

Tennessee CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2025 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED ⚡ COMMUNITY DRIVEN

Power in Community

CEO's role as civil leader
connects Tullahoma
Utilities Authority with
Arnold Air Force Base
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INSIDE

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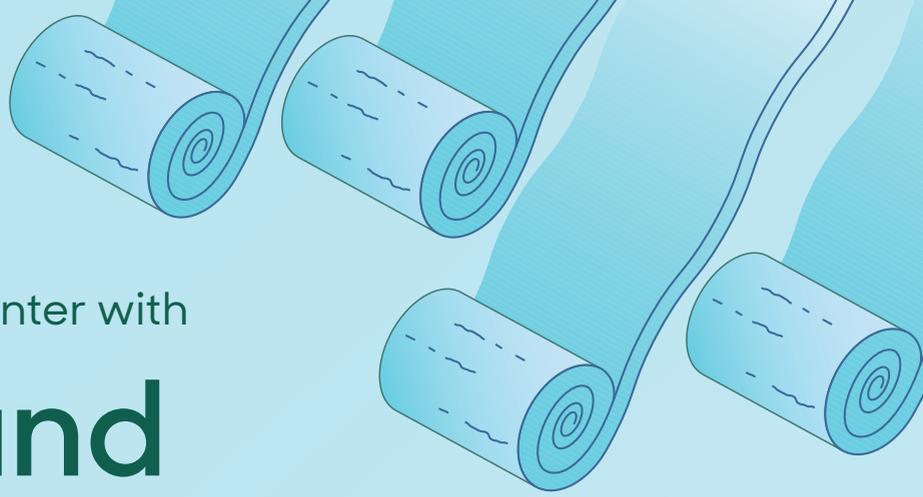
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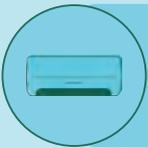
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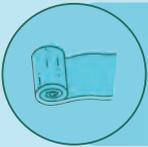
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Deck the Halls

With Energy-Efficient Gifts

The holiday season is a time of joy, celebration and gift-giving. As we embrace the festive spirit, let's remember the importance of energy efficiency.

Everyone has experienced the strain of the economy, and we all play a role in the amount of energy we consume. This Christmas, choose gifts that bring the holiday spirit to your loved ones and contribute to reducing energy use.

Here are eight gift ideas that make both the recipient and their electric bill happy.

1 Solar-Powered Gadgets

Solar-powered gadgets are the perfect gift for tech enthusiasts and eco-conscious individuals alike. From solar chargers to power banks to garden lights, these devices harness the power of the sun to provide renewable energy.

Solar chargers are particularly handy for keeping smartphones and other devices functioning while on the go, perfect for those who go camping, hiking or just enjoy being outdoors.

2 Energy-Efficient LED Lights

Among the most iconic decorations of the holiday season are the twinkling lights that adorn our homes and trees. Opting for energy-efficient LED lights instead of fluorescent and incandescent light bulbs is a great way to reduce energy use.

LED lights use less electricity, last longer and produce less heat, making them a safer and more energy-efficient choice.

3 Energy-Efficient Home Appliances

Consider giving the gift of energy-efficient home appliances. Energy Star-appliances, such as refrigerators, washing machines and dishwashers, lower energy use and

save money on utility bills. Plus, they often come with awesome features and designs, making them functional and stylish.

4 Smart Thermostats

A smart thermostat is a fantastic gift for anyone looking to make their home more energy efficient. These devices learn the household's temperature preferences and adjust heating and cooling systems accordingly. Thermostats can significantly lower heating and cooling costs and reduce energy waste by minimizing the amount of electricity used to heat and cool a home.

5 DIY Energy-Saving Kits

For those who love hands-on projects, consider creating a DIY energy-saving gift basket. These kits can include weatherstripping, LED bulbs and smart power strips. Encourage your friends and family to embark on energy-saving home improvement projects that are easy to complete and help them reduce their energy consumption and lower their energy bills in the process.

6 Blankets and Warm Clothing

Some of the most heartwarming and energy-efficient gifts we can give this season are blankets and warm clothing. These gifts provide more than just physical warmth—they can help reduce energy use during the colder months. By remaining cozy with warm blankets and attire, your friends and family can stay comfortable while lowering the thermostat.

These gifts can provide an energy-efficient approach to staying cozy this winter while helping to lower the thermostat.

7 Smart Outlets and Switches

Smart outlets and switches are excellent tools for improving home energy efficiency, making them a thoughtful and practical gift. These smart devices allow consumers to remotely control and schedule the power to various appliances and electronic devices, ensuring they are not left on unnecessarily.

Through smartphone apps and voice commands, users can turn off lights, chargers and other devices when not in use, reducing standby power consumption.

By giving smart outlets and switches as Christmas gifts, you empower your loved ones to take control of their energy consumption and lower their electricity bills.

8 Dryer Balls and Drying Racks

Dryer balls and drying racks can significantly boost energy efficiency in the laundry room. When used in the dryer, dryer balls help improve airflow and reduce drying time, cutting down on energy consumption. Additionally, they prevent static cling and soften clothes naturally, eliminating the need for dryer sheets.

Drying racks also offer benefits. They are an alternative to using the dryer and are ideal for delicate items. Gifting both or one of these items is a surefire way to help your friends and family reduce their energy use, while helping them keep their clothes fresh and clean.

This holiday season, embrace the spirit of energy efficiency and give practical gifts. These thoughtful Christmas gifts bring joy to your friends and family, and contribute to saving them money on their electric bills. Give the gift of saving all year long. ■



ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY PIXEL-SHOT

Power in Community

Connecting TUA, Civic Leadership and Arnold Air Force Base

Earlier this year, I was honored to be selected as a civic leader with the Air Force Materiel Command, representing Arnold Air Force Base and the Tullahoma community. This program, which brings together leaders from across the country, is designed to strengthen connections between the U.S. Air Force and the communities that support its missions. For me, it was more than an appointment; it was a powerful reminder that leadership, whether in the military, business or public service, is built on the same foundation: people, community and service.

My career in public power began over 20 years ago. Throughout that time, I have come to see that the work we do at Tullahoma Utilities Authority is about far more than infrastructure or technology. It is about community—making sure families, schools, businesses and organizations have what they need to thrive.

That same spirit of service is what drives the mission of Arnold AFB. As I take on this new role, I see a unique opportunity to connect the dots between TUA, Arnold AFB and the broader Tullahoma community in ways that will benefit us all.

The Power of Partnership

Arnold AFB is not only a vital part of the U.S. Air Force's testing and research capabilities; it is also a cornerstone of Tullahoma's economy and identity. The base provides thousands of jobs, supports local businesses and attracts some of the brightest minds in engineering and science. For decades, it has been one of the reasons Tullahoma has remained a hub for innovation, technology and opportunity.

At TUA, we view our relationship with Arnold AFB as more than just being neighbors. We are partners in growth, resilience and community strength. While we don't provide their utilities, the base's presence strengthens our entire region, from the families who live in Tullahoma to the businesses and schools that benefit from its economic and educational impact. Supporting Arnold



AFB means supporting the people who work there and call our community home, and that is a responsibility we take seriously.

But our partnership goes beyond infrastructure. It is about working hand-in-hand to support military families, strengthen education and make Tullahoma a community where people want to live, work and serve. The men and women at Arnold AFB are not just part of the Air Force; they are our neighbors and our friends. Their well-being and success directly impact the success of our city.

Shared Values

When I reflect on TUA's core values—safety, customer focus, integrity, dedication and innovation—I can't help but see their reflection in the mission of Arnold AFB and the U.S. Air Force.

- **Safety**—Just as TUA puts safety first in delivering essential services, Arnold AFB operates with precision and vigilance to protect people and missions.
- **Customer Focus**—TUA serves the citizens of Tullahoma; Arnold serves the nation. Both are rooted in service to something greater than themselves.
- **Integrity**—Doing the right thing, whether in utility operations or military service, builds trust and long-term strength.

- **Dedication**—Whether it's lineworkers restoring power after a storm or airmen working late hours on testing projects, dedication is what makes excellence possible.
- **Innovation**—TUA is embracing new technology through advanced metering, broadband upgrades and software transitions. Arnold AFB leads the world in cutting-edge aerospace testing. Innovation is in the DNA of both organizations.

These shared values create a powerful alignment.

Civic Leadership: A Bridge Between Worlds

The AFMC Civic Leader Program exists to build bridges between the Air Force and local communities, between civilian leaders and military missions, and between shared challenges and solutions.

As a civic leader, my role is to listen, learn and advocate. It means bringing the voice of our community to the national stage while also bringing back insights, ideas and opportunities that can benefit Tullahoma. It means serving as a connector between two institutions, TUA and Arnold AFB, which are critical to the future of our region.

This role is a reminder that leadership is never about titles or positions. At its best, leadership is about service; using whatever opportunities you are given to make a positive impact on others. Just as TUA's purpose goes beyond delivering utilities, the Civic Leader Program is about more than attending meetings. It is about building trust, strengthening relationships and finding new ways to serve our community and those connected to Arnold AFB.

Why Arnold AFB Matters to Tullahoma

It's impossible to talk about the future of Tullahoma without talking about Arnold AFB. The base is the largest employer in the region, directly and indirectly supporting thousands of families. Its work in aerospace testing and research has global significance, putting our community on the map as a leader in science and technology.

But beyond the numbers and the research, Arnold AFB matters because of the people. The families who move here bring new perspectives and enrich our schools, churches and neighborhoods. The engineers and contractors who work at the base strengthen our economy. And the partnerships between the base and local organizations create opportunities that ripple out across the community.

For TUA, supporting Arnold AFB means ensuring that the base and its people have reliable, safe and innovative utility services. It means investing in infrastructure that supports growth. And it means being ready to adapt as the base's needs evolve.

Community Service: A Shared Responsibility

Both TUA and Arnold AFB embody the idea that service is not just about what you do inside your walls. It's about how you impact the community around you.

At TUA, that means programs like Round Up, where customers voluntarily round up their utility bills to support local nonprofits. It means scholarships for high

school seniors, internships for students and investments in community events that bring people together.

At Arnold AFB, it means airmen volunteering in schools, families participating in community organizations, and leaders working with local governments and businesses to grow the region.

Looking Forward: Growth and Opportunity

As Tullahoma grows, the importance of strong partnerships will only increase. TUA's strategic plan focuses on preparing for growth, enhancing communication, building partnerships, and recruiting and retaining top talent. Arnold AFB's mission continues to evolve. With it, the opportunities for collaboration and innovation will grow.

Being a civic leader gives me a front-row seat to these changes. It allows me to bring Tullahoma's voice to the conversation and to make sure that as the Air Force looks to the future, our community is part of that vision.

A Personal Reflection

When I think about the future of TUA, Arnold AFB and Tullahoma, I return to a simple idea: There is power in community. Whether it's the power that flows through electric lines, the power of innovation at Arnold AFB or the power of people coming together to serve, the strength of our community lies in how we support one another.

The Civic Leader Program is not about individuals; it is about community. It is about TUA standing shoulder to shoulder with Arnold AFB. It is about ensuring that the values of service, dedication and innovation continue to guide us. And it is about believing that when we work together, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

Closing

Arnold Air Force Base has been, and will continue to be, a cornerstone of Tullahoma's identity. TUA is proud to support its mission and the people who make it possible. And through the AFMC Civic Leader Program, I am honored to serve as a bridge between the two, working to ensure that our community, our base and our utility continue to thrive together.

At the end of the day, whether in uniform or utility gear, whether serving a nation or a neighborhood, we are all part of the same mission: to serve, to innovate and to build a brighter future for Tullahoma.

Sincerely,



Allen Potter

President & CEO, Tullahoma Utilities Authority

Layers of Love

Born of the pandemic, organization matches those in need of a meal with a home-cooked lasagna

By Cheré Coen

It's a common dilemma, one that unfortunately plagues society daily. The world's so big and full of pain, what can one person do?

Rhiannon Menn found the answer in a pan of homemade lasagna.

The need in Rhiannon's community became painfully clear in 2020 as she witnessed medical workers in San Diego stretched thin and families and individuals isolated inside their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. California was the first state to shut down, and many residents lost their jobs, leaving some destitute. Rhiannon began making meals she left on doorsteps—a pan of lasagna to feed her neighbors and remind them they weren't alone.

What she didn't expect from her simple act of comfort-food kindness is how the neighborhood, then the city, then the world, would react.

The Start of a Movement

As word spread about Rhiannon's lasagnas, others reached out, asking to join the effort. A network soon came together to match those in need with home chefs wanting to cook. No one asked questions or required information from those seeking help. They just offered support within a home-cooked meal.

"It started to grow like firecrackers," says Andria R. Larson, executive director of Lasagna Love, the nonprofit that grew out of Rhiannon's original delivery. "We were able to bring people together through nourishment."

As word got out in late 2020, Rhiannon and Andria had to develop spreadsheets to keep up with the demand. A volunteer from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology helped develop their website.

"We were just random acts of kindness that came together," Andria says. "And the ripple effect keeps going. We're now in four countries and all 50 states."



Andria R. Larson

Lasagna Love's mission is simple: address food insecurity in an old-fashioned way, with a home-cooked dish. Those in need—people who have lost their job or housing, families struggling to make ends meet or even college students away from home longing for a home-cooked meal—can register on Lasagna Love's website. The main office sends on the information to local leaders throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom, who match them with home chefs. The lasagna chefs are volunteers—as are 99% of the organization's members. The chefs buy the ingredients, prepare the lasagnas and deliver the meals to recipients with notes of encouragement.

Not everyone who volunteers with Lasagna Love cooks. Some donate money and ingredients, while others provide administrative help.

TOP RIGHT: Andria R. Larson serves as executive director of Lasagna Love. BELOW: Volunteers cook pans of lasagna to deliver to those in need, from people who lost their jobs to families struggling to make ends meet. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LASAGNA LOVE



“Some love to cook, some want to donate their skill set,” Andria says. “They are all part of the larger mission.”

To date, more than 23 million people have been affected by Lasagna Love, with more than 80,000 volunteers serving up assistance in one capacity or another. Lasagna Love ambassadors deliver, on average, 3,500 lasagnas each week.

“Radical kindness and generosity continues to spread,” Andria says. “What better way to do that than a pan of homemade lasagna?”

Ingredients of Love

Andria insists that even those who have difficulty in the kitchen can create a pan of lasagna.

“It’s really not that complicated,” she says. “It’s meat, sauce, noodles, cheese, and repeat.”

Some recipe tweaks are necessary if recipients have dietary restrictions. For instance, some noodles might need to be gluten free, and vegetarians may request a meatless dish. Many chefs incorporate family recipes, so recipients receive a meal that’s been beloved for generations. Some chefs may use recipes from the main office, along with a tutorial on how to put the pieces together.

No matter which recipe is used, the

main ingredient is always a desire to help.

“Through all of it, kindness continues to be needed and woven back into our community,” Andria says. “No one should be without food, but we find many in need.”

Home chefs may be individuals, families or groups, but the primary contact must be at least 18 years old.

In Tennessee, state director Melanie Johnson finds many groups wanting to

community service goals with earning a Lasagna Love Patch. To receive a patch, Scouts explore how to initiate positive change in their neighborhoods, engage in activities that match the core values of Lasagna Love and explore the challenges individuals face today, such as food insecurity. Participating troops help address local waitlists by preparing and delivering meals “while learning invaluable skills and fostering a spirit of

“Radical kindness and generosity continues to spread. What better way to do that than a pan of homemade lasagna?”

— Andria R. Larson, executive director of Lasagna Love

serve lasagna weekly across the state. She continually works with church groups, parents homeschooling their children and those looking for community service hours. Members of a ladies group in Clarksville deliver their lasagnas once a quarter. She’s even had a yoga class volunteer.

“It’s a great group activity,” Melanie says. “For families, it’s a great opportunity to involve kids at different age levels.”

Lasagna Love recently partnered with the Girl Scouts to marry the Scouts’

altruism,” according to the organization.

Andria agrees that creating and delivering lasagna is “passion work” and fosters the idea of a village mentality when society’s support systems fail or are not in place. She insists volunteers receive just as much emotional support as the recipients.

“It’s an emotional connection that you can’t duplicate,” she says of cooking and delivering the meals. “This is definitely more than lasagna.”



Lasagna Love founder Rhiannon Menn creates pans of lasagna with her son.

ADOBE STOCK IMAGES BY ATLAS, VON

For recipients, it's as easy as signing up on the Lasagna Love website. There are no hoops to jump through, no paperwork to determine need. No fee is required, and privacy is paramount. Deliveries are contact-free to the doorstep unless the recipient requests otherwise. Recipients set the time, date and place of the delivery, and the process crosses all language and cultural barriers.

Sometimes, it's not the lack of finances that brings people to Lasagna Love. It may be someone in need of emotional sustenance.

"Most people have a need, but sometimes it's a harried parent who's working and tired of bringing home fast food," says Brenda Walkenhorst, local leader for the New Orleans metropolitan area. "You don't have to show reason."

For some, it's the first time they have asked for help. The lack of bureaucracy eases their anxiety, Andria says.

"We want to make the experience easy," she says. "There's no judgment, no qualifications. Hard times can happen anytime. We don't want people to face it alone. We're here."

How to Help

Lasagna Love is always in need of volunteers—and not just those who love to cook. The organization accepts donations, and sponsors may be called on to do everything from helping in the organization's administration to providing ingredients to chefs each month.

"It's a way for people to get involved without cooking," Andria says.

Those who wish to cook must complete a brief online training course on safe food preparation and share how often they wish to take part. Volunteers may participate as much or as little as they are able.

The ripple effect Rhiannon and Andria started in 2020 remains, Andria says, and the organization continues to grow thanks to the steady stream of volunteers. This year, Lasagna Love began spreading kindness in the United Kingdom.

"One of the things I did not expect from a group of five women to the state we are in now was being able to see how many people generally want to help," she says. "It really is impressive to see." ■

For more information about Lasagna Love, visit lasagnalove.org.



Volunteers may cook as many or as few lasagnas as they're able, as individual volunteers or as a group activity. Many volunteers use the opportunity to create lasagna with family members, church groups and other organizations. They sometimes add their own styles to the pan.



Messages of hope are delivered with each pan of lasagna.



Serving Tennessee One Lasagna at a Time

It wasn't long after Lasagna Love organized to serve home-cooked meals to American families in need that Melanie Johnson joined up. She oversees the organization's efforts across the entire state of Tennessee—12 districts and several metropolitan areas—and a group of volunteers that includes more than 200 home chefs. To date, more than 1,400 chefs have delivered 15,080 lasagnas to more than 64,000 Tennesseans.

But it's not enough, says the Knoxville native.

"The need is great, especially in rural areas," Melanie says, adding that at press time she had 928 people on a wait list. "There is more need than chefs."

Melanie is always looking for volunteers, insisting that donating time to Lasagna Love is easy. Volunteer chefs can cook once a week or once a year, depending on the amount of time and money they can spare. They may be individuals, families or groups, whatever works best.

"It is super flexible to join," Melanie says. "It can be a one-time thing, or it can be an ongoing thing. We're very flexible. We're also super flexible to take time off. Even if they serve one family, one time, that's one family served."

For those who shy away from stoves, Melanie insists creating a pan of lasagna is easy. It's inexpensive, and if chefs need help, she offers them an easy recipe devised with ingredient costs in mind.

"It's a delicious lasagna balanced with the cost," she says of her \$20 recipe. "And it's simple. They can put together a rather tasty lasagna in about 15 to 20 minutes."

Those who don't have time to offer may wish to start an ingredient drive of shelf staples such as noodles, sauce or canned tomatoes, Melanie suggests. Others may prefer the sponsor chef program, where financial donors join forces with chefs who can't afford to buy the ingredients but can volunteer their time.

"There are a lot of ways for people to get involved," she says.

What volunteers receive in exchange for their contributions is enormous, Melanie insists.

"You get more than you give," she says. "You never know what people are going through. It makes you realize we all want the same things—to feed our family, to have health, our happiness, to lower our stress levels. It's very humbling to me."

Even though Tennessee's Lasagna Love crew has racked up impressive numbers since its inception in 2021, there's still much more work to be done. Melanie enlists volunteers through social media, newspaper articles, flyers and bookmarks in libraries. She also partners with food banks.

"We try to advertise everywhere," she says. "We are known as the Volunteer State, and we would love to have more volunteers." ■

Classic Pies

for

Festive



Tables

By Anne Braly

Beautiful pies are a hallmark of the holiday season, a celebration of family and friends gathered around the table for the Yuletide feast. There's no disputing the best pies are made from scratch—gifts from the cook that will make memories for Christmases to come.

Millionaire pie is a classic, no-bake dessert that can be made ahead—just what you need during the busy holidays. Cranberry pie makes a lovely statement with its red filling and a crown of sweet whipped cream. And could there be a better pie than grasshopper pie, with its bright green filling?

These pies encompass the spirit of the holiday season and bring a gorgeous finale to festive dinners.

MILLIONAIRE PIE

- 14 graham crackers, finely crushed (about 2 cups)
- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- 1½ cups sweetened coconut flakes
- 1 cup chopped raw pecans
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 20-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
- 8-ounce container whipped topping
- Canned whip cream and maraschino cherries, for serving



Place racks in upper and lower thirds of oven; heat to 325 F. Spray a deep pie dish with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, mix cracker crumbs, butter, sugar and ¼ teaspoon salt until combined. Press mixture into bottom and up the sides of the prepared dish.

Toss coconut and pecans on a large baking sheet and spread in an even layer. Bake coconut and nuts on top rack, tossing halfway through. As the coconut and pecans are toasting, place pie crust on bottom rack, baking until crust is golden brown and coconut and nuts are lightly toasted, 15 to 20 minutes. Keep a careful eye on both to guard against burning. Let cool 15 minutes.

In a large bowl, using a mixer on medium-high speed, beat cream cheese until smooth. Add milk, lemon juice and ¼ teaspoon salt, beating until well combined. Stir in pineapple and all but ½ cup of the toasted coconut and pecans. Fold in whipped topping and pile high in cooled crust. Create swirls with canned whip cream around edge of pie, then top each swirl with a maraschino cherry. Sprinkle remaining toasted coconut and pecans in center of pie. Freeze until firm, at least 4 hours or, wrapped, up to 1 month. Let pie come to room temperature before slicing.

GRASSHOPPER PIE

- 15 chocolate sandwich cookies, such as Oreos
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 24 large marshmallows or a 13-ounce container marshmallow fluff
- ⅔ cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons creme de menthe liqueur, plus more to taste
- 2 tablespoons creme de cacao liqueur
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Drop or two of green food coloring, optional
- Extra cookie crumbs, for sprinkling

Place the cookies and melted butter into the bowl of a food processor, and pulverize. Press the crumbs into the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie pan, reserving a few to sprinkle over the pie later. Place the crust in the freezer for at least 15 minutes while you make the filling.

In a saucepan, heat the marshmallows and half-and-half over low heat, stirring constantly. As soon as it's all melted and combined, place the saucepan in a bowl of ice to cool down quickly. Once cool, add creme de menthe and creme de cacao. Taste and add more creme de menthe, if needed. Add one to two drops of green food coloring, if using.

In a mixing bowl, beat the heavy cream until stiff. Pour the cold marshmallow mixture into the whipped cream, and fold together gently.

Pour the filling into the chocolate crust. Sprinkle the reserved cookie crumbs over the top. Place the pie in the freezer until firm, at least 2 hours. Remove from the freezer 10 minutes or so before you want to slice and serve.



CRANBERRY PIE

- 10 ounces Biscoff cookies, ginger snaps or shortbread cookies, finely crushed
- ¼ cup butter, melted, plus more for pie plate
- ½ teaspoon, plus a pinch kosher salt
- 16 ounces whole cranberries, fresh or frozen
- 1 cup cranberry juice, not a juice blend
- ¼ cup sugar
- 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 3 large eggs
- Whipped cream and fresh raspberries, for garnish

Heat oven to 350 F, and grease a 9-inch pie plate. In a large bowl, combine cookie crumbs, melted butter and ½ teaspoon salt. Press into the bottom and up the sides of the prepared pie plate. Bake crust until golden and firm, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

While crust is baking and cooling, prepare filling. Add the cranberries, cranberry juice, sugar and a pinch of salt to a medium pot. Cook over medium heat for 10 minutes or until the cranberries have burst. Remove from heat.

Using a blender, puree the cranberries. Immediately pour through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl, using a spatula to push all the cranberry puree out while leaving behind any bits of seed. You should have about 2 cups of puree. If you don't, add more cranberry juice until you have 2 cups of liquid.

In a separate bowl, combine sweetened condensed milk and eggs and whisk together. Slowly pour in the cranberry puree, a little at a time, while gently whisking. Pour the cranberry filling into the baked pie crust.

Place the pie on the oven's middle rack and bake for 30-35 minutes or until the custard has a matte appearance on the edges and is set nearly throughout, but still slightly wobbly in the middle.

Remove the pie from the oven, and place it on a rack to cool.

Once the pie has cooled completely, refrigerate for at least 4 hours or until filling is set. Top with whipped cream and raspberries before serving.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE BY PNG ASTRAL, NIKA RIZKI, JETHUYNH

Honoring the *Queen* of Rock 'n' Roll

Brownsville erects
statue of hometown
star Tina Turner

By Trish Milburn

The bronze statue of the
performer was unveiled in
September. PHOTO COURTESY
OF SONIA OUTLAW-CLARK



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

When Anna Mae Bullock was born in 1939 in the tiny community of Nutbush, no one had any idea she would come to be known the world over as Tina Turner, the Queen of Rock 'n' Roll.

Throughout a career spanning more than seven decades, Turner's powerful voice and electrifying stage performances earned her 12 Grammy Awards, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame twice—the first time in 1991 with ex-husband Ike Turner and 30 years later as one of the biggest female solo artists ever.

Hometown Heroine

Though Turner moved to Switzerland in the mid-1990s, the area where she was born and raised continues to honor her. Tina Turner Museum is housed in the circa 1889 Flagg Grove School, which she attended as a child. In 2012, the school was moved from its original location to the grounds of West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center in Brownsville.

The annual Tina Turner Heritage Days event is held the fourth weekend of September in Brownsville, a few miles from Nutbush. This year's festival featured a special event alongside the usual musical performances, tours of Nutbush and guest speakers. A larger-than-life bronze statue of Turner was unveiled in Heritage Park, across from Carver High School, her alma mater.

The approximately 10-foot-tall statue was crafted over the course of a year by Atlanta-based sculptor Fred Ajanogha, also known as Ajano. His work is displayed publicly around the world and is part of the private collections of such notable figures as President Jimmy Carter and memoirist/poet Maya Angelou.

The statue of Turner evolved from a sketch to a clay sculpture and was eventually cast in bronze at Lugar Bronze Foundry in Eads.

Unveiling

Turner died in May 2023 in her home in Switzerland at age 83.

“The vision for a Tina Turner statue has long been a goal, but her passing brought a renewed sense of urgency and meaning to the project,” says Sonia Outlaw-Clark, director of West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center and Tina Turner Museum. “It underscored the importance of preserving her legacy and honoring Brownsville and Haywood County's most famous native daughter in a lasting, meaningful way.”

Locals, fans from as far away as the Netherlands and even Turner's grandson, Randall Turner, of Los Angeles, were on hand for the unveiling. When the moment came, it was revealed that Fred had captured the performer as many remember her—on stage in a minidress

The unveiling ceremony was deeply moving—highlighting not only her enduring impact, but also the spirit of perseverance and determination that defined her life.

and heels. On the day of the unveiling, Fred said he wanted to capture Turner's strength, prominence in the music industry and the way she moved while performing.

“The unveiling ceremony was deeply moving—highlighting not only her enduring impact, but also the spirit of perseverance and determination that defined her life,” Sonia says. “Education was always important to Tina, making it especially fitting that her childhood school now serves as her museum at the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center, and that her statue stands facing her former high school.”

As with many works of art, reactions to the statue have varied. Some are happy for the tribute to the musical legend, while others lament what they feel is a lack of

resemblance to Turner. This is likely because Fred's art blends realism with stylization and abstraction. This blending of styles helps express more than mere visual likeness. It also allows emotion, symbolism and other ideas to come through.

“You can copy her, but there's only one Tina Turner,” Fred said at the unveiling, describing his approach and acknowledging the limits of likeness.

A True Community Collaboration

The funding for the statue came from a \$100,000 grant from the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development and an additional \$150,000 from Ford Motor Co. as part of its Good Neighbor Plan

for West Tennessee, where the new Ford BlueOval City is being constructed to build EV trucks.

“This project is a true community collaboration, made possible through the partnership of the city of Brownsville, Ford Motor Co., other generous corporate donors, and the dedicated fans, friends and residents who wanted to see Tina's legacy preserved,” Sonia says.

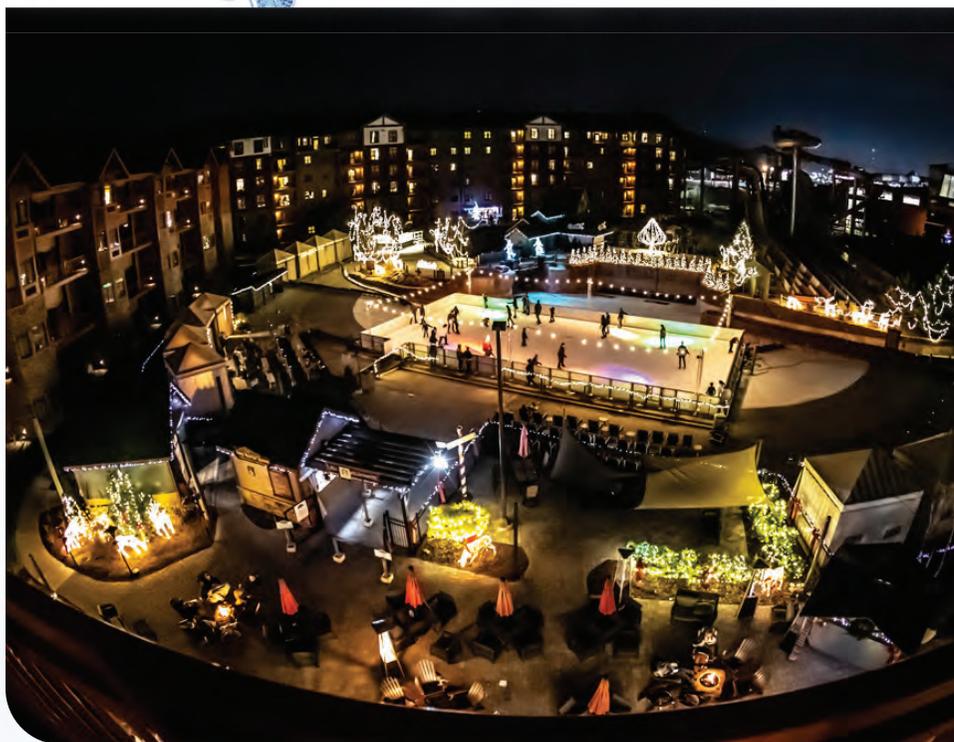
The project is not yet complete. Still to come are interpretive panels surrounding the statue—further sharing Turner's journey and celebrating the remarkable life she lived.

“We want future generations to have a place to visit, look up at the statue and see what is possible—to know that dreams can be achieved, no matter where you come from,” Sonia says. ■

TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS

PLANNER

From holiday parades and cocoa crawls to winter wildlife and cowboy cook-offs, Tennessee's winter calendar is packed with family-friendly fun. Here's a look at what's happening across the state this season.



GATLINBURG, PIGEON FORGE & SEVIERVILLE

Through Feb. 16

Smoky Mountain Winterfest

More than 15 million lights illuminate 25 miles through Sevierville, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg during this beloved holiday tradition. Visitors can stroll through SkyLand Ranch's Festival of Lights through Jan. 2, experience Shadrack's Christmas Wonderland and enjoy holiday shows at Dollywood through Jan. 4, and skate at the Wilderness at the Smokies Waterpark Resort through Jan. 11. visitsevierville.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEVIERVILLE
TENNESSEE CONVENTION &
VISITORS BUREAU

BROWNSVILLE

Through Dec. 31

Markowski Lights

Soak in the holiday spirit at one of Tennessee's brightest traditions. The 21st annual Markowski Lights display fills the night with more than 1 million shimmering Christmas lights. Families can drive through the sparkling wonderland and look out for special appearances from Santa, the Grinch and other holiday favorites. This dazzling event is also the anchor of Brownsville's Holiday Trail of Lights—a must-stop for anyone seeking festive cheer. visitbrownsvilletn.com/calendar

NASHVILLE

Through Dec. 28

Nashville's Nutcracker

The Nashville Ballet brings the beloved holiday classic to life with a distinctly Nashville twist at Tennessee Performing Arts Center. This acclaimed production features live music from

the Nashville Symphony, original choreography by Paul Vasterling and characters pulled from the city's rich history. Voted Best Dance Production of 2022, it's a magical holiday outing for first-time guests and returning fans. tpac.org

SPRINGFIELD

Through Dec. 28

Winter Wonderland

The city's annual Winter Wonderland tradition continues with thousands of twinkling lights and more than a dozen holiday scenes. Families can enjoy drive-thru and walkable experiences from 5:30–9 p.m., with walk-thru activity nights scheduled for Dec. 6, 13 and 20. Last year's event drew more than 38,000 visitors, making this free celebration a community favorite. springfieldtn.gov

SEVIERVILLE

Dec. 13

Cocoa Crawl Christmas Market

Downtown Sevierville's holiday market invites shoppers and families to sip hot cocoa, browse handcrafted gifts and enjoy festive treats and local artisans from 3–7 p.m. pigeonforgewinterfest.com

JONESBOROUGH

Dec. 13

Lighted Christmas Parade

Historic downtown Jonesborough shines bright during this beloved nighttime parade. Floats, marching bands, dancers and classic cars light up Boone and Main streets starting at 6 p.m.—with Santa himself closing out the festive procession. jonesborough.com

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

MORRISTOWN

Dec. 13

Jingle Run for Hope

Lace up for the 10th annual Jingle Run for Hope 5K Run/Walk through beautiful downtown Morristown. Proceeds benefit local cancer patients and their families through the Morristown Regional Cancer Center. The scenic course begins and ends on West Main Street with chip timing, course volunteers and post-race refreshments to keep spirits high. visitmorristowntn.com/things-to-do

PIGEON FORGE

Dec. 31

New Year's Eve Celebration

Free family-friendly event at the Island's entertainment complex featuring live music, attractions during the day, and an impressive fireworks display ringing in 2026. The celebration kicks off at 10 a.m. and runs through midnight. islandinpigeonforge.com/events/new-years-eve

MORRISTOWN

Jan. 17-18

Winter Angel Expo

Chase the winter blues away at the 12th annual indoor car show presented by the Hamblen County Car Club at the Great Smoky Mountain Expo Center. The event showcases everything from antique classics to modern tuners—plus 50/50 drawings, prizes, music bingo and more. Admission is \$10. Children 12 and under get in free. Proceeds support Angel Tree charities. hamblenccc.com

TIPTONVILLE

Jan. 30-Feb. 1

Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

Every winter, bald eagles flock to Reelfoot Lake, creating an unforgettable wildlife spectacle. Visitors can join guided tours and interpretive programs led by experienced park naturalists. Telescopes and expert insight make this a family-friendly way to connect with Tennessee's natural wonders. Reservations required. tnstateparks.com



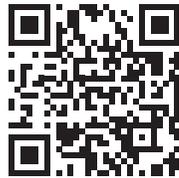
PIGEON FORGE

Jan. 5-8

34th annual Wilderness Wildlife Week

Celebrate the natural beauty of the Smokies with four days of wildlife, history, music, astronomy and hands-on gardening workshops. This free event at the LeConte Center at Pigeon Forge includes guided hikes and jeep tours, seminars, craft classes, photo exhibits and more. It's an annual favorite for outdoor lovers and families alike. Some activities, such as the photo competition, require preregistration. mypigeonforge.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF JUSTIN ROBINSON



Include Your Upcoming Event

Want to share an event with the readers of Tennessee Connections? Please visit tinyurl.com/TennesseeEvents or scan the QR code to submit the details. Thank you.



PIGEON FORGE

March 6-8

Chuck Wagon Cook-off Weekend & Competition

Experience cowboy culture at its tastiest during this three-day celebration. The event kicks off Friday with an intimate dinner and show, followed by Saturday's cook-off at Clabough's Campground featuring chuck wagon lunches, rodeo fun and old-fashioned cowboy contests. Sunday wraps up with Chuck Wagon Breakfast and Cowboy Church. The event is free, but there are ticketed activities. mypigeonforge.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF JUSTIN ROBINSON

Local Leader, Local Roots

Welch joins TUA Board



Daryl Welch, right, is sworn in as a member of the Tullahoma Utilities Authority Board

estate professionals, the city and TUA leadership.”

A Lifelong Commitment to Community

Welch’s civic involvement spans decades. He has chaired the Motlow College Foundation and the Tullahoma Area Chamber of Commerce, served on the boards of the Arnold Community Council and Tullahoma Noon Rotary, and was elected to the Tullahoma City School Board. These roles demonstrate a commitment to enhancing life in Tullahoma, whether through education, economic development or civic planning.

Welch says roles like these “help build meaningful relationships, understand the needs of different sectors and contribute to the growth of Tullahoma.”

“I’ve always loved Tullahoma, and it’s one of the main reasons I moved back to raise my family here,” Welch says. “I believe Tullahoma’s strength lies in its forward-thinking leadership and willingness to innovate. I want to continue that tradition.

“Through my civic leadership, I’ve developed a strong understanding of collaboration, strategic planning and community development—tools I hope to continue using to help TUA and our city thrive as one.”

Balancing Family, Hobbies and Service

Outside offices and boardrooms, Welch is grounded in family and local tradition. He and his wife, Lori, are parents to two children, Brianna and Brady, and enjoy

By Kelly Lapczynski

“TUA is one of the biggest assets we have in our community!”

That’s how Daryl Welch, a lifelong Tullahoma resident, describes Tullahoma Utilities Authority—and it’s why he joined its board of directors this fall.

Welch brings a combination of professional expertise, civic experience and deep local knowledge to the role. Confirmed by the Tullahoma Board of Mayor and Aldermen in August and sworn in in September, he is poised to influence utility policies and planning.

From Real Estate to Civic Leadership

For 26 years, Welch has served as broker and assistant general manager at Harton Realty, helping families and businesses navigate the local housing market. His work has earned him multiple accolades, from the Middle Tennessee Association of Realtors’ Rookie of the Year award to repeated recognition as Tullahoma’s Finest

Agent.

“My role with the Harton family has included direct involvement in developments in and around Tullahoma,” Welch says. “The Hartons have put their heart and soul in our community for a century, and I’ve been blessed to be a part in many aspects of the business.”

Recognized as a top producer, Welch has sold properties and worked onsite in many subdivisions, including Blue Creek Estates, Linkside, Setters Point, Creekstone and The Pines. He has also played a critical role in numerous commercial developments throughout the city, giving him unique insight into construction and infrastructure—from city roads to information highways.

“I have had the privilege of meeting many of the craftsmen and contractors in the trenches and listening to their knowledge and concerns,” he says. “Many times, the best way to learn is to listen. I have also seen firsthand how decisions have affected the residents, developers, real

hunting, fishing and participating in their church community.

“God has blessed me with the opportunity to serve in many leadership roles from high school and college to my professional career,” Welch says. “When I first moved to town, I became actively involved in many community activities. Later, I stepped back to focus on my family and children—coaching ball, attending recitals and games, and just being a dad.

“Even during that time, I remained committed to strengthening the community in other ways. With my involvement with TUA, I hope to reinforce my belief that good leadership means empowering the right people and supporting their success.”

Why His Voice Matters at TUA

Utilities affect every corner of daily life—from running businesses to raising families. Welch’s real estate background gives him insight into how well-managed utility

services support growth and quality of life in Tullahoma. Combined with business acumen and civic leadership experience, he’s well-positioned to contribute to strategic planning, investment decisions and community engagement initiatives.

“I believe the next few years will play a pivotal part in Tullahoma’s future growth,” Welch says. “The TUA board has always been attractive as some of my most respected mentors—Bob Lindeman, Steve Cope, Ray Knowis and JT Northcutt—have been instrumental in its progress.

“I believed a community liaison was needed, and that is a big reason I wanted to be on this board. I understand growth and accountability, and I believe I can fill a gap between the community, the city and management.

“My occupation is a service business. I think it’s important to continue the tradition that TUA has of serving the community by working to keep rates low, maintain reliable service and be customer friendly.”

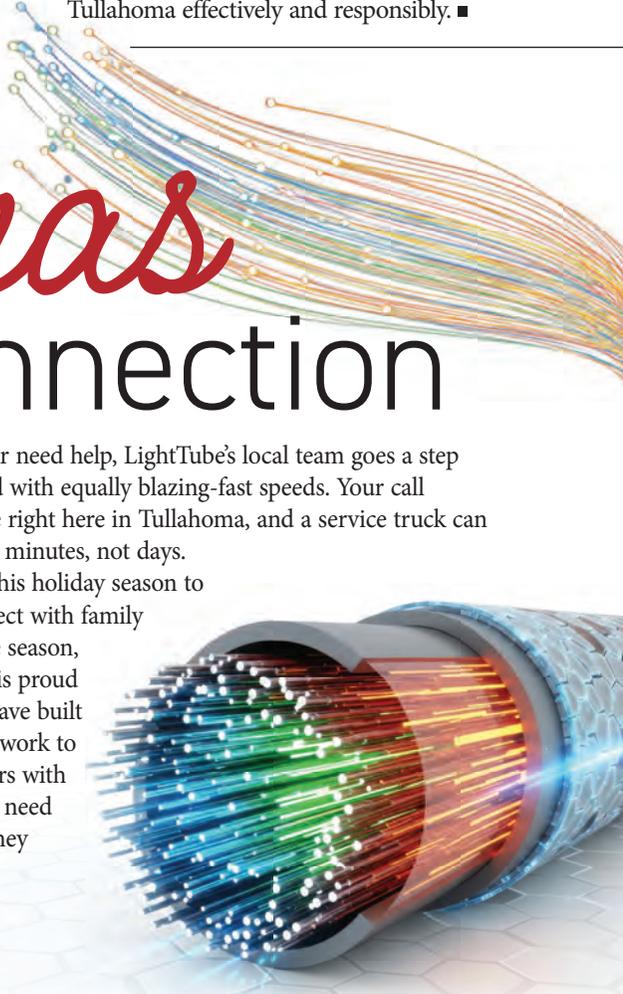
Looking Ahead

TUA welcomes Welch with enthusiasm, anticipating that his perspective, leadership and dedication will strengthen the board. His appointment reinforces TUA’s commitment to connecting leadership with the community it serves.

“The addition of fiber was huge, and TUA has been a leader in that field for many years,” Welch says. “With the recent influx of developments, I think it’s important for TUA to continue to think ahead with strategic planning and be a leader in the utility field. We are blessed to have local control of our utilities. I think TUA’s leadership strives to be held accountable, and I will continue to work to keep utilities affordable and customer service at the forefront.”

Whether it’s improving infrastructure, planning for growth, or making sure every household and business can access reliable utilities, Welch’s presence on the board promises to help TUA continue serving Tullahoma effectively and responsibly. ■

Your Christmas Connection



Santa is dropping off more devices than ever this year. Thanks to TUA LightTube, more than 4,000 TUA customers are ready to handle the load.

New tech—tablets, gaming consoles, smart TVs, streaming devices, video doorbells and smart speakers—brings excitement to your home. But all those devices compete for your home’s bandwidth.

LightTube fiber internet delivers all the bandwidth you need to power your smart home—plus something extra: a mission that extends far beyond selling internet access. Unlike national providers, we’re community powered. We serve our neighbors quickly, reliably and with care.

With transparent, affordable packages—no tricky promotional rates, hidden fees or fine print—LightTube offers free installation and local customer support you can trust.

Fiber internet offers endless possibilities for your home or business. It’s the fastest, most reliable internet connection available today, built to help you connect to the people and things you love most.

And if you ever need help, LightTube’s local team goes a step above to respond with equally blazing-fast speeds. Your call reaches someone right here in Tullahoma, and a service truck can be on the way in minutes, not days.

As we gather this holiday season to shop local, connect with family and celebrate the season, TUA LightTube is proud and grateful to have built a world-class network to provide customers with the internet they need for the holiday they deserve. ■



ADVENTURE AWAITS

Experience science through play at
Muse Knoxville

PHOTO COURTESY OF
TENNESSEE RIVER
VALLEY GEOTOURISM

What Is It?

Located in Knoxville's Chilhowee Park, Muse Knoxville is a children's science museum that focuses on hands-on learning in the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Here, children can step inside the Whirlwind Room, design in the Make Space, explore light and motion, and experience the wonders of the night sky inside the planetarium. Outdoors, there's a spacious play area and learning garden.

History

Muse Knoxville opened in 2014, merging the former East Tennessee Discovery Center with the local Muse arts initiative to create a single destination for creative learning. Its mission is to inspire and empower children through transformative learning experiences. The nonprofit museum offers programs like Muse for All, which works to ensure every child can access STEAM education regardless of background or income.

What to Do

Step into the planetarium for a 360-degree journey through space for a cozy retreat on a winter afternoon. In the Build exhibit, kids can engineer, tinker and experiment. Toddlers will love Mess Makers, weekly sensory art sessions for preschoolers. Seasonal workshops and programs often pop up during winter break, offering extra opportunities for fun and learning. On the fourth Friday of each month, except holidays, Muse offers Free Family Night from 5-7 p.m.

Beyond the Museum

Across the park, the Knoxville Zoo offers year-round exhibits and plenty of winter animal activity. Less than 10 minutes away, downtown's Market Square awaits with cafes, shops and live music. Grab a hot chocolate, enjoy the lights or go for a short winter stroll. Nearby, neighborhoods like Old City and Happy Holler have plenty of local restaurants and bakeries. Families can also find scenic riverfront views at Volunteer Landing.

More Info

The museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. It's closed on Mondays during the school year and on major holidays. Admission is \$12 for ages 1 to 64; \$6 for seniors, educators and military members; and free for children under 1. Parking is free in the Chilhowee Park lot at 516 N. Beaman St. For schedules, tickets or program details, visit themuseknoxville.org or call 865-594-1494.



Caring for Transplants

As we trudge along through the cold weather, it may seem like spring—and the exciting gardening projects that come with it—will never arrive.

If you are a vegetable gardener, though, the winter months are actually an ideal time to plan and get those spring transplants started. Vegetable plants may have different germination and growing requirements, but some fundamentals are the same. Here are a few tips to help you get those veggies off to a strong start.

Light

Plants need light. It seems simple enough, but when vegetable plants are growing indoors, getting them enough light can present a huge challenge. But how do you know when they need more?

The easiest way to identify when seedlings need more light is when they become thin and leggy, and the color fades from green to yellow. In contrast, healthy seedlings will be short, bushy and dark green. Generally speaking, putting your transplants in a window will not provide enough light to keep them healthy and happy.

A great way to supplement window light is to use fluorescent or LED grow lights. These can be found at many local garden stores or online and help give your plants the amount of light they need. However, if a window is the only option, pick one that is southern facing and receives plenty of sunlight.

Water

Watering can also be really tricky when growing transplants, especially from seed. Before the seeds germinate, the soil should be slightly damp but not saturated. To achieve this, it can be helpful to “mist” the soil using a spray bottle until the seeds have germinated.

After germination, the soil media should be watered more thoroughly but less frequently. This gives the soil more time to dry out between waterings, which helps reduce the disease pressures. Soil media that stays too wet can lead to dampening

off, a fatal fungal disease that ultimately kills the transplants. It can also attract other pests, such as fungus gnats and algae, to hang around.

When the soil media feels like a slightly damp sponge, the soil moisture is about right. Unfortunately, there is not a one-size-fits-all formula for watering transplants. Regularly monitoring them and adjusting for their needs can help achieve the best results.

Soil Temperature

Even growing indoors, keeping soil at the right temperature can be difficult during winter. Depending on the vegetable, germination temperatures can range from about 70-85 degrees, and growing temperatures range from about 60-85 degrees. Soil temperatures that are too low or too high can lead to poor seed germination and plant growth, so keeping soil in the recommended range for the plant is important.

In cold weather, remember that areas around windows can be cooler, so it is not a bad idea to move your plants to warmer areas, especially at night. Heat mats are another great way to keep soil at the right temperature, and they allow plants to be put anywhere there is an electrical outlet and light. ■

It's important to note that these are general recommendations for vegetable transplants. Moisture, light and temperature requirements vary based on the type of plant you have seeded, so it's important to research the varieties you are planting in detail. For more information on growing vegetable transplants, please visit tinyurl.com/TNVegetableGarden. Call your local UT-TSU Extension Office if you need additional assistance.



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



Flush With Fun

Going after doves where they already want to stay

The small brook barely trickling with water nourished the thick brush growing on both sides of the little stream.

I slowly moved along a narrow path leading to a break in the vegetation at the brook. As I approached the break, the streambed erupted with the distinctive whistling clatter of long, elegant elliptical wings as mourning doves scattered in all directions.

Most hunters only go dove hunting during September, but some of the best hunting occurs later in the season as birds from farther north migrate into Tennessee. Dove season lasts into mid-January, but only a few people bother to hunt them after September.

In September, most dove hunters stand in a tree line, at the edge of a field or sit in a chair surrounded by high weeds waiting for doves to fly into range. Later in the season, people might want to go looking for birds. Walking up to doves could put birds in the bag with considerable excitement.

To jump doves, hunters must first find them. Almost like quail hunting, flushing birds could explode from cover at any second. Stay alert when approaching good cover.

Doves like open fields or semi-open grassy savannas punctuated by scattered trees, brush or fencerows. Hunters can walk slowly along forest edges, power lines, fire breaks, food plots and other openings or through scattered timber.

The swift birds require food, cover, water and grit. About 99% of a dove's diet consists of seeds, but they also eat crops like corn, millet, sorghum, peanuts and cotton seeds. The small birds usually pick seeds off bare dirt, but they want leafy canopy cover above them so they can hide from hawks and other predators.

To digest rough seeds, doves swallow small pieces of gravel or sand. Hunters often find them "dusting" or picking up bits of rock

around grit piles or sandy patches.

For water, the diminutive birds could just drink from a puddle in a tire rut on a trail. Doves commonly stay around streams, creek beds or ponds. A gravelly sandbar with scrubby brush growing along a stream or pond shoreline could provide an excellent place to jump doves.

After filling their bellies, doves look for a place to rest and digest. They perch in tall trees, on electrical wires—never shoot near electrical equipment—or other areas where they can easily spot danger. In the afternoon, doves get hungry again and return to their feeding fields.

They might also hit the grit piles and water holes. When jumping doves, hunters could spot some lookout birds perched in high places watching for predators. While these birds watch for danger, several others could forage on the ground. Find some good cover to stalk them.

Often, hunters can work in teams. At fencerows or tree lines, one can walk on each side to catch birds flushing from any direction. Pay attention to where other hunters stand and watch the shots—always keeping safety at the forefront. ■

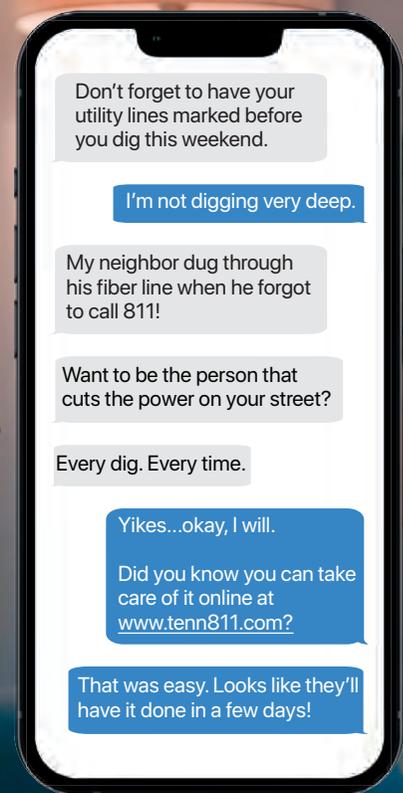
For more on Tennessee migratory bird hunting, see tn.gov/content/tn/twra/hunting/migratory-birds.html#seasons.



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



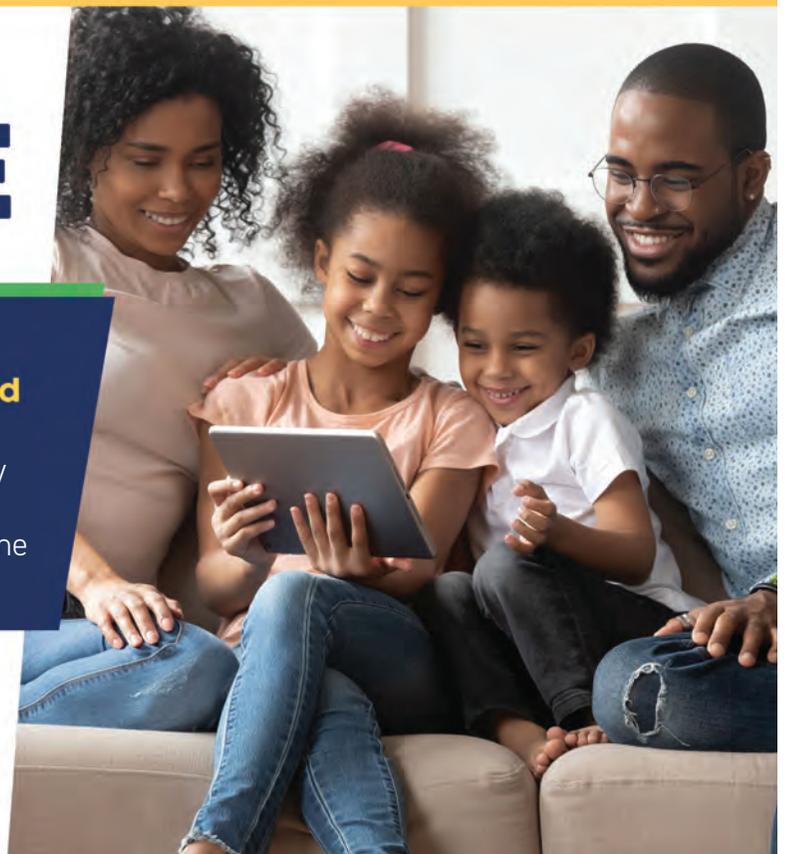
**SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS.
EVERY DIG. EVERY TIME.**



Powering **YOUR LIFE**

The energy to serve your world

You power us. It's our privilege and our responsibility to contribute to the quality of life in this community. Our focus is on powering your life so you can focus on the important things.





TULLAHOMA UTILITIES AUTHORITY

www.tullahomautilities.com

OFFICE

901 S. Jackson St.
Tullahoma, TN 37388

A not-for-profit state utility, TUA provides reliable electric, water, wastewater, television, internet and phone service to more than 11,000 customers. Please recycle.

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TUA LightTube

HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSURES

Christmas
Dec. 25

New Year's Day
Jan. 1, 2026



Reliable Public
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Tree Line
— USA —



THE POWER IN *Community*

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

At TUA, we provide electric, water, wastewater and fiber — but more importantly, we're your neighbors, helping neighbors stay powered, connected and supported.

