

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Plan Now for Conference!

As your city is planning the coming fiscal year's budget, you'll want to include travel for you, your officials and employees to attend our 85th TML Annual Conference! Chattanooga will proudly host officials from across the state August 2nd – 5th. Conference registration will open in just a few weeks, but plan now to attend.

TML is proud to announce one of our keynote speakers for the conference, a person who's influence and positive messages has inspired millions globally – Coach Donnie Campbell. Who is Coach Campbell? Campbell was the high school basketball coach of actor, screenwriter and comedian Jason Sudeikis. Sudeikis brought the fictional character Ted Lasso to

life and into the hearts of millions around the world. Sudeikis has attributed many of leadership and motivational messages, a hallmark of the Ted Lasso character, back to Campbell. With the welcomed news in recent weeks of the return of the Emmy winning series for a fourth season, TML Conference attendees will receive an insider's access to the messages that not only helped propel the Ted Lasso series into a global success, but can be applied every day at city hall.

You will not want to miss it!

Anthony Haynes
TML Executive Director

10 fatalities result from extreme weather across Tennessee



Tornadoes followed by heavy rains and flooding were reported across West and Middle Tennessee from Thursday, April 3 to Sunday, April 6, as well as ongoing flash flooding across the state. Pictured above is Damage to the Purdy Place Apartments in Selmer (Photo by Jamar Coach/Jackson Sun)

By KATE COIL
TT&C Assistant Editor

Ten deaths have been reported, and Gov. Bill Lee has declared a state of emergency following an overnight outbreak of tornadoes in the early morning hours of Thursday, April 3, and Saturday, April 5, and ongoing flash flooding across the state.

In response to Gov. Lee's state of emergency declaration, FEMA has been authorized to make federal disaster assistance available to supplement local response efforts in all 95 counties. Assistance will be pro-

vided for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and direct federal assistance.

The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) confirmed 10 deaths in West Tennessee: one in Carroll County, two in Fayette, five in McNairy, one in Obion, and one in Tipton County. Tennessee reported the highest fatality rate from the storms with a total of 19 deaths reported nationwide.

The National Weather Service (NWS) confirmed four tornadoes in West Tennessee and three tornadoes in Middle Tennessee on April 3.

Nashville and Memphis both broke previous rain records for April 3 with Nashville more than doubling its previous record. Residents in Bartlett and Collierville reported receiving quarter-sized hail.

On April 5, a tornado was confirmed in Cross Plains with another confirmed near Lobelville. As of the morning of April 6, Clarksville had received more than 10 inches of rain with both the Cumberland and Red Rivers overflowing their banks. The Cumberland in Clarksville crested in the evening of April 6 at 50.7 feet – See **WEATHER** on Page 6



TML 85th Annual Conference Chattanooga Convention Center August 2-5, 2025

City officials, don't miss your opportunity to be part of the premier event designed exclusively for Tennessee's municipal leaders—the 85th Tennessee Municipal League Annual Conference in vibrant Chattanooga! This is your chance to join fellow leaders from across the state who are tackling the same challenges and shaping the future of their communities.

Engage with dynamic keynote speakers, explore innovative solutions to emerging municipal issues, and dive into practical workshops that will empower your city to thrive (CMFO and Utility Board Training credits available). And that's not all—our expansive exhibit hall showcases the top companies and services tailored to Tennessee's cities and towns, offering you valuable resources and partnerships to better serve your community.

Registration to open next month - so be sure to watch your email for more conference information!

Nominations open for 2025 TML Achievement Awards

Each year the Tennessee Municipal League honors cities throughout the state for overall excellence, specific outstanding programs, improvement or department accomplishments.

The awards program gives cities and towns the recognition they deserve for superior and innovative efforts in local government. Any Tennessee city who is a member of the Tennessee Municipal League is eligible to submit an award nomination.

The awards committee comprised of municipal elected officials, past award recipients, TML board members and MTAS consultants will review the nominations and select the final award winners. Winners will be notified prior to the Annual Awards Breakfast which coincides with the TML Annual Conference.

The League disseminated a call for nominations on April 1 that included [a digital nomination form](#). Nominations will close on Friday, May 2.

TML Award Categories

1. Excellence in Economic and Community Development
2. Excellence in Energy Efficiency and Conservation
3. Excellence in Fire Service
4. Excellence in Parks and Recreation
5. Excellence in overall Municipal Governance
6. Excellence in Police Service
7. Innovation Award
8. Small Town Progress

Criteria

- The award honors a municipality which has developed unique and creative programs that have increased the efficiency and effectiveness of local government.
- The project or department's accomplishments have made a significant impact on their city and its residents.
- The nomination is of an original

project or program which has been successfully implemented and may serve as a model for other communities.

- The nomination should include a brief abstract that explains how the program has resulted in increased efficiency in the administration of local government, improved delivery of services to citizens, and/or cost savings to the city.
- The municipality must be a member of the Tennessee Municipal League and participates in and is supportive of TML and its mission.
- The recipient must attend and register for the TML Annual Conference.

UTC initiative brings law enforcement, academics together to fight violent crime

By KATE COIL

A new research center at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga is bringing academics and law enforcement together, using data to tackle violent crime.

The Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI), based within UTC's Criminal Justice Department, unites students, faculty, community organizations, and law enforcement to research and develop policies aimed at reducing violence.

Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt, UC Foundation associate professor and head of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, is himself a former police officer and said the VRI brings researchers and officers together to create data-informed solutions.

"I didn't want to call this a research center, because it is an initiative," Dierenfeldt said. "I want this to be treated as a process. There isn't a start and a stop. It isn't just a physical location. This is a new mentality about embracing data-informed evidence-based practices" See **UTC** on Page 4



Dr. Rick Dierenfeldt, UC Foundation associate professor and head of the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, with one of his criminal justice classes. Dierenfeldt is the head of the Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI), based within UTC's Criminal Justice Department, which unites students, faculty, community organizations, and law enforcement to research and develop policies aimed at reducing violence.

Police departments must meet federal cybersecurity standards to access important databases

By KATE COIL

Police departments without proper cyber security measures in place could lose access to valuable state and federal databases that provide information about sex offenders, warrants, licensing data, missing persons reports, gang and terrorist watchlists, criminal histories, and other important data.

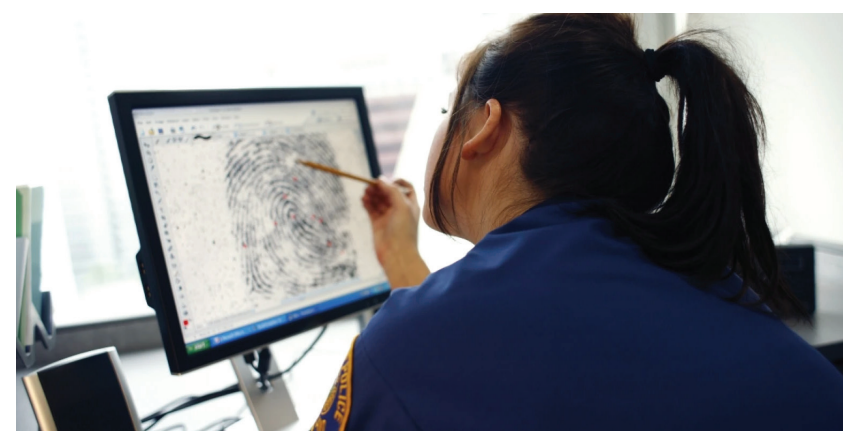
The FBI's [Criminal Justice Information Services](#) (CJIS) has modernized its own security policy to better align with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) framework as well as protect important data from cyber criminals.

This database includes fingerprinting, the [National Criminal Information Center](#) (NCIC), and other resources the FBI makes available to state and local law enforcement.

The CJIS database also funnels information into state databases, such as the TBI's Tennessee Incident Based Reporting System (TIBRS).

[VC3](#) Account Executive McKenzie Walton discussed how these new policies could impact police departments across the state at TML's Legislative Conference in Nashville. Walton said departments could lose access to valuable data if they or vendors who serve their agency for cybersecurity are not in compliance with the new [FBI CJIS Security Policy](#).

"What that means for your municipality is that you cannot do national crime background checks, look at fingerprints or the sex offender registry," Walton said. "That is all accessed through TBI databases, which are mandated by CJIIS. Municipalities are frequent focuses of cyberattacks due to their limited budgets. Being in



Fingerprint databases may be inaccessible to police departments who do not meet new CJIS cybersecurity measures.

compliance with these measures are super important. We need to start the compliance process. The worst thing that could happen is the TBI comes in and does an audit, finds you aren't in compliance, and you no longer have access to these resources you desperately need to have a functioning police

department. You can also be fined or be breached."

Walton said a municipality she worked with recently had their police department's computer systems breached and all of the police reports were frozen.

Not only did the department See **CJIS** on Page 4

NEWS ACROSS TENNESSEE



BOLIVAR

A new hospital is coming to Bolivar. West Tennessee Healthcare will replace its current, 51-year-old facility that serves as the only hospital in Hardeman County through a \$9,610,000 grant awarded by the Tennessee Department of Health Healthcare Resiliency Program Capital Investment Program. The new facility will be constructed on land gifted to the company by the city of Bolivar with construction beginning in late summer. The building will have inpatient beds, outpatient services and an emergency room designed to meet current and future needs of Bolivar and surrounding rural areas, according to West Tennessee Healthcare. It will also include negative pressure isolation rooms in preparation for future highly infectious disease outbreaks.

BRISTOL

Officials have opened a new Story Book Trail in Bristol's scenic Steele Creek Park as part of efforts to promote childhood literacy. Located along the arboretum path to the Lakeside Trail, the project was funded with a grant from the Governor's Early Literacy Foundation (GELF) at the request of the Appalachian Literacy Initiative (ALI), the trail includes child-height panels that change every three months as a new book is featured. The first Storybook Trail was launched by GELF at Long Hunter State Park in 2018 through a partnership with the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy. The program has since expanded across the state to include state and city parks, as well as other outdoor spaces. As part of its mission to enhance access to books for children in our region, the nonprofit ALI asked GELF to fund a Storybook Trail in Bristol at the 2200-acre Steele Creek Park. Park officials helped choose the ideal location. The Storybook Trail begins near the Bristol Host Lions Club Shelter (Shelter F), running along the arboretum path to Lakeside Trail.

CHATTANOOGA

The Chattanooga Fire Department and Hamilton County Emergency Management have unveiled a state-of-the-art \$3 million fire training tower. The new facility will provide realistic, hands-on training to ensure the city's crews are ready for any emergency. The tower replaces an older facility that was 50 years old and demolished in 2023. The new 8,053-square-foot tower includes six stories, multiple burn rooms and allows the department to create live fires, smoke, and sound generations that will recreate environments firefighters deal with in real life.

CLARKSVILLE

The Restoring Clarksville Initiative, a new task force established by Clarksville Mayor Joe Pitts, has hit its first milestone, assisting in the demolition of two abandoned properties along Fort Campbell Boulevard. Led by Ward 2 City Councilman Deanna McLaughlin, the initiative brings a proactive, community-driven approach to restoring economic and aesthetic value to Clarksville neighborhoods in need of assistance. Goals of the initiative include improving aesthetics and public safety as well as economic benefits to neighborhoods. The program involves multiple city departments to revitalize neglected areas, improve lighting, remove abandoned structures, restoring and rehabilitating existing properties, and targeting community resources.

COLLIERVILLE

Moody's Ratings has reaffirmed the town of Collierville's prestigious Aaa bond rating with a "No Outlook" indicator, confirming the town's exceptional fiscal health and financial stability. Moody's annual review evaluates four key areas when assessing ratings: economy/tax base, finances, management, and debt/pension obligations. A "No Outlook" designation signifies that the agency has no concerns in any of these areas, which is a strong endorsement of the town's responsible financial stewardship. The rating signals to investors that Collierville is a secure, low-risk

investment, ultimately allowing the town to borrow at lower interest rates and save taxpayer dollars. Collierville joins the Tennessee municipalities of Brentwood, Franklin, Germantown, and Smyrna in receiving this rating.

FRANKLIN

Both Moody's and Standard & Poor's Ratings Services have given the city of Franklin their top rating (AAA) for Franklin's expected \$43.5 million series 2025 general obligation (GO) bonds. In assigning the AAA rating, the top rating available, the rating agencies cited the city's healthy financial position marked by high available fund balance and liquidity ratios, stable and affluent tax base and a continued conservative budgeting and strong revenue performance. Franklin will use the bond proceeds to fund various capital projects throughout the city, headlined by a new park located in southeast Franklin, Pearl M. Bransford Municipal Complex that will be outfitted with athletics sites and other recreational amenities. The city will also use proceeds for improvements to McEwen Road and the purchase of replacement fire apparatus. The 2025 GO bonds mark the first time in nearly six years that the city of Franklin has issued General Obligation debt.

GALLATIN

Officials dedicated the newly completed Mid-Field Apron at the Music City Executive Airport (MCEA) in Gallatin. The airport has received more than \$7 million in modernization and safety upgrades as a result with the new apron project facilitating nine new corporate hangars. Through revenue generated from land leases and fuel flowage fees, the airport has the potential to realize an increase of over \$200,000 to its revenue. The airport has also received \$10 million from the state for the construction of a new terminal with added ramp space for aircraft parking, a new fuel facility, security/wildlife fencing and expansion to the east side of the airport to accommodate more corporate and t-hangars to support general aviation.

GOODLETTSVILLE

Goodlettsville Parks and Recreation has added two AEDs to the parks system that are accessible 24/7 for public use. One is placed at Moss-Wright Park, centrally located at the football fields, and another is at the Peay Park Pickleball courts. The goal is to ensure life-saving equipment is readily available in an emergency and to give greater peace of mind to the community. The existing eight AEDs are strategically placed across parks facilities in secure areas accessible by staff or department partners during events and activities. These locations include: Moss-Wright Park concession stand, baseball quad concession stand, football concession stand and the maintenance shop. They are also located at Peay Park's Delmas Long Community Center and splash pad and also at Pleasant Green swimming pool. This is a pilot program, and if successful, staff will assess the feasibility of expanding public access to AEDs in additional locations.

KNOXVILLE

The Knoxville City Council has approved two initiatives that will enhance both mobility and public safety. The first is providing the \$315,698 to Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson Inc., to provide professional design services for a critical greenway connection known as the Riverwalk Greenway Connection. The project will link the riverwalk at the Gay Street and Henley bridges with the Cityview Greenway to the west, making possible a 0.8-mile seamless greenway that connects One Riverwalk, 303 Flats, Cityview, and eventually the new 348-apartment Livano Knoxville communities, as well as new development around a planned pedestrian bridge spanning the Tennessee River. The second project grants \$195,052 for Superior Pavement Marking Inc. to install or improve 7,700 feet of crosswalk markings, 3,650 feet of stop line markings,

Clarksville deploys LiDAR for safer streets



Clarksville's Street Department has begun to deploy Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) remote sensing technology in its pursuit of safer travel for the public throughout the city. Mayor Joe Pitts ceremonially turned on the technology to launch the program that partners the Clarksville Street Department, Austin Peay State University, and Vanderbilt University to better study how traffic incidents occur and what can be done to prevent them. LiDAR technology uses pulsed light not visible to the human eye to precisely measure distances to objects, creating detailed 3D models. LiDAR technology is not to be confused with license plate readers, red light cameras, speed trailers, or other devices used in law enforcement that most motorists are likely more familiar with. It allows members of the Street Department to understand the habits of all travelers (cars, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.) and how these behaviors can be used to achieve safer streets and highways. The remote sensor will rotate through various locations in the city every couple of weeks to study various street and highway intersections of interest. The data collected can be used to better inform signal timings to optimize traffic flow and ultimately help reduce vehicle crashes, as well as assist the city with future planning for multi-modal pathways.

Columbia unveils Female Institute historic marker



Officials with the city of Columbia have unveiled a new historical marker at the site of the former Columbia Female Institute, now the Columbia Plaza. The institute played a significant role in the history of education for women in the region, established in 1834 by a group of prominent Episcopalian families from St. Peter's Church. The institute was known for offering courses like geology, chemistry, and physics that were traditionally only offered to male students. The Institute closed down in 1932 due to the Great Depression and was repurposed for a variety of uses, including housing WPA workers, a local business college, and a nursery school. It was destroyed by fire in 1959.

Mt. Juliet expresses hope for hometown astronaut



Officials with the Mt. Juliet Police and Fire Departments as well as local residents gathered to show their support for Mt. Juliet native Astronaut Capt. Barry "Butch" Wilmore, who was aboard the International Space Station (ISS) for nine months alongside fellow Astronaut Capt. Suni Williams. The pair was expected to stay on the ISS for an eight-day test flight but had to remain aboard the station after the Boeing Starliner spacecraft they were testing on its maiden crewed voyage suffered propulsion issues and was deemed unfit to return them to earth. Mt. Juliet Police Lt. Sean Ronan and Deputy Fire Chief Joey Edwards placed a wreath of yellow ribbons and flowers at the tribute display to Williams, expressing hope and prayers for Wilmore's safe return as the mission to return Wilmore and Williams to Earth began.

and 80 shared lane markings as part of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Pavement Marking Project.

LAFOLLETTE

The city of LaFollette has received a \$2,875,000 Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) to improve water infrastructure. The loan was approved by the Tennessee Local Development Authority. of LaFollette loan comes from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program. It will address waterline extensions and the construction of a booster pump station. The loan has a 20-year term at 1.32 percent interest. The city of LaFollette received \$1,437,500 in principal forgiveness with the remainder of the loan amount to be paid back as principal.

SPRING HILL

The city of Spring Hill has approved the \$8 million purchase to develop a new water reservoir. The Spring Hill Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved the purchase of the 111-acre property adjacent to Interstate 65 as well as the donation of an additional 45 acres of land for the project. The purchase is part of the city's Advanced Purification Project aimed at meeting increased water and wastewater needs.

STANTON

Employees have begun reporting to the BlueOval SK Battery plant in Stanton. The site is still under construction and equipment installation remains ongoing with production on schedule to start later this year. Employees have already begun to report to the company's corporate office in Shelby County.

Market demand and customer orders will determine when battery production begins in full. Ford and SK have remained committed to the \$5.6 billion investment to build a 3,600-acre mega campus.

TULLAHOMA

CG Model Tek LLC officials announced the company will expand its manufacturing operations to Tullahoma. CG Model Tek will invest \$4.5 million and create 32 jobs through the project, which includes purchasing the assets of longtime Tullahoma company, Micro Craft. CG Model Tek will operate similarly to Micro Craft, serving the aerospace and defense industry. A pioneering startup in the aerospace modeling design industry, the company provides prototyping or full-scale production.



PEOPLE

Major Todd Christian has been appointed the assistant police chief of the Dickson Police Department by Chief Seth Lyles. A 24-year law enforcement veteran, Christian takes over the position from Lyles who took over as chief following the retirement of Chief Jeff Lewis. Christian has been with the department since August 2000, serving as a patrolman, corporal, sergeant, patrol lieutenant, captain of the Special Operations Division, major and as an instructor at DPD. Since September 2021, Christian served as a network coordinator for the Tennessee Highway Safety Office, where he works with Law Enforcement Liaisons to promote, coordinate and implement THSO's initiatives and programs. In January 2023, he was named director of the city's new Office of Emergency Management with the responsibility of creating and implementing the city's response plans for natural and man-made disasters.



Todd Christian

lor's, master's and doctoral degree from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville with his Ph.D. focused on education and social sciences. He also served as a middle and high school social studies teacher as well as a K-12 natural history museum educator.



Matthew Hensley

Anthony McClain, the Nashville Police Department's North Precinct Commander, died from complications of a heart attack on Sunday, March 9, 2025, at the age of 53. A 27-year veteran of the Metro Nashville Police Department, McClain had been the head of the North Precinct since 2021. A fixture at community events in the precinct, he served in the U.S. Air Force from 1989 to 1994 before earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Tennessee State University in May 1997. He was hired by the Metro Police Department in August 1997 and served as a patrolman, detective in the Domestic Violence and Sex Abuse Units, and was promoted to sergeant in 2007, lieutenant in 2012, and captain in 2020. He supervised the North, South, and West Precincts as well as the Specialized Investigations Division's Narcotics Unit during his career.



Anthony McClain

Kathy Dillon, former city manager of Union City, died March 11, 2025, at the age of 67 after a long battle with cancer. Dillon began her career in local government in 1991, serving as a city clerk, city treasurer, and ultimately city manager. She joined the city of Union City in 2007 and began serving as its interim city manager in 2009. She accepted the role full-time in 2010, a role she held until her retirement in 2013. A native of Michigan, she earned her bachelor's degree from Bethel University. She was also among the first graduating class of CMFO's in Tennessee.



Kathy Dillon

Jason Gage has been named the new city manager of Brentwood, taking over the role from City Manager Kirk Bednar who retired after more than 24 years serving the city of Brentwood. Gage has more than 30 years of experience in municipal government management and comes to Brentwood from Springfield, Mo., where he spent six years as city manager. A credentialed member of ICMA, Gage has served as city manager for Salina, Kan.; Stillwater, Okla.; and De Soto, Mo. A southwest Missouri native, he holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Missouri Southern State University and a master's in public administration from the University of Missouri. In 2013, he received the Buford M. Watson Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Management from the Kansas Association of City/County Management, the highest honor for a city manager in Kansas.



Jason Gage

Patrick Smith has been appointed to fill the municipal judge vacancy in Ashland City following the death of long-time city Judge Bill Stinnett Jr, who died in January. Smith is an Ashland City native who holds degrees from Middle Tennessee State University and the Nashville School of Law. He is the grandson of former Ashland City Mayor Avery Roberts. Smith also previously served on the Ashland City Town Council from 1999 to 2003. He will fill the remainder of Stinnett's term, which ends in 2030.



Patrick Smith

Major Scott Winfree has been selected as the next chief of the Cookeville Police Department following the announcement of Chief Randy Evans' retirement. Winfree has been with the Cookeville Police Department since 1989 and has served as a major since 2017. A Putnam county native, Winfree is a graduate of both Tennessee Tech, the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Academy, and the FBI National Academy.



Scott Winfree

Angie Henderson, vice mayor of Nashville, has been selected as a member of the 2025 Champions Institute as part of Smart Growth America's (SGA) Active People, Healthy Nation program. The Champions Institute is a program created to help local elected officials define, design, build, and evaluate Complete Streets in their communities. Vice Mayor Henderson is one of 14 local elected officials selected from across the United States and its territories. After participants complete their work in the Champions Institute, SGA will provide continuing support to the local champions as they serve their communities.



Angie Henderson

Tyler Williams has been promoted to the assistant city manager and chief financial officer for the town of Mount Carmel. Williams will continue to serve as city recorder but will take on an expanded role in managing day-to-day activities such as budget, public relations and communications, and internal services. He has been with the town since 2024. Prior to that, he served as the city recorder for the town of Unicoi and worked as a private banker at First Horizon Bank. He holds a bachelor's degree from Carson-Newman University and a law degree from the University of Tennessee.



Tyler Williams

Kelly McKinley joins League staff

Kelly McKinley has joined the Tennessee Municipal League as the new assistant director of communications and digital communications specialist.

Originally from South Georgia and a longtime Gallatin resident, McKinley brings a strong background in digital strategy, public affairs, and nonprofit communications.

McKinley, through her consulting company White Oak Consulting, has worked with elected officials across Tennessee including State Sen. Ferrell Haile's re-election campaign, as well as former United Nations Ambassador Kelly Craft's



Kelly McKinley

campaign for Governor of Kentucky. McKinley has held various leadership roles in the nonprofit sector. Her experience across both public

and nonprofit sectors makes her a valuable addition to the TML team.

"I am honored to join the incredible team at TML and be part of an organization that champions Tennessee's municipalities," McKinley said. "I look forward to working alongside a great staff and helping shine a light on the people, progress, and partnerships that make our cities and towns so special."

"We are pleased to have Kelly McKinley join our team," TML Executive Director Anthony Haynes said. "She brings a depth of experience in all formats of digital communications, especially in the political arena."

Comptroller Mumpower, office recognized with USA Today National Leadership Award

Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury Jason E. Mumpower has been recognized as one of the nation's top leaders after receiving the 2025 *USA Today* Top Workplaces Leadership Award.

The award was presented to Comptroller Mumpower during a special awards ceremony in Las Vegas. This prestigious recognition is based on employee feedback. Comptroller Mumpower was awarded as the country's Top Leader for employers with 500-999 employees.

Since 2021, Mumpower has led a staff of more than 600 people in the Comptroller's Office who serve to make government work better for all Tennesseans by ensuring fiscal responsibility and accountability in state and local government entities.

During the same event, the Tennessee Comptroller's Office was also

recognized as the nation's No. 3 Top Workplace by *USA Today* for employers with 500-999 employees.

The award is based upon survey results indicating a high level of employee engagement and workplace satisfaction within the Comptroller's Office. This is the fifth consecutive year the Office has been designated as a Top Workplace at the national level.

"It has always been important to me that we take care of our staff members who take care of the people of Tennessee," said Comptroller Mumpower. "By ensuring our employees are engaged and fulfilled within their jobs, I know they are more productive in carrying out our important work. I'm honored to be recognized with this national award."



Comptroller Jason Mumpower receives 2025 *USA Today* Top Workplaces Leadership Award.

Teaster to retire after 63 years with Pigeon Forge

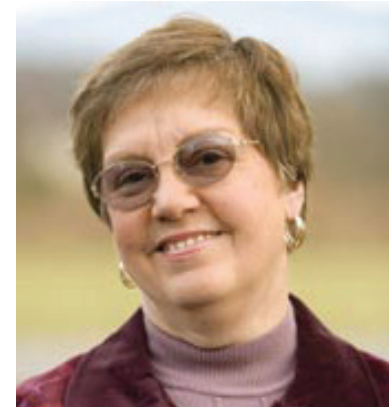
After 63 years of service to her hometown, Pigeon Forge City Manager Earlene Teaster has announced plans to retire on June 30 after serving as city manager for 44 years.

Teaster's career includes the distinction of being the Volunteer State's first female city manager.

Teaster was named Pigeon Forge City Manager in 1980. She is currently the longest-serving city manager in the state. Teaster was first hired as city clerk in 1961 before advancing to city recorder.

"As I reflect on my time in office, I'm overwhelmed with immense gratitude as I know what a blessing it has been to serve this fine city and its people," Teaster said. "I've lived my entire life in Pigeon Forge and gotten a front row seat to watch the city and my family grow, and both have brought me tremendous joy. I close this chapter with the certainty and confidence that Pigeon Forge's foundation is solid, and the best is yet to come."

"Earlene Teaster's impact on the City of Pigeon Forge is immeasurable," said Pigeon Forge Mayor David Wear. "On behalf of our City Commissioners, our residents and our visitors, we are forever grateful for her unwavering leadership and steadfast support. We're all better for having had the chance to work



Earlene Teaster, Pigeon Forge City Manager

alongside someone of her impeccable character."

In more than six decades, Teaster has witnessed first-hand Pigeon Forge's growth and success as a family vacation destination. She recognized the gateway city's potential and has been a strong advocate for supporting tourism, the city's only industry, through partnership with local businesses and improved infrastructure. She guided efforts to establish new businesses, including Dollywood theme park in 1986, the LeConte Center at Pigeon Forge in 2013, and the Ripken Experience Pigeon Forge in 2016. Dollywood is Tennessee's most visited ticketed attraction.

In 1986, she led efforts to estab-

lish Pigeon Forge's Fun Time Trolley, which now functions as Pigeon Forge Mass Transit, the third largest rural transit system in the U.S.

The city of Pigeon Forge was officially established and incorporated in 1961. Under her leadership, Pigeon Forge has sustained record growth, achieving more than \$1 billion in annual revenue for 11 consecutive years. Her public administration career also includes guiding Pigeon Forge through the 2016 wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaster was born and raised in Sevier County where she also raised her family, along with her late husband Glen. She is the proud mother of two sons, Steve and Phil. She enjoys spending time with them, her five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She is a member of Wears Valley First Baptist Church.

Professional accolades include the Southeast Tourism Society's Shining Example Award in 2010; Tourism Leader of the Year in 1994; membership in the Tennessee City Management Association and International City/County Management Association. TCMA named her City Manager of the Year in 2000. She has represented the tourism industry in various capacities on the East Tennessee Development Districts board.

Brentwood recognizes new firefighters



The city of Brentwood has recognized three new firefighters with the Brentwood Fire and Rescue Department. From left to right, Matthew Feehan, Santino Miranda, and Robert Smith. and Brentwood Fire Chief Brian Goss. The department also recognized the promotion of Caleb Lovett to lieutenant and Lt. Jason Sikes for earning international accreditation.

WAUFORD

J. R. Wauford & Company, Consulting Engineers, Inc.

UTC initiative brings law enforcement, academics together to fight violent crime

UTC, from Page 1 and helping bring together community support and implement best practices. A lot of times, we find out that the gut instincts of agencies is right, but now we have the math to support it.”

The VRI grew out of another three-year partnership between Dierenfeldt collaborated and the Chattanooga Police Department . The [Gun Crime Intelligence Center \(GCIC\)](#) helped bring down firearm-related crimes by using data to track guns. The project helped reframe how police in Chattanooga “closed” cases, using shell casing fingerprints captured by a 3D computer to determine if one gun had been used in multiple crimes.

“As part of that process, they really revolutionized their approach to gun crime in everything from canvassing to collecting, cataloging, and entering all spent shell casings and rounds to dedicating more resources to follow-up investigations,” Dierenfeldt said. “Our job was to see what impact those changes were having on 17 different performance metrics. As I was going through their logs, I noticed the same guns were being used multiple times by multiple offenders over months at a time. It’s great to get a bad guy off the street, but if that gun remains and is in the hands of a criminally controlled organization, it’s going to get used over and over again.”

As a result of the GCIC, Chattanooga police reopened 300 cold cases, leading to the seizure of firearms tied to violent crimes. This effort contributed to



Chattanooga Police Department Sgt. Josh May is one of the officers who worked with Dierenfeldt and UTC to reduce gun-related violence in Chattanooga.

a 27% decrease in firearm homicides, 36% decrease in overall homicides, and 42% decrease in shooting victims.

These successes helped establish a model now replicated in more than 60 other jurisdictions. Additionally, the Chattanooga Police Department and UTC received the ATF’s Excellence in Crime Gun Intelligence Award for their efforts.

The program also prioritized “focused deterrence,” which targets chronic offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of violent crime.

“Chronic offenders represent about 6% of the whole offender population, but they are responsible for more than half of all

crime,” he said. “If you can remove them from the community, you create a firebreak there and have opportunities to implement to wrap-around services and support and mediate the extent to which the next generation is socialized into that life of violence.”

Dierenfeldt hopes the VRI can build on the previous program’s success.

“I didn’t believe we had caught lightning in a bottle and this was only going to happen once,” he said. “That’s when we submitted a proposal for the VRI in our criminal justice department. We envision this as a hub to house all of our community-based research projects. It has researchers, post-docs, graduate assis-

tants, military grade encrypted hard drives, you name it. We are able to contribute on the research side, where a lot of agencies don’t have the staff, and combine what we do with not just their data but their knowledge of their respective fields.”

Sometimes, Dierenfeldt said reducing violent crime can begin in unexpected ways, such as tackling underlying causes like mental health issues, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and a lack of employment and educational opportunities. Data can also reduce retaliatory violence by identifying triggering cases and bringing in community resources to prevent escalation of violence.

Different perspectives can

also find simple prevention tactics. After analyzing data from the victims and offenders of 1,300 shootings resulting in injury in Chattanooga, Dierenfeldt said he felt some context was missing. Using Google Street View, he found some 40% of the addresses where shootings occurred had overgrown trees and shrubbery.

“I don’t have to arrest that problem away,” he said. “My recommendation to the city was to enforce the city codes and require them to trim back the shrubbery. When you enforce codes, crime is going to drop. These are not huge, expensive changes, but most people don’t consider them because it can’t be that simple.”

The VRI involvement also boosts the success of grant applications. VRI is presently working with two law enforcement agencies on projects that have received federal funding: a \$1,999,187 Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) grant for a partnership with the city of Chattanooga for the [Chattanooga United to Reduce Violence \(CURV\)](#) Initiative and a \$844,294 BJA grant for Hamilton County’s [Recidivism Reduction Initiative \(RRI\)](#).

A third grant is also in the works to reduce opioid overdoses in Rhea County in partnership with the Hamilton County Coalition’s New Start program, which is looking to expand into more rural areas. Dierenfeldt said the VRI is open to working with law enforcement and community agencies across the state. He can be contacted via email at Ric-ki-Dierenfeldt@utc.edu or via phone at [423-425-2174](tel:423-425-2174)

Police departments must meet federal cyber security standards to access databases

CJIS, from Page 1 itself not have access to the reports but local court proceedings requiring those reports could not take place.

Breaches in police data can also compromise public trust and put cities at risk for lawsuits and cases having to be dismissed because of a data breach.

“If there is a data breach, it is likely that a very good lawyer can go to court and say evidence is inadmissible because of that breach,” she said. “There are also chain of custody issues. Another big concern is that if you aren’t in compliance with CJIS, you cannot apply for federal criminal justice grants.”

Not being able to access these databases can also compromise cooperation with other law enforcement agencies.

“You need to be able to talk to your other colleagues throughout other departments,” Walton said. “If an officer pulls someone over, they won’t be able to see if that person has warrants out from anywhere. This allows everyone to talk to each other and allows

Who needs to comply?

<p>Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police/Sheriff’s offices • Courts and Judicial Branches • Prosecutors’ offices • Correctional Facilities • State law enforcement 	<p>Contractors and Vendors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT and Cloud service providers • Managed service providers • Cybersecurity Vendors • Contractors that provide biometric analysis, background checks, or data processing 	<p>Private Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security firms providing services to criminal justice facilities • Investigative services agencies working with law enforcement
<p>Public Safety Orgs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 911 and EMS Centers • Fire departments and EMS • Public safety answering points 	<p>IT and Cloud Providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech companies in the law enforcement/criminal justice industry • Data centers and software providers hosting law enforcement tools. 	<p>Anyone with CJIS Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers who request criminal background checks • Schools, hospitals, or other entities that need CJIS access.

more efficiency.”

The new requirements include multi-factor authentication, encryption of data, and supply chain risk management, and audits and logs.

This is required not just of police departments but other entities

that might have access to police department systems including non-criminal justice agencies, government contractors, and IT service providers.

“Every entity that has the ability to touch police department data – whether that be your

Internet provider who has created a cloud-based environment or a third-party IT company or vendor – are now mandated to also comply with these regulations,” Shelton said. “All of those entities now have to have background checks, get their fingerprints

done, and take the CJIS test to make sure they understand the rules. They need proper credentials in place. A lot of mom-and-pop shops or your best friend down the road who does your IT does not have the credentialing for this. You have to make sure whoever is protecting your data is keeping up-to-date and meeting these requirements.”

Additionally, Walton said departments are required to have elements of physical security in place such as security cameras monitoring server room, locks or keycard access to rooms containing sensitive data, and the ability to keep records of who accessed what information when.

Officers and vendors are required to do cybersecurity training that meets CJIS standards as well as ensure police computers and laptops meet compliance.

Even the emails used by the department must use specific technology on U.S.-based servers. Policies also need to be in place if there ever is a security breach.

No loan is too large or too small



The Town of Surgoinsville used the Tennessee Municipal Bond Fund’s alternative loan program to issue a \$100,000 note to purchase a truck for the Public Works Department. This marks the first time the Town has ever used one of TMBF programs. Pictured are Mayor Merrell Graham and Recorder Megan Gentry with Steve Queener, TMBF Marketing Representative.



The City of Savannah has used TMBF programs seven times. The first was in October 1995 and the latest was a \$1,300,000 public building authority loan to finance a LED street lighting project. Pictured L to R are TMBF Marketing Representative Justin Hanson, City Manager Blake Whalley, Mayor Robert Shutt, and City Recorder Daniell Phillips.

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STATE BRIEFS



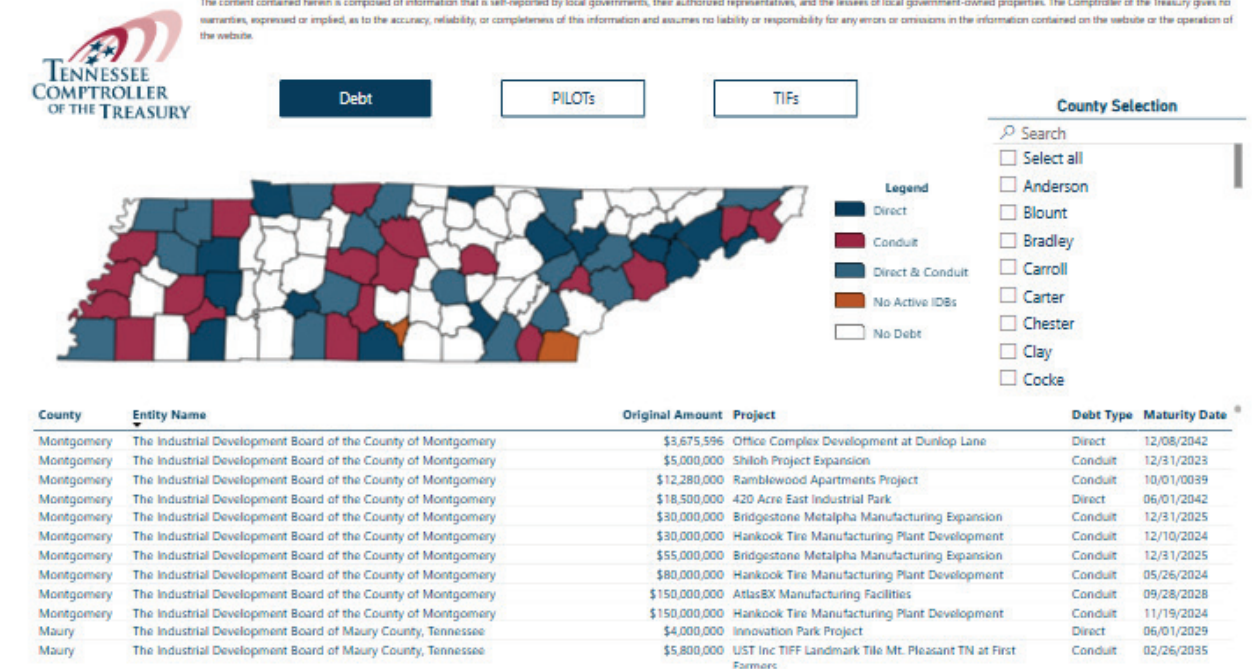
Unemployment in Tennessee remained steady at 3.7% in February, the six continuous month at that average. The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) said the rate has remained unchanged since September. In 2024, the February unemployment rate was 3.1%. Tennessee’s unemployment rate continues to remain below the national rate, which was 4.1% in February, up one-tenth of a percentage point from this time last year. Between January and February, total nonfarm employment increased by 9,100 jobs. The Education and Health Services sector accounted for the biggest increases, followed by the Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector and the Leisure and Hospitality sector. A complete analysis of the February 2025 unemployment data for Tennessee is [available here](#).

Pedestrian deaths declined year-over-year in 2024 but still remained well above where they were a decade ago. Tennessee reported a 30% decrease in pedestrian deaths with 63 deaths in 2024, down from 90 in 2023. However, the state has seen a 38% increase in pedestrian deaths since 2015 with more than 1,700 pedestrians dying since 2010. Urban centers with heavy traffic and higher population

densities tend to have a higher rate of pedestrian deaths. Advocates and government officials said the year-over-year increase are a sign that strategies to bring down pedestrian deaths are working and that the state is making significant strides toward reducing deaths.

TDEC has released its fifth solicitation for projects under the Volkswagen Diesel Settlement Environmental Mitigation Trust (EMT). The purpose of the EMT is to execute environmental mitigation projects that reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides. Under this solicitation, \$19.4 million in EMT funding is available for eligible projects. Applications may include a variety of vehicles and/or fuel types designated under this program. All terms and conditions of the program, including associated funding caps, are outlined in an [application manual, accessible here](#). Applications must be received by June 13 at 4 p.m. CDT. TDEC will announce awards after conducting a comprehensive review and evaluation of all complete and eligible grant applications. Grant contracting efforts will occur shortly thereafter. For more information, visit the [Medium- and Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Page](#).

Comptroller's new dashboard brings greater transparency to state economic incentives



The Comptroller’s division of Local Government Finance working with the State Board of Equalization has launched a new interactive map and dashboard that highlights how local governments are using economic incentive tools to attract industry and jobs to their communities.

The new dashboard shows how local governments through entities, such as industrial development boards, are utilizing payment in lieu of tax agreements (PILOTs), tax increment financing plans (TIFs), and debt to incentivize job growth and economic

development. The data within the dashboard is based on information that is required to be reported to the Comptroller’s Office each year.

A total of 68 of Tennessee’s 95 counties utilize at least one of these tools to promote economic development. Shelby County, for example, has the most PILOT agreements of any county in the state. In fiscal year 2023, 528 PILOT agreements were reported in Shelby County. Data related to each of these can be viewed within the dashboard.

“I’m thankful this new dashboard provides greater transparen-

cy about how local governments are using economic development incentives,” said Comptroller Mumpower. “While these incentives can be an important tool in creating jobs and attracting businesses, it’s important for governments to use them wisely. Tax incentives should be offset with a clear benefit to the community.”

The Comptroller’s Office will update the dashboard each year as new information is reported to our Office.

To view the new interactive map and dashboard, visit tncot.cc/econdev

TN February 2025 revenues \$16.9M more than estimated

Tennessee revenues exceeded budgeted estimates for the month of February with Finance and Administration Commissioner Jim Bryson reporting total February tax revenues were \$1.37 billion, \$16.9 million more than the budgeted estimate and \$45.3 million more than February 2024.

The total tax growth rate for the month was 3.42%. General fund revenues were \$27.2 million more than the February estimate and the four other funds that share in state tax revenues were \$10.3 million less than the estimates.

On an accrual basis, February is the seventh month in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

“February’s tax collections remain on track with our estimates,” Bryson said. “Sales tax receipts, reflecting January’s taxable sales activity, were notably strong. While corporate tax revenues fell short of expectations, all other tax categories collectively exceeded our projections for the month.”

“As we move into the latter half of the fiscal year, we will continue to closely monitor the economy and consumer demand to ensure we meet our monthly budget targets.”

On a year-to-date basis, August through February, total tax revenues are 0.19% more than the budget estimate, or \$22.8 million more than expectations. When compared to this same period last year, total tax revenues have increased by \$52.2 million or 0.44%.

General fund revenues are 0.08% more than the year-to-date budgeted estimate, or \$8.3 million greater. Likewise, year-to-date general fund collections compared to this same period last year have increased 0.92% or \$89.6 million.

Individual tax performance compared to February 2025 Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 1.96% or \$20.9 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Below estimate by 25.02% or \$13.8 million
- Fuel Taxes: Below estimate by 4.04% or \$4.0 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 10.24% or \$13.9 million

Year-to-date performance compared to Budgeted Estimates:

- Sales Taxes: Above estimate by 1.48% or \$124.8 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Below estimate by 11.13% or \$179.3 million
- Fuel Taxes: Below estimate by 0.13% or \$1.0 million
- All other taxes: Above estimate by 7.40% or \$78.2 million

Individual tax performance compared to February 2024:

- Sales Taxes: Up 5.73% or \$58.8 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 33.58% or \$21.0 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 3.26% or \$3.0 million
- All other taxes: Up 3.09% or \$4.5 million

Year-to-date tax performance compared to August 2023 through February 2024:

- Sales Taxes: Up 5.61% or \$453.2 million
- Corporate Taxes (Franchise & Excise): Down 23.48% or \$439.3 million
- Fuel Taxes: Up 1.01% or \$7.6 million
- All other taxes: Up 2.79% or \$30.8 million

[See more details here.](#)

Tennessee’s births are up – Now for the rest of the story

Tennessee State Data Center

Despite a declining fertility rate, a growing female population is pushing the number of births in the state higher.

The number of childbirths was up again last year in Tennessee.

Provisional data show that there were 83,742 births in Tennessee in 2024. That makes four straight years that the number of live births to Tennessee mothers has increased, and last year births reached the highest annual level since 2008.

Those recent increases come after births fell from a record high in 2007 and then stagnated for most of the last decade. Then, in 2020, missed conceptions related to pandemic uncertainty pushed births to their lowest annual total since 2002.

Two factors can account for the increase: more females of child-bearing age or an increasing fertility rate.

The population of females in their prime child-bearing years, aged 15-44, is rising. Since 2007, the number of females in this age group has increased by nearly 11%, slightly below Tennessee’s 15% total population gain. An increase of that size would typically result in a corresponding rise in the number of births. However, since the total number of annual births in 2023 is 4.3% lower than the 2007 figure, it indicates that fertility rates fell as the [female population grew](#).

The state’s recent declines are strongly associated with two age-specific trends: falling fertility rates among younger women and rising fertility among older ones. Fertility rates among mothers under the age of 29 [have fallen for all age groups since 2007](#).

The most pronounced decrease has been among teens, with fertility rates down almost 60% over that period and an additional 10% going back to 1995. Among 20- to 24-year-old females, there was a 38 percent drop since 200

In contrast, fertility rates have risen in all groups over the age of 30 since in 2007. The decline in fertility rates among younger females and the increasing rate among older ones can be succinctly summarized by looking at the share of mothers whose first child was born after age 30. In 2007, 17% of mothers were over 30 when their first childbirth occurred. By 2023, it had grown to over 28%.

In 2007, 17% of mothers were over 30 years old when their first childbirth occurred. By 2023, it had grown to over 28%. Parenting later in life can present health or fertility challenges but also career and childcare impacts. On the one hand, being more established in a career can create more family stability, but it can also mean more struggles in balancing the demands of work and parenting.

Since 2007, Tennessee has seen widespread fertility rate declines that have touched every corner of the state. Both [urban and rural areas](#) are down. Rates have dropped in all [10 metropolitan areas and all 17 smaller micropolitan statistical areas](#). 79 out of 95 counties also have lower reported rates.

[Fertility rates have also contracted](#) in every region of the state between 2007 and 2023. These regional shifts have had varying effects on births between 2007 and 2023. [A stagnant or declining number of births](#) was recorded in seven other regions of the state. If the number of births in the state is to continue

rising against the grain of a falling fertility rate, it will require sustained growth of the state’s population of child-bearing age women.

So far in the 2020s, that hasn’t been an issue. The state logged [its second largest year over year population increase in 2022](#) with more than 96,000 people added on record-levels of net domestic migration. Increases of 86,000 and nearly 80,000 followed in 2023 and 2024 as international migration pushed to single-year highs. But migrant flows from international locations are almost certain to slow and the cyclical pattern of domestic migration may have passed its peak.

Over the longer-term, it is certain that reproductive rates are below “replacement level” – the level at which population can replace itself from generation to generation. An average total fertility rate (TFR) of 2.1 children per female in her childbearing years is necessary to maintain a stable population size without relying on migration. After total fertility peaked at around 2.1 in 2007, it’s been a steady slide.

In 2023, the U.S. [TFR fell to a record low 1.62 births per female](#). Tennessee’s TFR [was slightly higher](#) at 1.73 births. The interplay of falling fertility rates and population change will lead to further shifts in birth patterns. Since births, along with deaths and migration, are the primary drivers of [population changes](#), these shifts will significantly influence local trends modeled in population projections.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for planning and policy-making to address future demand for educational services, the labor force, healthcare, housing, and infrastructure.

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10 fatalities result from extreme weather across Tennessee

WEATHER, from Page 1
 above the 46-foot flood stage – and impacted numerous roadways. The Wolf River in West Tennessee reported its fourth-highest crest on record on April 6 with other waterways expected to crest in coming days.

The town of Rives was inundated with floodwaters after the failure of a levee on the Mississippi River. Most residents were evacuated from the town after attempted repairs made by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did not hold. Other flooding-related evacuations and swift water rescues were reported in Nashville, Montgomery County, and Obion County. The NWS also stated they expect the Cumberland, Red, Harpeth, and Buffalo Rivers have not yet reached their crest, meaning flooding is an ongoing concern.

Interstate 65 was temporarily closed near Berry Hill due to flooding Friday while I-40 was closed following debris from the Saturday storms. Roads were also closed due to flooding and storm-related damage in Clarksville, Collierville, Columbia, Fairview, Gallatin, Gates, Germantown, Hendersonville, Huntingdon, McKenzie, Millersville, Mt. Juliet, Nashville, Paris, Portland, Savannah, and Vanleer. A peak of more than 15,400 power outages were reported statewide early on the morning of April 3 with a peak of 70,000 on April 5 following continued storms.

Storm damage also impacted water and wastewater services in West Tennessee. The Henderson, Munford, and Lauderdale County water departments were put under a boil water advisory while the Grand Junction Water Department had no water due to storm damage. Wastewater systems in Decaturville, Henderson, Huntingdon, Paris, Selmer, Springfield, and Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Henderson, and Humphreys counties all reported critically high water levels that had either inundated or damaged wastewater treatment plants.

Ongoing flooding prompted



The town of Rives in West Tennessee had to be evacuated after patches made to nearby levees on the Mississippi River did not hold.

school closures and delays throughout the state on Monday, April 7, including in the municipalities of Bradford and Trenton as well as schools in Carroll, Cheatham, Clarksville-Montgomery County, Dickson, Grundy, Hardeman, Haywood, Henry, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Jackson-Madison, Perry, Robertson, Stewart, and Weakley counties.

The United Way of Greater Nashville has set up a [2025 Disaster Relief Fund](#) to help those in Middle Tennessee impacted by the storms. In West Tennessee, donations are being taken at the Gibson County 911 center, Hardeman County Baptist Association, Hardeman County Schools, Jackson State Community College, McNairy County Ag Event Center, Selmer Community Center, and University of Tennessee Martin Parsons Center.

Additional photos can be found at [TT&C Online](#).



Debris litters the roadway in downtown Grand Junction following the April 3 storms.



Above: Gov. Bill Lee and U.S. Rep. David Kustoff met with TEMA Director Patrick Sheehan and local officials to survey damage in Selmer and McNairy County. A disaster declaration has been made and federally approved for all 95 counties in the state.

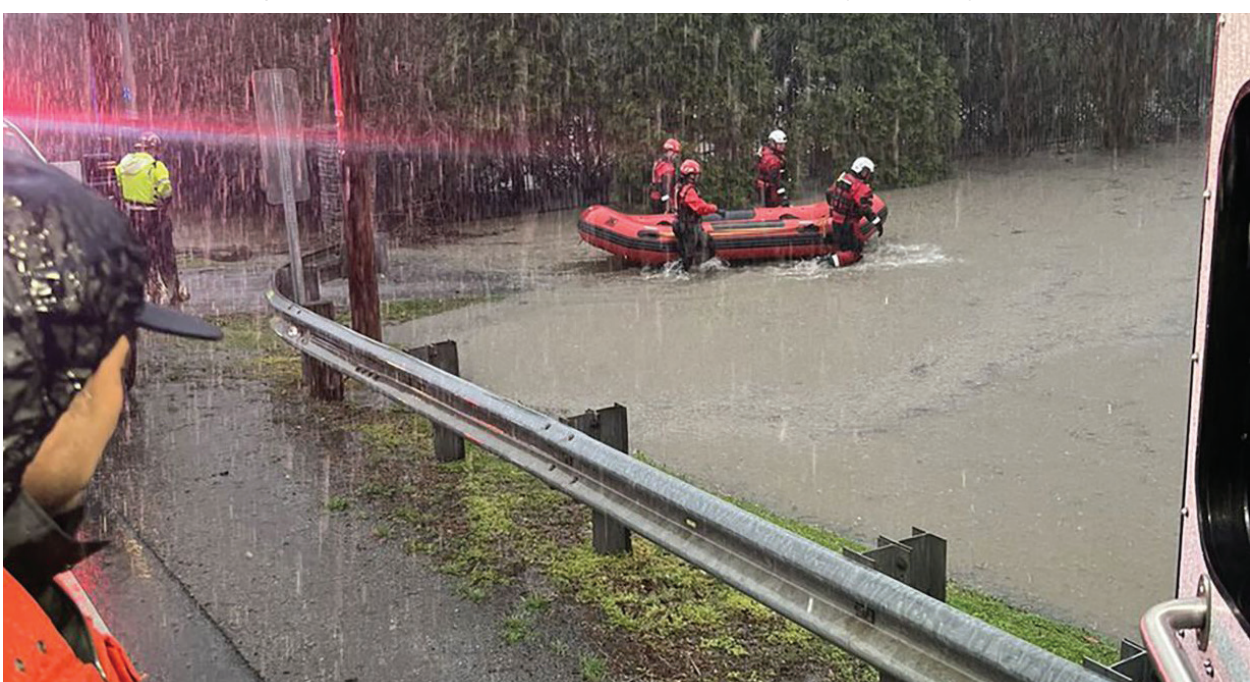
Right: Members of the town of Dyer Fire Department aid search and rescue operations in Selmer in the morning hours of April 3. Half of the deaths related to the storm were reported in McNairy County, of which Selmer is the county seat.



Hendersonville Firefighters work to clear a fallen tree from a roadway after major storms.



First responders rescue the occupants of a vehicle in floodwaters in Martin.



Members of the Nashville Fire Department conduct a swift water rescue mission.



Neighborhoods flooded in Clarksville early Sunday, April 6 after both the Cumberland and Red Rivers crested their banks.

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NATIONAL BRIEFS



Consumer price inflation eased by 0.1% in March, putting the 12-month inflation rate at 2.4%, down from 2.8% in February. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics said the core inflation – which strips out food and energy prices – was at a 2.8% annual rate, having increase 0.1% for the month. Slumping energy prices tamed overall inflation with a 6.3% decrease in gasoline prices, though food prices continued to climb by 0.4%. Shelter prices also remained stubborn, up 0.2% in March and 4% on a 12-month basis.

Immigration, not births, was the leading cause of population growth in all 50 states for the first time since 1850. As U.S. birth rates have slowed, immigration has grown by 1.6 million people between 2022 and 2023, reaching a record high of 47.8 million in 2023, according to think tank Migration Policy Institute. The 3.6% population increase driven by immigration is the largest annual growth since 2010. Approximately 14.3% of the U.S. population are foreign-born, above the 14.8% in 1890. Nearly three quarters of U.S. immigrants (73%)

are legally present and nearly half have become naturalized citizens. Meanwhile, U.S. birth rates fell to a historic low in the same period with the fertility rate at 54.5 births per 1,000 females aged 15-44. The U.S. Census Bureau began collecting immigration data in 1850, when 2.2 million immigrants made up 10% of the national population.

U.S. shoppers increased spending by 0.2% in February, a small rebound after a drop of 1.2% in January, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. Economists say this may signal Americans are shopping more cautiously due to mounting concerns about the direction of the economy. Federal tariff threats and spending cuts have led to widespread uncertainty among both consumers and businesses with economists predict consumer spending will grow 1% to 1.5% at an annual rate in the first quarter, far below the 4.2% gain reported in the last quarter of 2024. Consumer sentiment also fell sharply for the third straight month, down more than 20% since December.

America is reporting its highest death toll from influenza since 2018, particularly as vaccine skepticism has grown. There have been 8,900 deaths nationwide from the

flu, a nine-year high and up from 5,000 last year. Most flu-related deaths occur in senior citizens. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has canceled or postponed meetings to prepare for next fall's flu vaccine, raising protests from medical professionals, many of whom feel fed misinformation and political mistrust of government is costing human lives. Flu vaccine distribution in the United States has been declining in recent years, and as of the first week of 2025 was down 16% from 2022.

The U.S. added more jobs than expected in March with nonfarm payroll increasing by 228,000 jobs. This comes after February added 117,000 jobs – less than initially anticipated. The unemployment rate also rose to 4.2% in March, increasing from 4.1% in February. Low layoffs and solid wage gains are helping sustain economic expansion, but some businesses have been hesitant to hire due to uncertain trade policies. Data from the Labor Department indicates the economy has stalled in the first quarter due to a combination of trade policy and winter storms. Gross domestic product growth is below the 0.5% annualized rate for the first quarter and economists are not ruling out a recession in the next 12 months.



TENNESSEE FESTIVALS

April 15-17: Goodlettsville Heritage Days
Guests have the opportunity to experience life on the frontier and witness skilled demonstrators and artists.

April 19: Fayetteville Slawburger Festival
Fayetteville celebrates a rich history with the unique sweet and tangy mustard-based slaw served on an all-beef burger.

April 19-27: Paris 72nd Annual World's Biggest Fish Fry
The World's Biggest Fish Fry revolves around fried catfish dinners, parades, dancing, rodeo nights, carnival rides, fishing and more.

April 25-27: Brownsville Hatchie BirdFest
Come enjoy the best birding in West Tennessee.

April 26: Gallatin Square Fest
Join us for our annual spring tradition with more than 230 vendors, food trucks and family fun.

April 26: Johnson City ArtStruck
Celebrate art by visiting local artworks at the art market, enjoying live performances and demonstrations, and participating in arts activities for all ages.

April 26-27: South Pittsburg National Cornbread Festival
A celebration of cornbread, often considered the cornerstone of southern cuisine.

April 26-May 4: Trenton 43rd Annual Trenton Teapot Festival
The Teapot Capital of the world is proud to celebrate its annual Teapot Festival.

May 2-7: Dresden 47th Annual Tennessee Iris Festival
Showcasing the brightest talents in local art and music, playing host to well-known public figures, and featuring the best of area businesses.

May 2-3: Sweetwater Blooms, Bluegrass, & BBQ Festival
Come and enjoy the festival full of music, decorations, food and vendors.

May 2-3: Tellico Plains Tellico Trout Festival
This event gathers fishermen, river sports enthusiasts, and families to Tellico Plains for fun, education, food, entertainment and outfitter services.

May 3: Nolensville Buttercup Festival
A cherished celebration of art, music, food, and creativity, embodying the community spirit in Nolensville's Historic District.

May 3: Dickson Old Timers' Day
Since 1958, Dickson County has been celebrating all things Old Timers.

May 3-4: Collierville Fair on the Square
The largest public arts and crafts event in Collierville since 1976.

May 4-10: Humboldt West Tennessee Strawberry Festival
Seven days of an 87-year tradition.

May 5-10: Dayton Tennessee Strawberry Festival
Celebrating 78 years of strawberries.

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Help Us Keep Your City/Town's Information Up to Date!

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Municipalities use Career Quest to 'plant seeds,' grow future employees

By KATE COIL
TT&C Assistant Editor

At a time when many local governments are working to recruit the next generation of employees, a unique model in Northeast Tennessee is looking to inspire students to set out on career paths already available in their communities.

Created by the First Tennessee Development District, Career Quest combines a trade show atmosphere, job fair, and hands-on, interactive experiences to better educate students about what employment opportunities are available to them locally.

A recent event, sponsored and hosted by the Sevier County Economic Development Council and the Sevier County School System, brought out more than 2,500 juniors and seniors from all five high schools in Sevier County to explore available careers. Officials with the cities Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Sevierville all participated in the program.

Seth Butler, director of operations and communications with the city of Gatlinburg, said students spent 25 minutes each in four sections of the LeConte Center in Pigeon Forge learning from different employers. The city's golf course, water department, fleet services department, building and codes department, and tourism and outreach were in one quad with other government, healthcare, and tourism companies while the city's police, fire, and EMS were in another quad with local first responders.

Butler said the program was a great way to showcase unique opportunities in municipal government.

"There are a number of reasons we do this," Butler said. "We are a bit isolated in Gatlinburg with not a lot of permanent residents. If you are coming to work for the city of Gatlinburg, 86% of our current workforce comes from outside the city. This allows us to show them different job opportunities we have and salary scale, because we have great-paying jobs that can turn into a career. We have a lot of examples of employees who started at the bottom and now they're head of the department. You don't have to move away to make a good career."

Lottie Ryans, director of workforce and literacy initiatives for the First Tennessee Development District, said the organization launched the program in 2017.

"We were seeing businesses struggle to find employees, and we were seeing students not knowing what their future might be," Ryans said. "Sometimes it was not having a plan after high school, sometimes it was wasting money in college because they didn't have a clear path forward. This gave us a way to bring together business, industry, post-secondary education, and our K-12 schools to really introduce students to what careers are available in their region."

For many students, Ryans said it was a matter of not really knowing what jobs were available in their community or how to attain those jobs.

"When I was meeting with people around the region, I kept hearing two things that stood out to me," Ryans said. "One was that 'our kids only know what mom and dad do,' which meant they had a very limited exposure. We also had too many kids who didn't see anyone going to work. We fortunately had business leaders who were introduced and stepped up. We invite police departments,



Officials with the Gatlinburg Fire Department demonstrate use of a CPR dummy as a way to engage with students. Participants in Career Quest are encouraged to have interactive, hands-on presentations for students at the event, which combines aspects of trade shows, career fairs, and unique experiences to get students interested in career paths.



While hospitality is a major industry in the region, Butler said it's important for students to know there are opportunities in this sector besides working for hotels and restaurants. City officials got a chance to educate students on ways they promote and market the area.

fire departments, EMS, and power providers like municipalities and Bright Ridge because they have been struggling to hire."

Butler said his own career in municipal government was influenced by what he saw modeled at home.

"My mother worked for the city of Newport for 38 years, and that's all I knew growing up was what she did for her work," Butler said. "We try to show these kids the different career paths and what's available. They may be interested in being a contractor, but may have no idea that they could be a building inspector with great benefits. You have kids who also don't have aspirations of post-secondary education. They can come work for the streets and parks and recreation department and work their way up. A lot of them know about the tourism industry we have, but not necessarily about other, great-paying positions."

Interactive exhibits catch the interest of youngsters at a time when attention spans are at an all-time low.

"You draw them in with the interaction and then you have a conversation," Butler said. "Our golf course brought out a putting green, and once they had them interested in that, they were able to talk to them about the different jobs at a golf course like turf grass management. Our service center for our city garage had a cutaway transmission. The building department went all out and built a mock crawl space for the kids to crawl through. The whole goal was to get them to crawl through this maze."

There are three other Career Quest events that are held across the First Tennessee Development District to focus on major industries in each area of the district. The event at ETSU focuses on advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and IT.



After making their way through a crawl space-inspired maze, students learn about opportunities to work in Gatlinburg's Building and Codes Department.

Another regional event focuses on business services like accounting, banking, financial planning, marketing, and HR that has a business pitch contest. Sevier County also hosts a Career Quest Event titled Hospitality Works, which focuses on industries like food and accommodation, outdoor events, marketing, and recreation.

"It's cool when you see a student who walks away saying 'I know what I want to do now' because they've been exposed to something," Ryans said. "They may not get a job tomorrow, but they now have that exposure as they are planning their high school career. You are also promoting the industries in the area. I've had employers say they were at Kroger, and a kid walked up to them because they remembered them from Career Quest. We have also had people get internships and summer jobs."

For city employees, Butler said the program is also a chance to show pride in their professions.

"It's all about planting the seed," Butler said. "It may not lead to a job directly, but it is opening eyes. It was very rewarding for the

departments who participated. It was invigorating to spread what they do and why they do it."

Ryan said the First Development District are open to talking with other communities about how to start their own similar events with their local school systems and chambers of commerce. She said it is essential to ensure necessary stakeholders are on board.

"They are hands-on events with very fast-past introductions," she said. "We do a VIP event on the morning of the event where we invite mayors and city managers in first to walk the floor, thank the employers, and see what the kids are learning. We also have different speaker programs and a lunch. We have had students who participated in the program explain why this event was important."

Even without a Career Quest-style event, Butler said he recommends municipalities to try to connect with local schools to better educate students about career opportunities. He said Gatlinburg officials also do outreach in the city's middle and high schools to get students thinking about future careers with the city.



As students hit a few rounds on the putting green, employees with Gatlinburg's golf course and parks and recreation department talked to them about opportunities in turf management, landscaping, recreation programming, and other career paths. Butler said many entry-level positions the city has do not require a four-year degree and allow employees to work their way up through departmental ranks.



Students learn what it takes to make water safe to drink as part of the Gatlinburg Water Department's booth at Career Quest. Butler said city employees were excited to both show off the different ways they serve their community as well as spark interest in youngsters to follow in their footsteps.