

# Tennessee CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2022 | CUSTOMER FOCUSED ⚡ COMMUNITY DRIVEN

## Eating Healthy

Even When  
You Don't  
Have Time

Page 6

ALSO  
INSIDE

Dial it Down  
to Save

Creating a  
Home Gym

ADOBE STOCK  
PHOTO BY  
SVETLANA  
KOLPAKOVA





# Find the right contractor for what your home needs.

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

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

**STAFF**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** Brian Solsbee  
**DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**  
 Jeremy Elrod  
**EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT** Susan Sherrill  
**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ASSISTANT**  
 Savannah Gilman

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**PRESIDENT** Alex Smith, Humboldt Utilities  
**VICE PRESIDENT** Mark Kimbell, Gallatin  
 Department of Electricity  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER** Allen Robbins,  
 Sevier County Electric System  
**PAST PRESIDENT** Jeff Dykes, BrightRidge  
**MEMBERS:** Kenny Baird, LaFollette Utilities;  
 Gabe Bolas, Knoxville Utilities Board; Scott  
 Dahlstrom, Columbia Power & Water Systems;  
 Evann Freeman, EPB of Chattanooga; Jeff  
 Graves, Lexington Electric System; Don Hill,  
 Nashville Electric Service; Dana Jeanes,  
 Memphis Light Gas & Water Division; Eric  
 Newberry, Athens Utilities Board; Vic Pusser,  
 Lawrenceburg Utility Systems; and Terry  
 Wimberley, Paris Board of Public Utilities.



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

**PUR CEO** Michael Shepard  
**SVP OF CONTENT** Leon Espinoza  
**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** Mike Teegarden, CCC  
**SENIOR EDITOR** Pam Blair, CCC  
**TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS EDITOR**  
 Chasity Anderson, CCC  
**EDITORIAL TEAM**  
 Jennifer Paton, CCC; Victoria Hampton, David Herder, Valeri Pearson, Nina Todea  
**DESIGNER** Jenn Nunn  
**PUBLICATIONS PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
 Elizabeth Beatty  
**PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR**  
 Alyssa McDougale

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

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

**Advertising Inquiries:**  
 Email [displayads@pioneer.coop](mailto:displayads@pioneer.coop)

© 2022 Pioneer Utility Resources. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Direct reprint requests to [tconnections@pur.coop](mailto:tconnections@pur.coop). For more information, visit [www.pioneer.coop](http://www.pioneer.coop).



**Eat Healthy**

Even When You Don't Have the Time  
 Spotlight, **PAGE 6**

**Creating a Home Gym**

Up Close, **PAGE 14**

**Explore Birdwatching**

Get Outdoors, **PAGE 22**

Utility News	<b>4-5</b>	Adventure	<b>18</b>
Plugged In	<b>10</b>	Gardening	<b>19</b>
Planner	<b>16</b>	Utility News	<b>20-21</b>

# THE TOP APPS

## Parents Should Know Their Children Are Using

As children get older, they become more interested in using apps on their smartphones and tablets. While some apps are safe and age-appropriate, others can be dangerous for children. As a parent, it is important to be aware of the most popular apps your children are using so, you can make sure they stay safe and informed on online safety protocols.

### Understanding the App Landscape

A recent study showed children younger than 8 spend an average of two hours and 19 minutes a day using mobile devices, and teens are on their devices seven hours a day.

That's a lot of screen time!

While not necessarily dangerous, some apps are inappropriate for children. These include apps that allow users to share nude photos or engage in sexual conversations. The most popular apps in this category are Tinder, Grindr and Blendr. These

apps may have age restrictions in place, but it is possible for children to access them if they lie about their ages.

Gaming apps can be addictive and cause children to neglect their studies and social lives. Popular addictive apps include Candy Crush, Clash of Clans and Flappy Bird. Children can spend hours trying to beat them, leading to isolation from friends and family, and poor grades in school.

### Top Apps Children Are Using

Here are apps parents should know about:

 **Discord.** This chat app is popular among gamers but has been used by predators to groom and exploit children. According to Bark's 2021 annual report, Discord consistently ranked in the top five platforms for bullying, suicidal ideation, body image issues and more.

 **Fortnite.** This online multiplayer game has taken the world by storm, with children and adults spending hours playing. There are concerns about its violence and addictive nature.

 **Hoop & Houseparty.** The social media (Hoop) and video-chatting (Houseparty) apps popular among children have been known to allow strangers into chats, which can lead to sharing of inappropriate content.

 **Instagram.** This photo-sharing app is popular among young people but





has potential for cyberbullying. Instagram also exposes users to a constant stream of ads and sponsored content.

 **Kik.** This messaging app allows for anonymous communication. Predators can pose as other children and trick users into revealing personal information or send inappropriate pictures. Kik allows users to share their location with others, which can be dangerous. Other popular anonymous messaging apps include Whisper and Yik Yak.

 **Snapchat.** This messaging app allows users to send photos and videos for a limited amount of time. Predators can circumvent these measures by taking screenshots of snaps before they disappear or use a separate camera to record video. These images or videos can be used to blackmail or bully kids. Other safety concerns include “Snap Map,” which reveals your child’s location to anyone on their contact list.

 **TikTok.** This popular video-sharing app allows users to create and share short videos of themselves lip-syncing, dancing or performing other creative acts. While it is a lot of fun, there are concerns about its safety. The app has hosted inappropriate and even pornographic content.

 **WhatsApp.** This messaging app has safety concerns, such as allowing users to share their location with others. There is also the potential for cyberbullying.

 **YouTube.** This video-sharing platform is one of the most popular websites in the world, with billions of users. While YouTube can be a great resource for education and entertaining content, it is important to monitor your child’s activity on the site. Inappropriate and disturbing content is available.

#### Tips for Parents

- **Talk to your children** about the apps

they are using and why they like them.

- **Set limits** on how much time your children can spend on their devices, apps, games or specific websites.
- **Monitor children’s device activities**, including their app use and web browsing history.
- **Be aware of apps** your children are using and research their safety concerns. Block specific apps or limit time on them using enhanced parental controls.
- **Teach your children** about cyberbullying, online predators and other dangers associated with the internet.

#### SMARTBAND

Learn how CDE Lightband’s SMARTBAND content controls can give you freedom to control app use and screen time, focus the attention of your children and get back to more quality family time. ■

*For more information, call or text us at 931-648-8151.*



Eating healthy snacks and food on the go can be simple. Find some basics you and your family enjoy. ADOBE STOCK PHOTO BY PROSTOCK-STUDIO

# EAT HEALTHY

## Even When You Don't Have Time

By Robin Howard

When you are too busy to plan and cook healthy meals, it's likely your other physical and emotional needs are taking a backseat, too. Usually, the problem with eating healthy isn't that we don't know what to eat; when we're stressed, we crave comfort food.

Most fast food and comfort food is high in fat, calories, sugar and salt. As a steady diet, that can make us feel even worse—mentally and physically—when we're already overwhelmed.

The other problem is we have been inundated with the notion that healthy eating means making Instagram-worthy heirloom tomato tarts from scratch accompanied by heritage lettuce salads we grew on the windowsill.

Maybe there is time for that on Sunday, but as a society, Monday through Friday, we expend most of our energy trying to keep our eyelids open and polite smiles plastered on our faces.

There's a two-pronged approach to eating healthy when you don't have time

to make a summer beet salad with shaved walnuts and orange blossom water.

### Stock Up on These Foods

Before we get to the rules you can ignore, let's do a quick refresher of healthy foods that are versatile, fast, and keep you feeling full and energetic for long stretches.

- Bob's Red Mill Instant Oatmeal packets.
- Nut butter sandwiches.
- Greek yogurt—dairy- or plant-based.
- Plant-based protein powder shakes.
- Apples with peanut or almond butter.
- Popcorn.
- Pumpkin seeds.
- Bananas.
- Canned low-sodium soups.
- Muesli cereal.

### Tossing the Rules Out the Window

Who says you can't eat last night's leftover spaghetti for breakfast? Sometimes sticking to your health goals means rebelling against any food advice that starts with "always" or "never."

For example, we have been told that we

should always eat breakfast. Long-term studies show that for most people, skipping breakfast now and then—or every day, if it makes you feel good—has health benefits.

We have been told to eat a variety of foods, which sounds ideal, but studies show can lead to weight gain. We have been taught never to eat bread, sugar, pasta or potatoes. Then there are implied rules, such as you can't eat cereal for dinner.

Give yourself permission to eat what you want, when you want, as long as it fits your definition of healthy food.

### Temporarily Lower the Bar

When you are busy, the goal is to keep the wheels on the bus and not make yourself feel worse by eating food that makes you feel sick, guilty or defeats your health goals. If you know what healthy food looks like in general—vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins—forget everything you have read about getting five fruits and vegetables a day, avoiding carbohydrates or making cabbage soup in industrial batches.

Figure out how to limit the damage when you're busy, then you can score extra nutritional points with a big kale salad when you have time.

### The Groundhog Day Plan

Designing variety into a healthy meal plan is overwhelming for busy people. Personally, I've eaten a peanut butter and jelly sandwich nearly every day for 25 years, and I'm not the only one. I've lost track of the number of CEOs, pro athletes and celebrities I've interviewed who have a jar of peanut butter in their offices, lockers or cars.

None of us in the PB&J club includes a leafy green in our lunches, yet we have managed to stay alive.

Food anthropologists who study eating patterns worldwide tell us most healthy cultures have pretty dull diets. If you can come up with one simple food that does the trick on busy days, it's better to eat the same thing every day most of the time than it is to eat a variety of unhealthy processed food all the time.

For example, Muesli is a traditional cereal eaten in Switzerland for breakfast, lunch or dinner. It can be eaten hot or cold. It can be eaten right out of the bag over your keyboard or in your car. It's not a fully balanced meal, but it's also not a half dozen doughnuts.

Nut butter is good, but nut butter mashed with a banana is better—and is better for you than chips. Oatmeal can be made in a coffee mug in the microwave and improved with fruit and nuts.

### Step Away from Meal Replacement Bars

Before choosing your new go-to fast foods, develop a healthy suspicion for prepackaged meals. Most breakfast bars, meal replacement bars, shakes or pre-made breakfasts and entrees are loaded with sugar, salt or other things that make them taste good but make you feel bad later. They are also unnecessarily expensive.

There are some exceptions, though, so look for those unicorns. Skip anything with added sugar or more than 35 milligrams of sodium per serving.

### Make It Ahead—or Don't

Making meals such as soup, oatmeal or overnight oats in batches can help, but it's not a magic bullet. Assuming you are pursuing a goal of weight loss or maintenance, lowering blood pressure or cholesterol, or another health-related goal, the key to staying on track when you are stressed is to find food that is also emotionally satisfying.

Sure, you can make a big batch of egg white omelet muffins on Sunday, but if you're barely keeping it together by Wednesday, you're going to find yourself in the Krispy Kreme drive-thru because you don't just need food—you need joy. If you're going to batch meals, make sure they are meals you look forward to. Healthy basics such as oats, brown rice, whole-grain bread or crackers, and raw vegetables can be delivery vehicles for small sweet or savory indulgences that help you feel nurtured and well-fed. ■



# Time-Saving Gadgets

At the end of a long day—or when rushing to start the day—preparing nutritious meals can seem like another job. To make it less work and quicker, consider these time-saving kitchen appliances.



## Breakfast Sandwich Maker

Make a perfect breakfast sandwich in one machine, toasting the English muffin, frying the egg and heating the meat—sausage, bacon or ham—all at once in different layers of the machine. It's ready in 5 minutes.

You also can make pizza muffins, taco cups and molten lava cake.

## Instant Pot

Remember the ease of starting dinner before leaving for work in the morning in a slow cooker and coming home to the aroma of a completed meal?

While slow cookers still have a place in modern kitchens, there is a new option for one-pot, set-it-and-forget-it cooking: electric pressure cookers, such as the Instant Pot.

Pressure cookers superheat liquid, turning it into steam that cooks food

evenly and fast, in a fraction of the time needed by a slow cooker.

Keep in mind the Instant Pot needs time to pressurize and begin cooking. Some recipes call for natural depressurization, so time your meal accordingly.

Instant Pot is a multiuse appliance. It comes with preprogrammed settings for preparing different types of foods—including yogurt, with some models—and can be used to sauté food, as a steamer, warmer, slow cooker or rice cooker. It hard boils eggs with ease. The latest model incorporates an air fryer.

## Air Fryer

Love fried foods, but not the heavy dose of oil and the mess of a deep fryer?

Using convection heat, air fryers cook foods so they are browned and crispy on the outside but moist and tender on the inside. Air fryers circulate hot air around food, cooking it fast and evenly, with little to no oil.

For best results, preheat the air fryer, cut food into uniform pieces and don't overcrowd the basket.



## Food Processor or Chopper

Reclaim time spent chopping, slicing, shredding, grinding and puréeing.

Food processors vary in power, speed, functions, size and price.

If a food processor seems like more of a tool than you need, consider a food chopper.

Put vegetables in the chopper, press down a few times and you are done.

The clean-up time is a little longer than just cleaning a knife, but the time saved in preparation more than makes up for it. A lot of the bowls are dishwasher safe.

## Blenders

Whip up a quick sauce or salad dressing, blend a purée or soup or make frozen drinks with a high-powered blender in a matter of seconds. ■

# the Kitchen Counter podcast

By Drew Woolley

When Roger Anderson first discovered podcasts, he wasn't pulled in just by convenience or gripping narratives.

Listening to episodes on-demand was certainly a perk, and there were plenty of great storytellers, such as Hardcore History's Dan Carlin. But what struck Roger most was the passion of the people speaking to him through his headphones.

"I thought, 'Wow, here's this guy just talking about history, and it's one of the best things I've ever heard,'" Roger says. "I found other podcasts and thought this is such a neat space. It's not corporate networks putting out content. It's average people doing things they love and sharing it. I would love to do that."

At their heart, podcasts are audio recordings focused on specific topics— not unlike a pre-recorded radio show. But because they can be downloaded to a phone or computer to be played at any time, they allow listeners to go as deep or as light as they want on a certain topic.

In 2014, Roger launched his own podcast: The Kitchen Counter.

He isn't a professional chef, but Roger did grow up surrounded by food. Whether working at his family's hometown diner or watching his mom make time at the end of a busy day to cook fresh meals for her family, food was always a connective thread for him and his five siblings.

Home cooking was a natural fit.

Posting new episodes a few times each month, the podcast started as a platform for Roger to introduce his audience to cooking basics, banish myths about the kitchen and share advice for preparing some of his favorite meals.

It has also become a place for conversations with chefs across the country.

"Early on, I was actually kind of terrified to talk to other people," Roger says. "What do I have to contribute that someone who's written a cookbook couldn't?"

What could I add to the conversation? But you just have to understand that wherever you're at in your journey of knowledge and understanding, there are people above and below you. There's always someone you can help."

When Roger launched The Kitchen Counter, podcasts were beginning to gain mainstream popularity.

He could have chosen any format to share his knowledge about cooking—social



Roger Anderson uses The Kitchen Counter to share with others the cooking skills and inspiration he picked up from his family.

## Tune In

In the early days of podcasting, following your favorite show required navigating a technological obstacle course of downloads and synced devices. Today, the process is as easy as downloading an app.

Apps such as Apple Podcasts and Stitcher make it easy to search thousands of the latest podcasts and subscribe to your favorites for free.

If you have a Spotify app, you are already set. Go to the search tab and choose "Podcasts & Shows" to add new discoveries to your list.



ADOBE STOCK BY SPAXIAX

media, a blog or a YouTube channel—but was drawn to podcasts.

"You can listen to it when you want, where you want," he says. "You can listen to 50 episodes in one weekend if you feel like it. It really puts people in control of their consumption. As a listener, I find it much more appealing than, say, YouTube videos because it's something I can follow along with without having to focus all of your attention on it."

He also finds listening a much more personal way to engage with his favorite subjects or learn about something new.

"There really is something deeply connective and personal about it," Roger says. "If you have headphones on, it's like hearing someone's voice in your head, in a good way. You can't get that on YouTube or in written mediums. There's something about it that's kind of magical."

An influx of advertising money has turned what used to be a space made up entirely of scrappy creatives into a money-making industry.

"There's the joke that everybody has a podcast—and to some degree, compared to other mediums, it can feel that way," Roger says. "But that's kind of cool because it means there's a podcast for everybody."

For every huge network or celebrity podcast, there are five to 10 independent podcasts with people who are approachable and have a passion they want to talk about, Roger says.

"Whatever someone is passionate about or interested in, I can guarantee them there's at least one, if not many, podcasts about it," Roger says. "It gives them an opportunity to find their people and hear things that they'll never hear on TV or the radio." ■

# Dial It Down

Your heating system must work harder in the winter to maintain your comfort level

By Franklin Thurlow

For many, winter months come with snow days, sledding, warm drinks and fun celebrations.

However, they also come with higher electric bills from extended hours of darkness and cold temperatures.

Miranda Boutelle, vice president of operations and customer engagement at Efficiency Services Group, explains why higher power bills can be expected during extreme weather.

“A good general rule: The biggest energy consumers are the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and water heating systems,” Miranda says.

Even a few-degrees drop can make a significant difference in energy output. Homeowners may mistakenly think their bills will not change if the thermostat is not touched. However, when the temperature drops outside, the system must work harder to maintain the temperature setting.

“Even if you don’t do anything, your heating system has to work harder if it gets colder in the wintertime,” Miranda says.

One way to combat a higher bill is by

setting the thermostat lower at night or when you are away from the house.

“Setting your thermostat low when you’re asleep and under the covers is effective,” she says. “Then, either program it if you have a smart thermostat or manually adjust it back when you’re awake.”

Staying warm and comfortable is the goal, so wearing warmer clothes inside, turning the thermostat up and then back down intermittently, and staying in more enclosed areas of the home can help.

“Do things in the winter that make you more comfortable with keeping a lower setting,” Miranda says.

Winter months mean shorter days and longer hours of darkness, so pay attention to your light sources.

“Lighting is important,” Miranda says. “In the winter months, it’s darker earlier—and with holidays, people are running lights more. Replacing incandescent and CFLs with LED lighting—especially in the fixtures you use the most—is highly recommended.”

Colder months also bring the holiday season, with guests, lights, food and gatherings. All of that comes with higher energy use and, therefore, a higher energy bill.

“When you’re having people over or there’s a lot of people cooking in the kitchen, you can expect an increased energy bill,” Miranda says. “It’s good to plan for going into the new year. Budgeting for it can help.”

Knowing where your energy expenditures come from may help you decide where you can cut costs, helping to make the winter months and holidays merry and bright.

Several apps are available to help track your energy use. Many utilities use SmartHub, and others have their own apps. Others that help estimate energy bills are Green Outlet, Energy Cost Calculator and MeterPlug.

There are other ways to cut down on energy costs.

“Insulation is one of the most cost-effective energy-efficiency improvements in the home,” Miranda says. “Make sure your attic floors and walls are properly sealed. Adding insulation is one of the biggest bangs for your buck in terms of cost-benefit.”

A poorly insulated house leaks heat rapidly and forces the HVAC system to work harder to keep you warm. Make sure

# to Save

“Setting your thermostat low when you’re asleep and under the covers is effective.”

vents, windows and other areas that could allow warm air to leak out and cold air to seep in are properly sealed.

Another cost-effective measure is to turn off unused appliances.

“The most energy-efficient setting on any appliance is off,” Miranda says.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, Americans can save \$100 to \$200 a year by unplugging devices that are not in use.

When shopping, look for energy-efficiency branding.

“Sometimes I see little space heaters that promise energy savings that defy the laws of physics,” Miranda says. “Most of the time, those types of claims are false. Energy Star certification for major appliances is a good standard and can be trusted.”

Energy Star products undergo ongoing verification testing by a third party to meet standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. They are considered the industry gold standard for energy-efficient products. ■



ADOBE STOCK IMAGES BY LI DING, JORDAN

# Say Cheese,

By Anne Braly

So, you're looking at a holiday buffet when it hits you, "Oh no! Not another cheeseball!" But before you start rolling your eyes and moving on down the line, take a bite of today's cheeseballs. You may find they cannot be compared to cheeseballs of old—those warhorses of holiday appetizers made of cheddar cheese, cream cheese and scallions rolled in chopped pecans.

A staple of American buffet tables during the holiday season, cheeseballs seem to have reached their zenith in the 1970s. But in recent years, they have been reinvented and now go beyond the basic cheddar.

Cheeseballs have a lot going for them—not the least of which is they're easy to make and, better yet, are best when made a day ahead.

Not surprisingly, the key to making a good cheeseball is to use quality cheese and fresh ingredients. If the recipe calls for shredded cheese, by all means, do not buy pre-shredded cheese. Shred the cheese and chop the nuts yourself. Prechopped nuts and cheese shredded ahead of time lose flavor rapidly. Shortcuts have their place in cooking, but not when making a cheeseball.



## FRUITED CHEESEBALL

1½ cups mixed dried fruit, such as dried cherries, cranberries and blueberries, plus more for garnish

4 ounces cream cheese

4 ounces mascarpone cheese

4 ounces crumbled Stilton cheese (rind removed)

1 tablespoon honey

1 to 2 teaspoons cognac

A few slivered or sliced blanched almonds or a couple of rosemary sprigs, for garnish

Place the dried fruit in the bowl of a food processor; pulse just until chopped coarsely. Scrape the chopped fruit into a mixing bowl.

Combine the cream cheese, mascarpone, Stilton and honey in the bowl of the food processor; process until creamy and well blended. Taste and add the remaining tablespoon of honey as needed; process to incorporate. The mixture should be slightly on the sweet side.

Add the cognac to the mixture (to taste), along with the chopped dried fruit; process just until combined. Return the mixture to the mixing bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least two hours until firm.

Use a spatula to shape the mixture into a cheeseball, rotating the bowl as you shape it. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour, or until serving time.

When ready to serve, use a spatula to transfer it to the center of a serving platter. Arrange a few berries or a large, dried cherry on top of the cheese ball, then arrange the almonds around the cherry.

Garnish the platter as desired. Serve with crackers.

# Please

IN THE KITCHEN

## BLUE CHEESE-PECAN CHEESEBALL

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 8 ounces blue cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, divided
- 3 tablespoons chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup pecan halves
- 1-2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

Using an electric mixer, beat cream cheese until light and fluffy, about one minute. Crumble blue cheese into the bowl and add sour cream, Worcestershire, 1 tablespoon parsley, chives, lemon juice and pepper. Mix on low speed until uniform.

Form the cheese mixture into a ball and wrap it tightly in parchment paper. Chill for at least one hour.

While the cheese mixture is chilling, toast the pecans. Bake at 350 F on a baking sheet until browned, about 10 minutes. Once the nuts have cooled, roughly chop them and mix with the remaining 2 tablespoons parsley.

Unwrap the ball, reshape if desired, and roll in the chopped pecans until evenly coated. Serve at room temperature with your favorite crackers or toasted baguette slices.



## POMEGRANATE CHEESEBALL

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 ounces crumbled feta cheese
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup chopped pistachios
- 1 tablespoon dried mint
- 1 cup pomegranate arils

Place the softened cream cheese and feta cheese in a bowl. Mix well using a fork. Add in chopped walnuts and pistachios. Stir well. Mix in the dried mint.

Transfer the mixture onto a large piece of plastic wrap. Lift the sides of the plastic wrap and form the cheese mixture into a ball.

Bring all the corners of the plastic wrap together and tie them together. Place the wrapped cheese ball in the fridge and chill for at least one hour.

Place the pomegranate on a plate and roll the chilled cheese ball in the arils. Use your hands to press them onto the surface of the cheese ball until it is fully coated. Serve with crackers.



# Creating a Home Gym

By Robin Howard

While going to the gym is a great lifelong habit, navigating life, work, child care and traffic means we don't always make it. And, the cost of gym memberships may not be worth what we get from them. The average membership will set you back \$200 to \$500 a year, and surveys reveal only 23% of people with memberships use them consistently.

Creating a home gym is one of the best investments you can make if you're serious about getting or staying fit. Financial blogger Peter Adeney writes that although his gym membership was only \$25 a month, he jumped at the opportunity to buy a set of basic equipment for \$200 at Costco. Ten years later, he is still using the same \$200 setup.

He figures he has made about \$9,000 by investing that \$300 a year instead of spending it on a membership.

Besides savings, there are other benefits of a home gym:

- You can stick to a routine.
- There is no need for child care.
- You do not need extra time to commute, park, and pack up clothes and

shower essentials.

- There is no waiting for machines.
- You can break exercise into bite-size chunks throughout the day.
- You pick the music.
- There is no comparing yourself or your workout clothes to others.
- You have privacy.
- You have a clean space.
- The entire family can use it for one price.
- You can tailor equipment to your needs.

## Essential Equipment

Commercial gyms are warehouses of complicated equipment that may make building a home gym seem unachievable. However, fitness experts say you only need a few pieces of gear to stay fit and strong, no matter your goals.

If you want new equipment, the good news is the most basic version of the essentials are all you need. You can spend thousands on equipment that retailers claim is superior, but budget items work just as well.

Whether you want to lose weight or build muscle, you need five essential pieces:

**Olympic barbell.** This is the long bar to which you will

add weights. Olympic barbells weigh 45 pounds, but others weigh as little as 20 pounds. Plan to spend \$75 to \$255 for budget to mid-range options.

**Squat rack with pull-up bar.** In a commercial gym, this is the tall cage with horizontal bars that functions as a stand for barbells at varying heights. The different heights of the safety bars act as a "spotter" or safety net when you are lifting or doing repetitions. Put the barbell on the top rack, and you have a built-in pull-up bar. If squats or pull-ups aren't in your fitness plan, you probably don't need a squat rack. A basic frame will cost \$150 to \$350.

**Weight plates.** You want a set of weights that at least equals your body weight, but a standard set includes two 10-pound weights, two 25-pound weights, two 35-pound weights and two 45-pound weights. Depending on your budget, they can be rubber or metal, but don't spend more than \$250 on a set of weight plates.

**Flat bench.** All you need from a bench is stability and a vinyl covering, so don't spend more than \$50 to \$100.

**Jump rope.** If walking or jogging outside isn't your thing, an inexpensive jump rope will

ADOBESTOCK BY DOVLA982



ADOBESTOCK BY TEROVESALAINEN

quickly help you build cardio endurance. The Garage Fit jump rope is made of durable PVC and is adjustable for people of all heights. At around \$8 on Amazon, it's hard to beat the price.

#### Optional Add-ons

If you want to protect your floor or foundation, a thick rubber horse stall mat from Tractor Supply will set you back about \$50.

Checking your form is vital to avoiding injury, so a cheap full-length mirror can help.

#### Don't I Need a Treadmill?

If you have room for it, find a good deal, and prefer walking or jogging indoors, there's nothing wrong with adding a treadmill to your home gym. However, walking or

jogging outside can give you a mental—and social—boost you won't get on a treadmill. Treadmills also age, break down and need service. If you're on a budget or space is tight, you can stay fit by running or walking outside.

#### Where to Shop

Buying fitness equipment second-hand is always preferable to buying it new because you will save a ton of money. Check Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, local garage sales and NextDoor for deals.

#### Where to Put Your Gym

You will need a 10-foot-by-10-foot space. A spare room, garage, carport or corner will do the trick. If you use a garage or outdoor area, you

need to be mentally prepared to stick to your routine in the heat of summer and cold of winter. If you have a space indoors, a temperature-controlled gym is ideal.

One fitness trainers swear by: Keep your gym space clean and clutter-free, and you will exercise more often. The first time you use your bench as a drying or storage rack, your routine is doomed.

#### Create a Fitness Routine

If you already have a weight-lifting routine, you know what to do with this stuff. If you're just starting, it may look scary. All you need is the barbell for bench press, overhead press, curl, row, squat, triceps press, dead lift and shrug.

If all that sounds like Greek,

don't worry. YouTube is full of friendly expert trainers who make free videos on these techniques. Just search for "beginner barbell guide" and pick the trainer you like best. In a few days, you will have a routine memorized and can take off on your own.

YouTube is also a great resource when you are ready to shake things up.

If you have even a little space and money to dedicate to it, you can build a home gym for less than it costs for one year of a gym membership.

If you plan to buy good equipment second hand don't worry if you can't find all the essentials right away. Get your space ready, start with what you have and keep your eyes peeled for deals. ■

## TENNESSEE CONNECTIONS

# PLANNER

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



## SAVANNAH

**December 16-17**

### Christmas on Main

Enjoy sparkling lights and a nostalgic Christmas atmosphere in historic downtown Savannah, including ice skating under the canopy of lights at the farmers market pavilion, free movies, Santa visits, train and carriage rides, face painting and more. This free event happens from 5 to 8:30 each evening.

[cityofsavannah.org/events](http://cityofsavannah.org/events)

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
CITY OF SAVANNAH

## GOODLETTSVILLE

**Through December 31**

### Candy Cane Village

Take part in this free annual tradition by visiting the grounds of Goodlettsville City Hall. Tiny houses—measuring 4 feet by 4 feet by 7 feet—are creatively painted and decorated as gingerbread houses and in themes such as Frosty the Snowman, the Grinch, Santa and much more. Stop by and explore the houses, take photos and leisurely enjoy the holiday season. Reservations are not required.

[www.goodlettsville.gov/1342/Candy-Cane-Village](http://www.goodlettsville.gov/1342/Candy-Cane-Village)

## HENDERSON

**January 1**

### First Day Hike

Join Ranger Bridgette Butler on a hike designed by Tennessee State Parks to encourage people to get out and move. Hike at Chickasaw State Park along Fern Creek Trail and kick off the New Year with quality outdoor time from 2 to 3 p.m. The hilly hike is less than a mile. Please dress for the weather. Meet at Brewer Cabin.

[tnstateparks.com/events](http://tnstateparks.com/events)

## BIRCHWOOD

**January 14-15**

### Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival

Celebrate more than 20,000 majestic sandhill cranes stopping at Hiwassee Refuge on their winter migration. This family-friendly festival provides a chance to experience the call, which can be heard for over a mile, the dance between mates, wingspans that stretch to 8 feet and a view of the 4-foot-tall birds. The event includes entertainment, vendors and children's activities.

[tn.gov/twra/wildlife/birds.html](http://tn.gov/twra/wildlife/birds.html)

## KINGSPORT

**January 21**

### Wild Edibles and Medicinals

Meet at the recreation building at Warriors' Path State Park for the 33rd annual winter garden seminar. The lecture by Ila Hatter is an introduction to wildcrafting or learning how to make nature's pantry and medicine cabinet our own. Ila—an interpretive naturalist, artist, wildcrafter and gourmet cook with more than 25 years' experience teaching cultural heritage of native plants—will teach traditional uses of

common plants from yards, gardens and nearby woodlands. She will combine her knowledge of flora with folklore, telling interesting stories that go with the botany of wildcrafting.

[tnstateparks.com/events](http://tnstateparks.com/events)

## GATLINBURG, PIGEON FORGE and SEVIERVILLE

**Through February 20**

### Smoky Mountain Winterfest

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

[visitsevierville.com/Winterfest.aspx](http://visitsevierville.com/Winterfest.aspx)



## CASTALIAN SPRINGS

March 11

### County Summer Irish Festival

Live Irish music is sure to have you dancing and toe-tapping, while food and fun create the perfect festive celebration from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Bledsoe's Fort Historical Park, which is home to an authentic Irish cottage built by Hugh Rogan in the late 1790s and a historic trail that runs alongside a settler cemetery and remnants of a 19th-century spring house. The event includes guided hikes, storytelling, craft beer from Half Batch Brewing, historic house tours, children's activities and food vendors. Wear your favorite Irish-themed attire to participate in a costume contest, pets included, with prizes awarded. Please, no outside food or drinks. Admission is \$10 per vehicle.

[visitsumner.tn.com/annualevent/county-summer-irish-festival](http://visitsumner.tn.com/annualevent/county-summer-irish-festival)

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUMNER COUNTY TOURISM

## MEMPHIS

February 1-28

### Black History Month

Experience the music and movements and discover the legends and unsung heroes of Black history at important historical sites, poignant museums, soulful recording studios and inspiring special events across the city.

[memphistravel.com/trip-ideas/black-history-memphis](http://memphistravel.com/trip-ideas/black-history-memphis)

## TIPTONVILLE

February 3-5

### Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

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

[reelfoottourism.com/reelfootlake](http://reelfoottourism.com/reelfootlake)

## NASHVILLE

February 3-5

### Antiques and Garden Show

The annual event at award-winning Music City Center in the epicenter of Nashville's thriving downtown entertainment district features more than 150 antiques, art and horticultural exhibitors, magnificent gardens, cocktail parties, and some of the most renowned design, landscape and architectural speakers in the world. Nearly \$9 million has been raised for Cheekwood and ECON charities by the volunteer-managed show.

[antiquesandgardenshow.com](http://antiquesandgardenshow.com)

## SEVIERVILLE

February 25

### Rose Glen Literary Festival

National bestselling authors are spotlighted from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with presentations, book signings and workshops at Sevierville Convention Center. Sevierville Chamber of Commerce started the festival in 2010 to give local authors an opportunity to sell and sign books, meet their readers and network with fellow writers. It has since become an annual regional event.

[www.roseglenfestival.com](http://www.roseglenfestival.com)

## PIGEON FORGE

March 11

### Autism Expo of the Smokies

The free event about autism and other neuro-diversities features a resource fair, children's zone, entrepreneurial market and information sessions from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Evergreen Smoky Mountain Lodge and Convention Center.

[smashautism.com](http://smashautism.com)

### Include Your Upcoming Event

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

For a complete list of what's happening in Tennessee, visit [tnvacation.com/calendar](http://tnvacation.com/calendar).



## MARYVILLE

February 18

### Tall Stories: The Gruffalo

Join Mouse on a daring adventure through the deep, dark wood in Tall Stories' magical, musical adaptation of the classic picture book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler. Searching for hazelnuts, Mouse meets the cunning Fox, the eccentric old Owl and the party mad Snake. Will the story of the terrifying Gruffalo save Mouse from ending up as dinner for these hungry woodland creatures? After all, there's no such thing as a Gruffalo—is there? Pre-K to third graders enjoy songs, laughs and scary fun in the much-loved show at the Ronald and Lynda Nutt Theatre.

[claytonartscenter.com/event/tall-stories-the-gruffalo](http://claytonartscenter.com/event/tall-stories-the-gruffalo)

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAYTON ARTS CENTER

## ADVENTURE AWAITS

# See TV History at the Mayberry- I Love Lucy Museum



### What Is It?

Immerse yourself in two of the biggest sitcoms of the '50s and '60s at Granville's Mayberry-I Love Lucy Museum. The location houses museums for both "The Andy Griffith Show" as well as "I Love Lucy."

### History

Granville, a rural town about an hour from Nashville, has long been known as Tennessee's Mayberry for its similarity to the fictional location of "The Andy Griffith Show." After a local couple donated their collection of "I Love Lucy" memorabilia to the town, in 2020 Granville opened the 1,000-square-foot museum dedicated to the pair of sitcoms.

### Long-Running TV

"I Love Lucy" ran 150 episodes from 1951 to 1957, and focused on the antics of couple Lucy and Ricky Ricardo. The show was America's most popular show for four years. "The Andy Griffith Show" aired 249 episodes between 1960 and 1968, and focused on the widowed sheriff of a North Carolina town. The show finished its final season at No. 1 in the Nielsen ratings.

### Museum Info

Admission to the museum is included in Granville's Tour Town Ticket. The ticket includes a guided tour of the Sutton Homestead and Pioneer Village, as well as many of Granville's other museums. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6 to 12, and free for children younger than 6 years old.

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
MAYBERRY-I LOVE LUCY  
MUSEUM

### More Info

The museum is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. To start planning your trip, visit [www.granvilletn.com/mayberry-i-love-lucy-museum](http://www.granvilletn.com/mayberry-i-love-lucy-museum) or call 931-653-4151.

Small pruning cuts are best, allowing the tree to close the wound more quickly.

# A Professional Approach to Pruning Trees

Dr. Alex Shigo—the forefather of modern arboriculture—is noted for stating, “Pruning is one of the best things an arborist can do for a tree, but one of the worst things we can do to a tree.”

The crux of this statement is pruning can be one of the most beneficial cultural practices we can implement when done correctly. However, it can become one of the most destructive when done incorrectly.

## Why Do We Prune Trees?

Proper pruning can have numerous long-term benefits. When done early in the tree’s life, benefits include reduced long-term maintenance costs, improved structural integrity and increased tree longevity.

Remember, every pruning cut made is also a wound—an injury that breaks through the bark’s surface. Wounds on trees can become problematic because numerous opportunistic wood-decay fungi can be found in our environment, ultimately leading to wood decay. When pruning, we expose the internal wood to the external environment, providing a potential inoculation point into the tree.

When establishing new trees, it is important to prune them early, not at the time of planting or even the first year, but two or three years after planting.

Once your tree has acclimated to its new site, establish pruning objectives: increasing clearance beneath the canopy,

increasing sunlight or airflow to influence flower and/or fruit production, improving a view, reducing the risk of limb failures later in life, and/or improving the overall aesthetics of the tree.

By pruning trees early in life, these wounds are better able to close more quickly.

## When Do We Prune Trees?

Pruning of deciduous and broad-leaved evergreen trees should ideally be done when trees are dormant in late winter to early spring in Tennessee—late January, February and into early March. During dormancy, trees are less physiologically active, reducing the impact on subsequent growth and development.

A good rule of thumb is to wait until after leaf drop in the fall to begin pruning. All pruning should be completed before buds start to swell in the spring. Avoid pruning trees immediately following leaf emergence.

Some pruning may still need to be done during the growing season, which is OK. Dead, broken, diseased or crossing branches can be removed most any time of year without causing much harm to the tree.

When removing live foliage, keep pruning to a minimum to avoid obstructing tree growth and development.

In most cases, no more than 25% of a tree’s canopy should be removed in a year, and no single limb should have more than

25% of its foliage removed. For every leaf we remove, we reduce the tree’s overall ability to photosynthesize.

## How Do We Prune Trees?

Pruning is not a practice learned overnight. It takes years to fully understand how pruning cuts effectively compartmentalize, or close. There are so many nuances that hiring an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist is a worthwhile investment—and certainly more so for the pruning of mature trees.

Understanding the general types of pruning cuts is important to making cuts correctly.

For limbs that are to be removed entirely, it is important first to identify the branch collar, which is just outside the branch bark ridge. This is an area of actively compartmentalizing cells. By making cuts at the branch collar, unsightly stubs won’t be left behind, and cuts won’t be made into living bark tissues.

Improper cuts not only provide an invitation for potential wood-decay fungi, but it takes longer for the tree to compartmentalize these types of wounds. Cuts should be just outside the branch collar and should be small in diameter. ■

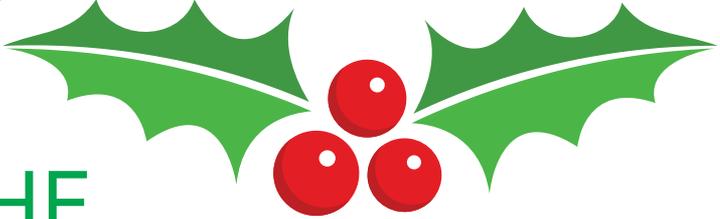


**Lee Rumble** is a University of Tennessee Extension agent in Knox County. He specializes in agriculture and natural resources and is an ISA Certified Arborist.

## Christmas Party

# deck THE HALLS

With  
Extra Savings!



By Alayna Mixon

CDE Lightband Communication Specialist

When it comes to holiday gatherings, there are numerous ways to share the holiday spirit.

They don't have to cost a fortune and shouldn't require you to hire an event planner.

The easier the preparation, the more time you have to enjoy the planning that goes into your event.

Here are tips to help map out your holiday party and save you money along the way.

- **Keep it small and manageable.** The hype for your party should be grand, but your guest list should be small. This will help when it comes time to budget for your gathering. With space being the main factor, a group size of 10 or less tends to keep things more personable.
- **Keep your decorations simple.** You don't have to be Martha Stewart to have a beautifully decorated party. Head to the Christmas section at your nearest discount store. Mason jars, cranberries and tea candles can make your decor elegant, but effortless. Wrap burlap and pine tree twigs around white candles to create a fun and festive feel. Make several of these and let your guests take them home as gifts.
- **Deck the halls with LED lights.** When it comes to decorating, use LED, fiber optic and battery-operated lights. Did you know LED Christmas lights use 90% less electricity than regular Christmas lights and cost about \$10 a strand? Use tiny battery-operated fairy light strands to create a dim glow in your decorations and throughout the rest of the house. Lighting really sets the mood.

- **Keep the oven door shut.** Resist the urge to continually check on your dish before it is ready. When your spouse comes to "peek in" on the ham, just place a snack in their hand and point them toward the other room. Each time you open the oven door, it can reduce the temperature inside by up to 25 degrees, which forces the appliance to use more energy to restore the proper cooking temperature.
- **Delegate responsibilities.** Don't be afraid to ask family and friends to help with specific tasks such as refilling drinks, setting timers, chopping vegetables and cleaning up. Most people are happy to help, but unsure where to start. Just give them a little direction.
- **Use your small appliances.** Take advantage of the microwave, air fryer, slow cooker and toaster oven. They not only use less energy but save you time. If you must use the oven, try to cook multiple dishes at the same time. Just move Great Aunt Girta's corn casserole to the side.
- **Lower the thermostat when the party starts.** Having a house full of guests generates more heat and should keep everyone comfortable. The heat from cooking and baking also warms and fills the house with sweet and savory aromas. If grandma feels a slight chill, this is the perfect time to break out your favorite throw.

With a little creativity and attention to detail, you will have people raving about your party. The best part about efficient party planning is you won't have to worry about breaking your budget, and you get to put away a few more dollars in your pocket. ■



Sources: [www.igs.com/energy-resource-center/energy-101/7-ways-to- conserve-energy-at-home-this-holiday-season](http://www.igs.com/energy-resource-center/energy-101/7-ways-to- conserve-energy-at-home-this-holiday-season); [www.gassouth.com/blog/10-brilliant-energy-saving-tips-holidays](http://www.gassouth.com/blog/10-brilliant-energy-saving-tips-holidays).

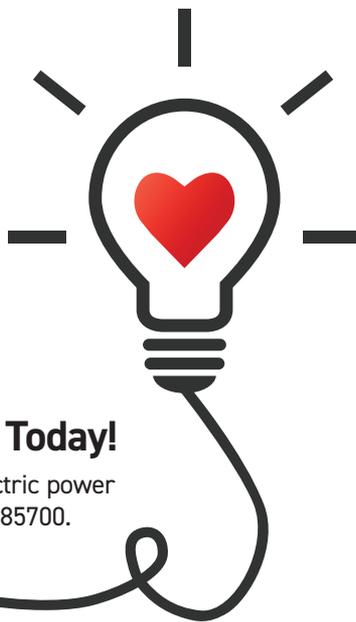
# Clarksville, How Do We Love Thee? Let Us Count the Ways We Love You a Watt

By Robert Denson, CDE Lightband Energy Services Specialist

Meters were read, energy usage grew.  
 Temper your emotions, here's what to do.  
 Thermostat settings should be set low.  
 Above 68 can cause your usage to grow.  
 You like hot showers? So do I.  
 Long hot showers make usage very high.  
 Are your appliances old and outdated?  
 Buy new ones that are Energy Star-rated.  
 Space heaters are small in size.  
 Run one too long, your energy costs will rise.  
 When all else fails, please fear not.  
 Power Partners are here,  
 We love you a watt!

## Become a Power Partner Today!

Partner with CDE Lightband and use electric power efficiently. To sign up, text PARTNERS to 85700.



**Did You Know?** The earliest lights for Christmas trees were candles, which were glued to the tree with melted wax or attached to branches by pins. Thankfully, we are safer and smarter today. Buckets of sand and water to put out fires are no longer needed for decorative lighting.

The first electrically illuminated Christmas tree was created by Edward Johnson in New York City in 1882. He worked under Thomas Edison and became vice president of Edison Electric Light Co. Johnson wanted to brighten up the holidays for his three daughters. His tree was hand-wired with 80 red, white and blue globe bulbs especially made for him. According to the magazine "Electrical World," Johnson had the "handsomest Christmas tree in the United States." Johnson is known today as "the father of electric Christmas tree lights."



Edward H. Johnson's Christmas tree with strings of electric lamps, December 25, 1882. PHOTO COURTESY OF BOWERYBOYSHISTORY.COM



## We Love Our Community

# Stuff the Bucket

CDE Lightband believes in the power of partnership. As the city of Clarksville's electric and broadband provider, we have a heart and drive to be a part of our growing community. Our homes are here, too. We want to make it the best place to live, work and raise your family.

At the center of our community's heart are military soldiers and their families. We are proud to provide services to those who bravely served and continue to serve our country. They are vital to progress and growth in our community.

CDE Lightband and its employees rally around our military friends—especially our veterans—when they are struggling and need assistance.

As a part of our Public Power Campaign in October, CDE Lightband teamed up with Beaver 100.3 and Q108 to host a Stuff the Bucket to help YAIPak Outreach's Project Patriot Hope.

YAIPAK partners with caseworkers to help veterans transitioning from homelessness to housing. They cover the initial financial burden, allowing veterans to focus on their futures.

The Clarksville community came out with strong support, donating cash and new household items to stuff the bucket at CDE Lightband. Thanks to these contributions, veterans will be gifted with a Tote of Hope, which is everything they need to equip their homes as they move in.

Donations are still being accepted. Drop off new items at the YAIPak warehouse, 1255 Paradise Hill, from 9 a.m. to noon on Mondays; noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays; and 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Contributions also are accepted at the donation box at LifePoint Church.

Together, we make a difference as we provide hope to our community's veterans. ■



# Seven Islands State Birding Park

Let's say you're planning a road trip across Tennessee. Sticking to the main highways, the drive should take close to seven hours.

Traveling east to west, you will cross six physiographic regions, beginning with the Appalachian Mountains along the Tennessee/North Carolina border and ending about 440 miles later at the vast floodplains of the Mississippi River.

Along the way, you will have the chance to pull over and visit any number of Tennessee's 56 state parks, including one just off Interstate 40 in southeast Knox County, where birdwatching is the main draw.

Dedicated in 2014, Seven Islands State Birding Park is on the forefront of a growing effort to promote birding opportunities on state-owned recreation lands.

Until recently, the 416-acre wildlife refuge was managed for fescue and hay. Today, the property is still farmed, but in a manner that benefits wildlife instead of cattle.

Seven Islands State Birding Park uses prescribed burns to promote native warm-season grasses. Wildlife food plots add to the mosaic of grasslands and meadows, and fence rows that once were mowed clean are now permitted to grow in bramble, sweet gum and oak trees.

The French Broad River—a haven for freshwater mussels, osprey and bald eagles—hugs the park's southwestern border. In addition to its river-bottom fields, the park's upland ridges are covered in hardwood-pine forests, adding to the habitat diversity. Grassland and ground-nesting birds thrive at Seven Islands State Birding Park, as do small mammals and reptiles.

I'm a backyard birder at best, but even I can appreciate the soul-stirring abundance of the feathered jewels found at Seven Islands. The park is situated along the migratory path of numerous bird species that nest there during the breeding season. More than 180 species of birds—some considered threatened or endangered—have been sighted.

An 8-mile hiking trail provides excellent access to the park's backcountry. For visitors looking for a less challenging stroll, the park features a 1.2-mile paved greenway. Barn owls reside in several old barns on the property, and the park includes a canoe-kayak launch ramp on the French Broad River.

Spring and summer bring enough warbler species to fill a guidebook: Louisiana waterthrush, prothonotary warbler, common yellowthroat and American redstart, to name a few.

There's no bad time of year to visit Seven Islands, but I'm partial to winter. I remember one cold morning when I spotted a bird of prey gliding low and slow over the sepia-colored fields. Having never seen a northern harrier before, I quickly consulted my pocket field guide to birding.

I learned how this long-tailed hawk locates mice and other prey by sight and sound, making it the most owl-like of all the hawks. When my guidebook described how northern harriers sometimes subdue larger animals by drowning them, I immediately thought of the French Broad River, barely a stone's throw from where I stood surrounded by stalks of goldenrod and thistle.

Find more information about Seven Islands State Birding Park at [www.tnstateparks.com/parks/seven-islands](http://www.tnstateparks.com/parks/seven-islands) or call 865-407-8335. ■



**Morgan Simmons** is the former outdoor editor for the Knoxville News Sentinel and seven-time winner of the

Tennessee Outdoor Writer of the Year award. He lives on a farm in Clinton, Tennessee, with his wife, a donkey, six goats, two dogs and several chickens.



---

**aWAY in a manger**  
was born on the first Christmas night.

---

There has been only one **Christmas**, the rest are anniversaries.



**MERRY CHRISTMAS**



**AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO OUR FARM BUREAU CUSTOMERS.**

**FIRST CHOICE<sup>®</sup>**  
LENDING SERVICES, LLC

NMLS # 473797

Call us for a free 2023 wall calendar.

\*\*Limited quantities available\*\*



[www.fcls.com](http://www.fcls.com)

Toll Free: 855-392-4141





[www.cdelightband.com](http://www.cdelightband.com)

**OFFICE**

2021 Wilma Rudolph Blvd.  
Clarksville, TN 37040

**PHONE**

Call or text  
931-648-8151

**REPORT POWER  
OUTAGES**

Text OUT to 85700

**OFFICE HOURS**

8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Monday-Friday

**CALL CENTER  
HOURS**

7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**GENERAL  
MANAGER**

Brian Taylor

**BOARD  
MEMBERS**

Ron Jackson, Chair  
Travis Holleman  
Darla Knight  
Garnett Ladd  
Kunal Shah

**MISSION  
STATEMENT**

To improve our community through the reliable and affordable delivery of electric and broadband services.

Follow us on social media.



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

TN-200



Connect everyone with good tidings and great Wi-Fi this holiday. Let CDE Lightband get your home ready with installation of the Ultimate Wi-Fi service, SMARTBAND. We'll bring everything ALL TOGETHER.

**Get Connected Today!**



Share Joy. Share the Wi-Fi.

Advertisement footer featuring a large red ribbon graphic, the CDE LIGHTBAND logo, and the website [cdelightband.com/smartband](http://cdelightband.com/smartband).

**Closed**  
for the  
**holidays**

**OFFICE CLOSURES 2022**

- CHRISTMAS EVE, OBSERVED  
Monday, December 26
- CHRISTMAS DAY, OBSERVED  
Tuesday, December 27

**2023**

- NEW YEAR'S DAY, OBSERVED  
Monday, January 2
- MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY  
Monday, January 16
- PRESIDENTS DAY  
Monday, February 20