a chartered bus on their way to a state tournament game.

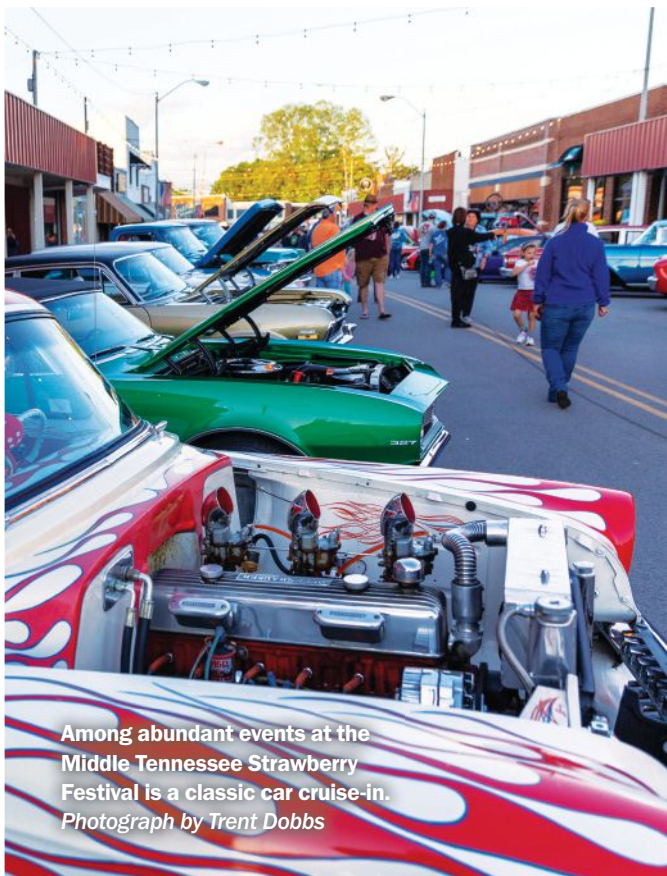
It was all over in about 30 seconds ... but well worth the effort.

I finished my Portland adventure with a quick visit to Big Poppa Corn, a specialty popcorn store just outside

of town. There, young employee Morgan Tharpe quietly summed up the appeal of Portland.

"Everybody knows everybody," Morgan said with a shy smile, handing me a bag of Caramel Macchiato-flavored popcorn. "There's lots of love and support here."

To learn more about the May 8-9 Middle Tennessee Strawberry Festival (and to find other events happening across the state), see page 15.



Among abundant events at the Middle Tennessee Strawberry Festival is a classic car cruise-in. Photograph by Trent Dobbs



Welcoming visitors to 5 Chefs Restaurant are owner Jaska Russell, left, and General Manager Phyllis Darnell.




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- J.P. Morgan



# What Sewanee means to me

How students and faculty are making a centennial celebration their own

Story and photographs by Amber Weaver

“What Sewanee means to me” is a phrase fifth grade students have been using as a part of their graduation speeches for quite some time at Sewanee Elementary School. This year, the answer to that prompt will be entirely different and possibly the most touching all thanks to one librarian and her efforts to celebrate the school’s 100th anniversary.

“These students have really claimed this celebration as their own,” Kathryn Bruce said. “For me, this has always been for the students. They are going to carry these stories with their little voices with them wherever they go. That’s what education is supposed to be about. Education is supposed to be life-changing, and this certainly has been for me and for them.”

## The past

This fall, Sewanee Elementary School is celebrating 100 years since it opened its doors, but the story begins long before 1926. One thing

is certain, though, and still rings true — Sewanee Elementary School is a community school.

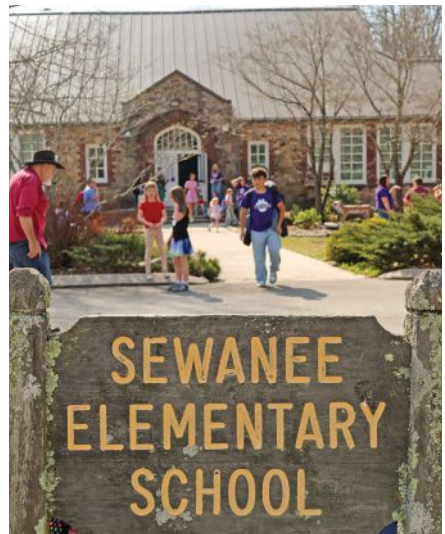
In 1867, the generosity of the community that is still ever present today began with one man from New Jersey. Jabez Wheeler Hayes leased 100 acres to become the location of St. Mary’s convent, which included a large steam sawmill and a schoolhouse. By 1875, the school had 100 students in attendance. Over time, there became a need in the area for a separate place of worship from the schoolhouse. The white children shifted to the Billy Goat Hill School while the Black children continued to attend school at the parish church. It didn’t take long for that school, with a potbellied stove for heat and well water carried in by buckets for drinks, to become overcrowded too. In 1916, three teachers taught nine grades filled with 300 students. Members of the newly formed Sewanee Civitan Club then made it their mission to build a new school.

In 1924, construction began in Franklin County for the Sewanee Public School, now known as Sewanee Elementary School, and was complete in 1926. It was built on land owned by the University of the South and later turned over to the board of education with abundant fundraising help from the community.

As they say, the rest is history. Every piece of the school’s additions and history are centered around the community’s help and involvement. Until the campus had a cafeteria, the church across the street ran a lunchroom. When the school added a library in 1948, the community donated books. In 1964, long after racial segregation was overturned in schools, it was community members who raised funds to build four additional classrooms so that all children could attend Sewanee Elementary School. The Chattanooga Times even recorded this kindness on March 2, 1964, saying, “Sewanee is believed to be the only community in the nation to dig into its own pockets to provide facilities making total school desegregation possible.”

The community support doesn’t stop there either. In 1977, the Friday School program began, and community members still come to the school to share their passions. Whether it be at the edge of campus in the woods to learn more about ecology, experiencing folk music or even funding computers and part-time positions in art and music — community involvement is still at an all-time high for the now five-building campus, and it is at the helm of this year’s celebration.

“The school just has such a rich connection to the community,” Bruce said. “While it’s really important for our kids to learn all their academics, we also love being able to show them how they can be a part of this



*Clockwise from top:* Sewanee Elementary School student leaders and the staff gather outside the school. From left are, first row, Kaisen Dietz, Amelie Watson, Mia Casey, Violet Stefanut, Zeke Matson and Luke Winkler; middle row, Axton Ladd, Bella Barnes, Ellie Green, Suzy Camp and Charlotte Fischer; and back row, student advocate Kim Hasty, principal Allison Dietz and librarian Kathryn Bruce.

Students dismiss from school every day behind the wooden sign. A new sign will be revealed at the 100th celebration.

During the open house, fourth grader Mia Casey will share information on changes that happened at the school in the 1950s.

Frame Gallery Gifts & Art, a local custom frame shop and art gallery, donated the Stripes the Tiger statue in 2023.

*Opposite page:* The entrance to Sewanee Elementary School today isn't much different than it was in 1926.

community. As a librarian, I want them to learn about themselves and the world. When they know better — they do better.”

### The preparation

Bruce has been involved with education her entire career and has been the librarian at Sewanee Elementary School since 2012. For over two years now, she has been preparing diligently to mark this centennial milestone. Bruce has not only interviewed and received information from community members through a designated mailbox on campus to share school memories, but she has also dug through files, newspaper stories and old school records.

“We are so lucky to have the kind of community who kept as many records as ours did,” Bruce said. “The university archives is so well stocked. Previous parent organizations donated their minutes, and we have composition books that start at 1922 and go through the 1970s — all with information pertaining to how our school came to be. This has been a community effort and a big collaborative kind of experience.”

She immersed herself in this knowledge, all while engaging students throughout the entire process.

“All of our teachers are going out of their way to celebrate the 100th year, and we all should thank Mrs. Bruce because we wouldn’t know half of this information without her,” said fifth grader Kaisen Dietz.

Students have been at the center of community interviews and letters, have walked to key places in their school’s history and even met key figures who changed history. The information learned and gathered from the community is on display throughout the building for all students to read.

“Being able to be the principal here for the 100th year celebration is super special because of all the hard work Mrs. Bruce has done,” said Allison Dietz. “I am glad as a parent that my child, Kaisen, gets to be a part of this and carry on these stories. It takes a village to run a school and put on this sort of celebration, and Mrs. Bruce is a part of our village. Now we will have lots of good little citizens who will want to give back to their community like it has given to them, all because of this knowledge shared with them.”

### The party

All the knowledge gained will be on display at Sewanee Elementary

School’s 100th celebration on May 8 in Duck River Electric Membership Corporation’s service area. At the campus, with the original school building still in use, the community is invited to walk through the detailed history of how the school came to be, all shared by students.

“We are celebrating in a wax museum type style for the 100th anniversary,” said Amelie Watson, a fifth grader. “Tours will be given of the school at the open house, and each of us will be set up at different decade stations sharing what happened within those time frames and how the school has evolved. I will be sharing about the 1930s.”

Throughout the walking tour, there will also be name tags to recognize legacy members where the community will be able to find and learn about their family members who attended the school in the past. A new sign is going to be revealed at the celebration as well as a name for the story-book trail that goes down into the woods on the school’s campus. The event will wrap up with an assembly featuring speakers from the community reflecting on that idea of what Sewanee means to them, even after all this time.

“This has been such a neat experience learning and getting to share what we learned,” said fourth grader Luke Winkler. “What Sewanee means to me — it means that I have stories to tell my kids one day. I can share that I was here when my school turned 100, and that’s really cool!”

*“This celebration reminds us that we’re still a part of this, and we should be thankful for that,” said Bella Barnes, a fourth grader.*

## In their own words ...

*“Mrs. Bruce has spent so much time going through files, looking at the old blueprints and engaging with the community. I’m thankful she shared that with us, and we get to share that with you,” said Zeke Matson, a fourth grader.*

*“I’m grateful and thankful that our school is still here. There was a point in history where we almost didn’t have a school, and there was downfall. I’m so thankful we have a school in Sewanee,” said Mia Casey, a fourth grader.*

*“This does mean a lot to me, the fact that I can share this. The future Tiger News Network (the school’s student-run news team) might be interviewing me about this celebration. It’s cool that I get to be a part of this experience,” said Charlotte Fischer, a fourth grader.*

*“I’m grateful for all the community support that has gotten us through these 100 years. I’m just thankful to be a part of this,” said Suzy Camp, a fifth grader.*



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# Community Corner

– What our neighbors are up to –

## Find the Tennessee Flag

**W**e 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



March'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](http://tnmagazine.org/flag) or email [flag@tnmagazine.org](mailto:flag@tnmagazine.org). Entries must be postmarked or received via email

by Monday, June 1. Winners will be published in the July issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

### March flag spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the location of the flag, left, which was found in the teapot display case on page 30.

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

#### Louise Freeman

Union City, Gibson EMC

#### Persia Bishop

Ashland City, Cumberland EMC

#### Norman Lipe

Rogersville, Holston EC

## Artist's Palette Assignment for July

### 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 — July, 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, June 1.

### Include:

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

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

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

### Each entry needs its own SASE, please.

Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes.

### Attention, teachers:

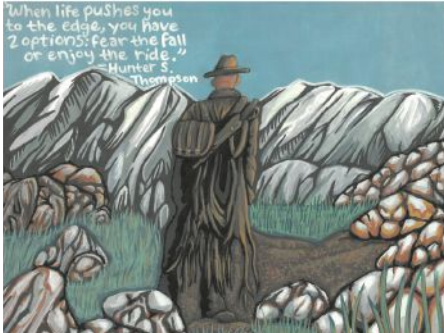
You may send multiple entries in one envelope along with one SASE with sufficient postage.

### Winners will be published in the July 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 May Winners

## 14-18 AGE GROUP WINNERS



**FIRST PLACE: Rihanna G. Ladd,**  
16, Appalachian EC



**SECOND PLACE: Ailley Slusher,**  
14, Tennessee Valley EC



**THIRD PLACE: Claire Nabors,**  
17, Upper Cumberland EMC

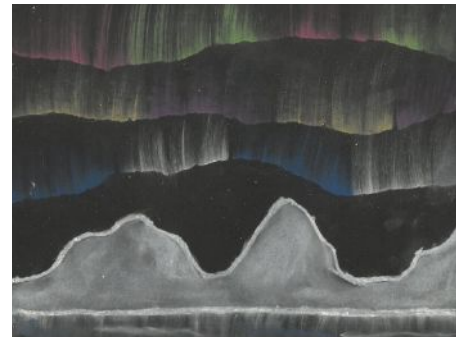
## 9-13 AGE GROUP WINNERS



**FIRST PLACE: Annabelle Simpson,**  
9, Cumberland EMC



**SECOND PLACE: Lily Burchfield,**  
12, Fort Loudoun EC



**THIRD PLACE: Anna Monahan,**  
11, Middle Tennessee Electric

## 8 AND YOUNGER AGE GROUP WINNERS




**FIRST PLACE: Noelle Snyder,**  
6, Cumberland EMC



**SECOND PLACE: Elyse Farley,**  
8, Caney Fork EC



**THIRD PLACE: Noelle Taber,**  
6, Caney Fork EC



Strawberry  
Panna Cotta

# Savor The Season

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

**S**trawberry season is here! It's tempting to buy entire flats of these red jewels to stash in freezer bags or jars to use long after the season has passed. But here's a life lesson: Eat them while they're fresh. They'll never taste better than when they've just been picked. Eat them plain, or work your way through these recipes during strawberry season. Don't save for tomorrow a portion of the strawberries you pick today!

## Icebox Strawberry Pie

*This is not your usual stir-and-fill pie but so much better!*

Yield: 8 servings

- 6 cups capped and coarsely chopped strawberries
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup cornstarch
- 1/3 cup cold water
- 1 scant tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 1/4 cups heavy whipping cream
- 1 9-inch graham cracker crust

Place the strawberries in a medium saucepan over medium

heat. Add the sugar and salt and stir well to combine. Bring to a gentle boil and cook for 4 minutes, stirring frequently.

Meanwhile, whisk together the cornstarch and cold water in a small bowl. Make sure the mixture is smooth. Add to the strawberry mixture and cook, stirring frequently, for another 4 minutes or until the mixture thickens. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter and vanilla. Set aside to cool to room temperature.

Place the cream in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat until

medium peaks form. Reduce the mixer speed to low and gently fold in the cooled strawberry mixture. Transfer to the pie crust and refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving cold.

## Strawberry Panna Cotta

Yield: 8 servings

- 2 cups cold milk
- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin
- 2 pints fresh strawberries, capped, hulled and sliced in wedges
- 1/3 cup + 2 tablespoons sugar, divided

- 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups heavy cream

Place the milk in a medium saucepan and sprinkle the gelatin evenly over the top. Allow to stand for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, reserve ½ cup of the strawberries for garnish and set aside. Place the remaining strawberries in a medium bowl and mash along with 2 tablespoons sugar. Cover and refrigerate for topping.

Add the remaining sugar along with the extract and salt to the milk mixture and place over low heat. Cook, stirring constantly, for 4 minutes or until the sugar and gelatin dissolve and the milk begins to steam.

Remove from the heat and stir in the cream, blending well. Evenly pour in each serving glass, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Chill at least 2 hours.

When ready to serve, top with the reserved mashed strawberries and garnish with the reserved strawberry wedges.

### Spring Strawberry Scones

*Make sure the butter, sour cream and whipping cream are all cold for the best results.*

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut in pieces
- 1 cup chopped strawberries
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¼ cup + 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream, divided
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, stir together the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, zest and salt. Using a pastry cutter or two

forks, cut the butter into the flour mixture until crumbly. Add the strawberries and toss to evenly coat. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the sour cream and ¼ cup of the whipping cream until smooth. Add to the flour mixture, stirring just until a dough forms. It will be crumbly.

Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and flatten. Fold the dough in half and repeat 3 or 4 times until the dough holds together. Shape into a round disk with a 1-inch thickness. Cut into 6 wedges and place on the baking sheet. Make sure the wedges are not touching and are at least ½ inch apart. Place in the freezer for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Remove the baking sheet from the freezer and brush the tops with the remaining tablespoon of whipping

cream. Bake 20-22 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.

Meanwhile, whisk together the powdered sugar and milk in a medium bowl until smooth. Drizzle on the scones and serve.

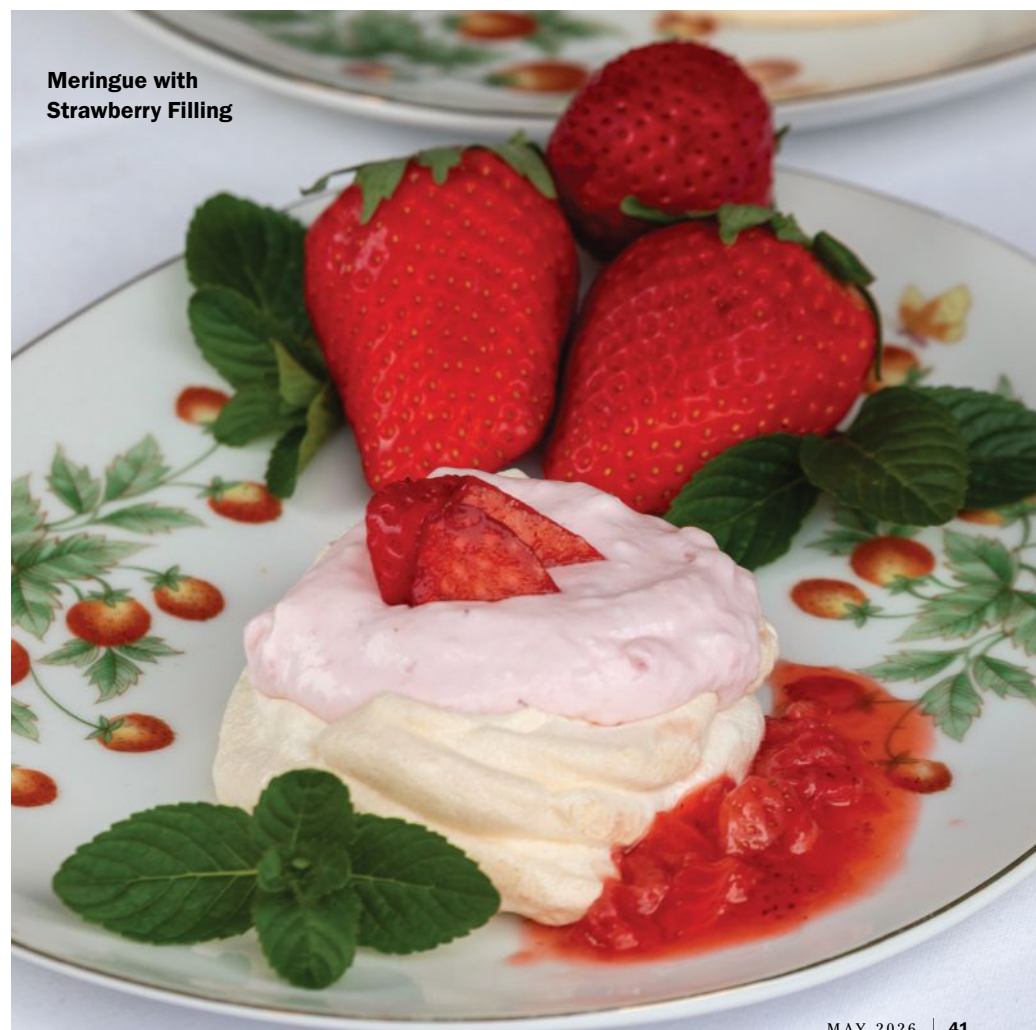
### Strawberry Filling

*Fantastic alone or in puff pastry, meringues or cream puffs. Also makes a great spread on angel food or pound cake.*

Yield: around 2 cups

- 1 cup chopped strawberries
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 6 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 6 tablespoons cream cheese, diced and at room temperature

Place the strawberries in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook 8 minutes, then mash with the back of a wooden spoon or a potato masher. Cook an additional 2 minutes. Remove



**Meringue with Strawberry Filling**

from the heat, cool and refrigerate until ready to use.

Place the cream, powdered sugar and extract in the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat 1 minute on low speed, then increase the mixer speed to medium-high and whip until soft peaks form, around 2 minutes. Add the cream cheese and beat another minute or until stiff peaks form. Gently fold in the chilled strawberries, blending well.

Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour and up to 1 day before using.

## Meringues

Use to hold strawberry filling.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

- 6 egg whites
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar
- 1¼ cups sugar

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line 2 rimless baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the egg whites and cream of tartar on high speed until soft peaks form. Gradually add the sugar 1 tablespoon at a time until the whites are stiff and glossy. Spoon the meringue into 10 or 12

mounds at least 4 inches apart on the prepared baking sheets. With the back of a spoon, shape into cups. Place in the oven and turn off the heat. Do not open the oven door! Let stand in the oven for 8 hours or overnight to harden. Fill with Strawberry Filling just before serving. Store any leftovers in a tightly covered airtight container.

## Easy Strawberry Sheet Cake

Yield: 10-12 servings

- 1 (18-ounce) package white cake mix
- 1 cup strawberry preserves
- 1 cup water
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 2 pints fresh strawberries, capped, hulled and halved

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 9-by-13-inch baking pan and set aside.

In the bowl on an electric mixer, combine the cake mix, preserves, water, oil and eggs. Beat at medium speed until thoroughly blended.

Transfer the batter to the prepared pan and bake 40-42 minutes or until

a pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool completely on a wire rack in the pan.

Meanwhile, place the cream and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat until soft peaks form. Spread over the cooled cake and top with the strawberries. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

## Fresh Strawberry Icing

Perfect for just a smear on sugar cookies.

Yield: 2 cups

- 1 cup capped and sliced strawberries
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice
- 1½ to 2 cups powdered sugar

Place the strawberries and lemon juice in a food processor and puree until smooth. Transfer to a mixing bowl and gradually add 1½ cups of powdered sugar, beating with a hand mixer. If necessary, add the remaining powdered sugar and beat until smooth. Use immediately.

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.

## Tips & Tricks

- Do not wash or cap strawberries until you are ready to use them.
- Use a colander when washing so the berries don't stand in water. Use a cool, gentle spray or mist.
- Always keep fresh berries refrigerated in the crisper drawer. To extend the shelf life, store them in a single layer.
- When picking your own, stay in the area or lane you are given by the producer. Bring a cooler for transporting them home.



## Ask Chef Tammy

*Harley asks, "How much will I have to use from a pint of fresh strawberries? I see varying amounts online."*

Harley, after the berries are capped, hulled and sliced, you will have 2 cups of fruit to use from a pint.

*Bobbie writes, "I would like to start making my own graham cracker crust. How many crackers do I need to have on hand for a cup of crumbs?"*

Bobbie, you will need 16 graham crackers to crush into crumbs for a cup.

Email your cooking questions to Tammy Algood:  
[talgood@tnelectric.org](mailto:talgood@tnelectric.org).

# Point of View

by Robin Conover



I love hearing and seeing the transition of a landscape from twilight to daybreak at sunrise. The peaceful silence of the forest is especially calming to me.

Just before the sunlight began to glow at the horizon on this spring day, I heard barred owls calling in the distance and saw deer beginning to stir and songbirds flitting through the air.

The air was crisp and clear but not cold. The cloudless sky and slight wind eliminated any chance for the interplay of clouds and fog that can be magical during the golden hour.

Since the sunrise on this particular day at Radnor Lake was proving to be unremarkable, I quickly moved on to find other subjects.

It seemed like everything began to wake within just a few minutes. I started to notice turtles surfacing, muskrat swimming, fish splashing the surface and great blue herons hunting in the shallows along the lake's edge.

I saw that the soft, warm morning light was going to be perfect for reflections. I was focused on the heron and had my camera settings dialed in as it began striking at small minnows. In the background, I kept hearing several geese honking alerts to each other, but I could not see them.

*“Nothing is more beautiful than the loveliness of the woods before sunrise.”*

— *George Washington Carver*

Soon, a pair flew into the cove where the heron was located and settled in to preen on a slightly submerged log. They were about 20 feet away from me. I had no chance to get a shot of them flying in as it happened very quickly.

In the distance, I could hear another pair heading my way. With only time to change my lens to auto

focus, two more geese came around the bend and flew directly toward me. I was able to get about 10 shots off as they skimmed close to the water before sliding in for a landing. Apparently it was a turf war between the two pairs who were sparring for a particular nest location.

If I'd had time, I would have increased my ISO enough to have allowed for a higher shutter speed. The shutter speed of 1/500 of a second was fast enough to capture the image, but a shutter speed of 1/1,500 would have yielded a sharper image.


I stayed for three more hours that morning, but this proved to be the shot of the day. The reflection and wing position with the wingtips just barely grazing the surface made for the perfect moment to witness.

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## **“Canada Goose at Sunrise”**

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, EF 200-400 mm f4 L IS USM 1.4 Ext at 560mm, ISO 800, f-5.6 at 1/500 second, Gitzo tripod



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