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THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

Long Hunter State Park

Dutch Oven Simplicity

Long's and Thomson's Routes Give Rise to Railroad Towns

McEwen's SP-Teri *Leather, Laces and Blades*

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Mission Statement

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is committed to meeting the needs of our membership by delivering safe, affordable and reliable services the cooperative way.

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Between the Lines

News from your community

Possibilities of the new year

In Roman mythology, the two-faced god Janus represents beginnings and transitions and can see the past and future. This first month on our calendar — January — takes its name from Janus.

As we turn the calendar to 2024, you might be excited about what the future holds. You might also be apprehensive about challenges or unknowns facing you in the upcoming year.

Through change and uncertainty, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation works diligently to be a constant. This demands a deliberate and intentional effort by all our employees. The electric grid is a complicated system that needs constant attention and maintenance.

To deliver energy to more than 110,000 members served by CEMC, we maintain around 8,400 miles of line. Like Janus, our crews need to be able to consider both the past and the future. How has our infrastructure held up under past weather events, and what maintenance or upgrades need to be performed to ensure safe and reliable service into the future?

Many times, it requires that we replace poles and transformers and build new substations. You will also find our crews and contractors performing right-of-

way maintenance, clearing existing vegetation and looking into the future to prevent encroaching limbs from threatening delivery of electricity to you.

We work alongside the other co-ops in the state to monitor legislation in Nashville and Washington, D.C., that could affect the safety, reliability or affordability of our electric service. As the Tennessee General Assembly and Congress reconvene this month, we will remain watchful for legislation that could pose issues for your co-op or your community.

By looking back and ahead, we strive to provide you with the critical services you and your family will need in 2024. I hope you will join us in this exercise. What blessings of the previous year fill your heart with gratitude, and what opportunities in the future fill you with hope? The turn of the year is a great time to think about both the past and the future.

The team here at CEMC wishes you a safe, happy and prosperous new year.



By Chris A. Davis
*General Manager,
Cumberland Electric
Membership
Corporation*

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Dutch oven cooking is not just for camping anymore. These versatile and easy-to-use ceramic pots make everything from stews to pulled pork to desserts. See page 32. Photograph by Robin Conover

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The sun sets on beautiful J. Percy Priest Lake at Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage. See page 28. Photograph by Robin Conover



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TENNESSEE TODAY

Viewpoint

Warm homes and warm hearts

You have undoubtedly heard the old adage, “The grass is always greener on the other side.” But does a snow-covered lawn count? As the cold of winter sets in and the new year begins, I have been finding myself starting a fire and wishing for the warmth of the coming Tennessee spring. But I am often reminded by my family from the upper Midwest to not look past the beauty of winter, either. While they genuinely do love the snow, I think they mean to say that each day has its own attributes for which to be grateful.

Thanks to the reliable service provided by my electric co-op, I don’t have to think much about the comforts of my home. In fact, for most of us in Tennessee, the grass isn’t actually greener on the other side. We all share a historically amazing standard of living primarily because of the availability of affordable, reliable electric power.

My friend Brian demonstrates many of these recent luxuries by describing some things we don’t generally think about. When people ask him what is causing the most electric energy use at their homes, he often replies, “Warm air, cold beer and hot showers.” And he is right.

Warm and cool air has become indispensable in our society. Can you imagine a modern hospital operating in 95-degree temperatures? Heating and air conditioning systems perform remarkably well at both warming and cooling our homes and businesses. And while newer units are becoming more and more efficient, it requires a lot of energy to keep these machines working. But they run without a lot of input from us. We walk to the thermostat and “set it and forget it.”

It’s hard to imagine, but 100 years ago, the only practical way to preserve fresh food was the icebox. An icebox was a crudely insulated wooden cabinet that held a large block of always-melting ice, which created a cool environment

that slowed the spoiling of perishables. Where did the ice come from? Originally, this required cutting blocks from frozen lakes and transporting them across the country (as the ice melted en route) to then be divided into smaller portions and delivered. That’s a lot of work for fresh eggs in the morning!

This is a far cry from today’s electric refrigeration, which is also getting more efficient and using less energy than before. But many of us intentionally erase any energy savings when we buy a new fridge. How? We put the old one in the hot garage and make it work even harder and use even more energy that it did before. Is that a good trade-off for cold beer? I’ll let you answer that question for yourself, but I bet I know the answer.

Another major consumer of energy in your home is the water heater. Today’s cold plunge trend aside, the warm shower is a luxury most of us just can’t live without. But it does come at a cost to your electric bill. As teenage boys quickly learn, neglecting that hot shower comes at a cost of its own.

So whether you’re excited or apprehensive about what 2024 might bring, my hope is that you will take a moment to consider things often taken for granted — especially a comfortable home that warms more than just the thermostat but also warms your heart. ■



By Mike Knotts

Tennessee Electric
Cooperative Association

How a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can change your life

Remember when...

Think about the things you loved to do that are difficult today — going for a walk or just sitting comfortably while reading a book. And remember the last time you got a great night's sleep?

As we get older, health issues or even everyday aches, pains and stress can prevent us from enjoying life.

So what's keeping you from having a better quality of life?

Check all the conditions that apply to you.

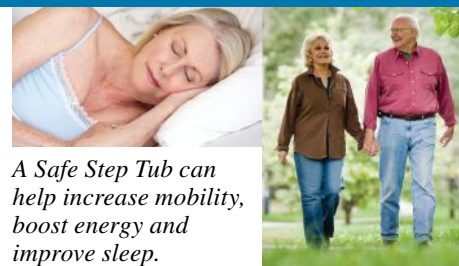
Personal Checklist:

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

Then read on to learn how a Safe Step Walk-In Tub can help.

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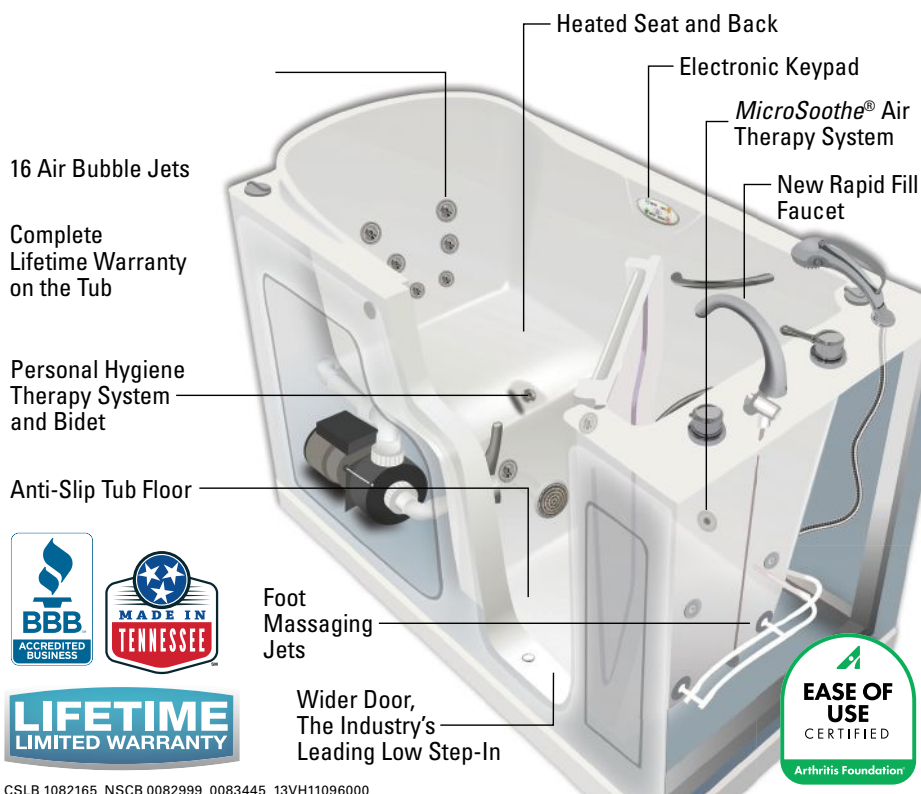
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TENNESSEE ALMANAC

Bite-sized news, notes and knowledge — January 2024

Winter getaways in Tennessee

Break up the monotony of winter with a long weekend getaway. Whether you are a lifelong resident or a recent transplant, you're sure to find interesting places to stay, delicious food to eat and exciting things to do. The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development recently published a list of winter getaways in Tennessee. Visit tnvacation.com to learn more.



Photo courtesy of The Coalmont Cabin



JANUARY 23
National Pie Day

Apple, pecan, chess — how will you celebrate National Pie Day? Follow us on Facebook for a chance to vote for your favorite.

“

One kind word can
warm three winter
months.

JAPANESE PROVERB

A WARM THOUGHT TO FIGHT THE WINTER CHILL

Perihelion, or the point of the year when the Earth's orbit is nearest to the sun, will occur on Tuesday, Jan. 2, at 7:38 p.m. Aphelion, or the point when Earth is farthest from the sun, will occur on Friday, July 5, at 1:06 a.m. As strange as it sounds, Earth is about 3 million miles closer to the sun in January than it is in July.



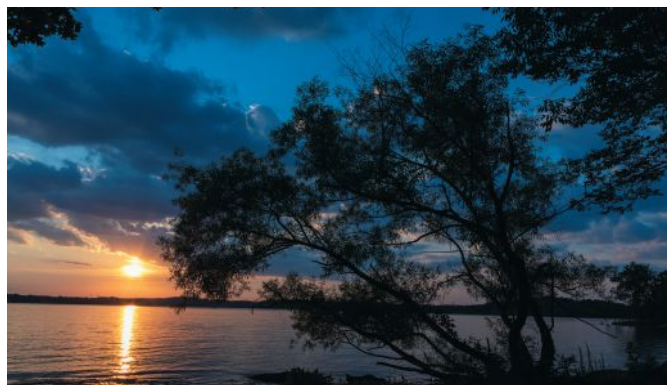
50 YEARS AGO IN THE TENNESSEE MAGAZINE

The January 1974 edition of *The Tennessee Magazine* featured "Cardinal" by artist Ralph McDonald on the cover. Topics covered inside included the Battle of Stones River, cooking in the 1970s and "Slingshot Charlie Jr." View the entire issue at tnmagazine.org.

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From the editor

Welcome to the opening issue of *The Tennessee Magazine's* 67th volume. We're delighted to bring remarkable stories from across the state; here's what we're sharing this month:



In a repurposed factory space in McEwen, the folks at SP-Teri are handcrafting quality ice-skating boots. Olympians and amateurs alike have donned these Tennessee-made skates.

We're continuing our popular features on Tennessee State Parks. Since we relaunched the series in 2020, we have covered all of these natural and recreational treasures except 15, and we'll shine the spotlight on them through 2024. This month, come with us to Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage. The photo above by Robin Conover is a taste of what you'll find.

We welcome singer-songwriter Antsy McClain and his interesting, humorous and nostalgic musings from his life at home and on the road. Be sure to check out the first "My Tennessee Notebook" beginning on page 16.

With much of the hustle-and-bustle of the busy holiday season now in the rearview, perhaps you're looking to kick up your feet by a roaring fire or snuggle under a warm, well-worn quilt. Before you settle in, try one of this month's satisfying Dutch oven recipes. Simply add the ingredients and sit back until suppertime.

Finally, we love engaging with readers and sharing their talents, so don't miss the contests we're currently running. Share your photographs, poetry and artwork, and peruse this issue in search of the Tennessee flag's iconic tristar emblem.

Thanks for reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Kirk". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Chris Kirk
Editor, *The Tennessee Magazine*

The Little Factory in McEwen That Makes

Story by Nicole Christensen

Photographs by Robin Conover

ICE SKATES

Located at 55 High St. W. in McEwen, right by the town's water tower and on Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative's lines, sits a 30,000-square-foot factory building that has a rich history. Built after World War II in 1947, the factory was a major employer in Humphreys County for many years, employing up to 350 workers at a time and was home to Washington Manufacturing and then OshKosh B'gosh until 2000 when it became a warehouse and remained unchanged ... until now.

The Little Factory in McEwen is the relatively new home of ice skating boot manufacturer SP-Teri, and Bill Fauver has big plans not only for SP-Teri but for the factory as well.

SP-Teri moved from California to Tennessee in 2019 when Bill took over leadership of the company as its president. He describes SP-Teri as a traditional, handcrafted ice skating boot maker. A lot of the company's customers are amateur competitors, but even past Olympic skaters are in SP-Teri's consumer base.

"If someone didn't know about ice skating, they wouldn't know about SP-Teri," Bill said.

SP-Teri might not be pronounced how you would expect. It is pronounced "Ess-Spiteri" — the last part like the last name of the founder of the company, Joseph Spiteri. Joseph started SP-Teri in 1963. His son, George, is still an adviser for the company.

New leadership

With over 55 years of experience as a skater and coach, Bill has a long history with ice skating.

"I've been involved in figure skating for my entire life," he said.

He competed in pairs skating at the Olympics in the 1970s and 1980s and then skated professionally with opportunities that took him all over the world. He now balances his work with SP-Teri in McEwen with teaching ice skating classes at Centennial Sportsplex in Nashville.



Left, SP-Teri president Bill Fauver took leadership of the company in 2019 and moved SP-Teri to Tennessee. Opposite page, one of Bill's students hits the ice in SP-Teri ice skates.

"It's just all part of the package of me," Bill said. "I teach skating; I can supply the boots; I can sharpen the skates. So, I have my niche in the skating community in Nashville."

Bill has had to overcome many obstacles since he took over SP-Teri in fall 2019. A tornado hit the company's first factory location in spring 2020, and the company had to move again after a second

location was not a good fit for its manufacturing needs. Other obstacles SP-Teri has faced include the supply chain and demand issues that came with the COVID-19 pandemic.

And still, Bill and SP-Teri have persisted.

Personal

When asked if he could describe SP-Teri in one word, Bill said "personal."

"It's a very personal company because you're working with people who are working with their fingers and their hands and their eyes," Bill said. "We all know each other well by now, and it's been remarkable to see how they've come along."

He has a small staff of a few employees right now — Gary Fitzgerald, Deedra Llewellyn and Garrett Unger — and they all share a willingness to learn the skilled craft of making ice skates.

"Making skates is not like making anything else," Bill said, adding that he is still learning even though he has been doing it for years now.

SP-Teri's ice skates are made-to-order. The small-scale manufacturing means that the skate-maker is able to fit each individual customer's needs and customize the boot as needed. Along with the order, people send in detailed measurements, drawings of their foot sizes and shapes or even molds of their feet so each boot will be the perfect fit. Bill, Garrett and Deedra shared that they were once able to custom fit an ice skating boot to a boy's prosthetic foot.

"They are handmade from the very beginning, so we put a lot of thought into them," said Deedra, who specializes in the sewing department at SP-Teri. She is the third



Above, hundreds of “lasts” of every shape and size help ensure that SP-Teri is able to custom-fit ice skating boots with precision for each customer. Below, each SP-Teri ice skating boot is hand-sewn and handcrafted using traditional manufacturing methods. The leather for each boot is hand-cut, shaped and sewn together one stitch at a time to ensure the highest quality.

generation in her family to work in The Little Factory building in McEwen, and her son, Garrett, is the fourth generation.

The boot-making process usually starts with the material on the outside of the boot, which Deedra said could be many types of materials or colors. Leather or suede are the most typical materials for the boot, and black

or white are the usual colors, but SP-Teri sometimes gets orders for scarlet-red ice skating boots, for example.

“We usually try to accommodate the customers on that customization, whatever they want; we had a blue jean pair recently,” Deedra said. “I really, personally, enjoy doing those. They’re just fun.”

High quality and traditional

“It’s just like cooking,” Bill said. “You have to have quality ingredients to start with.”

An SP-Teri ice skating boot is made with old-school craftsmanship: hand-sewn with soles made of leather.

“I’m a big proponent of an older style of manufacturing,” Bill said.

Bill said that a lot of new skates now are made of plastic that is meant to imitate leather and is manufactured by machines.

“Leather is probably one of the only materials that you can make any kind of shoe or boot with that has give and return,” Bill said. “The plastic skates have no return, no bend. They’re not meant to. They’re light, but they don’t really articulate.”

Ice skates made of leather will also last much longer; plastic ice skates are not meant to last.

Bill said that SP-Teri only makes high-quality ice skating boots.

“If somebody comes to us and says, ‘Can you make me a cheap boot?’ — I really can’t,” Bill said, “because we



use the same leathers, the same hooks, the same laces, the same soles. The only varying part of it could be the type of material you want, how strong the boot is inside and the lining. Other than that, all the materials are the same.”

Deedra said there are more than 30 steps to making an SP-Teri ice skating boot (within the McEwen factory’s walls — when you don’t take into account the steps that were taken to produce the blades, laces or other components made by their suppliers).

Bill said that each step of the process requires skill and precision, explaining that “with each step, you can’t really vary the recipe.”



Tennessee-made

Bill bought the factory building in McEwen from the previous owners who were using it as a warehouse (he said he did not want to move SP-Teri a fourth time).

“It was dirty and dingy, the lights were shot and it had leaks in the roof,” Bill said. “But it’s like buying your first car. You don’t care!”

Bill has big dreams for The Little Factory: a roller-skating rink in the center of the large room (which, did we mention, SP-Teri hopes to make roller skates in the future?), vendors lining the sides, a restaurant and a farmer’s market and/or vendors outside the building. He is looking for a business partner to help with the expansion of the factory building. He hopes that this building is able to provide something special for the community of McEwen — a destination for people to come together. He also hopes the building helps increase brand visibility for SP-Teri.

Right, Deedra Llewellyn and her son, Garrett Unger, are the third and fourth generations in their family to work at The Little Factory building in McEwen. Whether they are repairing worn pieces of a well-loved pair of SP-Teri skates, above, or building a brand new custom pair, they take pride in the quality of their workmanship and the hours that go into each pair.

A quick Google search into some of the biggest ice skating boot manufacturers around today shows that many are based out of East Asia. There is a handful of high-quality brands from Canada or Italy, and only a select few from the U.S. The other (few and far between) U.S. brands are based out of California and Minnesota; there’s only one in Tennessee: SP-Teri.

“I’m a big supporter on a very small scale of bringing manufacturing back to the States,” Bill said.

Bill has lived in Nashville for nearly 30 years, so he takes pride in the state that SP-Teri now calls home. His family lives and works in the ice skating scene in Nashville as well, and he has been (and continues to be) a part of multiple projects and programs related to ice skating and athletics in Nashville, one of note being CoachFax, which is a system for screening athletic coaches to keep young athletes safe.

In reflecting on his busy life full of ice skating, Bill said, “I just can’t see my life having gone any other direction. I don’t know how else to say that.”

In thinking about the opportunity that Bill gave her by hiring her to work for SP-Teri, Deedra said, “I never thought my dream would lead me here, but I’m glad it did.”

Deedra said her favorite part of making a pair of SP-Teri ice skating boots is when the employees are finished with the boots, adding that “they’re not complete until you’re actually finished.”

“When we put them in the box to ship, that’s my favorite part because then I can breathe and go on to the next pair.” ■

For more information on SP-Teri, go to spteri.com or email bfauver@sp-teri.com.



Tracking change

These railroad engineers altered the Tennessee map

When it comes to history, politicians and generals get all the glory, but no one gives credit to the engineers.

Stephen Harriman Long and John Edgar Thomson are two examples. Were it not for Long, Chattanooga might not exist. On the other hand, Shelbyville might be a large city today had it not been for Thomson.

Here's the background:

Georgia was about 10 years ahead of Tennessee when it came to building railroads. By the mid-1830s, the Peach State had several railroads in the works with names such as the Central of Georgia Railroad, Monroe Railroad and Georgia Railroad. All three were intended to link the Atlantic Coast and Savannah River with points in the interior of that state.

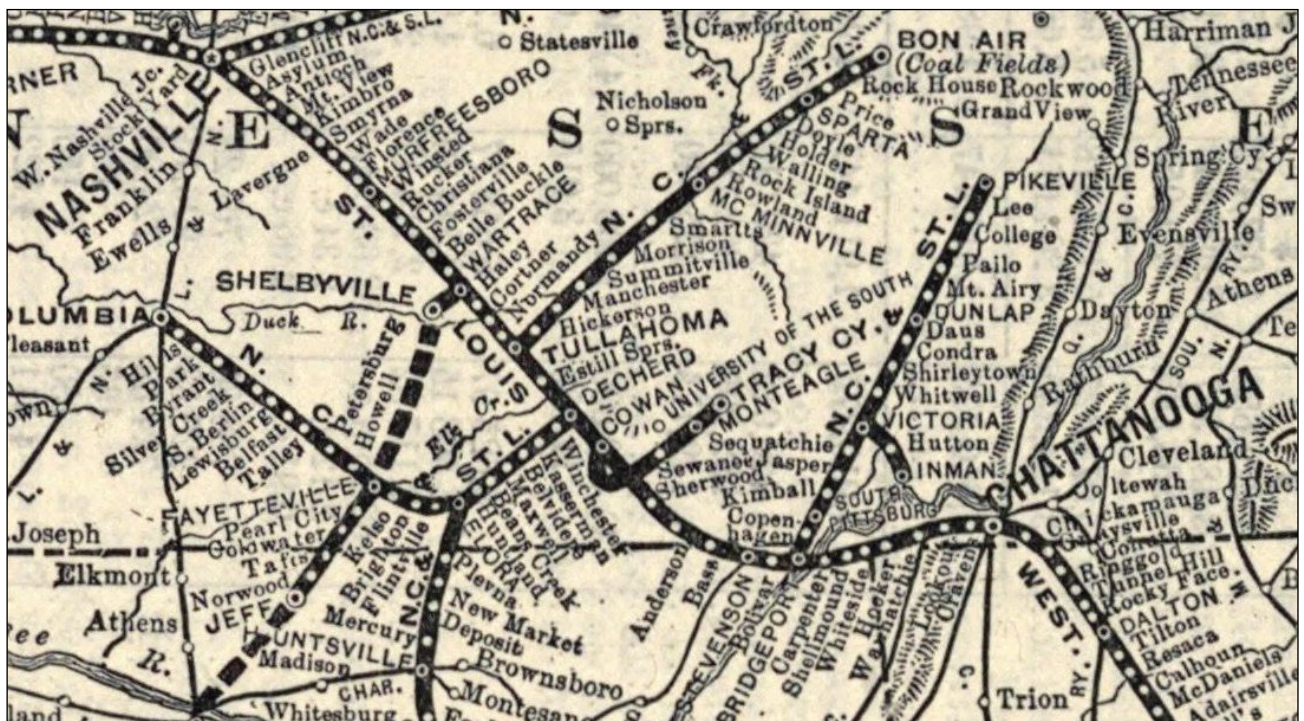
Then, in 1836, the Georgia government started the Western and Atlantic Railroad. The idea of the W&A was to connect the interior of the state to the Tennessee River. The W&A hired Stephen Harriman Long — who had

engineered large parts of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad — to be its lead surveyor.

Sometime in the late 1830s, a member of Long's team drove a stake in the ground 7 miles east of the Chattahoochee River in Fulton County, Georgia. The town that grew up around "Zero Mile Post" was originally called Terminus.

Long and his colleagues then surveyed the best route to connect Terminus to the Tennessee River. They had two main choices. One was for the railroad to head west to Gunter's Landing — a place in northeast Alabama where the Tennessee River turns from a southwest heading to a due west heading. The other was for the railroad to head northwest to Ross's Landing — a place in southeast Tennessee where the river also turns from a southwest heading to a due west heading.

Long recommended Ross's Landing. His report was published in the September 18, 1839, (Nashville) Republican Banner. It pointed out that:



This 1903 Poor's map shows the route taken by the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, which was called the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad before the Civil War.



The Nashville and Chattanooga track just west of Chattanooga where it winds around Lookout Mountain (Library of Congress photo)

- The Gunter's Landing route would be about 45 miles longer than the Ross's Landing route.
- The Gunter's Landing route would have to pass over Alabama's Sand Mountain, "which can only be crossed by means of three, perhaps four, inclined planes, at an ascent of more than 100 feet per mile."
- Gunter's Landing was more likely to flood than Ross's Landing.

Officials also favored Ross's Landing over Gunter's Landing because of a belief that a private company would soon build another railroad heading southeast from Nashville to hook up with it.

The railroad went with Stephen Long's recommendations, and to summarize:

- The town that sprung up at the former site of Ross's Landing became officially known as Chattanooga.
- Gunter's Landing later changed its name to Guntersville.
- Terminus changed its name to Marthasville. A few years later, it became known as Atlanta.

Now onto part two of our story:

By the time the Western and Atlantic was being built, engineers and business leaders were already working on the next big thing. A railroad that would connect Nashville to the brand-new town of Chattanooga was granted a charter by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1845. However, it wasn't obvious what route the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad should take since it would have to cross the Cumberland Plateau and Tennessee River.

The job fell to another engineer — John Edgar Thomson — who surveyed the route from Nashville to Chattanooga in the summer and fall of 1846. Thomson chose a 152-mile path through Rutherford, Bedford, Coffee and Franklin counties where it would pass through a 2,200 foot tunnel. The railroad would then head into north Alabama, where it turned east at the Tennessee River and headed to Chattanooga from there.

There was a lot of hemming and hawing about Thomson's route at the

time — and not without reason. Murfreesboro was fine with it since the railroad would go right through that town. However, Shelbyville was not. And remember that in 1830, Bedford County had the highest population of any county in Tennessee (30,244) — higher than Davidson and twice the population of Knox.

However, Thomson was simply trying to build a railroad as inexpensively as he could. Having decided the site of the Franklin County tunnel, Thomson decided it made sense for the railroad to cross the Elk River, Duck River and all the gaps in the hills using a path that didn't go through Shelbyville. His route passed through the Bedford County communities of Wartrace and Bell Buckle — but not Shelbyville, which had to be satisfied with a 10-mile branch line to the Wartrace Depot.

Despite protests from Shelbyville, the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad went with Thomson's recommendation. And although it wasn't obvious to everyone at the time, this was a major turning point for Bedford County. After the Civil War, thanks to their status as railroad hubs, Shelby, Davidson, Hamilton and Knox emerged as Tennessee's most populous counties. But by 1900, Bedford County would fall from first to 19th in population among Tennessee counties.

Shelbyville wasn't the only town affected by Thomson's route. A new town called Cowan was surveyed and laid out near where the tunnel was dug. In the 1850s, railroad executives organized two new towns at railroad stops called Tullahoma and Decherd. After the war, other towns along the route such as Smyrna would be incorporated. On the Alabama side of the mountain, both Stevenson and Bridgeport owe their existence to Thomson's chosen route.

In conclusion, engineers Stephen Harriman Long and John Edgar Thomson had a lot to do with either the existence or the current size of the Tennessee communities of Nashville, Chattanooga, Shelbyville,

Murfreesboro, Smyrna, Tullahoma, Decherd and Cowan and the Alabama communities of Guntersville, Stevenson and Bridgeport. However, I'm not sure how much either man reflected on this. Long's Wikipedia page is dominated by his career as a Western explorer while Thomson is remembered as the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. So as much as it pains me to admit this, the impact they made to the Tennessee and Alabama maps might have never crossed their minds. ■



John Edgar Thomson (National Portrait Gallery image taken by Mathew Brady)

My TENNESSEE Notebook

Story and photographs by Antsy McClain

I ate breakfast, lunch and dinner at Buc-ee's convenience store in Crossville. Stores have strangely meandered from the town square to the suburbs to the freeway.

My earliest memories involve shopping. Like any red-blooded, corn-fed, God-fearing American, unabashed consumerism has been a long-practiced rite of passage throughout my life.

Shopping as a boy with my grandparents on the town square in the little farming community where I grew up are some of my fondest memories. We'd ride into town where there was a hardware store, a grocery store, a feed store, a post office and one good diner. Our last stop was always the pharmacy in the back of the five-and-dime with a long counter and red vinyl stools that would spin. The pharmacist's wife made milkshakes. Grandpa would give me 25 cents, and I'd pick out a comic book from the tall metal rack in the corner by the greeting cards. Grandma's soft, wax paper hands and Grandpa's easy, chipped-tooth smile remain big parts of those memories. It wasn't just about buying the comic book. It was the people I was with who made it so special.

As a teenager, I watched sadly as the shops on our town square closed to make way for attorneys and real estate agents. The locally owned stores and eateries were replaced by national chains that occupied space in the

Convenience stores are aptly named for having what everyone needs all in one place: milk, bread, beef jerky, beer and toilet paper. Everything else on one's grocery list is just a frivolous luxury.

mall, which became the new beacon of consumerism, located minutes from our suburban homes with plenty of parking. The stores were all under one roof with a food court at its heart and a fountain for loose-change wishes.

The fountain became a place to rest if you were old and a place to kiss and hold hands if you were young.

Around this time, there was another popular consumer destination to pop up along city blocks and busy shopping centers: the now ubiquitous convenience store.

While I can certainly recall exactly where I was on 9/11, I can also give remarkably vivid detail about the first time I stepped into a 7-Eleven.

My first five minutes were spent watching the hot dogs roll deliciously in that most amazing of all modern culinary appliances: the hot dog roller grill. Sweating like Brazilian bathing beauties under the heat lamp, those golden, all-beef hot dogs embodied desire. At that moment in time, I wanted a 7-Eleven hot dog more than anything I'd ever wanted in all my life.

Convenience stores are aptly named for having what everyone needs all in one place: milk, bread,



The author, moments before stepping into a Buc-ee's for the very first time.

beef jerky, beer and toilet paper. Everything else on one's grocery list is just a frivolous luxury. They also have every candy bar and junk food known to Middle America, a teenager's fever dream.

Which brings me to the new consumer model sweeping the nation and taking Southeast America by storm one freeway exit at a time: Buc-ee's.

We have now migrated from the town square to the suburbs to the freeways. But don't call Buc-ee's a truck stop. They are, as advertised on their website, simply "The World's Largest Convenience Store." Their numbers — and reputation — back up the claim.

Founded in 1982 during America's convenience store boom, most of the stores are in Texas where it all started, but Buc-ee's now counts Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Missouri and Georgia among locations, with more stores in the works.

The largest Buc-ee's, incidentally, is in Sevierville and boasts 74,000 square feet with more than 120 gas pumps and EV charging stations.

I first heard of Buc-ee's at a dinner party in 2019 when a friend came wearing a T-shirt with a cartoon beaver on the front. I asked her about it. Her eyes got wide as she spoke about this "magical place." "It's huge!" "Beyond belief." "A shopping experience like nothing you've ever seen."

I hadn't heard this kind of excitement from adults since our county allowed beer sales on Sunday. It was akin to hearing children talk about Disney World.

But kids clearly love this place, too. My neighbor, Esme, is 9 years old. When I told her father, Niles, that I was doing a story on Buc-ee's, he said, "Esme is obsessed with that place."



Buc-ee's No. 1 fan, Esme Ingalls, clutches her favorite plush toy and snuggles under a Buc-ee's blanket.

When Niles and Esme showed up later, she was in full Buc-ee's regalia and carrying a Buc-ee's plush toy.

"I've never been to Buc-ee's," I said, "What do you like about the place?"

She didn't hesitate. "It's big."

"Do you like the food?"

She nodded, "Especially the sweet, cinnamon stuff."

The Crossville location of Buc-ee's is nestled off Exit 320 on Interstate 40, just a stone's throw from Stonehaus Winery and The Crossville-Cumberland County Visitor Center — Gateway to the Big South Fork, a beautiful part of

the state in Volunteer Energy Cooperative's service area.

I pulled off the freeway around 9:30 a.m., just in time for breakfast, and followed a line of cars. I realized I was part of a pilgrimage now and that I was entering a finely tuned shopper's playground.

I walked in with a friendly couple on their way to the Smoky Mountains from Arkansas. They must have noticed my childlike wonder and asked, "First time here?" I replied affirmatively and they said, "Oh, you're gonna love it! Just wait until you get inside."

I felt the uncontrollable excitement of my inner child as I was bombarded immediately with bursts of color, happy music and soft, plush things hanging on hooks.

They were beavers — hundreds of stuffed beavers — all smiling at me with wide-eyed, caffeinated glares. They wore little red caps and little red sweaters bearing the beaver's own face, so as not to forget, I suppose, who was boss around here. Make no mistake: It's the beaver.

The Buc-ee's mascot is everywhere, on everything from boxers to beef jerky. The beaver was smiling at

I first heard of Buc-ee's at a dinner party in 2019. I hadn't heard this kind of excitement from adults since our county allowed beer sales on Sunday.

me from every piece of swag imaginable: refrigerator magnets, stickers, buttons, T-shirts, hoodies, briefs, pajamas, caps, coffee mugs, water bottles, backpacks, boxes of fudge, endless bags of snacks, sandwich wrappers and shopping bags. Every possible surface where a beaver's face could be positioned has been done so with superhuman thoroughness.

Being a convenience store and not a truck stop, the only place to eat comfortably was in my car, which I did — although I did sneak some food into the fitting room at one point. Needing a little sustenance while trying on some hoodies, I brought my purchases in with me and nibbled on some Bohemian Garlic jerky and a bag of Beaver Nuggets, which are not made from actual beaver as the name might suggest but rather are tasty corn puffs.

I met a nice couple just outside the world's cleanest bathrooms (true!), retirees from Georgia who arrived pulling an Airstream and confessed to having red pins in a map to commemorate each Buc-ee's stop, along with other pins marking state and national parks. Their goal is to visit every Buc-ee's in their travels. They'd been to eight. Fifty more to go.

They spoke excitedly about having visited Buc-ee's No. 1, located in Lake Jackson, Texas, about an hour south of Houston. It's about the size of a typical convenience store but serves as a destination favorite for deep-dive devotees driving through south Texas along the coastline.

I was most intrigued by the art gallery in the entrance of the bathroom. An original painting of tigers was priced at \$699. A large, foggy landscape photo was \$349. I wanted to keep looking, but I was in the way of the busy bathroom traffic, so I went back to the home section where signs told me that unless I was George Strait or God, I had to remove my boots. Glittered cow skulls hung among T-shirts announcing "Never Mind the Dog, Beware of Wife," and another shirt declaring its wearer as a member of the Grumpy Old Man Club.

I was startled every 10 minutes or so when the meat counter staff would yell something in unison

that I couldn't quite understand. I asked the nice lady helping me with my fudge purchases (blueberry cheesecake, peanut butter and banana pudding — don't judge me) what they were saying, and she smiled and said, "They're announcing the latest rack of brisket coming out of the smoker. We're known for our brisket, so they yell it out to let everyone know."

"Like the town crier," I replied, "yelling out the important news of the day."

"And what's more important than brisket?" she said with a wry smile.

I looked around at the families coming in and out. I saw their smiles and the Disney World faces on their children. A little girl in front of the candy counter. A little boy with his grandfather. Some things never change, and magic is what we make it.

I grabbed the last brisket and pulled pork barbecue sandwiches. It was 3:15 p.m. I had been at Buc-ee's for about six hours. I'd eaten twice and was about to eat again. I met some really nice people and spent more than \$130 on must-have items like grilling forks; 8 pounds of fudge;

some sweet, cinnamon things (per Esme's astute recommendation); five bags of jerky; and a hat.

I looked back over my shoulder as I made my exit. "Yes, Esme," I thought, "it's big, all right."

As I drove home, I kept the radio off and thought about hardware stores and diners. I daydreamed of red vinyl stools and ice cream. My stomach was content, and I had a full tank of gas.

But more importantly, I think the kid inside me got fed a little, too. I was light-years away from that little farm town where I grew up, but I felt like I was home, like I had just spent the day with my grandparents.

Now, where can I buy a comic book? ■

Antsy McClain is a Nashville-adjacent singer-songwriter, author and graphic artist who performs with his band, The Trailer Park Troubadours, around the world and in parts of Wilson County. Find his full bio, music, books, artwork and tour dates at unhitched.com.

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WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR

The Tennessee electric cooperative
creative writing and scholarship
competition for high school Juniors

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‘Electric Cooperatives Connect’

An electric cooperative writing and scholarship competition

High school juniors from Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation’s service area have a unique opportunity to earn spots on a once-in-a-lifetime tour of our nation’s capital by participating in the Electric Cooperative Creative Writing and Scholarship Competition.

CEMC will select 12 students who write winning short stories describing the benefits of cooperative power to attend the Washington Youth Tour, an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., this summer. Sponsored by CEMC and the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association, the Washington Youth Tour provides young leaders with an opportunity to explore our nation’s capital, learn more about government and cooperatives, develop leadership skills and network with other young leaders from across the nation.

To enter, students must write short stories titled “Electric Cooperatives Connect” explaining how co-ops connect Tennessee communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more.

Stories must not exceed 900 words, including articles (“a,” “an” and “the”), and the exact word count must be included on the cover page. Entries, which must be typewritten and double-spaced, will be judged on appropriate treatment of theme, knowledge of the subject, originality, creativity, grammar and composition.

The contest deadline is Thursday, Feb. 29, and winners will be announced this spring. Writers of the top 12 entries in CEMC’s service area will join nearly 2,000 other delegates from across the country for the 2024 Washington Youth Tour in June.

Food, travel and lodging expenses are paid by Tennessee’s electric cooperatives, but the benefits of the Youth Tour go far beyond an expense-paid trip. Youth Tour attendees will qualify for additional trips and thousands of dollars in scholarships. TECA will award \$3,000, \$2,000 and \$1,000 scholarships for the state’s top three short stories. Additional scholarships on the national level will be awarded by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association as well.

Winners can also choose to participate in the Cooperative Youth Ambassador program. Delegates who remain active and

engaged with CEMC for 12 months following the contest will qualify for a drawing for a \$10,000 scholarship to the school of the winner's choice.

The Washington Youth Tour Creative Writing and Scholarship Competition is open to high school juniors living in CEMC's five-county

service area. Resource materials and additional information can be found online at cemc.org and youthtour.tnelectric.org or by contacting Susie Yonkers, CEMC community relations coordinator, at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or by email at syonkers@cemc.org.

CEMC Senior Scholarship Program



Each year, Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation invests in future leaders by awarding scholarships to deserving high school seniors through the Senior Scholarship Program.

Twelve students will be chosen this year to receive one-time awards of \$1,000 that can be used toward their freshman year expenses such as tuition, textbooks and lab fees or to purchase other required classroom materials. The program is coordinated through each school's senior guidance counselor.

To be eligible, applicants must meet these requirements:

- Must be a graduating high school senior whose parents or guardians are members of CEMC and receive electric service from CEMC at his or her primary residence.
- Must have attained a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade-point average.
- Must enroll or plan to enroll as a full-time student at an accredited Tennessee college, university or trade school by fall 2023 (Murray State and Western Kentucky universities are included).

- Must submit a completed application, including two letters of reference: one from a teacher or other school official and one from a community leader.
- Must write an original essay of at least 300 words explaining what the student most looks forward to about attending college and how a scholarship, in terms of financial assistance, will help in completing his or her education. All essays will be judged on the basis of content, composition, grammar and neatness.

Applications are available through the senior guidance counselors at each school and can be found on CEMC's website: cemc.org. Deadline for scholarship entry is Thursday, Feb. 29. Children of CEMC, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association or Tennessee Valley Authority employees, directors or attorneys are not eligible to apply.

For additional information, contact CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or via email at syonkers@cemc.org.

Beginner's guide to the electric grid

By Maura Giles

Electricity plays an essential role in everyday life. It powers our homes, offices, hospitals and schools. We depend on it to keep us warm in the winter (and cool in the summer), charge our phones and stream our favorite TV shows. If the power goes out, even briefly, our lives can be disrupted.

The system that delivers your electricity is often described as the most complex machine in the world, and it's known as the electric grid.

What makes it so complex? We all use different amounts of electricity throughout the day, so the supply and demand for electricity are constantly changing. For example, we typically use more electricity in the mornings when we're starting our day and in the evenings when we're cooking dinner and using appliances. Severe weather and other factors also impact how much electricity we need.

The challenge for electric providers is to plan for, produce and purchase enough electricity so it's available exactly when we need it. Too much or too little electricity in one place can cause problems. So, to make sure the whole system stays balanced, the electric grid must adjust in real time to changes and unforeseen events.

At its core, the electric grid is a network of power lines, transformers, substations and other infrastructure that spans the entire country. But it's not just a singular system. It's divided into three major interconnected grids: the Eastern Interconnection, Western Interconnection and Electric Reliability Council of Texas. These grids operate independently but are linked to allow electricity to be transferred between regions when backup support is required.

Within the three regions, seven balancing authorities known as independent system operators (ISOs) or

HOW ELECTRICITY GETS TO YOU



step 1 Generation

Electricity is generated from various sources.



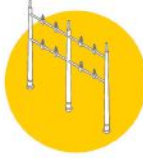
step 2 Step-Up Transformer

Voltage is increased to push the electricity over long distances.



step 3 Transmission Power Lines

Lines carry electricity over long distances.



step 4 Transmission Substation

Voltage is lowered so electricity can travel across the local system.



step 5 Distribution Substation

Voltage is lowered further for safe distribution.



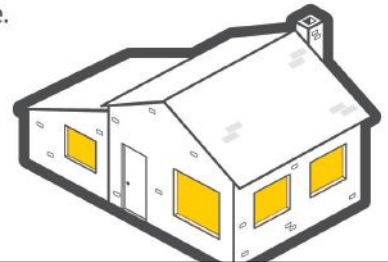
step 6 Distribution Power Lines

Electricity travels across these lines in your community.



step 7 Final Stop

A transformer reduces voltage a final time, and electricity is sent to your home.



regional transmission organizations (RTOs) monitor the grid, signaling to power plants when more electricity is needed to maintain a balanced electrical flow. ISOs and RTOs are like traffic controllers for electricity.

The journey of electricity begins at power plants, which can be thought of as factories that make electricity using various energy sources like natural gas, solar, wind and nuclear energy. Across the U.S., more than 11,000 power plants deliver electricity to the grid.

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation receives power from the Tennessee Valley Authority. We work closely with TVA to provide electricity at the lowest cost possible.

To get the electricity from power plants to you, we need a transportation system.

High-voltage transmission lines act as highways for electricity, transporting power over long distances. These lines are supported by massive towers and travel through vast landscapes, connecting power plants to electric substations.

Substations are like pit stops along the highway, where the voltage of electricity is adjusted. They play a crucial role in managing power flow and ensuring that electricity is safe for use in homes and businesses.

Once the electricity is reduced to the proper voltage, it travels through distribution power lines like the ones you typically see on the side of the road. Distribution lines carry electricity from substations to homes, schools and businesses. Distribution transformers, which look like metal buckets on the tops of power poles or large green boxes on the ground, further reduce the voltage to levels suitable for household appliances and electronic devices.

After traveling through transformers, electricity reaches you — to power everyday life.

We're proud to be your local, trusted energy provider. From the time it's created to the time it's used, electricity travels great distances to be available at the flip of a switch. That's what makes the electric grid our nation's most complex machine — and one of our nation's greatest achievements.

Maura Giles writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Turn down the thermostat

Saving energy during the winter doesn't have to mean feeling cold in your own home. Here are five free ways to lower your energy bills while staying comfortable indoors:

Lower the temperature in your home by just a single degree. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save 3% on your heating bill for every degree you set your thermostat back during the winter — as long as you leave it there.

Turn off exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathroom as soon as the steam or cooking smells are gone. It takes only one hour for those fans to blow all of the warm air out of your house, so use them only as needed.

Close the fireplace damper when you're not burning a fire. An open damper is a hole in your house that sucks heated air out and draws cold winter air in.

Move furniture and rugs away from heating vents so air can circulate freely around the room. That will make your heating system's work a lot easier.

Open the curtains on south-facing windows on sunny days so the sun's warm rays can radiate into

your home. Close the curtains at night to help trap that heat indoors.

For more energy-saving tips and helpful information on how to make your home more energy-efficient year-round, visit the Energy Solutions page on Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation's website, cemc.org, or give us a call at 800-987-2362.



CEMC Calendar Art Contest

Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation is seeking entries from local student-artists for its 2025 Calendar Art Contest. Winners will receive cash prizes and have their artwork published in CEMC's 2025 calendar, which will be displayed in homes, businesses and schools throughout the co-op's service area. Calendars are free and will be available at CEMC's offices beginning in November each year. (Get your 2024 calendar at any CEMC office while supplies last!)

The contest is open to all students — grades kindergarten through 12 —who reside within CEMC's service area. Entries will be accepted through participating schools and are due by Thursday, Feb. 29. Each grade (for which the student is currently enrolled) has been assigned a calendar month to illustrate as follows: **January**, sixth; **February**, seventh; **March**, eighth; **April**, ninth; **May**, 10th; **June**, 11th; **July**, kindergarten; **August**, first; **September**, second; **October**, third; **November**, fourth; and **December**, fifth.

Seniors will illustrate the cover. There is no specific theme for the cover; however, rural scenes, barns,

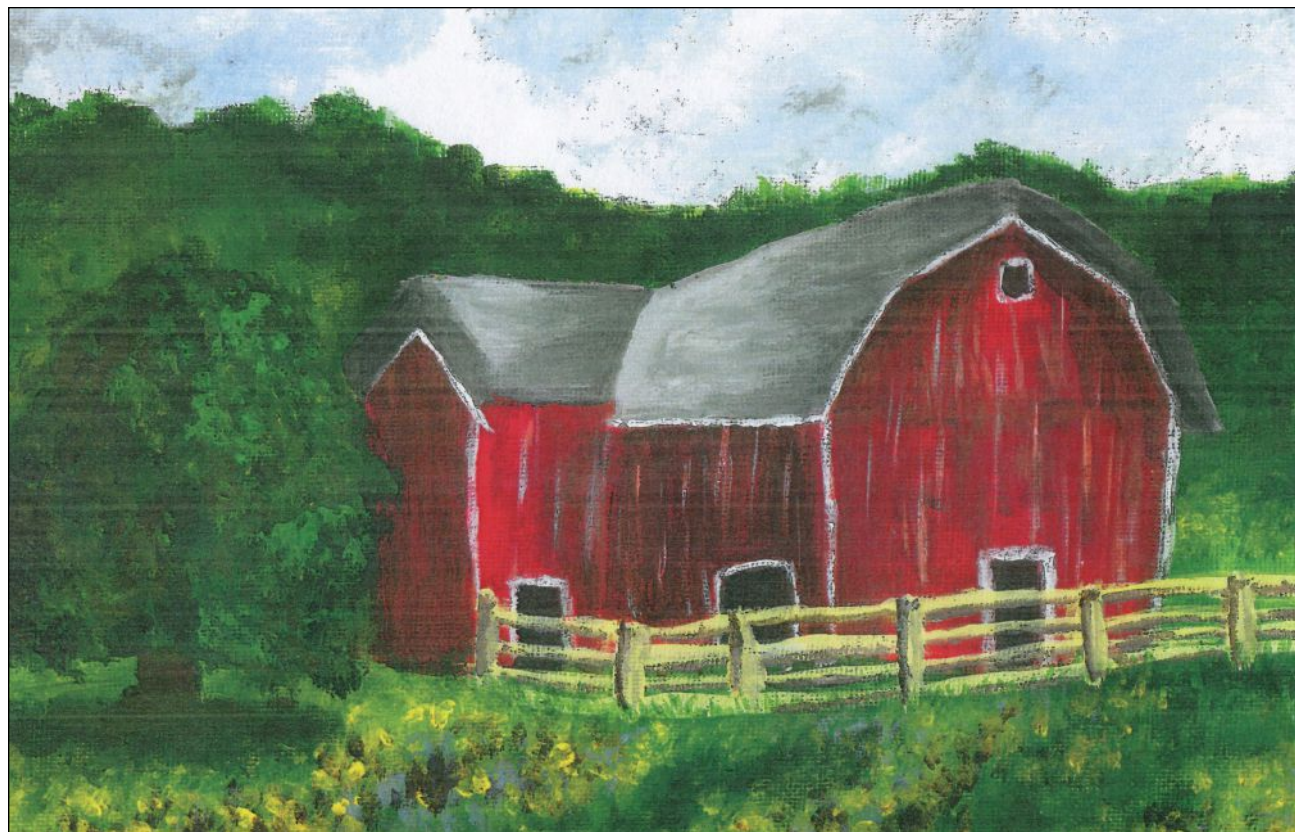
wildlife and items that illustrate CEMC's service (line trucks, utility poles, etc.) are a few suggestions.

Artwork will be judged on artistic merit, creativity and how well the assigned month is depicted. All elements of the artwork must be the work of the student submitting the entry. Artwork must be on white or light-colored, unruled paper no larger than 11 by 14 inches and no smaller than 8.5 by 11 inches. Original artwork must be submitted (no photocopies), and art must be in the horizontal or landscape position.

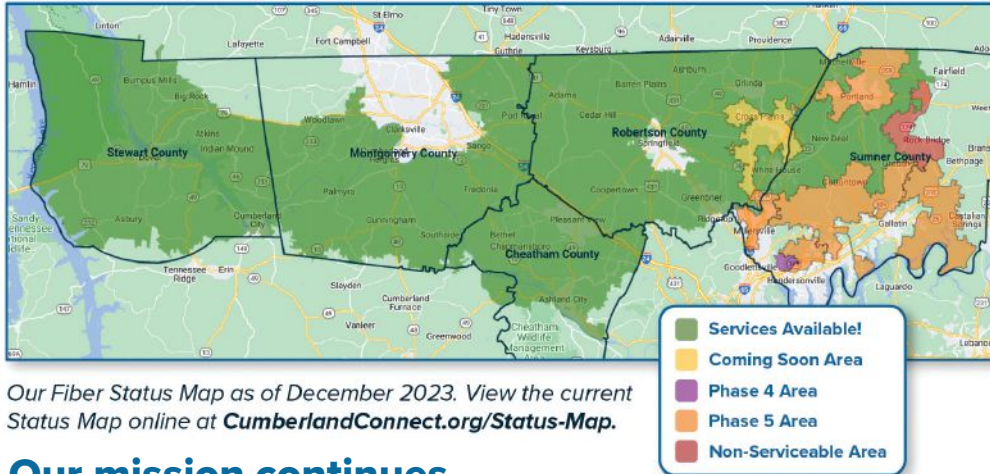
First-place winners will receive cash prizes as follows: kindergarten-fifth, \$25; sixth-eighth, \$50; and ninth-12th, \$75. The Overall Winner will receive \$100.

Complete contest details and instructions can be obtained by contacting CEMC Community Relations Coordinator Susie Yonkers at 800-987-2362, ext. 1143, or by emailing syonkers@cemc.org.

Below, the artwork of Clarksville High School student Morgan Chancey was the Overall Winner of CEMC's 2024 Calendar Art Contest.



THE HOME STRETCH: Fiber is Coming in 2024



Our mission continues

2023 was a year filled with progress for CEMC and Cumberland Connect. Our fiber network construction continued through Phase 4 areas in Montgomery, Cheatham and Robertson counties, making CCFiber services available to more than 80,000 homes and businesses as of December 2023. While we still have more work to do, we are excited to say that we are reaching the home stretch as we move into the new year.

Throughout the next year, Cumberland Connect will move into Phase 5 of fiber construction, the final phase of our initial network buildout. Phase 5 areas encompass a large portion of Sumner County, and we are so excited to be completing construction in these areas because we know our members have been eagerly waiting! During this final construction phase, we will pass 24,574 additional locations and construct an additional 854 miles of fiber optic line. Access to reliable internet service for CEMC members in Sumner County is long overdue, and we are just as excited as you all to bring CCFiber service to these communities.

While we're enthusiastic about the road ahead, we also want to reflect on the milestones we've reached along the way. Since fiber construction began in 2019, our crews have built more than 4,500 miles of fiber optic line throughout CEMC's service territory. That's nearly enough fiber to cross our entire continent — it's about the distance of driving from New York City to Anchorage, Alaska! We have covered all CEMC service territory in Stewart, Montgomery and Cheatham counties, and once all Phase 4 zones are opened, we will have covered almost all CEMC territory in Robertson County as well.

But we can't reflect on the high points without mentioning our membership's incredible support and encouragement. Your support has spurred us on and enabled us to help make a difference in our communities in ways that go beyond bringing fiber Internet service. Your membership fuels investments in our local communities, including local schools, community service organizations, local events and economic development efforts — and we are honored to have been a part of your communities over the past year.

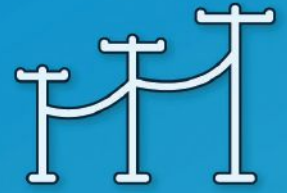
Our team is always happy to share our progress with you all, and we know it will be another impactful year ahead. Thank you to our members and subscribers for your support — we truly couldn't do what we do without members like you. We are looking forward to this time next year when we hope to celebrate the most significant milestone yet — the completion of Cumberland Connect's initial fiber network construction!

—Happy New Year from all of us at Cumberland Connect

Check Availability to Register for Email Updates at
www.CumberlandConnect.org

This institution is an equal-opportunity provider and employer.

WHERE ARE WE
TODAY?



4,500+

MILES OF FIBER CONSTRUCTED



81,787+

HOMES & BUSINESSES
WITH CCFIBER SERVICE ACCESS



29,000+

CCFIBER SUBSCRIBERS
AS OF DECEMBER 2023



Tips to stay warm and save energy this winter

Q: My winter energy bills are typically higher. Can you offer advice on how to lower bills during colder months?

A: Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell — the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.



It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits; boilers; radiant heat; baseboard heaters; and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

We use energy to make our homes comfortable. The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy that's used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are asleep or away from home. Keep in mind that setting the temperature too low can lead to frozen pipes or moisture issues in some geographic locations.

Adding an additional layer of clothing, slippers or a hat can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you might see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space

Operating an additional heat source to warm a room or section of a home could increase your monthly electric bills.

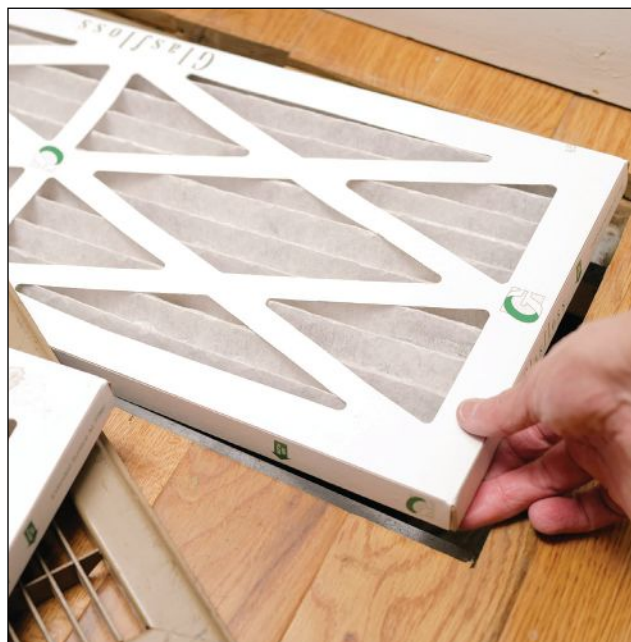
heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them 3 feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Just as we put on a windbreaker to keep cold winds from blowing through a sweater, your home also benefits from blocking air movement. Air-sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings. A common air-sealing practice is applying weather stripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together — like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check. ■



Top, the easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. Adding a layer, slippers, a hat or a lap dog can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

Above, if you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty.

Left, air-seal around plumbing penetrations with expanding foam to reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.



Miranda Boutelle is vice president of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group in Oregon, a cooperatively owned energy efficiency company. She also writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives.





Best of Both Worlds

Long Hunter State Park balances resource protection with visitor recreation

Story by Trish Milburn • Photographs by Robin Conover

Long Hunter State Park in Davidson and Rutherford counties is named after the White hunters such as Uriah Stone and Kasper Mansker who traveled to this area in the 1760s and 1770s, three decades before Tennessee became a state. Those men, however, were far from the first people to hunt in this area. Native peoples hunted and gathered food here centuries before any European colonization in what would become America. It was a time when the only White people to have likely even seen North America were the Vikings, who didn't stick around.

Left: Long Hunter State Park offers several easy-to-moderate trails with a few leading to bluffs that overlook J. Percy Priest Lake. Right, a 2.2-mile paved trail leads visitors on an easy hike around Couchville Lake at Long Hunter State Park. The lake helps provide wildlife viewing; you could see deer, migratory waterfowl and other bird species. Below, fishermen enjoy a beautiful sunset over J. Percy Priest Lake, which borders the park to the west and south.

The location of the modern park on the outskirts of Nashville makes its 2,600 acres of preserved nature a popular option for outdoor activities for the more than 2 million people who call the metro area home — not to mention the many who visit the city each year.

“It’s a great place for people in urban areas to get outside,” says Park Manager Bill Loewer, who has been at Long Hunter three and a half years following time spent serving at nearby Cedars of Lebanon and David Crockett state parks.

Like many parks with high visitation numbers, Loewer and his staff face a challenging balance: providing enjoyable recreation for the public while protecting natural resources. In Long Hunter, those resources include the shores of J. Percy Priest Lake, the smaller Couchville Lake, woodlands and especially the rare cedar glades ecosystem.

“The cedar glades are some of the most at-risk ecosystems with thin to no soil,” Loewer says. “They tend to get abused.”

Loewer says that he and other park staff have to artificially maintain the glades because they no longer are subject to the fires and animal grazing that naturally maintained them before people settled here and Middle Tennessee grew into the densely populated area it is now. That growth in human population and the land



development that comes with that have also taken out some of the cedar glades ecosystem entirely.

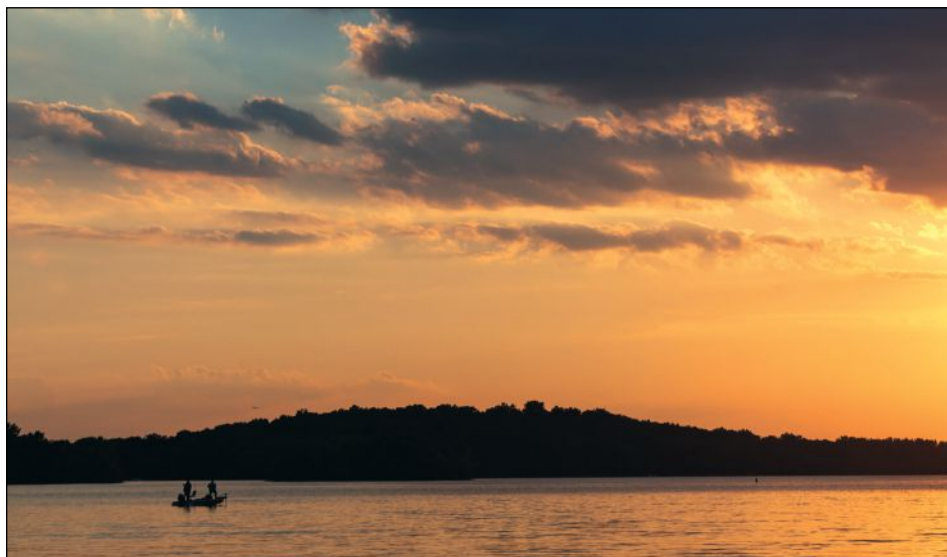
The park also has to manage other resources in ways that balance nature with humanity. For instance, in a call back to its roots, on the day when Loewer was interviewed for this article, he was out directing traffic for a managed deer hunt to decrease the overpopulation of the species.

Long Hunter is divided into four sections: Couchville, Baker’s Grove, Bryant Grove and Sellars Farm State Archaeological Area in Watertown.

Sellars Grove protects a Native American mounds site that was occupied by Mississippian-era people roughly from the year 900 to 1500.

Outdoor activities

As you might expect from a park that sits on the shores of a 14,000-plus-acre lake, water recreation such as boating, swimming, skiing and fishing are popular here. There is a designated swimming beach at the Bryant Grove area, but swimming is prohibited at





Willa Reeves and Judy Champ, both Middle Tennessee Electric members, enjoy a day hike at Long Hunter State Park near Mt Juliet. The park is known for its cedar glades that include several varieties of endangered plants. Below, a bumblebee gathers pollen from a prairie coneflower.

Couchville Lake and around the park's two boat launch ramps to J. Percy Priest Lake.

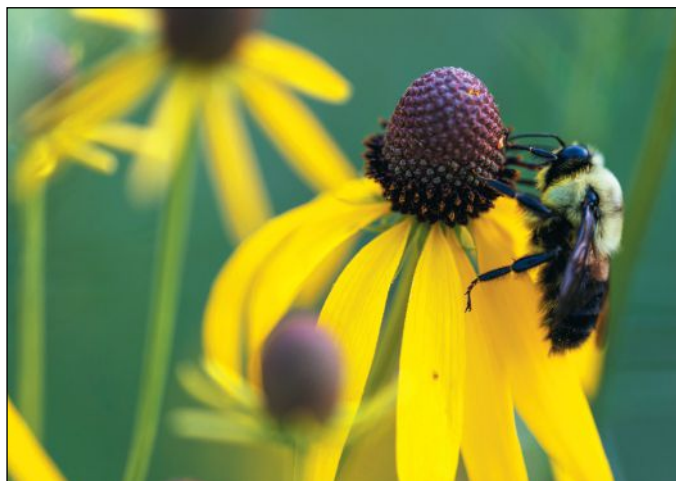
The 110-acre Couchville Lake offers a more tranquil float, but gas motors and personal watercraft are not allowed. During the summer months, the boathouse here rents canoes, kayaks and paddleboats. Visitors can bring their own paddle craft for personal use year-round.

If you're not a get-on-or-in-the-water type of person but still enjoy a lovely water view, a picnic on the bluffs overlooking J. Percy Priest Lake or a walk along the park's trails might be more your speed. The 2-mile paved Couchville Lake Arboretum Trail around Couchville Lake is a great option for those with children in strollers or those who use wheelchairs. Pets on leashes are allowed, but please clean up after them.

There are a total of 12 trails located within the park's four areas, all of them rated easy and/or

moderate. While walking along them, you'll be treated not only to those water views on some but also a wide variety of trees such as black cherry and tulip poplar; seasonal wildflowers like the vibrant purple limestone fameflower and the striking passionflower; and numerous types of woodland birds, waterfowl and butterflies at different times of the year.

The 1.5-mile-loop Sellars Farm Trail includes a kiosk that shares information about the Native village that once existed next to Spring Creek.



Mountain bikers will find 5 miles of intermediate fun along the Jones Mill Mountain Bike Trail located at the Bryant Grove area of the park. Hikers may also use this trail.

While Long Hunter doesn't have any RV campgrounds, it does have two primitive backcountry tents-only sites that require a 6-mile hike to reach. Each has a fire ring but no running water, restrooms,

showers or electricity. Reservations are required, and no hiking is allowed on the trails after dark.

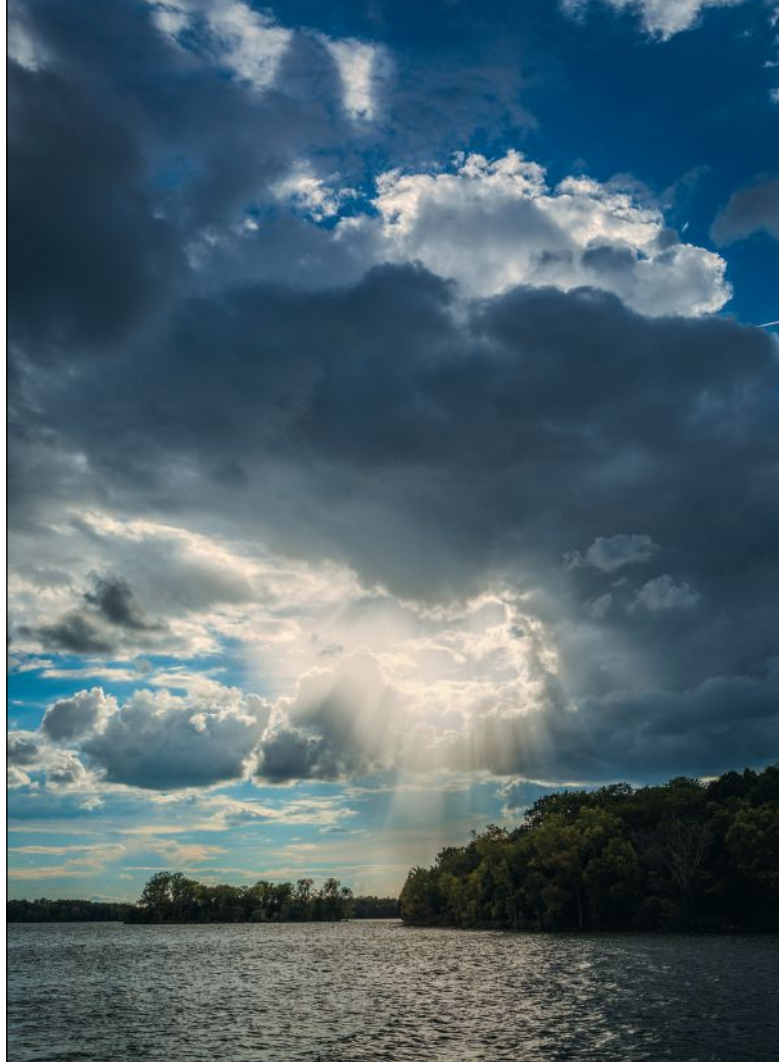
One attraction available at Long Hunter that you don't see at a lot of parks is the Alpine Tower Adventure, a 50-foot wooden tower designed to simulate the challenges of rock climbing and ropes courses. Park rangers are certified instructors for this structure. Reservations are required for the tower adventures, and there is an age requirement of at least 10 years old. A fee of \$20 per person is due when you make the reservation.

Upcoming events

Even in the winter months, the Long Hunter staff provides interesting programming. On Jan. 26, they'll be hosting the new year's first moonlit walk in the glade. The following day a program called Warm Up for Wildflowers will prepare visitors to identify the coming spring wildflowers and where to find them in the park. You can register for these events via the park's website. The walk has a small \$3 fee per person while the wildflower program is \$5.

Variety is the spice

People who become park rangers typically find it a rewarding career — for big and small reasons. For some, highlights are big moments like rescues. For others, it's the small moments like seeing a child's eyes light up when



Above, storm clouds hover over J. Percy Priest Lake as the sun tries to break through. Below, Long Hunter State Park is known for its abundance of the Tennessee coneflower, serving as a haven for butterflies and bees.



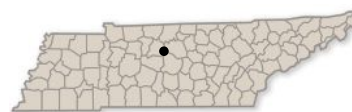
connecting with some aspect of nature for the first time. When asked about some of his favorite memories from his time at Long Hunter State Park, Loewer says seeing the park with a fresh snowfall is high on the list.

"Also, every day is different," he says. "Some days, I'm doing admin work, others trail maintenance or cutting trees."

The same can be said for visitor experiences. Whether you're coming out for a day of lake recreation, a walk in the woods or a relaxing picnic as you listen to birdsong and watch squirrels hop through fallen leaves, Long Hunter State Park has a lot to offer.

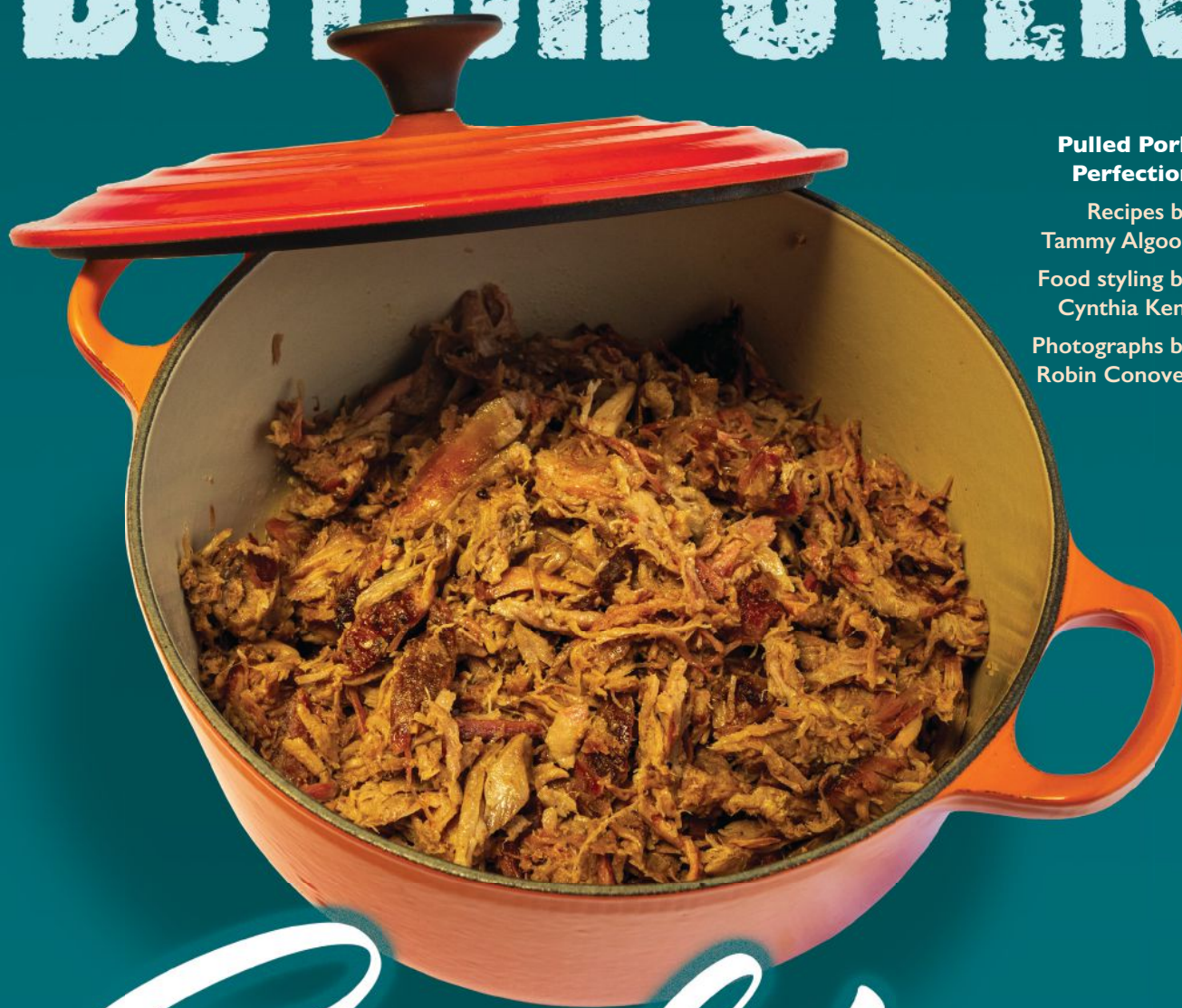
Long Hunter State Park

For more information, visit tnstateparks.com/parks/long-hunter; follow the park's social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube (links available on the website); or call the park office at 615-885-2422.



Back to Basics for the New Year

DUTCH OVEN



Pulled Pork Perfection

Recipes by
Tammy Algood

Food styling by
Cynthia Kent

Photographs by
Robin Conover

Cooking

In December, you did all the special things. You saw all the special people, even Great-Aunt Ruth. You ate all the special foods, even the ones your doctor said you shouldn't. But now it's January, and it's time to make life a little more simple, a little more nutritious, a little more comforting. It's time to pull out your Dutch oven. And lucky for you, we just happen to have some terrific recipes to get your new year started off right. And isn't that special?

Macaroni and Cheese Soup — *Use sharp Cheddar cheese for this recipe rather than anything milder.*

Yield: 4-6 servings

1½ cups elbow macaroni
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 shallot, peeled and diced
1 celery stalk, diced
⅓ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup dry white wine
2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1 teaspoon dry mustard
¼ teaspoon salt
⅛ teaspoon white pepper
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
Dash of ground nutmeg
2 cups milk, room temperature
4 cups sharp shredded Cheddar cheese
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Chopped fresh chives for garnish

Cook the macaroni in a large pot of boiling water according to the package directions. Drain and set aside.

Meanwhile, place the butter in a Dutch oven over medium heat. When melted, add the shallots and celery. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the flour, stirring to coat, and cook 1 minute longer. Stir in the wine and simmer until the liquid has nearly evaporated, around 3 minutes.

Add the stock, mustard, salt, white pepper, cayenne and nutmeg and simmer 5 minutes. Slowly add the milk, whisking constantly, and allow to warm for 2 minutes (do not allow it to boil). One cup at a time, whisk in the cheese, making sure it completely melts before adding the next cup. Repeat with all the cheese.

Stir in the reserved macaroni along with the lemon juice. Remove from heat and allow to stand for 3 minutes. Serve in warmed soup bowls and garnish with fresh chives.

Easy Chicken Cacciatore — *This is the perfect cool or cold weather dish!*

Yield: 4-5 servings

⅓ cup canola or vegetable oil
6 boneless skinless chicken thighs
1 sweet onion, peeled and sliced
3 large garlic cloves, peeled and minced
3 carrots, peeled and chopped

¼ cup chopped parsley
1 bay leaf
1 (28-ounce) can whole Italian tomatoes
1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
½ cup dry red wine
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
Hot cooked pasta or rice

Place the oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and sear until browned, about 3 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onions, garlic, carrots and parsley. Saute for 5 minutes, then add the bay leaf, tomatoes, tomato sauce and wine. Stir well, then top with the chicken, nestling it into the tomato mixture. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper.

Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes. Cover and cook 15 minutes longer. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve over hot cooked pasta or rice.

Aromatherapy Beef Stew

Yield: 8-10 servings

3 pounds stew beef, cut into bite-sized pieces
3 cups all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons vegetable oil
3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 pound fresh baby carrots
½ pound fresh pearl onions, peeled
10 small red potatoes, cut into quarters
3 cups beef stock
2 cups (16-ounces) crushed tomatoes
1 bottle dry red wine, divided
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup frozen English peas

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

Dredge the beef in the flour until coated on all sides, shaking off the excess. Place a large Dutch oven over high heat and add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the meat a few pieces at a time.

Cook, turning several times with tongs, until the meat is crispy and brown on all sides. Remove to a large dish. Repeat until all the meat is cooked and set aside. Reduce heat to medium-high. In the same pot, add the garlic, carrots, onions and potatoes. Sauté 5 minutes. Add the browned meat, stock, tomatoes, 2 cups of the wine, bay leaves, basil, salt and pepper. Cover and place in the oven. Bake 1 hour.

Add the remaining wine and bake, covered, 3 hours more or until the stew is fork-tender. Gently stir in the peas and adjust the seasonings if necessary. Remove and discard bay leaves. Serve hot.

Pulled Pork Perfection

Yield: 8 servings

1 (5-pound) boneless pork butt
2 teaspoons garlic salt
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon dry mustard
⅓ cup liquid smoke
2 tablespoons water, beer or beef stock
Barbecue sauce

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Grease a large Dutch oven with cooking spray and add the pork butt. In a small bowl, stir

Macaroni and Cheese Soup



together the garlic salt, paprika, pepper and mustard. Sprinkle evenly over the pork butt. Pour liquid smoke and water, beer or stock around the pork, cover and roast 6 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 190 degrees. Allow to rest 10 minutes before shredding the meat. Drizzle with your favorite barbecue sauce and serve.

Best Oven Beef Brisket

Yield: 6-8 servings

1 (3-pound) beef brisket, trimmed
 ¼ cup yellow mustard
 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
 1 teaspoon paprika
 1 teaspoon chili powder
 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon dry mustard
 1 teaspoon onion powder
 1 teaspoon black pepper
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 cup beef stock or stout beer
 Barbecue sauce of your choice

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Grease a large Dutch oven and set aside.

Smear both sides of the brisket with mustard. In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, paprika, chili powder, garlic powder, dry mustard, onion powder, black pepper and salt. Sprinkle evenly over both sides of the brisket and place in the Dutch oven.

Roast uncovered for 1 hour. Add the stock or beer around the brisket, cover and cook for 3 to 3½ hours more or until the brisket is fork-tender. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for 15 minutes. Slice against the grain if it doesn't fall apart. Serve warm with barbecue sauce.

Herbed Butter Chicken and Potatoes

Yield: 6 servings

3 Russet potatoes, peeled and cut into wedges
 6 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1 teaspoon onion salt, divided
 ½ teaspoon black pepper, divided
 1 (3- to 3¼-pound) roasting chicken
 ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
 1 small lemon
 4 fresh thyme sprigs

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a large Dutch oven and add the potatoes and garlic. Sprinkle evenly with half the salt and pepper. Place the chicken on a large piece of waxed paper or aluminum foil. Rub all over with the softened butter, including underneath the skin. Place on top of the potato mixture.

Pierce the lemon with an ice pick at least 9 times all over. Insert into the chicken cavity along with thyme.

Tips and tricks

A Dutch oven is perfect for moist cooking methods such as stewing and braising.

It is a pot with a tight-fitting lid that prevents any steam from escaping while it lingers in the oven or on the stovetop.

Sizes can range from small to extra large.

Dutch ovens are typically made of cast iron.

The name comes from their American colonial Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry that dates back to the early 1700s.

Be aware that large and extra large Dutch ovens are heavy even before the ingredients are added. Exercise caution when removing from the heat source.

Cover and roast 1 hour on the lowest oven rack. Uncover and roast another 30-40 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 165 degrees. Remove from the oven and allow to rest 15 minutes before slicing and serving warm with pan drippings and potatoes. ■

*Tammy Algood develops recipes for **The Tennessee Magazine** that feature farm-fresh Tennessee food. Those fresh, local ingredients will always add cleaner, more flavorful foods to your table. We recommend visiting local farms and farmers markets to find the freshest seasonal produce.*



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

Mollie asks: “Could you tell me how long I can keep garam masala? I don’t use it a lot and have had this container for quite some time.”

Mollie, the problem with garam masala as well as other spices is that it tends to lessen in strength after nine months. This can be even shorter if it isn’t stored correctly, which is in a

tightly closed container in a cool, dry place. Garam masala can contain up to a dozen different spices, so after that time, you won’t get the full impact of it in your dish.

Reginald writes: “I have a recipe that calls for either snow puff or golden mushrooms, and I am having trouble

locating them. I can readily find many others. Can you help?”

Reginald, you have likely seen golden mushrooms, but didn’t realize it. The more common name for labeling is enoki mushrooms. And snow puff is just another name for the same thing, so it’s not two different kinds but enoki. ■

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SHUTTERBUG SHOWCASE

In the next installment of our Shutterbug Photography Contest, we're reviving a favorite theme from several years ago. We received so many great entries in our "Selfie" contest in 2015, we're bringing it back for another round.

Most selfies are simple, straightforward shots, but we at *The Tennessee Magazine* are looking to expand the definition of the selfie. Your photographs could be autobiographical, representing who you are. The art of the self-portrait has been approached in countless ways by artists over the centuries. We are excited to see what you come up with.

As you accept this challenge, please stay safe. People have injured themselves in search of the perfect self-portrait, and we don't want anyone to take a tumble in the name of the Shutterbug contest.

Contest rules

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



Shutterbug assignment: "Selfie"

Submissions — online entries only

To enter, visit tnmagazine.org and click on "Entry Forms" under the "Contests" tab.

Deadline

Entries must be entered online by the end of the day on Tuesday, Jan. 16. Winners will be published in the March issue.

Prize packages:

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

**Graham Taylor,
Second Place, Adult,
2015 "Selfie"
Shutterbug Contest**

POET'S PLAYGROUND

Inspiring words from your neighbors

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

Subject: While the theme of your poem must include something Tennessee-related, including the word "Tennessee" is not required.

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

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

Deadline: Entry must be submitted online or postmarked by Thursday, Feb. 1. First-place poems will be published in the April issue.

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

Please enter online at tnmagazine.org or mail handwritten entries to: Poetry Contest, *The Tennessee Magazine*, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Make sure to print your poem legibly, and be sure to keep a copy of your poem as submissions received via mail will not be returned.

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



Photograph by Robin Conover

TENNESSEE EVENTS

Festivals, celebrations and other happenings around the state

Stay active throughout winter with Tennessee State Parks

Visit tnstateparks.com to begin planning your next adventure

Wintertime might not conjure thoughts of abundant outdoor activities, but Tennessee's state parks offer an array of programming and events year-round. Here's just a sampling over the next couple of months.

Winter is the ideal time for birdwatching at **Reelfoot Lake State Park** in Tiptonville. The park is offering various tours, festivals and programming throughout February: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/reelfoot-lake

Long Hunter State Park in Hermitage is hosting a program on National Bird Day on Jan. 5: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/long-hunter

Savage Gulf State Park in Coalmont is holding a Day Loop Hike on Jan. 10 and 11: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/savage-gulf

Warriors Path State Park in Kingsport is hosting a Winter Garden Seminar with nationally renowned backyard ecologist Shannon Trimboli on Jan. 13: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/warriors-path

Edgar Evins State Park in Silver Point is hosting a Wolf Moon Hike on Jan. 25: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/edgar-evins



Cordell Hull Birthplace State Park in Byrdstown is hosting a Beginning Spinning Wheel class on Jan. 20 and the Sixth annual Victorian Galentine's Day on Feb. 10: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/cordell-hull-birthplace

Bledsoe Creek State Park in Gallatin is hosting a Maker Market and Craft Fair on Feb. 24: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/bledsoe-creek

Cummins Falls State Park in Jackson County is hosting the Cummins Falls Marathon on Feb. 24: cumminsfallsmarathon.com

Hiwassee-Ocoee Scenic River State Park in Delano is hosting a How to Thru-Hike the Appalachian Trail program on Jan. 27 as well as an Introduction to Overnight Backpacking intensive on Feb. 16 and 17: tnstateparks.com/parks/events/hiwassee-ocoe

West Tennessee

Now-Jan. 8 • Christmas at Graceland, Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com/christmas-at-graceland

Jan. 2-7 • Company, Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

Jan. 5-8 • Elvis Birthday Celebration 2024, Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com

Jan. 13 • Jo Koy, Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

Jan. 21 • C.S. Lewis On Stage: Further Up And Further In, Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. info@fpatheatre.com or fpatheatre.com

Feb. 3 • "Live at the Lorraine" Music Series: J. Buck, National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel, Memphis. 901-521-9699 or civilrightsmuseum.org/events

Feb. 6-11 • Les Misérables, Orpheum Theatre, Memphis. 901-525-3000 or orpheum-memphis.com

Feb. 9-11 • Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Weekend 2024, Graceland, Memphis. 901-332-3322 or graceland.com

Feb. 17 • Annual Black History Program, Chester County Senior Center, Henderson. croomamie@gmail.com

Middle Tennessee

Now-Jan. 7 • PAW Patrol: Adventure Play Exhibit, Discovery Center at Murfree Spring, Murfreesboro. 615-890-2300 or exploredhdc.org

Now-Feb. 4 • Zoolumination, Nashville Zoo. 615-833-1534 or nashvillezoo.org/zoolumination

Jan. 2-7 • Funny Girl, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville. 615-782-4040 or tpac.org

Jan. 6-7 • Monster Jam, Bridgestone Arena, Nashville. 615-770-2100 or bridgestonearena.com

Jan. 6, 13 and 20 • Marshmallow Hikes, Owl's Hill Nature Sanctuary, Brentwood. 615-370-4672 or owlshill.org/marshmallow-hikes

Jan. 10 • Aerosmith: PEACE OUT The Farewell Tour with The Black Crowes, Bridgestone Arena, Nashville. 615-770-2100 or bridgestonearena.com

Jan. 19 • Harlem Globetrotters 2024 World Tour, F&M Bank Arena, Clarksville. 931-343-3622 or myfimbankarena.com

Jan. 19 • Candlelight: A Tribute to Coldplay, First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Lewisburg. 402-249-2445 or fever@eventvesta.com

Jan. 19 • Candlelight: The Best of Hans Zimmer, First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Lewisburg. 402-249-2445 or fever@eventvesta.com

Jan. 19-20 • The Cher Show, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville. 615-782-4040 or tpac.org

Jan. 20 • Harlem Globetrotters 2024 World Tour, Bridgestone Arena, Nashville. 615-770-2100 or bridgestonearena.com

Jan. 27 • Family Geocaching Day, Owl's Hill Nature Sanctuary, Brentwood. 615-370-4672 or owlshill.org/geocache-day

Jan. 30-Feb. 4 • Girl From the North Country, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville. 615-782-4040 or tpac.org

Feb. 1-9 • Mayberry Valentine Dinner Theatre, historic Granville. 931-653-4151 or granvilletn.com

East Tennessee

Now-Jan. 14 • Asian Lantern Festival, Chattanooga Zoo. 423-697-1322 or chattzoo.org/events/alf-2023

Now-Jan. 15 • Missionary Ridge Local Train Rides, Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, Chattanooga. 423-894-8028 or tvrrail.com/train-rides/missionary-ridge-local

Jan. 5 • Candlelight: A Tribute to Taylor Swift, The Press Room, Knoxville. 402-249-2445 or fever@eventvesta.com

Jan. 5-6 • Chattanooga ModelCon 2024, Chattanooga Convention Center. glhaars@hotmail.com or chattanoogaamodelers.com

Jan. 6 • The Fine Colombians: A Steely Dan Tribute, The Bijou Theatre, Knoxville. 865-522-0832 or knoxbijou.org

Select dates Jan. 6-Dec. 21 • Dinner Detective Interactive True Crime Dinner Show, DoubleTree Chattanooga Hamilton Place. thedinnerdetective.com/chattanooga

Select dates Jan. 6-Dec. 28 • Dinner Detective Interactive True Crime Dinner Show, Hilton Knoxville Hotel. thedinnerdetective.com/knoxville

Jan. 9 • Dean Z - The Ultimate Elvis, Niswonger Performing Arts Center, Greeneville. 423-638-1679 or npacgreeneville.com

Jan. 10-21 • Wicked, Historic Tennessee Theatre, Knoxville. 865-684-1200 or tennesseetheatre.com

Jan. 11 • Alex Lopez Billboard Blues Rock, Open Chord Stage, Knoxville. 360-878-3474 or dawn.maremilmusic@gmail.com

Jan. 12 • Fool House - The Ultimate 90's Dance Party, The Signal, Chattanooga. 423-498-4700 or thesignaltn.com

Jan. 14 • Knoxville Symphony Orchestra MLK Celebration Concert ft. Kelle Jolly & Rhea Carmon, The Bijou Theatre, Knoxville. knoxvillesymphony.com/concert/mlk-concert

Jan. 20 • Bindlestiff Family Cirkus, Clayton Center for the Arts, Maryville. 865-981-8590 or claytonartscenter.com/event/bindlestiff-family-cirkus

Jan. 20-21 • Annual Winter Angel Expo, Great Smoky Mountains Expo Center, White Pine. 937-403-7199 or hamblenccc.com

Jan. 20-21 • Come From Away, Soldier and Sailors Memorial Auditorium, Chattanooga. 423-757-5580 or tivolichattanooga.com

Feb. 10 • Valentine's Market at the Mall, Bradley Square Mall, Cleveland. 423-650-1388 or touchtheskyevents.com

Submit your events

Complete the form at tnmagazine.org or email events@tnelectric.org. Information must be received at least two months ahead of the event date, and we accept submissions up to a year in advance. Due to the great demand for space in each month's issue, we cannot guarantee publication. Find a complete listing of submissions we've received at tnmagazine.org/events.

Find the Tennessee flag



We have hidden somewhere in this magazine the icon from the Tennessee flag like the one pictured here. It could be larger or smaller than this, and it could be in black and white or any color. If you find it, send us a postcard or email us with the page number where it's located. Include your name, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. One entry per person. Three winners will be chosen from a random drawing, and each will receive \$20.

Note that the icon we hide will not be on an actual flag or historical marker, will not appear on pages 20-26 and will not be placed in any ads. This month's flag will not appear on this page (that would just be too easy). Good luck!

Send **postcards only** (no phone calls, please) to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Find the Flag, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. Or you can fill out the

form at tnmagazine.org or email flag@tnelectric.org. Entries must be postmarked or received via email by Thursday, Feb. 1. Winners will be published in the March issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*.

November Flag Spotters

Thanks for the postcards and emails again this month identifying the correct location of the flag, which was found in the gift illustration on **page 14**.

Winners are drawn randomly from each month's entries.

November's lucky flag spotters are:

Anthony Henson, Ramer, Pickwick EC

Karen Medley, Hillsboro, Duck River EMC

Murlene Richards, Harrogate, Powell Valley EC



Artist's Palette

Assignment for January

Three age categories: 1 to 8, 9 to 13 and 14 to 18 years old. Each group will have first-, second- and third-place winners.

Media: Drawing or painting on **8½-by-11-inch unlined** paper, canvas or board. We encourage the use of color. **Please follow these size guidelines.** Oversized canvas entries and framed pieces are especially difficult to handle and **cannot be returned**.

Entry: Send your original art to: *The Tennessee Magazine*, Artist's Palette — **March**, P.O. Box 100912, Nashville, TN 37224. *(Please make sure you include the month on the outside of the envelope!)* Only one entry per artist, please.

Deadline: Art must be postmarked by Thursday, Feb. 1.

Include: Your name, age, mailing address, phone number, email address and electric cooperative. **Leaving anything out will result in disqualification.**

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

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

Each entry needs its own SASE, please. Siblings must enter separately with their own envelopes.

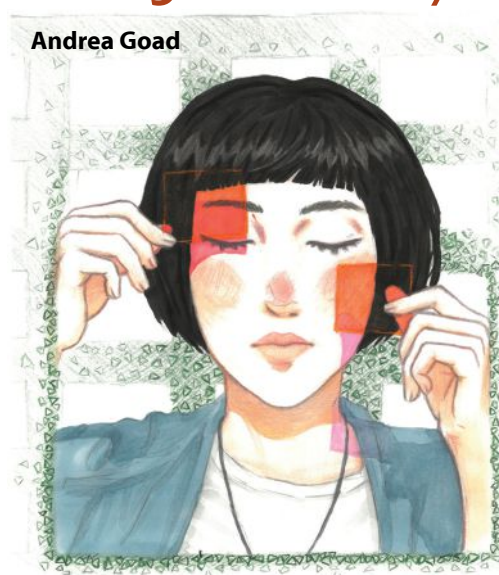
Attention, teachers: You may send multiple entries in one envelope along with one SASE with sufficient postage.

Winners will be published in the March 2024 issue of *The Tennessee Magazine*. First place wins \$50, second place wins \$30 and third place wins \$20. Winners are eligible to enter again after three months. Winners will receive their checks, artwork and certificates of placement within six to eight weeks of publication.

Artist's Palette *January Winners*



Lauren Kinsman

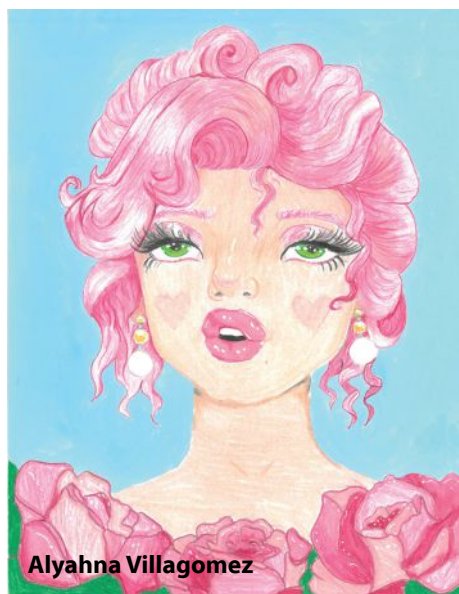


Andrea Goad



Eleanor Baldrige

WINNERS, 15-18 AGE GROUP: **First place:** Lauren Kinsman, age 15, Middle Tennessee Electric; **Second place:** Andrea Goad, age 17, Volunteer EC; **Third place:** Eleanor Baldrige, age 15, Middle Tennessee Electric



Alyahna Villagomez



Madalina Lupan

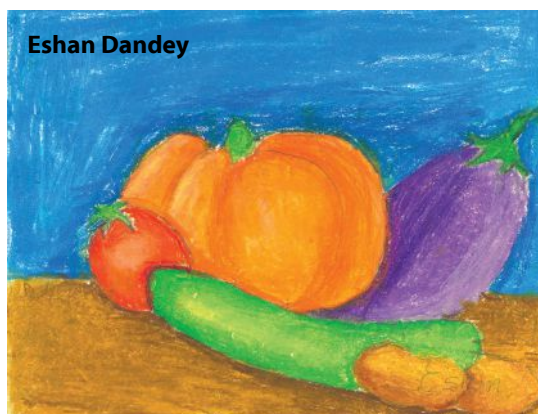


Zelig Ferri

WINNERS, 10-14 AGE GROUP: **First place:** Alyahna Villagomez, age 14, Cumberland EMC; **Second place:** Madalina Lupan, age 12, Middle Tennessee Electric; **Third place:** Zelig Ferri, age 12, Middle Tennessee Electric



Eirnin Pippin



Eshan Dandey



Emma Brown

WINNERS, 1-9 AGE GROUP: **First place:** Eirnin Pippin, age 7, Upper Cumberland EMC; **Second place:** Eshan Dandey, age 9, Middle Tennessee Electric; **Third place:** Emma Brown, age 8, Southwest Tennessee EMC



Point *of* View

By Robin Conover

"Male Pileated Woodpecker"

by Robin Conover, Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
EF 100-400 mm with a 2x converter at 800 mm,
f4.5-5.6 L USM lens, ISO 3200, f11 at 1/500 second, handheld

I'm looking forward to the next few weeks of winter — not because I love dressing for freezing temperatures or days with fewer than 10 hours of sunlight but because I love the solitude, sights and sounds of cold winter hikes.

From the moment I step out of my car and onto the Lake Trail at Radnor Lake State Park near Nashville, every sensory receptor seems to be heightened as I'm trying to stay warm. With each step, I hear and feel the crunch of frozen leaves beneath my boots. With each breath, I feel the chill and lower humidity in the air.

The sounds of the woods seem crisp and clear, no longer muffled by the leaves that now lie silently on the ground. Oftentimes I hear the loud rat-a-tat sound of a pileated woodpecker drilling into a distant tree. On this trip, the distinct sound attracted my attention long before I spotted him at work. His red crest finally gave away his location as he was silhouetted by winter's monotone palette.

His red mustache extending back from his beak indicates this is a male. The stripe is absent on females. These birds are monogamous, and both parents share the

duties of raising their young. Their nesting activity will ramp up in the next few weeks as they search for hollows in trees that they can expand for nest sites.

I observed this particular bird for about 20 minutes as he banged away in search of insects and larvae. Generally, these woodpeckers are shy and will fly away as soon as they feel threatened or are startled. I kept my distance of about 50 feet and used a telephoto lens with a 2x converter to get a close shot without disturbing him.

Selecting a telephoto lens also helped blur the background, the shallow depth of field allowing the subject to stand out. The light was low that day, so I did choose a high ISO to allow for a shutter speed that was fast enough to stop the action. That setting also prevented a blurred image from any camera movement as I shot handheld and not on a tripod.

The woodpecker was about all I saw that day. I appreciated the time to myself in the woods and the time spent observing one of nature's creatures. I also enjoyed a large hot chocolate on the way home as my own reward. ■

1920s Style for a 1920s Price

It was a warm summer afternoon and my wife and I were mingling with the best of them. The occasion was a 1920s-themed party, and everyone was dressed to the nines. Parked on the manse's circular driveway was a beautiful classic convertible. It was here that I got the idea for our new 1920s Retrograde Watch.

Never ones to miss an opportunity, we carefully steadied our glasses of bubbly and climbed into the car's long front seat. Among the many opulent features on display was a series of dashboard dials that accentuated the car's lavish aura. One of those dials inspired our 1920s Retrograde Watch, a genuinely unique timepiece that marries timeless style with modern technology.

With its remarkable retrograde hour and minute indicators, sunburst guilloché face and precision movement, this design is truly one of a kind. What does retrograde mean? Instead of displaying the hands rotating on an axis like most watches, the hands sweep in a semicircle, then return to their starting point and begin all over again.

Retrograde watches by the big brands can set you back thousands; one recent offering from a big French fashion house is selling for more than \$150,000! But because we've designed the 1920s Retrograde Watch in-house, we can offer it to you for just \$99!

This watch is so wildly popular with our customers that we're actually concerned about running out; we only have 937 729 left for this ad!

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— Carlos C., Los Banos, CA

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