

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2023 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED ⚡ COMMUNITY DRIVEN

Saving Energy Saves You \$\$\$

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Tennessee CONNECTIONS

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Put the Chill in Your Energy Bill This Winter



The weather outside may be frightful, but your electric bill doesn't have to be.

When the air begins to chill, the heat gets cranked up. In many homes, extra warmth may come with the assistance of a space heater. Despite the warmth they provide, these heaters can be dangerous if not used properly. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, heating fires represented the second-leading cause of house fires in 2021 with an estimated 32,000 house fires reported, along with 190 deaths. Experts recommend those who use space heaters plug their devices directly into walls instead of using extension cords. The heaters should also be kept three feet away from all objects and turned off at bedtime or when no one is in the room.

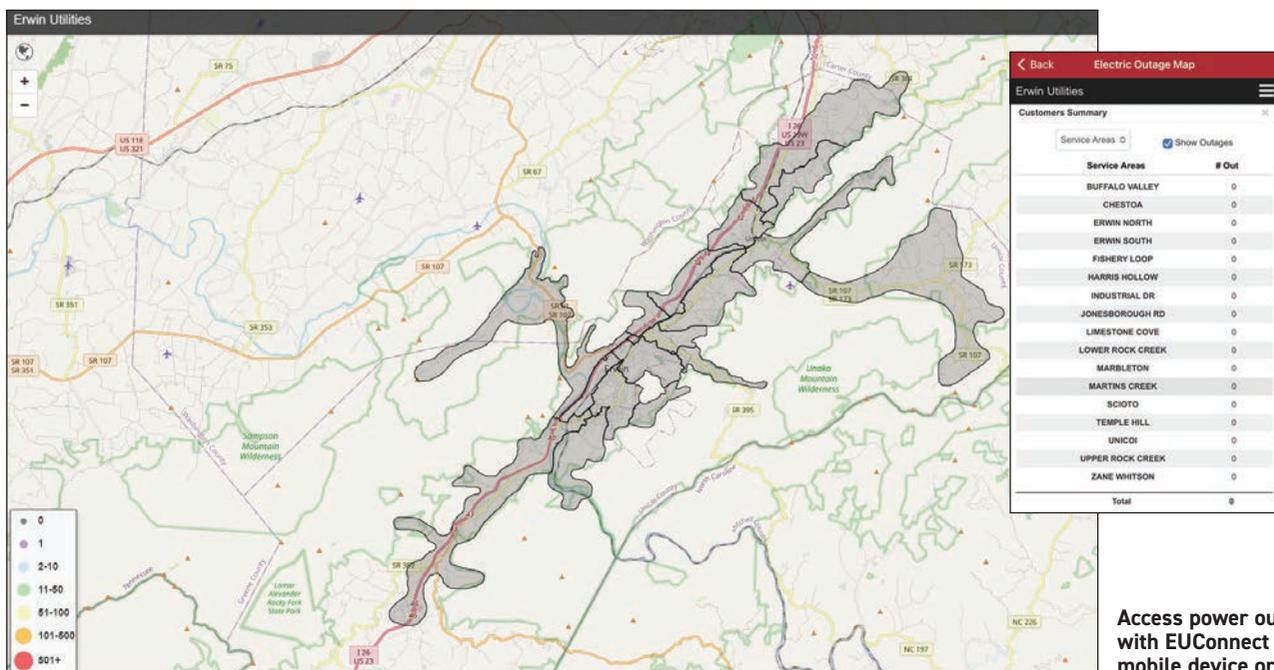
Space heaters can also greatly increase your utility bills. Using multiple heating devices for hours each day can rack up energy use and your bill. Some space heaters come with simple low, medium and high settings, while other models may have thermostats. Regardless of the model, space heaters affect energy consumption. Tracking the time you use a space heater and avoiding using it

to heat large rooms can help lessen the expense.

You may find your home's heating and cooling system can provide more comfort than a space heater. Your heat pump is typically two-to-three times more efficient than a space heater. Having your HVAC system inspected annually can help with efficiency and reliability.

Proper weatherization of your home can also help you prepare for colder months. Caulking and weatherstripping insulate windows and doors. Kits for weatherization are available through Tennessee Valley Authority EnergyRight's website, energyright.com. DIY tools and a gift card from The Home Depot are mailed to you upon completion of a TVA EnergyRight online assessment.

Eligible customers can make energy-efficient repairs and upgrades to their homes through the TVA Home Uplift Program.



Access power outage maps with EUConnect on your mobile device or computer.

Customers can check their eligibility by completing a short questionnaire on EnergyRight's website at energyright.com/residential/home-uplift. This program offers an average of \$10,000 in free home-energy upgrades, including appliances, electric water heaters and new or repaired HVAC units.

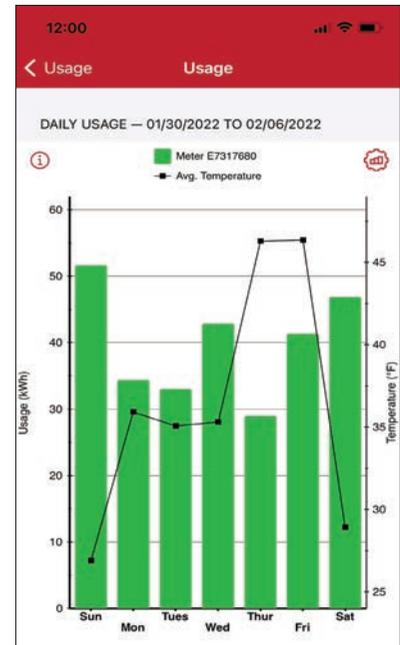
Erwin Utilities' customers can view their energy consumption by the hour using EUConnect, EU's free web portal and mobile app. The feature can be accessed by opening the portal, selecting the usage tab and clicking on the location you wish to view. Customers can view their water consumption in addition to their energy usage. Viewing usage allows customers to see when changes have occurred and can help detect any issues with homes, such as water leaks.

With a bustling winter chill in the air, EUConnect allows customers to pay their bills

anytime and anywhere. Customers can also report outages with the click of a button, view a power-outage map and sign up for automated power outage/restoration text messages. Customers can start using EUConnect by going to e-u.cc/euconnect or by searching "EUConnect" in their device's app store.

Utility bills can be unpredictable in winter months due to various factors, including extreme weather, heat source malfunctions and burst pipes. Regardless of the cause, resources are available to help customers in need of financial assistance. Local agencies that provide aid include the Neighborhood Service Center, Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency, the Salvation Army: Johnson City Corps, Care and Share, and Good Samaritan Ministries. ■

View a full breakdown of your energy and water consumption with EUConnect.



Preventing Frozen Pipes

Staying prepared before, during and after the cold.



BEFORE THE COLD

- Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses and faucets.
- Insulate pipes in unheated spaces.

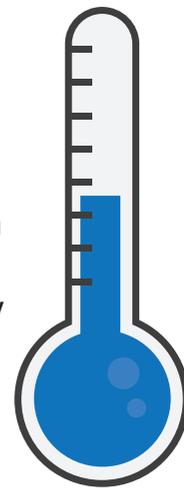
WHEN TEMPERATURES DROP BELOW FREEZING

- Open cabinet doors to allow warm air to reach pipes.
- Run a small trickle of water when temperatures reach the low teens.
- Keep basement and garage windows and doors tightly shut.



IF YOUR PIPES FREEZE

- Use a hair dryer or heat gun to thaw.
- If your meter is frozen, contact Erwin Utilities.
- NEVER use an open flame.



Dancing COLORS & Rhythmic BEATS

Unveiling the rich tapestry of Tennessee's Native American culture

In the heart of Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage, a vibrant powwow brought the park to life in late October. Native dancers, representing tribes across the United States, converged for the 42nd Annual Indian Education Tennessee Pow Wow to showcase their talents in detailed, colorful regalia, a testament to their rich heritage.

Meanwhile, vendors offered a feast for the senses, selling food, traditional wares and art that embodied skills passed down through generations. Beyond the festivities, this powwow is crucial in educating attendees about the significance of Native American culture in Tennessee and the broader United States.

What sets this celebration apart is its inclusivity, inviting

Native American tribes from all corners of the nation to participate. Attendees are treated to a firsthand experience of diverse tribal heritages, fostering a sense of unity.

Storytelling sessions, teepee tours and fire-starting demonstrations further enrich the experience. This event, planned by the Native American Indian Association of Tennessee, has grown to one of the largest powwows east of the Mississippi. ■

Pow Wows are one of the best ways to connect with ancestral heritage and celebrate Native American culture. To find out when events are near you, visit calendar.powwows.com. The 43rd Annual Indian Education Tennessee Pow Wow is October 18-20, 2024.



LEFT: The next generation learns the ways of their ancestors. **RIGHT:** The Brown family established a production company in 2020, Touch the Earth Dancers, to present authentic historical teachings to people today. They travel to powwows, schools, museums and historical events, demonstrating many Native dancing styles and explaining their meanings and purposes. PHOTOS BY DEBBIE NEELY



Native people's clothing often includes vibrant colors.

Preserving Cherokee Culture at Red Clay

By Cheré Coen

What Erin Medley learned in school about the Cherokee came from two paragraphs in a social studies book. It took a job at Red Clay State Historic Park in Cleveland to rectify that lack of understanding about her hometown's Native American history.

"That is sad, honestly," she says. "I didn't learn it until I came here."

Erin works as an interpretive ranger at Red Clay, the last location of the Cherokee national government before the 1838 Indian Removal Act by the U.S. Military, otherwise known as the Trail of Tears.

The Cherokee left their capital in nearby New Echota, Georgia, to settle in southern Tennessee after the Georgia Legislature passed laws restricting their political sovereignty in the 1820s due to

the discovery of gold in the north Georgia mountains. Facing the loss of their lands, the tribe moved north to just above the Georgia-Tennessee state line in 1832.

With its natural spring, Red Clay appealed to the tribe. Members would call meetings bringing together thousands from their tribe, and those gatherings sometimes lasted weeks or months. The spring they named Council Spring or Blue Hole for its unique coloring provided adequate sustenance for the members and was considered sacred. The clear water rises through limestone into a deep pool.

"Red Clay is to the Cherokee like Washington, D.C., is to us," Erin explains. "It was their capital, but it was their capital in exile. You needed a good water source. It's the most culturally

significant aspect at Red Clay and, arguably, at Tennessee State Parks."

The Cherokee held 11 General Council meetings at the site until 1837. One meeting discussed whether to peacefully resist the removal of the tribe by the U.S. government or accept the relocation. One of the Cherokee's leaders, Principal Chief John Ross, argued to refuse the relocation.

"John Ross wanted to stay and fight," Erin says. "Others said, 'If we stay here, there will be more bloodshed.' They knew they needed to move west. They didn't want to, but they knew they needed to save their people."

The Cherokee at Red Clay learned they had lost their lands and would be moved west. Meanwhile, Ross moved his followers into hiding in North Carolina. Ross' followers gave up their



ABOVE: The Eternal Flame of the Cherokee Nation, a memorial to the Cherokees who suffered and died during the removal, was placed on the site April 6, 1984, at an event attended by both the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. This was the first time the two tribes were reunited since the removal.

LEFT: The park is considered sacred to the Cherokees, and includes Blue Hole Spring, a large hydrological spring. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RED CLAY STATE HISTORIC PARK



Replicas of a Cherokee farmstead, sleeping huts, blacksmith shop and the council house are found on the council grounds. PHOTO BY CHERÉ COEN

Cherokee citizenship, and many assimilated into European society. The government allowed them to remain in North Carolina, and they are now known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Indian Removal Act

The Cherokee were one of several tribes of the Southeast forced to move west when Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830.

The Choctaws, Muscogee Creeks, Seminoles and Chickasaws either moved or were forcibly moved to present-day Oklahoma. The forced relocation of the Cherokee who didn't align with Ross began in 1838 in several places throughout Tennessee, including Red Clay. This forced migration of 16,000 Cherokee, that caused the loss of a thousand lives, is now known as the Trail of Tears.

Tennessee is home to several sites along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, including Red Clay, Charleston and Chattanooga.

Maintaining Their Culture

Those Cherokee who were forced out of Red Clay in the Trail of Tears took coals in clay pots from their council fire to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

"They rekindled that council fire, and

it still burns today," Erin says.

The two bands of the tribe evolved separately—the Oklahoma branch is known as the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians—but in the 1950s, the Eastern Band traveled to Oklahoma to retrieve a hot coal from the council fire. They carried it back to North Carolina.

"They kept that fire burning all the way," Erin says. "They used the coal to ignite their council fire, then seven tribal members lit a torch, like the Olympic torch, and ran to Red Clay, where they lit another."

It marked the first time the two bands reunited. The Eternal Flame of the Cherokee Indians memorial, placed on the site in 1984 at an event with both tribes, burns continuously today.

Returning Home

Erin began working for the state parks system in 1999 as a seasonal interpretive ranger. She was hired full time in 2002 and returned to her hometown of Cleveland in 2006 to work at Red Clay. She has learned quite a bit from visitors.

"Over the 17 years at Red Clay, I've met a lot of Cherokee people and learned a lot," she says.

The park's James F. Corn Interpretive Center plays an 18-minute video

explaining the park's history and significance to the Cherokee people of the 19th century, and features exhibits on Cherokee art, history and culture. The park hosts programming year-round, including special events in summer.

As park manager, Erin's goal is to ensure all materials, exhibits and programming are accurate and respectful to the Native American history and culture. She consistently works with Cherokee members to provide events in their honor, such as the Cherokee Cultural Celebration in

August and the Christmas by Candlelight tour that focuses on Cherokee winter traditions and European interactions with the tribe.

"Every program we do has to connect in some way with the Cherokee," she says. "That's nonnegotiable."

Erin says she has come a long way since learning about the Cherokee from two paragraphs.

"What I'm most proud of as a park manager is meeting the Cherokee people and making these partnerships," she says. ■

To learn more, visit:

Museum Center at Five Points, Cleveland
www.museumcenter.org

Hiwassee River Heritage Center, Charleston
www.hiwasseeheritage.com

Cherokee Removal Memorial Park, Blythe Ferry
www.nps.gov/places/cherokee-removal-memorial-park-at-historic-blythe-ferry.htm

The Sequoyah Birthplace Museum, Vonore
sequoyahmuseum.org

Ross's Landing and Audubon Acres, Chattanooga
www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm

Trail of Tears on the Natchez Trace
www.nps.gov/natr/index.htm

Browns Ferry Tavern, Chattanooga
www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm

John Martin House and Hair Conrad Cabin, Cleveland
www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm

Moderate winter temperature 45°
Temperature inside the home 70°
Temperature difference 25°



Changing outside temperatures causes your home's heating system to work harder to maintain a constant temperature indoors. For example, on a moderate day, there may be a 25-degree difference in temperature inside and outside your home. On extreme weather days, the temperature difference may be 45 degrees or more. ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Extreme Weather Mythbusters

The truth about winter energy efficiency and keeping electric bills in check

By Pam Spettel

After periods of extremely cold or hot weather, one of the most common questions utilities receive is, "Why was my bill so high?"

Here are some straightforward answers to how extreme weather affects residential energy use and drives higher electric bills, and what you can do to lower your bill.

Myth No. 1: Weather does not affect my electric bill.

Fact: The larger the difference between the temperature of the air outside and the temperature of the air inside, the more energy must be used to heat or cool the air. Even if you don't adjust the setting on your thermostat, changing outside temperatures mean your home's HVAC system must work harder to maintain a constant temperature indoors.

Myth No. 2: My bill should be the same as last month/year if I didn't adjust my thermostat.

Fact: When temperatures dip, running the heat for long periods of time can result in a significantly higher bill. The larger the difference between the temperature of the air outside and the temperature of the air inside, the more energy must be used to heat your home.

Myth No. 3: I can lower my bill using space heaters.

Fact: Most space heaters consume approximately 1,500 watts of electricity or more. A 1,500-watt space heater used for 12 hours a day for a month will add an extra \$50 dollars to your bill—for each space heater!

Myth No. 4: Turning off the upstairs HVAC unit will save money.

Fact: If you have two HVAC units and the upstairs unit is turned

Extreme winter temperature 25°
 Temperature inside the home 70°
 Temperature difference 45°



off, then the downstairs unit works even harder to supply heat for the entire home. As you heat the downstairs, that heat will rise upstairs. If there is a major temperature difference between upstairs and downstairs, your HVAC system will work twice as hard.

You can prevent your downstairs unit from overuse by turning on the upstairs unit and setting it a few degrees cooler than the downstairs one. If no one is upstairs, it does not need to be as warm as the main living area. Keep it cooler but not off. It takes more energy to reheat an area than to keep it at a lower temperature.

Myth No. 5: Closing vents and doors in unused rooms saves energy.

Fact: Keeping a vent closed prevents the warm air from going into a room, and this can negatively impact how your home circulates warm air. Closing off vents in unused rooms makes cold areas, and it prevents a consistent temperature in the home. Also, it is best to leave interior doors open when possible as this also aids in air circulation inside the home.

Myth No. 6: I can save on my electric bill by heating with my oven.

Fact: Running an electric oven costs even more than running a small space heater. The longer an oven is on—especially unattended—the greater the chance of an electrical malfunction leading to a fire. Ovens are designed to heat the small, internal area where your food is cooked, not an entire room in your home. ■



Tips to Lower Your Electric Bill in Extreme Weather

- 1: Being smart about your thermostat settings can make a difference to your energy consumption. Reduce your home's thermostat setting to 68 degrees or lower during winter and 78 degrees during summer to use less energy and reduce your bills.
- 2: Replace your thermostat with a programmable one, and set it to a comfortable low temperature, gradually cooling down at bedtime and gradually warming in the morning.
- 3: Using space heaters is costly. Make sure the extra comfort is something you are willing to pay for.
- 4: Keep cold air out and warm air in. Seal drafty windows and doors and use draft protector snakes or rolled up towels to block drafts from your exterior doorways.
- 5: Replace HVAC filters as recommended by the manufacturer. Clogged and dirty air filters require HVAC systems to work harder and use more energy.
- 6: Make sure your water heater is in good working order. Flush the tank to remove mineral sediments that build up on the heating elements to increase its efficiency. Add a layer of insulation to your water heater and pipes to prevent heat from escaping.

Savory Sweet

By Anne Braly

The subject of sweet potatoes may sound simple, but it's a topic that evokes strong feelings, nonetheless. Two camps seem to divide fans of the starchy root vegetable: those who prefer sweet potatoes made even sweeter with maple syrup or brown sugar and those who have a taste for warm, savory sweet potatoes that are less sweet when onions and peppers are part of the plan.

Sweet potato casseroles with a crown of marshmallows will grace most Southern tables this holiday season. It's always nice to offer something different, though, because—it's hard to believe—not everyone appreciates Grandma's sweet potato casserole. Sweet potatoes get their name for a reason: They're sweet enough on their own and don't necessarily need any sweet additions to bring out their flavor.

CRISPY PARMESAN SWEET POTATOES

- 3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced into small cubes
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Parsley, for optional garnish

Heat the oven to 400 F. Lightly coat a large baking pan with nonstick cooking spray, or line with parchment paper. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine the olive oil, Parmesan, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Add diced potatoes, and toss to coat.

Spread potatoes in an even layer on the prepared pan. Bake for 32-35 minutes, or until lightly browned and crispy. Remove from the oven and let cool for 5 minutes.

Sprinkle with extra Parmesan and parsley, if desired.



SWEET POTATO GRAVY

Don't let your turkey drippings go to waste. Use this gravy just like any other—on turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing or any other dishes that demand a spoonful or two.

- 1-2 baked sweet potatoes (baked alongside the turkey, preferably)
- 2 cups turkey drippings, fat removed
- Chicken broth, as needed
- Rosemary, thyme or sage, as needed
- Sherry, optional

Mash the potatoes. Stir them into the turkey drippings, a little bit at a time, using a stick blender to mix until smooth. Add chicken broth or more mashed sweet potatoes to reach the right consistency, then taste for seasonings. Add a little rosemary, thyme or sage and a splash of sherry, if desired.



weet Potatoes

SWEET POTATO PEANUT SOUP

This makes a nice vegetarian meal with a salad or serves as a starter to any meal.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger root
- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1½ teaspoons ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 pinch ground cloves
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1½ pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 4½ cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup chopped, unsalted dry-roasted peanuts
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper
- 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- Optional garnishes: chopped fresh cilantro and chopped roasted peanuts

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion for 10 minutes, until lightly browned. Mix in the garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander, cinnamon and cloves. Stir in the tomatoes, sweet potatoes and carrot. Continue to cook and stir for about 5 minutes.

Pour water into the saucepan and season the mixture with salt. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer for 30 minutes.

Remove the soup mixture from heat. In a food processor or blender, blend the soup and peanuts until almost smooth. Season with cayenne pepper. Return to the saucepan. Whisk in the peanut butter, and cook until heated through. Serve warm topped with chopped peanuts and fresh cilantro.



SWEET POTATO CORNBREAD MUFFINS

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 cup yellow cornmeal | ½ cup granulated sugar |
| 1 cup all-purpose flour | ½ cup sweet potato puree (see note) |
| 1 tablespoon baking powder | 3 tablespoons honey |
| 1 teaspoon salt | ½ cup milk |
| ½ teaspoon cinnamon | 2 large eggs |
| ½ teaspoon nutmeg | |
| ½ cup unsalted butter | |

Heat oven to 375 F. Grease a 12-cup muffin tin with butter or oil, or use cupcake liners.

Combine cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix well, and set aside.

In a large pot over medium heat, brown the butter. Let butter melt, untouched. Once it starts to simmer with little brown flecks at the bottom, whisk constantly until butter is lightly golden and fragrant. This adds extra flavor to the muffins.

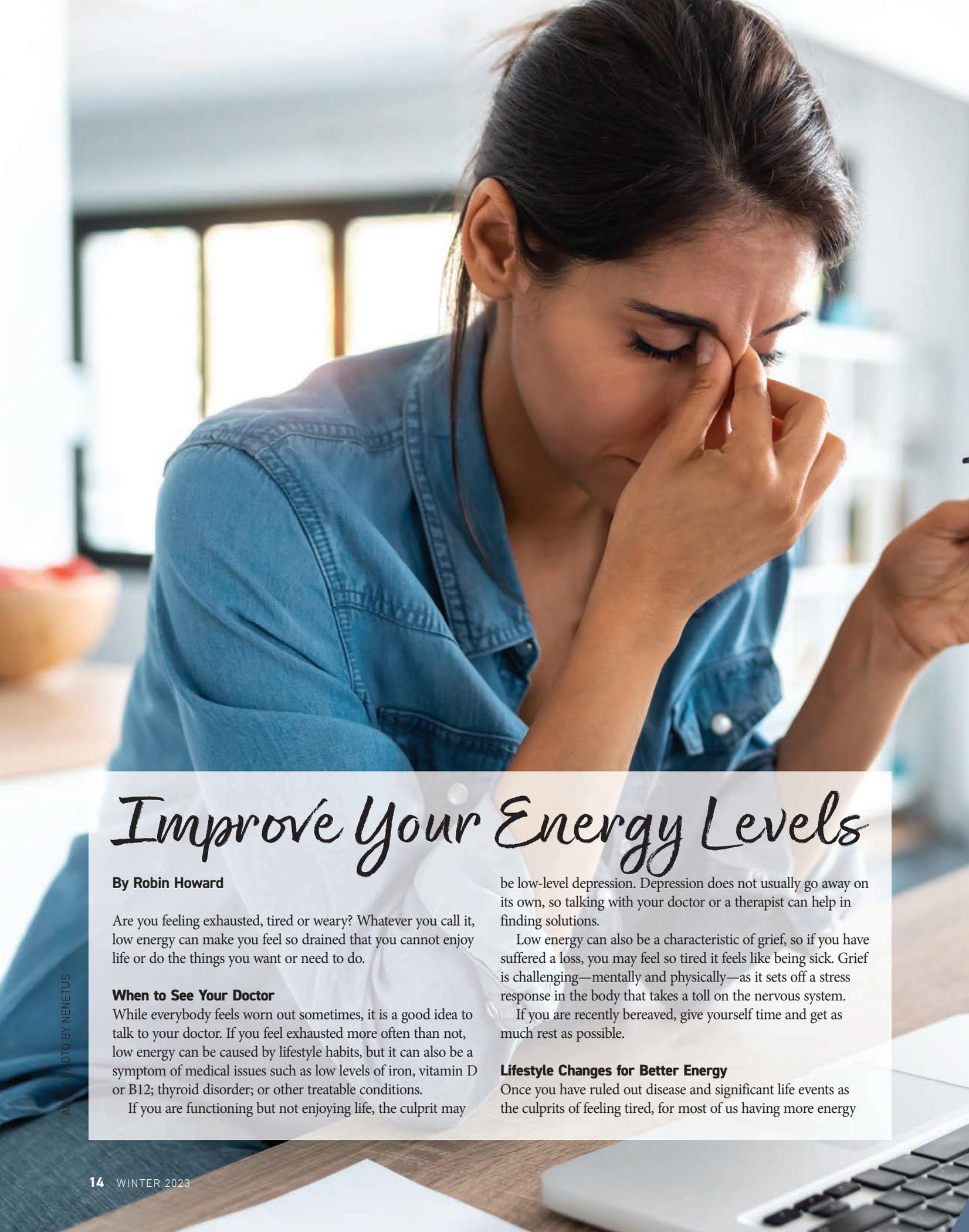
Remove from heat, and stir in sugar. Whisk until fully incorporated.

Thoroughly whisk in sweet potato, milk and honey. By now, the mixture should have cooled. If it is still hot, allow it to cool for a few more minutes before whisking in eggs.

Once the eggs are incorporated into the batter, add cornmeal-flour mixture. Whisk until just a few lumps remain.

Bake for 15-18 minutes, until muffins are golden and cooked through. Insert a toothpick in the center to test for doneness. If it comes out clean, the muffins are ready. Cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then place on a wire cooling rack to finish cooling.

NOTE: To make sweet potato puree, peel and dice one sweet potato. Boil or steam the potato until it is fork tender. Transfer to a food processor or blender, and blend until smooth.



Improve Your Energy Levels

By Robin Howard

Are you feeling exhausted, tired or weary? Whatever you call it, low energy can make you feel so drained that you cannot enjoy life or do the things you want or need to do.

When to See Your Doctor

While everybody feels worn out sometimes, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor. If you feel exhausted more often than not, low energy can be caused by lifestyle habits, but it can also be a symptom of medical issues such as low levels of iron, vitamin D or B12; thyroid disorder; or other treatable conditions.

If you are functioning but not enjoying life, the culprit may

be low-level depression. Depression does not usually go away on its own, so talking with your doctor or a therapist can help in finding solutions.

Low energy can also be a characteristic of grief, so if you have suffered a loss, you may feel so tired it feels like being sick. Grief is challenging—mentally and physically—as it sets off a stress response in the body that takes a toll on the nervous system.

If you are recently bereaved, give yourself time and get as much rest as possible.

Lifestyle Changes for Better Energy

Once you have ruled out disease and significant life events as the culprits of feeling tired, for most of us having more energy

can be as simple as making a few lifestyle changes.

Eating for energy.

The body's primary energy source is food; working toward a diet of whole, unprocessed foods is a first step. Instead of eating two to three large meals daily, try eating a small meal or snack every three or four hours.

Make sure you are eating a balance of complex carbohydrates, such as brown rice, oats, beans and quinoa; lean proteins; and healthy fats.

Complex carbs. The body burns complex carbohydrates slower, which means grains such as quinoa and brown rice provide a steady energy supply and stabilize blood sugar.

Lean protein. Protein helps keep your energy levels up, but try to avoid red meat as it takes more energy to digest. Reliable sources of protein include nuts, seeds and beans.

Unsaturated fat. Fat gets a bad reputation, but you need fat to feel good. Avoid foods with saturated fats, such as animal products, dairy, desserts and fried food. Instead, go for meals and snacks that contain olive oil and avocado.

Water. Fatigue is the first sign you may be dehydrated, so drink plenty of water if you feel like you are wilting.

Skip the sugar. Processed food means food not in its natural form. Avoid foods with ingredients you cannot pronounce, energy bars and drinks, and food with added sugar.

Supplements. People may not need supplements if they eat a healthy, balanced diet, but a daily B12 vitamin can help your body convert food to energy and is important for people who are eating plant-based, vegetarian or vegan.

Take a hike. Exercise is the last thing you want to do when tired. However, making exercise a daily habit can boost your energy. Even a short walk can be refreshing. Slowly increase your time and distance until you are exercising 30 minutes to an hour daily. Exercise can also help you lose weight, which can fatigue the body by stressing the heart.

Come up for air. Being a new parent, caregiver or enduring a challenging passage in life can cause daily exhaustion. We cannot avoid some difficult phases in life, but it is important to ask for help or take a vacation so you can occasionally restore your physical and mental batteries.

Review your medications. Common medications for high blood pressure and allergies can have energy-draining side effects. Check your medication labels for side effects, and talk to your doctor about alternatives.

Get more zzzzz. It seems evident that the antidote to tiredness is sleep, but it is hard to know exactly how long or how well we sleep. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, turn off your screens an hour before bed and avoid caffeine four hours before bed (or all together).

If you snore or regularly wake up gasping for breath, you may have sleep apnea, which can cause the brain to wake up repeatedly. If anyone tells you that you snore or gasp in your sleep, talk to your doctor.

Quit caffeine. For the tired among us, caffeine can feel like a life raft. However, a morning coffee or soda may cause tiredness all day. Try cutting back on caffeine over two to three weeks, then go for a month without it to see if it is causing fatigue.

Skip the nightcap. Alcohol can make you feel relaxed and sleepy, but several hours after your last drink, it raises epinephrine levels—a stress hormone that wakes the body and makes the heart beat faster. Alcohol reduces the amount of REM sleep you get, causing you to feel tired the next day.

If you drink alcohol, stick to one serving and drink it at least four hours before bedtime.

Get support. Dealing with stress is hard work, and chronic stress can zap your energy day after day. Try de-stressing with a regular yoga class, a meditation app, talking with a friend or taking a long walk outside.

Feeling tired all the time is not normal. If fatigue is severe and unexplained, talk to a doctor. Otherwise, experiment with lifestyle changes to see if energy levels can naturally improve. ■

TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS

PLANNER

Holiday lights twinkle, and special events, such as caroling and visits with Santa, abound. Grab a cup of hot cocoa and be inspired to celebrate the warmth of the season in Tennessee.



PHOTO COURTESY OF
ORPHEUM THEATRE GROUP

MEMPHIS

December 19

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical

The beloved TV classic "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" soars off the screen and onto the Orpheum stage this holiday season. Come see all of your favorite characters from the special, including Santa and Mrs. Claus, Hermey the Elf, the Abominable Snow Monster, Clarice, Yukon Cornelius and, of course, Rudolph. This adventure teaches us that what makes you different can be what makes you special. Don't miss this wonderful holiday tradition that speaks to the misfit in all of us.

www.orpheum-memphis.com

CHATTANOOGA

December 8-10, 15-17, 19-23

North Pole Limited

North Pole Limited offers an unforgettable experience that will create cherished memories for the whole family. From the moment you step aboard the train until the final farewell, every aspect of this enchanting journey is designed to immerse you in the magic of the holiday season. It's a perfect opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones and share in the joy and wonder of Christmas.

www.tvrail.com

BELL BUCKLE

December 9 and 16

Old Fashioned Christmas

Enjoy sleigh rides with Santa, carolers, a s'mores pit and the look and feel of an Old Fashioned Christmas from 1 to 4 p.m.

[bellbucklechamber.com/
old-fashioned-christmas](http://bellbucklechamber.com/old-fashioned-christmas)

CLARKSVILLE

December 21

Live Ice Sculpting and Movie Night

Grab your popcorn and jingle all the way to our screening of Tim Allen's classic holiday movie, "The Santa Clause." But wait, there's ice-solutely more. Watch our live ice sculptor carve a Santa Claus during the film for all to enjoy. Festivities start at 6 p.m.

Downtowncommons.org

NASHVILLE

January 6

Monster Jam

Experience full-throttle family fun at Monster Jam, where the world's best drivers and their 12,000-pound monster trucks tear up the dirt in wide-open competitions of speed and skill. You will be on the edge of your seat watching your favorites like the legendary Grave Digger, mighty Megalodon and more show off crazy skills, massive stunts and all-out racing at Bridgestone Arena.

www.bridgestonearena.com

KINGSPORT

January 13

Winter Garden Seminar

The 34th Annual Winter Garden Seminar will focus on becoming a backyard ecologist: create your personal pollinator and wildlife oasis. Join this highly interactive workshop where wildlife biologist and educator Shannon Trimboli will guide you through turning your ideas into reality. Register online and meet at the Warriors' Path State Park recreation building from 10 a.m. to noon.

tnstateparks.com/events

TIPTONVILLE

February 2-4

Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

Every winter, hundreds of eagles call the lake home in a sight not to be missed. This family-friendly festival features eagle tours and interpretive programs. Join experienced park naturalists daily for two-hour bald eagle and waterfowl bus or van tours and see eagles perching, flying, soaring and snatching fish from the lake. Telescopes for viewing and

For a complete list of what's happening in Tennessee, visit tnvacation.com/calendar.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SKYPARK



GATLINBURG

December 31

NYE Lights of Wonder

Ring in the new year at the Gatlinburg SkyPark. Gatlinburg's fireworks display will come from the top of the Gatlinburg Space Needle this New Year's Eve. To get the best, and unique, view of the fireworks in (and above) town, get your VIP "NYE Lights of Wonder" tickets for an exclusive fireworks viewing on top of the SkyPark's mountain and SkyBridge. From the SkyBridge, you will view the fireworks from 500 feet above Gatlinburg and roughly 100 feet above the Space Needle's fireworks launchpad. View the fireworks and come back to visit the SkyPark as many times as you would like January 1.

www.gatlinburgskypark.com

information about the natural and cultural history of the wildlife and area are provided. Reservations are required for the tours.

reelfoottourism.com/reelfootlake

GREENEVILLE

February 4

Canine Stars

Featured on Animal Planet, ESPN, Travel Channel, "America's Got Talent" and Nickelodeon's "Unleashed," this high-energy stunt dog show at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center can't be missed. Rescued shelter dogs of multiple breeds and mixes perform incredible stunts, such as dock diving, freestyle Frisbee disc, flyball racing, high jumping and dog agility, all led by their attentive and skilled trainers.

www.npacgreenville.com

BYRDSTOWN

February 10

6th Annual Victorian Galentine's Day

Galentine's Day is the best day of the year—when

ladies celebrate ladies. Bring your best girls for a day of yoga, brunch and Victorian-themed crafts. Join the ladies of Cordell Hull Birthplace State Park for a day of fun and friendship. The day starts with a morning yoga practice taught by Meg Guy. Afterward, the small group will enjoy a catered brunch. The afternoon is spent crafting the Victorian way, creating watercolor Valentine's cards, needle felting and more with Sue Duncan. Space is limited.

www.tnstateparks.com/events

GALLATIN

February 24

Maker Market & Craft Fair

Bledsoe Creek Maker Market and Craft Fair offers a healthy dose of invention—a family-friendly gathering of creativity and ingenuity. Bundle up and bring friends and family to see what your neighbors create and support their efforts by buying unique items. When entering Bledsoe Creek State Park, please follow the signs to event parking.

tnstateparks.com/events

Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share a family-friendly event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Please visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents to submit the details. Thank you.



PHOTO BY MAIKE SCHULZ

MARYVILLE

January 20

Bindlestiff Family Circus

Celebrating two decades of keeping American traditional circus alive, the legendary Bindlestiff Family Cirkus brings its diverse roster of the world's finest circus, sideshow, vaudeville, and variety talent to the Clayton Center for the Arts. Bindlestiff Family Circus harkens back to the heyday of the traditional American circus, touring the country by caravan while offering its own artistic twist. It's earthy, gritty and celebrates the sideshow's odd novelty acts in an engaging and participatory way that you don't find in other types of circuses.

claytonartscenter.com

ADVENTURE AWAITS

Walk through history in Memphis at the

National Civil Rights Museum



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO
BY CHAD ROBERTSON

What Is It?

The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis is home to great exhibits and collections—and hosts speakers and events—highlighting lessons of progress and change.

Museum History

The museum is housed in the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1969. The museum was established in 1991. Exhibits highlight the Atlantic slave trade, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights Movement and more.

Honoring the Movement

The museum is dedicated to all who took part in the American Civil Rights Movement. The exterior of the Lorraine building remains identical to how it looked when King was murdered. Inside, permanent exhibits cover topics such as student sit-ins and the Montgomery bus boycotts, as well as King's final hours in Memphis.

Extra Learning

Walking the exhibits isn't the only way to learn. The National Civil Rights Museum has many educational resources. It offers teacher workshops to equip teachers with how to cover the Civil Rights Movement. The museum also has lesson plans and online learning activities.

More Info

The museum is open daily, except Tuesdays, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visitors are required to buy tickets, although admission is free for military or museum members and children younger than 4 years old. To plan your trip, call 901-521-9699 or visit civilrightsmuseum.org.



Tree and Shrub Pruning Tips

Does the word pruning give you anxiety? Does the thought of trimming your beautiful plants give you chills? Don't worry, you are not alone.

One of the more intimidating home gardening tasks is pruning. While not for the faint of heart, a properly planned pruning session can lead to improved plant health, increased vigor and better overall form.

The key to success is pruning your plants at the right time and using sound cultural methods. Not only will it build your confidence, but it will ensure your plants look great for years to come.

When to Prune

Timing is an important consideration before you start pruning. Generally, trees and evergreen shrubs should be pruned in the late winter or early spring before they begin to sprout.

Flowering shrubs, on the other hand, are pruned based on when they bloom. If your shrub blooms in the spring, or before July 1, prune it immediately after flowering. If your shrub blooms in the summer, or after July 1, it should be pruned in late winter. A plant pruned out of season can become stressed and need months, or even years, to recover.

Pruning Techniques

Once you have ensured your plant is suited for winter pruning, it is time to start. The first thing you should focus on is the removal of dead, broken or diseased limbs. Then, work on removing limbs rubbing together or lying on one another. Lastly, address branches that need to be reduced or removed to help maintain a natural form.

Regardless of which step you are on, it is important to make clean and proper pruning cuts. If you are shortening a branch, make your cut just above a bud to allow proper regrowth. If you remove an entire limb, cut at the base of the limb, just outside the swollen branch collar.

In some cases, your plant may even need renewal pruning,

which is required when a plant becomes overgrown or leggy. A renewal pruning is accomplished by cutting the entire plant to within a few inches of the ground. The plant then sends new growth up from the established root system, which can then be managed to maintain its proper form.

Tree Topping (Don't Do It)

Unfortunately, a common practice across the state is tree topping, normally done to reduce a tree's height. Topping a tree is detrimental to its health, as it leaves large, open wounds that rarely heal and can drastically shorten the lifespan of your tree.

Topping also triggers the growth of waterspouts, which typically lead to a thick and unnatural canopy, detracting from the tree's appearance. If a tree is too large for its surroundings, it is better to remove and replace it than to have it topped. Remember, right plant, right place.

Safety

The fresh scar on my finger attests that safety is very important when working in your landscape. Be sure to wear gloves, eye protection and a long-sleeve shirt to help prevent cuts and scrapes. If you use gas-powered pruning tools, ear protection and chainsaw chaps are a must.

It is also important to check your surroundings and have situational awareness. Always check twice before you cut to ensure no part of your body, powerlines or anything else is in the path of your pruner (or falling branches). ■



For more detailed information, refer to UT Extension publication, PB1619- Best Management Practices for Pruning Landscape Trees, Shrubs and Ground Covers or contact your local Extension agent.

Rylan Thompson is a Tennessee State University Agriculture and Natural Resources/4-H Extension agent in Knox County. He specializes in residential/consumer horticulture and 4-H and is the Knox County Master Gardener coordinator.

Deck the Halls

with Holiday Light Safety

A chill in the air, a cup of hot cocoa in your hand, the sweet sounds of holiday music in the background and, of course, twinkling lights making the night sparkle. Welcoming in the holiday season is a special tradition for families across the globe, but how did we get here? And how can we be merry and safe?

The history of decorative lights during the holiday season dates to the 17th Century. Germans used candles to light their Christmas trees and later brought the tradition with them to the United States.

The first strand of electric lights was created in 1880 by Thomas Edison. Two years later, Edward H. Johnson, an associate of Edison's, placed hand-wired light strands on his Christmas tree. On December 22, 1882, Johnson wound 80 red, white and blue lights on a revolving conifer tree in his New York home. A Detroit newspaper published the news, and Johnson's notoriety grew. He became known as the "Father of Christmas lights."

By 1895, the use of Christmas lights spread to the White House. The illuminating strands became more affordable to the general public in the 1930s, and their use in

everyday homes grew.

Today, Christmas lights come in all shapes, sizes and colors. While decorating for the holidays is a favorite pastime for many, it's a good idea to keep safety in mind. Here are some tips to help you deck the halls safely:

- Check your decorations. Inspect cords for any cracks and broken bulbs.
- Consider the age of your lights. Older lights tend to generate more heat. It may be time for an upgrade, which is not only safer but also more cost effective.
- When hanging lights, use plastic hooks instead of staples or nails, which can cause damage and shorts to your cords.
- If you opt for a live Christmas tree inside your home, make sure to water it daily.
- Before you plug in your lights, read labels to ensure cords are properly assembled.
- Practice extension cord safety to avoid overloading circuits.
- Invest in timers for your inside and outside lights. This is beneficial for safety as well as your electric bill. ■

Have a happy and safe holiday season!

Pat's Christmas Party Pinwheels

- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 package ranch salad dressing mix
- ½ cup minced sweet red pepper
- ½ cup minced celery
- ¼ cup sliced green onions
- ¼ cup sliced stuffed olives
- 3 10-inch flour tortillas

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and dressing mix until smooth. Add red pepper, celery, onions and olives; mix well. Spread 1/3 of the mixture on each tortilla. Roll up tightly; wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours but preferably

overnight. Using a serrated knife, slice into 1/2-inch pieces. Yields 15 servings. ■

Recipe submitted in loving memory of Patricia Barnett. Pat began her career at Erwin Utilities in 1967 and served our customers for 37 years before her passing in November 2004.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Tammy Peterson

Job Title:
Customer Service
Representative

Years at EU:
24 years

Favorite part of job:

I enjoy working with customers and want to make sure each one has a positive experience with every service EU provides. I'm also proud to work for an organization that's main goal is to provide safe, reliable and efficient service to our community.



Jason Byrd

Job Title:
Wastewater Treatment
Supervisor

Years at EU:
23 years

Favorite part of job:

I enjoy the teamwork between all Erwin Utilities' departments to achieve high water quality standards.



Howard Morris

Job Title:
Network Specialist

Years at EU:
8 years

Favorite part of job:

The diversity of the job. There are so many parts to the job; I can be doing one thing in the morning and something different in the evening. The people also make for a great work environment.



Chris Tolley

Job Title:
Lineman

Years at EU:
30 years

Favorite part of job:

Trouble calls and restoring power to our customers.



WELCOME
to our team!



Madison Gillespie
Customer Service Representative

National Engineers *Week*

February 18-24

Erwin Utilities Electrical,
Water and Fiber Engineering Staff



Back row, from left, are Wes Millhorn, Trevor Shelton, Joseph Wigington, Jason Foster and Jonathan Blackley. Front row, from left, are Josh Peterson, Howard Morris, John Fredericks, Kip Lemmon and Marsha Crain.

GET OUTSIDE



Ruth Simmons trains Hogan using a quail wing and fly rod. PHOTO COURTESY OF MORGAN SIMMONS

The End of an Era

It was a cold winter morning when I last grouse hunted my favorite mountain just outside the eastern border of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. With me was Hogan, a 2-year-old German wirehaired pointer that I simply adored, despite his shortcomings. Hogan wasn't much of a retriever, but on the other hand, he hunted close and was rock-steady on point. I considered him a flawed masterpiece.

The steep terrain made for rough going. As I followed Hogan through the thick, thorny underbrush, I thought how nice it would be if his gifted nose occasionally led to a fire road or at least some semblance of a trail.

But ruffed grouse don't make it easy, especially in the mountains of East Tennessee.

Nothing much happened until noon when I spotted Hogan down a nearby ravine, holding point in a mountain laurel thicket dusted with snow. I had a clear shot as the grouse flushed from the cover and flew across the ravine. Hogan quickly located the dead bird, but as per usual, he balked at bringing it back. I really didn't mind. I figured retrieving was something we could work on during the off-season.

But there was no off-season. The following spring, Hogan was struck by a car in front of our house after he escaped from his lot. Admittedly, grouse hunting in the Southern Appalachians was already on the decline due to a range of factors, including mortality from the West Nile Virus, increasing predator populations, and a decline in early successional forests due to changes in land use and logging.

But it was Hogan's untimely death that made me quit grouse hunting. They say you can't love a dog without paying a price. The end always comes too soon.

I remember how Hogan would dunk his head underwater and

come up with a stick in his mouth. The woods, for him, were an immense world of delight. It was a pleasure just to watch him run.

I buried Hogan the day after he died. At the foot of the mountain behind our house was a sizable hole I had recently dug for days in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue a Jack Russell terrier that had become stuck underground while chasing a groundhog. After Hogan died, that hole became a ready-made grave.

After the burial, I gathered Hogan's training equipment—check chord, blank pistol, retrieving dummy and whistle—and put them away.

Lastly, I let my children release the training pigeons. I had three left, and it was time to let them go. I suppose I expected the pigeons to fly off and join Hogan's spirit in the sky. Never did it occur to me that they were too fat to fly.

Or maybe their wing muscles had atrophied from being cooped up for so long. In any case, the pigeons fluttered about the yard, spoiling the whole effect. Their wingbeats never lifted them more than a few feet off the ground. One, a cinnamon-colored bird with pink eyes, flew headlong into a tree.

Eventually, the children gathered the pigeons and set them on tree branches, where they perched like Christmas ornaments. What had begun as a solemn post-burial ritual had ended in a hilarious chase scene my family will never forget.

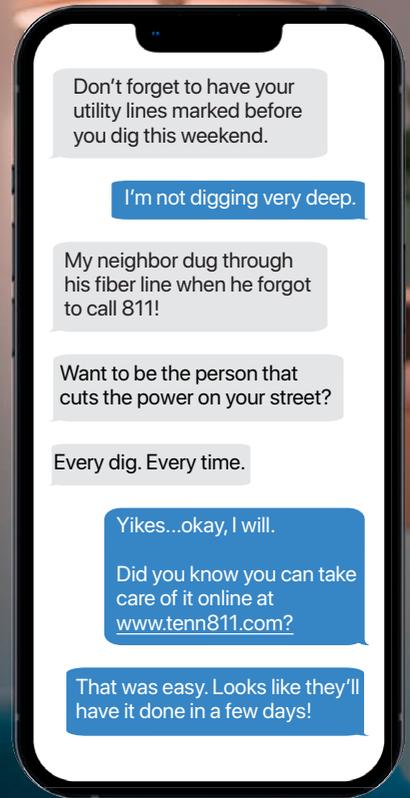
There are worse ways to honor a dog. ■



Morgan Simmons is the former outdoor editor for the Knoxville News Sentinel and seven-time winner of the Tennessee Outdoor Writer of the Year award. He lives on a farm in Clinton, Tennessee, with his wife, a donkey, six goats, two dogs and several chickens.



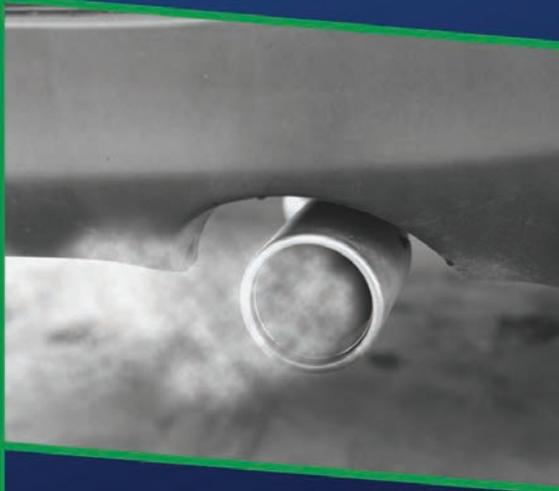
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this edition of
Tennessee Connections!

TN-200

A Time to Be Thankful

During this time of Thanksgiving and Christmas, we have so much to be thankful for.

I am thankful to be an American. I am thankful for the men and women of our military, law enforcement, fire and EMS who keep us safe or come to our aid in time of need.

I am thankful for our employees who come to work each day and through each emergency with a servant's heart knowing the work they perform makes a difference in our community and our customers' lives.

I am thankful for our board members



who support the work we do and believe it builds a brighter future for our community. I am thankful for you, our customers, and the opportunity to serve you. Without you, we would not have a reason to come to work.

As we celebrate Christmas with beautiful decorations and lights, we should stop and remember—more than 2,000 years ago, Wise Men sought the Christ child. Today, Wise Men still seek him.

From our Erwin Utilities work family: May your holidays be safe and filled with joy and happiness.

Merry Christmas,

Lee H. Brown

Lee Brown
President and CEO



OFFICE CLOSURES

2023
CHRISTMAS
Monday, December 25 and
Tuesday, December 26

2024
NEW YEAR'S DAY
Monday, January 1
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
Monday, January 15