

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2024 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED ⚡ COMMUNITY DRIVEN

Recovering and Rebuilding From Helene

Page 4

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, Erwin Utilities' crew members worked tirelessly to restore utility services to customers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
ERWIN UTILITIES

Erwin
Fiber

Erwin
Utilities



Find the right contractor for what your home needs.

Improving your home's energy efficiency shouldn't be stressful. Enjoy peace of mind and hire with confidence when you find a contractor through the TVA EnergyRight® Quality Contractor Network (QCN). Every licensed and insured QCN member is trained to meet TVA's quality standards. From window installation to HVAC repair, you can expect a job done right and take advantage of our free inspection service to make sure it is.

Visit [EnergyRight.com](https://www.energyright.com) to register your home and connect to the Quality Contractor Network today.

STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Brian Solsbee
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
 Jeremy Elrod
OFFICE MANAGER & EVENT COORDINATOR
 Susan Sherrill
MEETINGS & MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR
 Carrie Crawford

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR Allen Robbins,
 Sevier County Electric System
VICE CHAIR Terry Wimberly,
 Paris Utility Authority
SECRETARY/TREASURER Vic Pusser,
 Lawrenceburg Utility Systems
PAST PRESIDENT Mark Kimbell, Gallatin
 Department of Electricity
MEMBERS: Susan Edwards, Knoxville Utilities
 Board; Evann Freeman, EPB of Chattanooga;
 Don Hill, Nashville Electric Service; Dana Jeanes,
 Memphis Light Gas & Water; Al Kerstiens, Mount
 Pleasant Power System; Tony Kirk, Bolivar Energy
 Authority; Eric Newberry, Athens Utilities Board;
 George Powell, Winchester Utilities; Alex Smith,
 Humboldt Utilities Authority and Ryan Trentham,
 Alcoa Electric Department.

TMEPA

Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association
 Customer Focused • Community Driven



Published quarterly to keep you informed of noteworthy events and important issues at your utility, Tennessee Connections is produced with the assistance of Pioneer Utility Resources Inc. Formed in 1954, the not-for-profit Oregon-based cooperative corporation serves the communication needs of consumer-owned electric utilities across the country.

PUR CEO Michael Shepard
SVP OF CONTENT Leon Espinoza
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Mike Teegarden, CCC
DEPUTY EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
 Noble Sprayberry
SENIOR EDITOR Jennifer Paton, CCC
TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS EDITORS
 Chasity Anderson, CCC; Robin Conover

ASSISTANT EDITORS Victoria Hampton, CCC;
 David Herder, CCC

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Valeri Pearson, Nina Todea

DESIGNER Jenn Nunn

PUBLICATIONS PRODUCTION

SENIOR MANAGER

Elizabeth Beatty

SENIOR PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR

Alyssa McDougle

TO CONTACT TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS

Subscription services:

Noncustomer subscriptions \$10 U.S. a year; \$12 foreign a year. Prepayment required. Allow 4-8 weeks for first issue. Identify local edition desired. Send orders to 5625 NE Elam Young Pkwy. Ste. 100, Hillsboro, OR 97124-6422.

Have a problem receiving your magazine? Utility customers should contact their utility office. Noncustomers call 503-357-2105.

Advertising Inquiries:

Email displayads@pioneer.coop

© 2024 Pioneer Utility Resources. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Direct reprint requests to tconnections@pur.coop. For more information, visit www.pioneer.coop.

Help Us Help Your Neighbors

#SleevesUp to donate blood for your community



At Pioneer Utility Resources, the publisher of Tennessee Connections magazine, we are always working to put the right letters together to tell a story. The American Red Cross story can't be told without three letters: A, B and O, which represent the main blood types. When those important letters are missing from blood bank shelves, lives are at stake.

With the recent impact from hurricanes adding to the need for blood nationwide, we encourage

each of you to consider donating blood by rolling up your sleeves and visiting a local Red Cross donation center between now and Dec. 25. Your gift of blood can save more than one life.

Visit this link—rcblood.org/3zJ1rxU—or scan the QR code above. Sign up to help us reach our goal and fill in the missing blood types so patients can receive the lifesaving care they need. Make and keep an appointment to give blood to the American Red Cross. ■

Facts About Blood Needs in the United States

- ▶ Every 2 seconds, someone needs blood or platelets.
- ▶ Approximately 29,000 units of red blood cells are needed every day.
- ▶ Nearly 5,000 units of platelets and 6,500 units of plasma are needed daily.
- ▶ The blood type most often requested by hospitals is type O.
- ▶ One donation can help save more than one life.
- ▶ According to the American Cancer Society, more than 1.9 million people are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in 2025. Many of them will need blood, sometimes daily, during their chemotherapy treatments.
- ▶ The average red blood cell transfusion is approximately 3 units.
- ▶ A single-car accident victim can require as many as 100 units of blood.
- ▶ Sickle cell disease affects 90,000 to 100,000 people in the United States. Sickle cell patients may require blood transfusions throughout their lives.
- ▶ Blood and platelets cannot be manufactured; they can only come from volunteer donors.
- ▶ Nearly 16 million blood components are transfused each year.



Energy-Efficient Education

Spotlight, Page 6

New Year's Energy Resolutions

Plugged In, Page 10

Powering Through

Up Close, Page 14

Utility News	4-5	Adventure	18
In The Kitchen	12	Gardening	19
Planner	16	Utility News	20-21

Building a Brighter Future

By Lee H. Brown, President and CEO

We come to work at Erwin Utilities to ‘make a difference through safe, reliable, efficient services.’ That is our mission statement.

I don’t think anyone could have imagined what Hurricane Helene would produce when we went to bed Thursday, Sept. 26. The forecast was for heavy rains and heavy wind in East Tennessee and Western North Carolina from tropical storm Helene. We have heard this forecast before, right?

I have always had an imaginary flood line in my mind from the flood of 1977. That was the worst our community would ever experience, right? Flood waters that washed homes and businesses away, washed roads and bridges away, people trapped by flood waters, people trapped on roof tops waiting to be saved by a helicopter, that is in some other community on national news, right? NO, it was here, here in my hometown, here in my community. Mother Nature proved me wrong. Friday morning, Sept. 27, 2024, would soon be different—violently different—from anything we had ever experienced.

Our Friday morning started early with scattered power outages from the wind. We expected that. What we did not expect was that two of our linemen responding to a power outage in Bumpus Cove would be cut off by the raging waters of the Nolichucky. They would spend the next 30 hours in their truck waiting for the flood waters to recede until they could walk out. By noon Friday

the rain had stopped, and the skies began to clear.

The immediate improvement allowed our emergency assessment and restoration efforts to ramp up quickly. We had multiple locations with downed power and fiber lines from the wind and an unknown number of poles missing from the flood waters. Our water production was unharmed. We had water and wastewater lines severed in the Industrial Park and Temple Hill Rd. Our water crew would soon have those areas isolated and stabilize the water system.

Our linemen would soon be joined by 29 additional linemen from Tennessee and Alabama to work alongside our men. I must brag on the men and women of Erwin Utilities for their servant hearts and quick responses and the ability to bring in outside crews, find lodging for them and feed them. What a team effort by our engineering and office staff to quickly be able to feed 60 hungry workers twice each day. Great progress was made quickly to restore power, water, and broadband services.

Wastewater service has been different due to the flood’s extensive damage to the wastewater treatment plant. The plant was covered in 10 feet of water which left a foot or more of mud and silt over everything. Each building and structure was damaged. Assessment and restoration could not begin until we could access the plant.

Our wastewater team moved rapidly to bring in equipment to remove the mud and silt. The days of mud and silt removal never seemed to end. Every concrete basin had 3 to 5 feet of mud



Erwin Utilities President and CEO Lee Brown meets with Tennessee Valley Authority President Jeff Lyash, during a visit by TVA representatives to Erwin and Unicoi after Hurricane Helene.



Erwin Utilities’ linemen pause for a photo during a hike to reach areas where roads were washed away by the storm.

and silt that had to be removed. The perseverance of our team to remove the mud and establish emergency temporary wastewater treatment in four weeks is nothing short of incredible.

Our temporary wastewater treatment operation will sustain us through the days ahead as we work on a permanent plan to repair or replace our facilities.

Hurricane Helene showed us Mother Nature at her worst, unleashing 24 inches of rainfall in western North Carolina. It produced the worst flood on record for our community and possibly the worst flood we may ever see. Within 24 hours, emergency management personnel and rescue personnel established an emergency operations center at the Unicoi County Middle School. Search and rescue operations were fully underway.

Volunteer organizations—local, state, and regional—quickly made our community home to help us search for the missing and help provide aid to those who lost everything. Blackhawk helicopters quickly replaced the noise from the railroad and interstate and the parking lots at the Middle School and Love Chapel were filled with local search and rescue volunteers from across the state.

In the days that followed Sept. 27, I met with insurance representatives, the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Services. They all agreed it was the worst destruction they had ever seen.

I always try to look for a silver lining, even in the toughest of times. My list includes: school was out, the flood came during daylight hours, the sky cleared the same day and we were blessed with good weather for the work to restore essential services, differences were set aside, we are all on the same team, and the outpouring of support from our community, region, and nation. I believe that was a direct reflection of the giving heart of this community. Helene may have changed the landscape, but it

has not dampened the spirit of this community. In fact, it has strengthened it.

We must now focus our time and attention on rebuilding our community better, stronger, and more resilient than ever before. The work in the days ahead will resemble a complex puzzle made of pieces of infrastructure, design, funding, building and resiliency. We must work to get our Industrial Park rebuilt with protective measures that could lessen or prevent this type of damage from occurring again and protect the jobs that feed our families. Never have I seen our community, and the region come together, working as one to help those who lost everything. We must stay on course to Build a Brighter Future for Our Community.

As I think of the many needs of those who have lost everything, I am reminded of something my grandmother frequently said: “You only keep in life what you give away.” As a young child, I did not understand this. The meaning became clear as I became an adult, and the meaning is crystal clear today. I encourage you to look for something you can keep by giving it away to someone as they continue to rebuild their life, home, and hope for the future.

Reflecting on the work done by the employees of Erwin Utilities, I think of the men and women who left their families to work long hours, 17 to 20 days straight without a day off. They came to work tired, yet with a smile and a servant’s heart, knowing our customers were depending on us. They truly made a difference in every customer’s life by restoring essential services, doing it safely, reliably, and efficiently. Incredible job, well done!

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11

My heart is broken for those who perished in the flood waters and for the families that lost their homes and properties, and that witnessed their life’s work erased. Let us not forget those who have lost loved ones. Let us all continue working together Building A Brighter Future for Our Community. It is the least we can do for those who have lost everything. ■



A view of Erwin Utilities' Wastewater Treatment Plant right after the storm. High water levels can be seen as an individual drives a boat down a typical roadway.

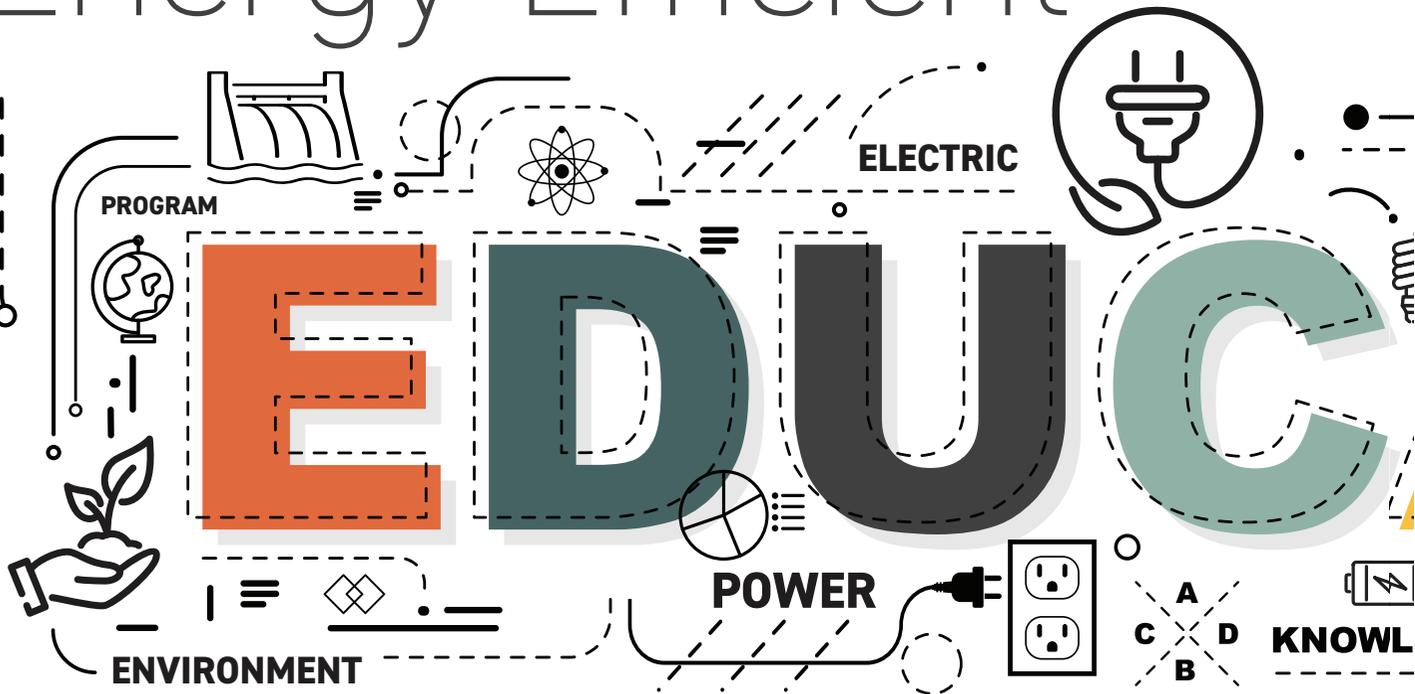


Crews from surrounding utilities and contractor groups aid restoration efforts.



Erwin Utilities' fiber crew work to repair services by scaling remnants of washed away roads.

Energy-Efficient



TVA EnergyRight School Uplift Program helps schools shift funds from energy bills to the classroom

By Trish Milburn

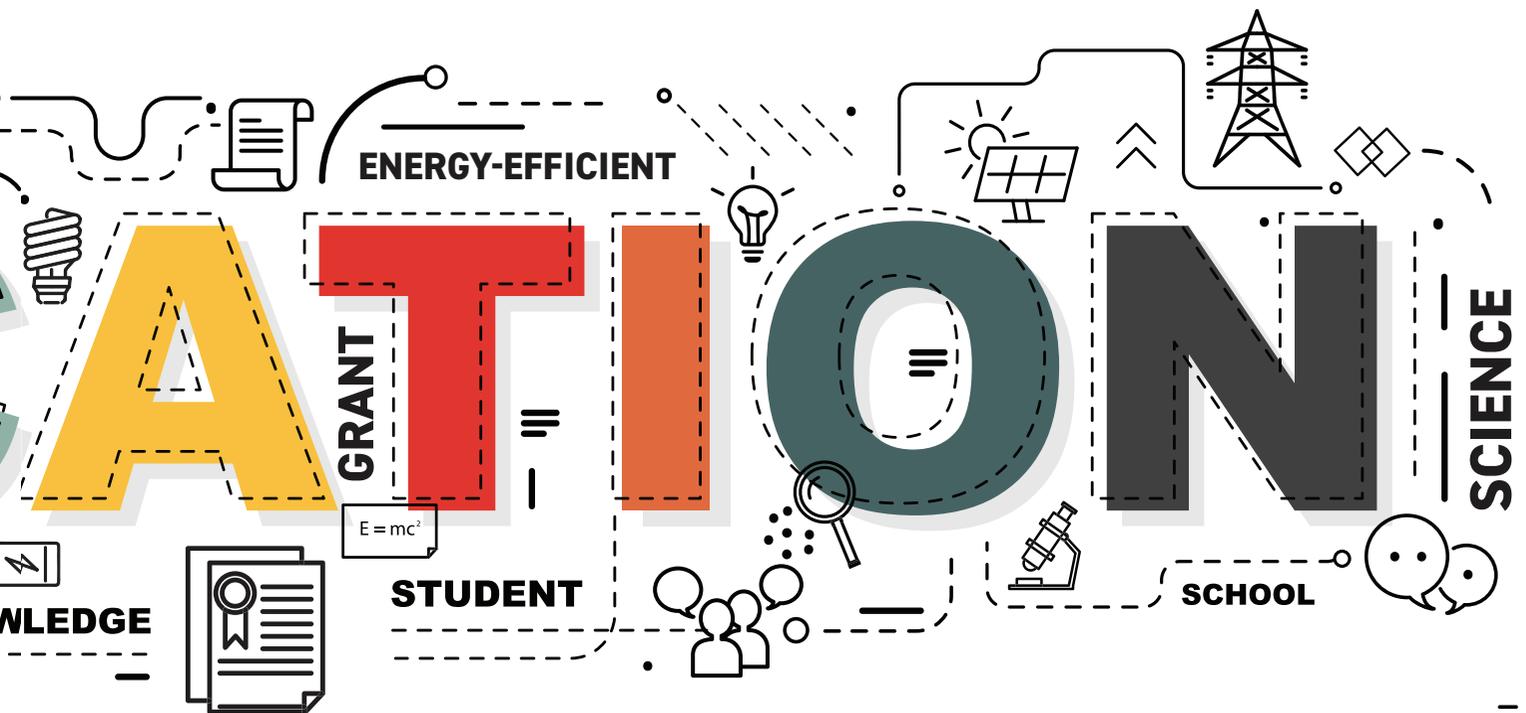
It is no secret public schools need more funding, so ways to save on operational costs—freeing up money to be used for educational purposes—are always welcome. It's a bonus when those money-saving methods also help an organization fulfill its purpose. Such is the case with Tennessee Valley Authority's EnergyRight School Uplift Program.

During the more than 90 years since its creation, TVA's mission has been to help make life better for the people living in the Tennessee Valley. That comes in the form of providing low-cost electricity, controlling floods, facilitating economic development and protecting the environment.

Based on that mission, TVA is dedicated to supporting underserved communities by providing a free program to reduce energy costs in participating schools. The School Uplift Program provides a combination of energy-efficiency training and grants to help schools lower their energy bills while also improving the learning environment for their students.



Humboldt's Stigall Primary School students cast ballots to determine which of three projects will be funded by their \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant. PHOTO COURTESY OF TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY



In 2021, TVA officially piloted the School Uplift Program with 11 underserved schools in their service area. Based on the energy savings of those schools, TVA rolled the program out across its seven-state service area and now helps about 100 schools each year lower their energy costs by approximately 10% through no-cost energy-saving measures—an average of \$13,000 per school annually. TVA recently announced it has opened the program to private schools that can apply to participate in the 2025–2026 school year.

“TVA EnergyRight has two strategic goals for the School Uplift Program: to reduce energy costs for K–12 schools, which is especially important in underserved communities, and carbon reduction in our region,” says Lori Brown, SUP program manager at TVA. “The initial site assessments conducted for School Uplift provide each participating school a list of low- and no-cost options they can implement to save energy use and money.



Students at Eakin Elementary in Shelbyville gather around Spark, the official mascot of the TVA EnergyRight monsters, a group of characters that help teach children and families how to save energy and money. PHOTO COURTESY OF EAKIN ELEMENTARY

“Schools can use the money saved to provide additional educational opportunities for students.”

Schools in underserved areas also have an opportunity to apply for a \$200,000 Building Energy Upgrade Grants to fund energy upgrades like HVAC and lighting that require capital funds that are not readily available to them,” Lori says.

During the initial TVA site assessments, engineers take note of larger issues such as heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems and chillers, roofing, windows, and lighting. From this list, the schools determine if they should apply for the Building Energy Upgrade Grants. Grant applications are scored based on specific need-based criteria in an anonymous process.



ABOVE: Students in Shelbyville hold posters that are now displayed throughout the school. **BELOW:** A kickoff assembly at Eakin Elementary taught students about the program. PHOTOS COURTESY OF EAKIN ELEMENTARY

The top 12 qualifying schools receive a free industrial-grade energy audit to determine the six grant-winning schools.

These grants fund invaluable upgrades such as enhanced lighting and ventilation, which improves the learning environment for students, teachers and staff.

Learning Environment Grants

This year's recipient schools in areas served by Tennessee Connections were White County Middle School in Sparta and the Deery Eakin and Learning Way elementary schools in Shelbyville.

In the 2023-2024 program, several Humboldt schools, including Humboldt Junior/Senior High School, Stigall Elementary and East Elementary, were selected. Each school was awarded a \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant, which can be used for nonenergy improvements.

Students have the opportunity to vote on how the Learning Environment Grants will be allocated in their schools. Stigall Elementary chose to install fun playground equipment including Lola the snail bouncer and Calvin the caterpillar climber.

According to Laticia Hicks, who was the school's librarian and head of the reading interview program at the time the grant was

received, it will also be more accessible to the school's approximately 240 students.

East Elementary School's grant will pay for an outdoor learning lab, picnic tables, benches, a canopy and associated costs.

Humboldt Junior/Senior High chose to use its grant funds to build a covered patio area where the school community can enjoy lunch outdoors. The new covered patio will be between the cafeteria and the main office, according to Energy Coach Sarah Cline.

"To build this covered patio, we are going to use a sunshade that can be attached to the walls and will cover an area of roughly 20-by-40 feet," Sarah says. "This sunshade is designed to last five to seven years and costs about \$350, so replacing the sunshade is not too expensive."

The patio will feature plastic or metal picnic tables with learning boards containing educational content that can be updated as needed.

Sparta's White County Middle School students voted to use their \$10,000 Learning Environment Grant to buy a makerspace cart and a 3D printer. A makerspace is a collaborative learning environment where students can use a

variety of tools and technologies to design, experiment and create. The makerspace fosters hands-on learning, critical thinking, a growth mindset, communication and collaboration and real-world application.

The program is off to a great start in Shelbyville.

"The school system's experience with the School Uplift Program so far has been absolutely amazing," says Megan Moreland, energy manager for Bedford County Schools.

"I am starting to see utility bills drop. The SUP has helped our schools lower energy costs by allowing us to give more awareness on how to save energy and the extra steps that everyone can take to help conserve energy. Since starting the program back in June, I have seen a drop in kilowatt-hours by an average of 10,000 a month, with a cost savings average of \$1,000 a month per school in the SUP."

On top of the \$10,000 grant, the top-performing schools receive an additional \$25,000 Learning Environment grant.

Deery Eakin Elementary was chosen to move on to the next round of the selection process for Building Energy Upgrade grants. They are among six Tennessee



schools in the running for three \$200,000 grants, the winners of which are announced in May 2025.

In addition to the SUP grants making energy-efficiency improvements and the purchase of learning equipment possible, Megan's calculations illustrate how participating schools also benefit from the small behavioral changes that lead to big savings—and these changes don't stay within the confines of the schools.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: White County Middle School students in Sparta voted for a makerspace cart and 3D printer. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WHITE COUNTY SCHOOLS

TVA Energy Coaches work with school-level Energy Champions, who then transfer the knowledge and plan to their teacher teams and students.

“We have materials for the students called ‘taking the habits home,’” Lori says. “Then the energy-efficiency training goes home with the students to educate their parents and community.”

School faculty and staff also take home lessons learned and can apply these to their home energy use. It's a cost- and energy-saving ripple effect.

“I think the program allowed our faculty, staff and students to really think about the impact they have on our energy consumption as a school,” says Sara Halliburton, a seventh grade science teacher at White County Middle School.

“When I shared the figures with our faculty and staff, I think most were surprised by the cost of our energy bills, and this allowed us to start to change behaviors in our school that led to overall energy awareness,” she says. “Our hope is that this will also bleed over into our community and that students can take these ideas to save energy in their homes as well.

“At WCMS, we put together an energy team of faculty, staff and students. It was, without a doubt, a collaborative effort. We are so thankful for TVA and the School Uplift Program.”

Building Energy Upgrade Grants

Humboldt Junior/Senior High was awarded a Building Energy Upgrade Grant of \$200,000 from TVA, with an additional \$200,000 in matching funds from the Tennessee Department of Energy's Energy-Efficient Schools Initiative. The total funding of \$400,000 will be used for a variety of energy upgrades: installation of LED light fixtures, occupancy sensor lighting controls, high-efficiency air-conditioning units and programmable thermostats;

retrofitting fluorescent fixtures with LED lamps and drivers; and retrofitting other fixtures with LED lamps.

“Implementing behavior-based energy-efficiency training in schools not only reduces utility cost but also improves the classroom learning environment and sets students up for success,” says Scott Slusher, executive director of the Energy-Efficient Schools Initiative. “The School Uplift Program provides the catalyst and springboard to help get more schools—students, teachers, staff—engaged on the energy conservation train.”

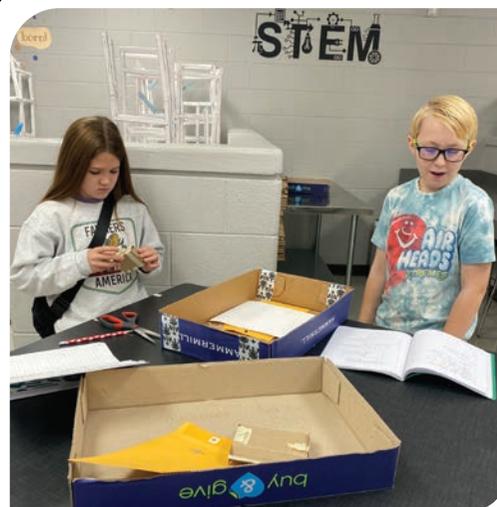
EESI was established in 2008 by the Tennessee General Assembly to offer financial solutions, including loans and grants, and educational programs to

support school districts in lowering utility costs, enhancing indoor environmental quality and improving the classroom learning experience.

Since 2019, EESI has partnered with TVA's School Uplift Program to cofund nine building energy upgrade grants for a total of \$2.5 million, provided programmatic design and development assistance, and helped with program recruitment.

The \$10,000 Learning Environment Grants must be completed within 11 months, while the \$200,000 Building Energy Upgrade Grants have 15 months to be completed.

The School Uplift Program was recognized for its accomplishments when TVA received one of the Energy Star Partner of the Year Awards given by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency earlier this year. Key accomplishments noted were completing activities at 64 schools across the TVA service area, resulting in more than \$1 million in energy savings, and encouraging school-wide participation in new energy-saving behaviors by gamifying engagement in those energy-efficiency behaviors. ■



Enrollment for the 2025–2026 School Uplift Program is now open for both public and private schools. School staff can visit energyright.com/business-industry/school-uplift to apply to bring this no-cost program to their campus.

New Year's Energy Resolutions

Resolve to take on a major household efficiency project this year and save big on your energy bills

By David Herder

We can all think of improvements we would like to make in the new year, whether it is eating healthier, volunteering more or lowering our expenses. One way to spend less in the new year and for many more to come is to make household energy efficiency a goal.

Making small changes to your routine can add up to significant savings. But do you know what adds up faster than small things?

Big things.

If you're willing to make the initial investment, resolve to go big by taking on one of these projects.

Insulate and Air Seal

For most houses, heating and cooling air makes up the largest chunk of energy use. If you're paying to heat or cool the air, you want to keep it inside your house.

Common spots to insulate are attics, walls, floors and anywhere your house contacts the outside. Just like you want a jacket between you and a snowstorm, you want insulation between your home and the outdoors.

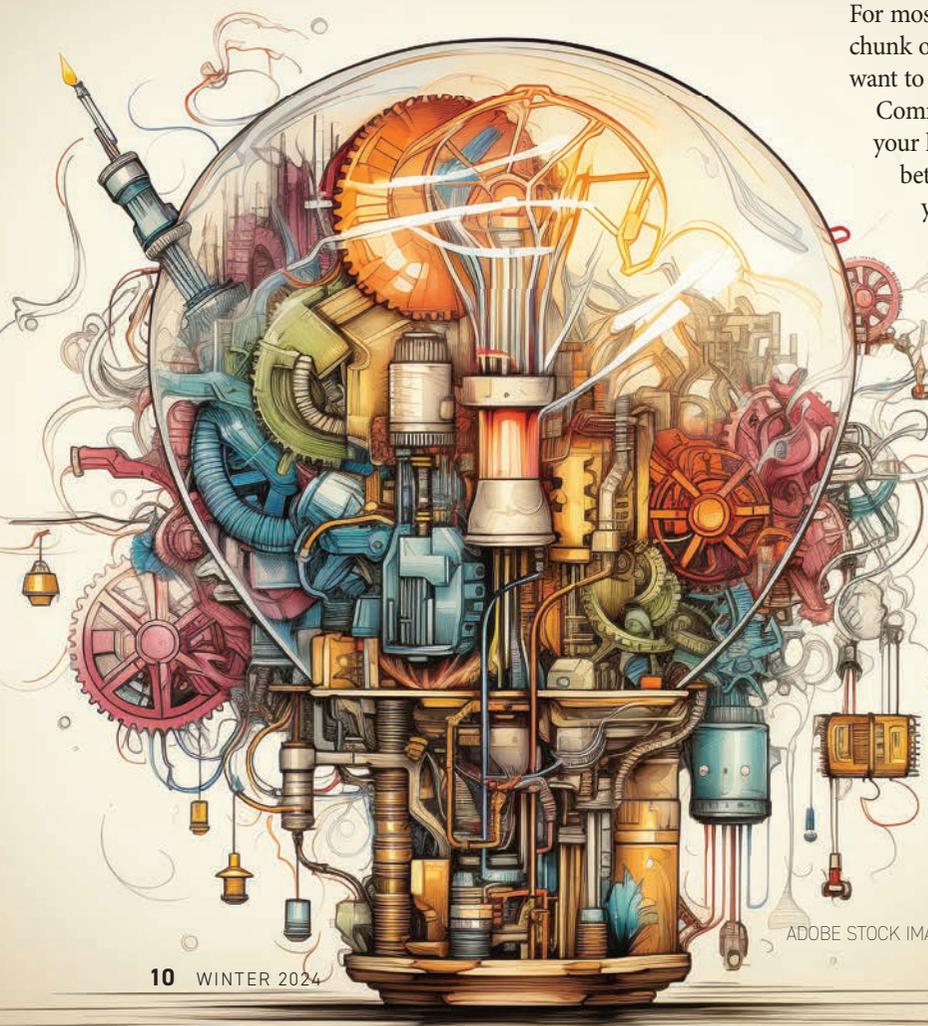
Insulation is rated in R-values. Suggested insulation R-values are between R-30 and R-60, depending on your region and climate. In many cases, it is a good idea to get professional insulation help.

Air sealing is another step to prevent drafts by physically closing gaps and cracks. In some cases, this can be as simple as adding caulking or weatherstripping to places where you notice drafts. Contractors and some utilities can do a home blower test to find and seal leaks.

If you're considering doing some air sealing on your own, the Department of Energy offers tips at www.energy.gov/energysaver/air-sealing-your-home.

Windows

What are windows but walls you can see through? Like outer walls, they touch the outdoors, and unlike many walls, they aren't filled with thick insulation. Heat gain and loss through windows account for 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling costs, according to the Department of Energy.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY BERIT KESSLER

ions

Energy Star windows typically have high U-factors, a measurement of how well they insulate. Get multiple quotes for any home improvement project, including windows, and be on the lookout for rebates from utilities, state programs and the federal government.

If you aren't buying new windows right away, consider steppingstones such as adding weatherstripping, caulking gaps and using thermal drapes.

Seal Ducts

Just like you don't want your heated and cooled air to leak outdoors, you don't want your air leaking into parts of the house where you never go.

If you have ductwork in an attic, crawlspace or other unairconditioned or heated area, the ducts could have leaks that increase your energy bill. According to the Department of Energy, 20% to 30% of the air moved through ducts is lost to leakage.

Hire a professional to seal your ducts, or seal them yourself with metal tape or duct mastic specifically designed for the job. Do not use duct tape, which will dry out and lose adhesion.

Heat Pump

So far, we've covered three ways to keep your heated and cooled air where you want it. It turns out, how you heat or cool the air is also important.

If you're willing to replace your furnace, or the unit is 10-plus years old, a heat pump is an efficient home heating and cooling upgrade. It can reduce heating costs by as much as 50% compared to electric resistance heating, according to the Department of Energy.

A heat pump works similarly to an air conditioner in reverse. It uses a refrigerant to pull heat energy out of the air outdoors, then moves it indoors and blows the heat into your living areas.

Also consider a heat pump water heater, which has all the same advantages but heats water rather than air.

Programmable Thermostat

If a heater turns on, but nobody is there to hear it, does it make a noise? One thing we know is that it would impact your energy bill.



Not sure where to start?

Schedule a home energy assessment

Before starting a project, it is important to take a step back and consider, "What will make the biggest impact?" This means knowing how efficient your house is and where the energy use is going.

A home energy assessment looks for air leaks, insufficient insulation, energy-hog appliances or other issues, and evaluates your total energy use. Conducting a home energy assessment lets you know where any inefficiencies in your house are, giving you a blueprint for fixing them.

Many utilities offer assessment programs, and the Department of Energy offers guides on assessments—including tips for a do-it-yourself assessment—at www.energy.gov/energysaver/home-energy-assessments.

You can also find more information at Tennessee Valley Authority's energyright.com.

Both programmable and smart thermostats help people save energy by changing the temperature throughout the day. You can save 10% on energy bills by turning back the thermostat 10% to 15% for eight hours a day, according to the Department of Energy.

Whether that means heating or cooling less during the day while you're at work or turning things down while you're sleeping, a programmable thermostat ensures you're only heating and cooling the air you feel. ■

Make Your Holiday Brunch *Spa*

By Anne Braly

All kinds of memorable events center around the holidays—cocktail parties sparkling with sequins and accented by the tinkle of ice cubes; cinnamon-scented cookie exchanges where friends share their baking skills and trade treasured recipes; family turkey dinners with little cousins falling asleep by the fire while the grownups reminisce about days gone by. And don't forget about a favorite event: the holiday brunch. What do they all have in common? They start with good ingredients and end up creating treasured moments.

Brunches are incredibly versatile. You can plan a casual gathering for a handful of people or host a grand, show-stopping spectacular filled with mouthwatering treats for your closest friends. Whichever crowd you brunch with, here are some recipes to create one more holiday memory.

ASIAGO HAM BISCUITS

2½ cups flour, spooned and leveled	3 ounces Asiago cheese, grated (about ¾ cup)
1½ tablespoons baking powder	1 cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon kosher salt	Flaky sea salt, for garnish
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	Thinly sliced honey ham or prosciutto, for serving
1 stick cold butter, cut into pieces, plus 1 tablespoon melted butter, divided	Butter, for serving

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk together flour, baking powder, kosher salt and pepper in a bowl. Cut in cold butter with a pastry blender or two forks until mixture resembles small pebbles. Add Asiago and toss to coat. Add buttermilk and stir just until dough comes together.

Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface. Gather into a ball, then pat to ¾-inch-thick. Cut biscuits with a 2-inch round cutter. Repeat procedure with remaining scraps. Place on prepared baking sheet, arranging in the shape of a Christmas tree and allowing edges of biscuits to touch. Brush tops with melted butter and sprinkle with flaky sea salt. Bake until golden brown, 14 to 16 minutes. Serve with butter and ham on the side, or go ahead and add a thin slice of butter and ham to the biscuits before putting them on the platter.



irkle

EGGS BENEDICT BAKE

EGG BAKE:

- 6 English muffins, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 6 ounces Canadian-style bacon, chopped
- 1½ cups milk
- 12 eggs
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

- ¼ cup water
- 3 egg yolks
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 to 3 drops hot pepper sauce

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray a 13-by-9-inch baking dish with no-stick cooking spray. Place half the English muffin cubes into a prepared baking dish and sprinkle with half of the Canadian bacon. Top with remaining English muffin cubes and Canadian bacon.

Whisk milk and eggs together in bowl. Season with onion powder, salt and pepper. Pour egg mixture evenly over ingredients in baking dish, gently pressing down to soak English muffin cubes. Cover; refrigerate 4 hours or overnight.

Bake, uncovered, 45-55 minutes or until puffed and golden brown and knife inserted in center comes out clean.

FOR HOLLANDAISE:

Place water and egg yolks into 1-quart saucepan and whisk until well-mixed. Cook over low heat, whisking constantly, 2-3 minutes or until egg mixture begins to thicken. Add butter, 1 tablespoon at a time. Whisk constantly and make sure butter melts slowly and sauce begins to thicken without scrambling the eggs. Slowly whisk in lemon juice, Dijon mustard and hot sauce.

Serve egg bake warm topped with hollandaise sauce. Sprinkle with paprika, if desired.



BLUEBERRY PANCAKE BREAD PUDDING

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1½ cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled | 2 cups half-and-half |
| ½ cup chopped toasted pecans | ½ cup sugar |
| 1½ teaspoons sugar | 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract |
| 1½ teaspoons baking powder | ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| ½ teaspoon baking soda | Unsalted butter, for griddle |
| 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided | HONEY SOUR CREAM: |
| 1 cup evaporated milk | ⅓ cup sour cream |
| ⅓ cup sour cream | 2 tablespoons half-and-half |
| 5 large eggs, divided | 2 tablespoons honey |
| 1 cup fresh blueberries, divided | 2 teaspoons lemon zest |
| | Kosher salt |

Combine flour, pecans, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together milk, sour cream and 1 egg. Stir milk mixture into flour mixture until just blended and smooth.

Heat a griddle or large nonstick skillet over medium heat, then add butter. Pour about ¼ cup batter for each pancake onto griddle. Cook until tops are covered with bubbles and edges look dry, 3 to 4 minutes. Turn and cook until plump and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Repeat with remaining batter.

Slice each pancake in half and arrange, flat side down, in two snug rows in an 8-by-8-inch baking dish. Scatter half the blueberries over pancakes, tucking a few between pancakes. Whisk together half-and-half, sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, remaining 4 eggs, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. Pour egg mixture over pancakes. Chill at least 4 hours and up to overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Bake until puffed and set, 35 to 40 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes.

Sprinkle with remaining blueberries and drizzle with honey sour cream. Serve warm.

HONEY SOUR CREAM:

Whisk together sour cream, half-and-half, honey, lemon zest and a pinch of salt until smooth. Makes ½ cup.

Powering Through

Utilities use mutual aid to repair storm-damaged electric systems

Each year, communities throughout Tennessee weather powerful storms, and damage is inevitable. Tornadoes, flooding and, as shown by Helene, even hurricanes can bring destruction and turmoil to the state.

As water and fallen trees cause damage to critical infrastructure, the loss of electrical power is unavoidable. No single electricity provider can cope alone, but fortunately, the mutual-aid system creates a framework utilities can use to support one another.

The concept of mutual aid is straightforward—agreements among utilities to offer aid during emergencies. When one

utility is hit hard by a storm, others send expert crews and vital equipment to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

Mutual aid, however, is more than a formal process. It's based on a powerful, long-standing culture devoted to restoring vital electrical service.

Visiting crews might spend days or weeks away from loved ones to help hard-hit communities, knowing theirs might be in need of a helping hand next. They work long hours in often dangerous and unpredictable conditions, and these professionals do it all with the same goal in mind: helping communities like ours recover.



When a tornado struck Clarksville last year, 40 additional line crews—more than 300 workers—joined the tireless effort to rebuild the electric infrastructure and restore power. PHOTO COURTESY OF CDE LIGHTBAND



Shelbyville Power System lineworkers restore power in Newport following Hurricane Helene. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPS

Faster Restoration

One of the key benefits of mutual aid is increasing recovery speed. Damage from a significant storm might overwhelm a utility working alone.

“Mutual aid is a powerful reminder of the true meaning of Public Power, where we are all in this together,” says CDE Lightband General Manager Brian Taylor. “When we help each other, we build a stronger, more resilient community.”

Mutual aid enables a quick response. You might even see utility crews on the interstate heading toward impending storms on their way to areas where outages are expected. Often, they travel hundreds of miles to be in position and then to respond where they are most needed.

Shared Expertise and Resources

The nation’s electric grid is built to federally determined standards, so repair crews understand the system from one community to the next. This knowledge and related experience are vital given the potential scope of the necessary repairs. Recovery from storm damage can touch every part of a utility’s system.

In addition to specialized vehicles like bucket trucks, recovery may require utility poles, electrical cables and almost every other item stored in utility warehouses. The skills of the line crews span tree trimming and removal to pole and cable restoration.

A Culture of Support

The mutual-aid system is ingrained in the community of electric utilities, part of the culture since the 1930s, when the nation’s rural areas were first electrified. It’s a system based on cooperation and a commitment to serve—no electric utility must face disaster alone.



Sevier County Electric System assists with restoration following a 2021 tornado in Mayfield, Kentucky. PHOTO COURTESY OF SCES

Mutual aid means power is restored quickly and more efficiently, returning power to everyone at a time when that resource is especially important. ■



Tullahoma Utilities Authority lineworkers help restore power in Elizabethton after Hurricane Helene. PHOTO COURTESY OF TUA

TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS PLANNER

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



CLARKSVILLE

Dec. 14

A 19th Century Christmas

Celebrate Christmas as soldiers did in the 1860s in Clarksville. Join the Friends of Fort Defiance and park staff from 3–4:30 p.m. Enjoy period refreshments, parlor games and reenactors. Step back in time and create period decorations, decorate the tree, and enjoy eggnog, cakes, caroling and more. There are goodie bags to take home. Preregistration and a fee of \$5 per person are required to participate.

visitclarksvilletn.com

BROWNSVILLE

Through Dec. 30

Markowski Lights

Immerse yourself in a dazzling display of more than a million Christmas lights as you drive through the Markowski Lights. This spectacular display, in its 20th year, is a beloved holiday tradition and the anchor site for Brownsville's Holiday Trail of Lights. Follow Markowski Lights on Facebook to learn when Santa, the Grinch and other beloved characters are making a special appearance.

visitbrownsvilletn.com/calendar

NASHVILLE

Through Dec. 26

Nashville's Nutcracker

See the Nashville Ballet perform at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. The unique rendition of the classic features characters from the city's history, stunning costumes, live music from the Nashville Symphony and original choreography by Artistic Director Emeritus Paul Vasterling.

www.tpac.org

MORRISTOWN

Dec. 14

Jingle Run for Hope

The 10th annual Jingle Run for Hope 5K Run/Walk takes place in beautiful historic downtown Morristown. Proceeds from this event benefit

cancer care at Morristown Regional Cancer Center within Morristown-Hamblen Healthcare System. These funds provide cancer patients and their families with financial assistance when they need it most. The course features mild elevation changes and a scenic route starting and ending on West Main Street near East Tennessee Diamond Co. Participants are supported by the well-marked course, chip timing, energetic course volunteers and post-race refreshments. Give hope this holiday season by running or walking in the annual Jingle Run for Hope.

jingleunforhope.com

GATLINBURG, PIGEON FORGE AND SEVIERVILLE

Through Feb. 17

Smoky Mountain Winterfest

More than 15 million lights line the parkway in Sevierville, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg. In Sevierville, Shadrack's Christmas Wonderland illuminates the drive with new, custom-built LED lights dancing in perfect rhythm to Christmas music played over the radio. In Pigeon Forge, attractions at The Old Mill include tours of the 186-year-old working mill, its two award-winning restaurants and shops filled with gifts. Gatlinburg offers the Trolley Ride of Lights to see the town's holiday magic. Check the website for dates of specific events.

visitsevierville.com/Winterfest.aspx

DICKSON

Dec. 14

Christmas in Downtown Dickson

Carriage rides, live music, carolers and much more make the evening fun. Events are planned from 5–9 p.m.

dicksoncountychamber.com

JONESBOROUGH

Dec. 14

Lighted Christmas Parade

Folks of all ages gather along Boone and Main streets downtown in anticipation of the arrival of floats, bands, classic cars, dancers and, of course, Santa Claus as they make their way downtown. This year's theme is "A Nutcracker Christmas." As one of the only nighttime parades in the area, Jonesborough takes advantage of the beautiful small-town setting in the downtown area as the backdrop for the event. The parade begins at 6 p.m.

jonesborough.com

PIGEON FORGE

Jan. 28-Feb. 1

Wilderness Wildlife Week

Celebrate the natural features, creatures and cultures of the Great Smoky Mountains. This year, leading wildlife experts are invited to lead informative discussions—a great opportunity to learn and ask questions about nature. Showcasing what makes the Smokies so special, Wilderness Wildlife Week celebrates the abundance of wildlife, variety of plants, trees and wildflowers, and rich history of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee through a series of classes, seminars, demonstrations, guided hikes, panel discussions and workshops. The event is at Ramsey Hotel and Convention Center.
mypigeonforge.com

TIPTONVILLE

Jan. 31-Feb. 2

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. Watch eagles perching, flying, soaring and snatching fish from the lake. Telescopes are provided for viewing and information about the natural and cultural

history of the wildlife and area. Reservations are required for the tours.

tnstateparks.com/parks/activity-detail/reelfoot-lake-birding

MEMPHIS

Feb. 8

Lunar New Year Fair

A vibrant celebration of Asian culture that brings the spirit of Lunar New Year to the Mid-South, the event showcases traditional Lion and Dragon dances, live performances, Asian arts and crafts, and a variety of delicious foods at Agricenter International. The event serves as a platform to promote and share the rich heritage of Asian cultures with the broader Memphis community. Tickets are \$15. Children ages 10 and younger attend for free.

memphislunarnewyear.com

KINGSPORT

Feb. 11

Moonrise and Moon Pies

Watch the full moon rise above the high forested ridges of Warriors' Path State Park. February's full moon is called the Full Snow Moon. Whether or not it snows, participants enjoy a fine 2-mile hike through the gathering dusk and then salute the rising moon with a Moon Pie. Dress for the weather and wear good hiking boots. It's a mostly uphill hike to the view, with a few steep

and rocky places. Also, bring a flashlight for the walk back down. Meet at the former stables parking area at 5:30 p.m. Sign up soon, as space is limited.

tnstateparks.com

RIPLEY

Feb. 22

6th Annual Yard and Garden Expo

The Master Gardeners of Lauderdale County invite everyone to Ripley High School for this annual event. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. with speaker Jim Crowder at 9 a.m. and a horticulture expert panel at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10.

facebook.com/lauderdaletnextension

MANCHESTER

March 8

Guided Tour of the Ancient Enclosure

Join Ranger Indiana and explore the prehistoric Native American walls at Old Stone Fort. Along this hike, learn about those who built the walls, why they are important and the history of Old Stone Fort. Enjoy the sights and sounds of nature, passing three waterfalls along the way. This hike is approximately 1.25 miles long, takes around 1.5 hours to complete and is considered easy-moderate. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots are suggested, as this is a natural dirt trail. Meet at the museum room at 11 a.m.

tnstateparks.com/events



PIGEON FORGE

Feb. 28-March 2

Chuckwagon Cookoff

Pigeon Forge invites Western lifestyle enthusiasts, foodies and those in search of a hearty meal to this three-day event that includes a dinner concert, cowboy church and the annual cook-off competition. Chuck wagons gather at Clabough's Campground for this one-of-a-kind outdoor cooking event. Long before today's food truck craze, early American chuck wagons fed hungry cowboys on the open prairies during cattle drives. Chuck wagon cooks, or cookies as they are known, rely on simple ingredients to guide their menus and fire to power their ovens.

mypigeonforge.com

Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share an event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents, or scan the QR Code, to submit the details.

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



Take part in a grand parade of ducks at The

Peabody Memphis



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PEABODY MEMPHIS

What Is It?

Located in the heart of downtown Memphis, The Peabody Memphis is a grand, historic hotel known for its daily Duck March. Each morning, guests gather in the lobby to watch as the ducks parade into the lobby fountain.

History

The original Peabody Hotel opened in 1869. It relocated a few blocks from its initial spot in 1925. Its connection with ducks came in the '30s, when then-General Manager Frank Schutt and a friend returned from a hunting trip. On a whim, they placed some of the live duck decoys they used while hunting into the hotel's lobby fountain, and a tradition began.

In the Site

There are five Peabody Ducks—all North American mallards. Every day, a Peabody Duckmaster guides the Peabody Ducks across a red carpet and into the lobby fountain at 11 a.m. They stay until 5 p.m. When not in the fountain, the ducks live in a Royal Duck Palace on the hotel's roof—a \$200,000 marble and glass home with its own fountain.

Outside the Hotel

Whether staying at the Peabody or just passing through, the hotel's central location in Memphis puts you close to many other things to do. Visit the National Civil Rights Museum or Graceland, or just walk down Beale Street. If you're looking for more ideas, consider asking the hotel's concierge for other activities.

More Info

The hotel advises guests to arrive 30 minutes before the Duck March to find a good viewing spot. For information on room reservations and to start planning your trip, visit www.peabodymemphis.com or call 901-529-4000.

The Nature of Soils

Have you ever been outside on a beautiful day, in complete awe over the wonders of nature? Whether you are in a mature forest in the Smoky Mountains, a pollinator garden in Nashville, a cornfield along the Mississippi River or sitting on a blanket in your backyard, each location shares something in common: soil.

Soil can be easily overlooked as we appreciate the vegetation around us, as well as the fruits of our gardening labor. It plays a critical role in producing healthy plants and a healthy ecosystem, and it should be understood and properly cared for. As the winter sets in and you begin planning your spring garden, be sure to consider the following information to help you better understand and manage your soil.

What is soil?

Before we talk about basic soil care and health, it is important to explain what soil is. At a basic level, soil is a mix of solids, liquids and gases. The solids consist primarily of minerals and organic matter.

Soil is ultimately formed by five factors: parent material, biological activity, climate, topography and time. The different variables make soils unique to their locations. While all of these factors are important, time is worth a special note. Soil requires a long time to develop. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 1 inch of soil can take up to 1,000 years to form. Contrast that with the work of a bulldozer blade, which can remove several feet of soil with only one pass across the land.

Soil Care and Health

If you are just getting started on a plan to better manage your soil health, consider submitting your soil to the UT Soil, Plant and Pest

Center for testing. A basic test can tell you the soil pH and nutrient levels, which helps identify which amendments you can add to improve it. That test is normally sufficient for most people, but you can also have the lab evaluate the organic matter content, soluble salts, texture and heavy metals for an additional cost.

Two easy ways to better care for your soil include reducing compaction and regularly adding organic matter. Compaction is a common problem in areas with recent construction or equipment activity. When soil is compressed, air and water leave the pore space. Compacted soils make it difficult for plants to send out roots and inhibit water movement, among other problems. To reduce compaction and improve your soil quality, consider aeration or tillage and adding around a half-inch layer of quality compost. Aeration and tillage mechanically break up the compaction, while the compost adds organic matter to the soil, improving the overall soil structure as it breaks down.

This is just a small snapshot of the wonderful world of soils. If you would like to learn more, check out your local UT-TSU Extension office for more resources. ■

This article was written with information from "North Carolina Extension Master Gardener Handbook Chapter 1. Soils & Plant Nutrients." Read more at tinyurl.com/gardenerhandbook.



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.



'Tis the Season to Be Jolly—and Vigilant

12 ways to protect yourself from grinchers trying to take advantage

- 1. Check your list—and your sites—twice:** Be cautious when clicking on ads, especially on social media, as they may lead to fake websites. Look for “https” in the URL for security.
- 2. Know when an ad is naughty or nice:** If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. You might receive an item that’s not as advertised—or nothing at all.
- 3. Gift yourself some peace of mind:** Read customer reviews before you buy something online. Be sure to verify that the product being reviewed is the same as the one you’re considering.
- 4. Swipe wisely for seasonal shopping:** When making a purchase online, consider using a credit card instead of a debit card. One of the best perks of credit cards is fraud protection.
- 5. Don’t let fake messages fill your holidays with fear:** Be wary of texts or emails claiming issues with your accounts. Report them as spam, and don’t click on any links.
- 6. Deck the halls, not your inbox:** Check sender emails for errors and avoid suspicious links. Verify sales on retailer websites.
- 7. Furry friend or scheming foe?** Check the legitimacy of a pet ad by doing a reverse image search. You can also find reputable breeders online through the American Kennel Club, or go to your local animal shelter. Remember, getting a pet is a lifetime commitment.
- 8. Be wary of Santa’s sneaky apps:** Not all Santa apps are jolly. “Free” apps may steal your info, contain hidden fees or even contain malware.
- 9. Hang up stockings and hang up on scam callers:** Don’t give out personal information over the phone. Scammers often impersonate authorities, utility companies and even family members.
- 10. Guard your Christmas cookies—and your info:** Create unique passwords for each account and enable multifactor authentication for extra security.
- 11. Give the gift of vigilance:** Research charities to make sure they’re legitimate, and use a credit card for online donations to protect yourself from fraud.
- 12. Know when to call the authorities:** If you suspect you’ve been scammed, contact your bank, change your passwords and contact local authorities.

ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY ELENAMEDVEVA PAJAROS VOLANDO, SUNNY_NSK, JAVA



McNABB'S FUDGE *Recipe*

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2½ cups sugar | 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate morsels |
| ¾ cup margarine (1½ sticks) | 1 7 oz. jar marshmallow creme |
| ¾ cup evaporated milk | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 1 cup milk chocolate morsels | |

Recipe compliments of retired EU employee, Charles McNabb.

DIRECTIONS:

Grease an 8x12-inch baking dish with margarine.

In a large, heavy pot, bring margarine, sugar and evaporated milk to a boil, stirring constantly until it reaches 234 F on a candy thermometer.

Stir chocolate morsels until melted. Add vanilla and mix well. Stir in marshmallow creme until completely mixed. Spread evenly in prepared dish.

Let stand at room temperature for 4 hours before cutting into squares. Store in an air-tight container.



Employee Spotlight

SHAWN TREADWAY

Job Title: Certified Utility Worker/
Pipe Fitter

Years at EU: 14

Favorite part of the job:

"My favorite part about my job is new construction."



HOLLIE BENARD

Job Title: Customer Service
Representative

Years at EU: 13

Favorite part of the job:

"My favorite part of my job is having the best coworkers to work alongside. Their positivity and commitment make every day more enjoyable and allow us to provide the best service to our customers."



CURTIS EDWARDS

Job Title: Certified Utility Worker/
Pipe Fitter

Years at EU: 12

Favorite part of the job:

"My favorite parts about my job are helping customers in a time of need and working outside."



Welcome to Our Team



NOAH TILSON
Groundman/Operator



JAMES ARWOOD
Lineman

National Engineers Week FEBRUARY 18-24



GET OUTSIDE

Some monster catfish in the Tennessee River can weigh up to 100 pounds. PHOTO BY JOHN N. FELSHER



River Monster

Anglers might battle giants on Tennessee River lakes

By John N. Felsler

Legendary for its monster catfish, the Tennessee River can produce blue cats topping 100 pounds, as well as some huge flatheads. Some of the best catfish action in the Volunteer State occurs in Lake Chickamauga and Watts Bar Lake.

Named for the Chickamauga Cherokees of the area, Lake Chickamauga snakes for about 59 miles along the Tennessee River between Watts Bar Dam, north of Decatur, and Chickamauga Dam in Chattanooga. The serpentine impoundment covers about 36,240 acres and offers anglers 810 shoreline miles. Chickamauga Creek, the Hiwassee River and several other tributaries flow into the system.

On the other side of Watts Bar Dam, Watts Bar Lake continues for 72 miles to Fort Loudoun Dam at Lenoir City and covers 39,000 acres. It derives its name from Watts Island, once a river landmark, now just a submerged sandbar near Watts Bar Dam. The lake offers anglers 722 shoreline miles and drops to more than 100 feet deep in places. The Clinch and Emory rivers feed into it.

Anglers might catch big cats practically anywhere in the Tennessee River, but the best whiskerfish action usually comes in the tailraces below the dams. Water passing through the dams stirs up baitfish and incites fish-feeding frenzies. When the water doesn't run, try fishing the deep holes near the dams.

Catfish eat almost anything, but the biggest blues prefer fish. With thousands of taste buds per square inch in its skin, a catfish swims through the water like a giant tongue, tasting everything. It can detect minute food particles or scents over long distances. Catfish can even detect live prey with tiny natural "scanners" in their heads. Every living cell emits a minuscule electrical field.

Catfish use their electrosensors to detect prey at night or in muddy water.

Skipjack, a type of large river herring, makes an outstanding catfish bait. Toss the tail into the water for chum, and use the head and gut section so the juices ooze out. Catfish follow those juices. Live, whole or chunked, shad also make great catfish bait.

When the current runs too strong, head downstream to look for flathead catfish. Flatheads can exceed 80 pounds. Several creeks flow into the lakes. Big catfish often gather near creek mouths and points on the main channel. Ravenous predators, flatheads normally eat shad, bluegills, skipjack, bullheads and other catfish. Flatheads hunker down in woody cover and ambush any fish that swim too close. They prefer live fish but also eat fish chunks.

For some delicious fillets, try for channel cats. Widespread and abundant, channel catfish look similar to blue cats but don't reach such gigantic sizes. Most run in the 1- to 5-pound range, but channel cats can exceed 50 pounds.

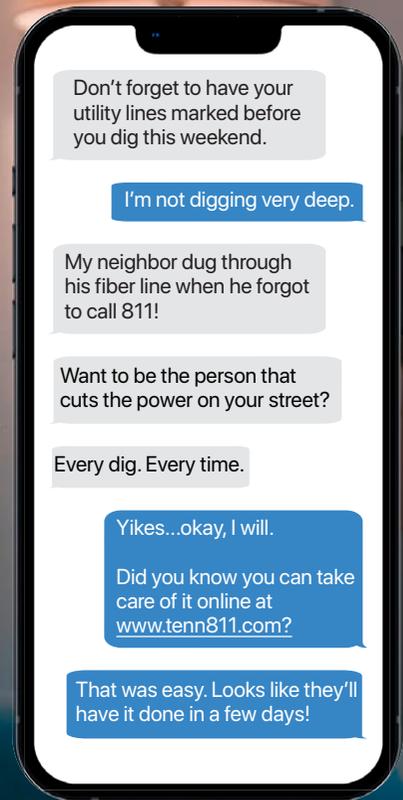
Channel catfish eat just about anything. Some excellent baits include crickets, shrimp, nightcrawlers, minnows, fish pieces, clams, dough balls, crawfish, cheese, livers, commercial stink or blood baits. For channel catfish, place fish baits on the bottom or under a float. ■



John N. Felsler is a professional freelance writer, broadcaster, photographer, editor and consultant. An avid sportsman, he's written more than 3,600 articles for more than 170 different magazines on a wide variety of outdoors topics. He also hosts an outdoors tips show for WAVH-FM Talk 106.5 radio station in Mobile, Alabama. Contact him at j.felsler@hotmail.com or through Facebook.



**SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS.
EVERY DIG. EVERY TIME.**



Don't forget to have your utility lines marked before you dig this weekend.

I'm not digging very deep.

My neighbor dug through his fiber line when he forgot to call 811!

Want to be the person that cuts the power on your street?

Every dig. Every time.

Yikes...okay, I will.

Did you know you can take care of it online at www.tenn811.com?

That was easy. Looks like they'll have it done in a few days!

Throw Yourself a Bone

Full tang stainless steel blade with natural bone handle —now **ONLY \$79!**

If you're on the hunt for a knife that combines impeccable craftsmanship with a sense of wonder, the **\$79 Huntsman Blade** is the trophy you're looking for. While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

Huntsman Blade \$249*

Offer Code Price Only \$79 + S&P Save \$170

1-800-333-2045

Your Insider Offer Code: HBK257-01

You must use the insider offer code to get our special price.



Rating of A+

Stauer® 14091 Southcross Drive W., Dept. HBK257-01
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337 www.stauer.com

**Discount is only for customers who use the offer code versus the listed original Stauer.com price.*

California residents please call 1-800-333-2045 regarding Proposition 65 regulations before purchasing this product.

• 12" overall length; 6 1/2" stainless steel full tang blade • Genuine bone handle with brass hand guard & bolsters • Includes genuine leather sheath

Stauer... *Afford the Extraordinary.®*

**EXCLUSIVE
FREE**

Stauer® 8x21
Compact
Binoculars
-a \$99 value-
with purchase of
Huntsman Blade



**What Stauer Clients
Are Saying About
Our Knives**



"This knife is beautiful!"

— J., La Crescent, MN



PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FRANKLIN, TN
PERMIT No. 351

www.e-u.cc

OFFICE:

244 Love St.
Erwin, TN 37650

PHONE:

423-743-1820

TN-200

REPORT POWER OUTAGES:

Call 423-743-1820 and select Option 1, or use EUConnect, our web portal or mobile app.

BUSINESS HOURS:

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday

PRESIDENT & CEO:

Lee Brown

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Tom D. Harris, Chairman
Russell D. Brackins, Member
D. Scott Charles, Member
Gary Chandler, Member
B. Kevin Horton, Member

MISSION STATEMENT:

Making a difference through safe, reliable and efficient service.

OFFICE CLOSINGS:

Christmas: Dec. 24-25
New Year's Day: Jan 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Jan. 20

Manage your account
like never before!



Follow us on social media!



Tell us what you think about this edition of TN Connections, and you could win a \$50 Visa gift card!

SCHEDULE YOUR INSTALL NOW!
423-743-1820 or e-u.cc/fiber

Erwin
Fiber

We're here for you—
today, tomorrow... *always.*