

FACILITIES AROUND CAMPUS

JUST THE FACs

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE FACILITIES SERVICES DEPARTMENT



SUMMER 2026

T FACILITIES SERVICES

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

FACILITIES SERVICES

The Annual Outage That Helps Prevent Unplanned Outages

For most of campus, the annual steam outage comes and goes without any notice beyond slightly cooler building temperatures.

There are no ribbon cuttings, no crowds gathered around a construction site, and few visible signs of the work taking place beneath the surface. Yet for dozens of Facilities Services employees, the outage represents one of the most coordinated and consequential maintenance efforts of the year. It is a massive undertaking that requires months of planning, hundreds of hours of labor, and collaboration across multiple Facilities Services teams. The result is a more reliable steam system that supports everything from heating and hot water to research, residence halls, and academic buildings.

In many ways, the annual steam outage is a perfect example of how the quiet work of Facilities Services helps ensure the university can carry out its mission every day.

Vols Plan Ahead

Planning for the next steam outage truly begins before the previous year's outage ends.

Facilities Services reinstated annual campus-wide steam outages in 2021 after a decade of relying on shorter outages every few years, which resulted in more frequent unplanned outages that created challenges for building occupants and required employees to work under tight deadlines and extended overtime schedules.

Today, planning involves a complex balancing act. Teams evaluate maintenance needs across the steam distribution system, coordinate contractor work, consider academic and campus schedules, and identify the least disruptive window to complete the work.

"There is a timing sweet spot," said Utilities & Energy Director Wes Willoughby. "We have to balance the amount of work that needs to be completed with what's happening across campus and the least impact to our customers."

Months before the outage begins, Facilities Services communicates with campus partners, allowing departments to prepare for temporary service interruptions and make any necessary accommodations.

The Race Is On

Once steam is shut down, the clock starts ticking.

Teams from the Steam Plant, Plumbing Services, Maintenance and Repair, Building Automation Systems, Utilities Project Management, and other

Facilities Services sub-units spread across campus to complete work that can only be performed while the system is offline.

In more than 90 steam vaults across campus, crews perform critical maintenance including valve repairs, valve packing, expansion joint maintenance, inspections, and equipment replacements.

At the same time, Steam Plant personnel conduct annual inspections and certifications of the university's boilers, tune equipment for maximum efficiency, and perform extensive maintenance on the turbine generator.

Many of these tasks happen simultaneously, requiring careful coordination between crews working long days throughout the outage, including weekends.

"It's truly a team effort," said Wayne Stalans, Utilities Superintendent. "Everyone has a role, and the work has to be carefully sequenced so that one team can hand off to another. Success depends on everyone working together."

Looking Ahead

While the outage is primarily focused on maintenance and reliability, crews also use the opportunity to make strategic improvements to the steam system.

This year, teams installed nine new monitoring devices and a feeder that will provide additional visibility into the health of the underground steam system. The equipment will help operators better understand system conditions and monitor water chemistry throughout the network.

Spotlight Stories (cont.)

Crews also installed two magnetic strainers that will be evaluated as a potential long-term solution for removing iron oxide particles from condensate before they can cause future problems.

These upgrades may not be visible to campus, but they provide valuable data and help position the university for even greater reliability moving forward.

Safety Comes First

Safety remains a top priority throughout the outage.

Before work can begin inside any steam vault, crews must verify that conditions are safe for entry. With more than 90 vaults spread across campus, this process requires significant time and attention.

As the outage nears completion, teams begin preparing the system for restart by bleeding condensate lines and removing accumulated water from vaults.

Returning steam to a campus-wide distribution system is a carefully orchestrated process. Multiple crews are stationed throughout campus to bleed air from the system, monitor equipment, inspect for leaks, and adjust valves as steam pressure gradually returns.

The process requires patience, communication, and constant vigilance.

Reliability You Can Count On

The success of the outage is measured long after crews leave the steam vaults.

By repairing leaks, replacing aging components, and completing preventative maintenance, Facilities Services expects to recover more condensate and improve overall system efficiency. Just as importantly, the work reduces the likelihood of unplanned outages throughout the year.

Like many large universities, UT's steam distribution system includes infrastructure that has served campus for decades. The annual outage provides an opportunity to proactively inspect, maintain, and replace components before they impact reliability, helping extend the life of the system while reducing the risk of future disruptions.

This year's valve replacement efforts also strengthen the university's ability to isolate portions of the steam system in the future, allowing for smaller, more targeted outages when maintenance is needed.

For campus customers, the most noticeable outcome may be that nothing happens at all.

Classes continue. Research continues. Residence halls remain operational. Hot water is available. Buildings stay comfortable.

Reliability is the goal.

And while most people will never see the work happening beneath their feet, dozens of Facilities Services employees know exactly what it takes to make it possible.

Their teamwork, planning, and dedication help ensure the university's mission can continue uninterrupted, one steam line at a time.

Spotlight Stories

Breaking Barriers, Building Leaders: How Maria Martinez Earned Her Doctorate and Redefined What's Possible in Facilities Services

When Maria Martinez finished defending her dissertation in early April, the moment didn't feel the way she expected. She closed her laptop in her own home with only her dog there beside her.

There was no grand celebration. No immediate sense of arrival. She mostly felt a surreal stillness.

"Now what?" she thought.

Everything had changed. And yet, in that moment, everything felt the same. So she got up, left the house to celebrate with friends, and called her parents in Spain. The milestone was very real, even if it took a moment for Maria to grasp it.

That moment represented years of perseverance, growth, and navigating uncharted territory. It was forging a trail for future facilities management professionals, especially women at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Leading Where Few Women Have Gone Before

As Director of Space and Asset Data Management, Martinez operates in a field where women are often underrepresented, especially in leadership.

Today, she is the only female director in Facilities Services.

That reality didn't always feel like something she could name. For much of her career, Martinez focused on adapting. Often subconsciously, she spent time learning how to succeed in environments that weren't built with her in mind.

"I never used my gender," she says. "I just tried to fit into the environment."

But through her doctoral research on women in leadership, something shifted.

She found language for her experiences, validation for challenges she had navigated quietly, and a clearer vision for how she wants to lead moving forward.

Now, she's not just navigating the space; she's helping reshape it.

She's advocating for perspectives that haven't always been heard and leading by example to ensure future leaders feel seen, supported, and equipped.

A Degree That Means More Here

Martinez now joins a small group of leaders within Facilities Services who hold terminal degrees, alongside Michael Howze and Antonio Yancey.

In many academic units, that might not stand out, but in an operational department like Facilities Services, it carries a different kind of weight.

Facilities Services is often viewed through the lens of trades and operations. While those roles are critical, her achievement highlights something broader: the department is also home to strategic thinkers, researchers, and leaders committed to continuous learning.

Her doctorate reinforces the idea that innovation and expertise exist at every level of university – not just in classrooms or labs.

It also strengthens credibility across campus, bridging the gap between operational work and academic partnership.

Earning It the Hard Way

Martinez's path to her PhD was anything but easy. She began considering the idea

Spotlight Stories (cont.)

during the COVID-19 pandemic, while working in the Emergency Operations Center. Tasked with helping reconfigure classrooms for social distancing, she collaborated with teams across campus in new ways.

That experience sparked something deeper.

At the time, she held the university's only GIS-focused role. The exposure to broader systems and decision-making processes made her want to understand more as preparation for whatever might come next.

With this in mind, she took the leap, but the biggest challenge of this journey came after her acceptance into her program.

In 2023, Maria was promoted into a brand-new role as Director of Space Management. This opportunity came with steep learning curves and high expectations at the same time, she was enrolled in two demanding doctoral courses.

By the end of the semester, she was exhausted.

"I wasn't sure I could continue," she admits.

With guidance from her advisor, she made a critical adjustment, choosing to scale back to one class to create space to breathe. That decision helped her regain momentum and ultimately continue forward.

It was a turning point, not just academically, but personally.

Learning to Set Boundaries—and Give Grace

For Martinez, success wasn't just about discipline. It was about unlearning habits that no longer served her.

A self-described people pleaser, she had to learn how to say no, and that's something that didn't come naturally.

She also had to examine every aspect of her life to set firm priorities.

As a mother, her son always came first. When he was home, he had her full attention. Balancing that with a leadership role and doctoral work required intentional boundaries, and the humility to accept that balance wouldn't always be perfect.

"Give yourself some grace," she says. "When something isn't going well in one area, it's okay. Own it, make a plan, and move forward."

That mindset carried her through the most difficult seasons.

Lifting Others as She Climbs

While her research may not directly connect to space and asset management, its impact shows up in how she leads every day.

Martinez is focused on developing others, but she's especially interested in building up future leaders within Facilities Services.

She wants her journey to serve as proof that growth is always possible.

That includes encouraging colleagues to take advantage of opportunities like the university's educational fee waiver, which can make continued education accessible regardless of role or title.

Her message is simple: don't limit yourself.

What Comes Next

As Martinez prepares to walk across the stage in May, she's most proud of one thing:

She finished, and she's already looking ahead.

What started as a plan to rest has turned into new goals. She's already making strides toward publishing her research, continuing her work in leadership studies, and possibly even teaching in the future.

But first, there's time to celebrate.

After graduation, she'll travel to Spain, bringing her doctoral regalia with her for another celebration with family.

While her dissertation defense may have ended with a quiet "now what," her graduation is the beginning of so much more.

Maria is a leader who didn't just earn a degree. She's actively helping to redefine what leadership looks like in Facilities Services, and the future is bright.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Where Campus Work Starts: Central Supply



Behind every well-run campus is a team you may never see. At the UT Facilities Services Central Supply Warehouse, about 90% of the supplies needed to maintain and operate Rocky Top flow through one organized hub. From electrical safety gear and hand tools to equipment and AC units, the warehouse keeps materials ready to support maintenance, projects and emergency responses. It's quiet, essential work that helps keep UTK moving every day.

Read More: <https://facilities.utk.edu/2026/02/23/where-campus-work-starts-ut-facilities-services-central-supply-warehouse/>

Celebrating Tom McConnell's Retirement

In March, we gathered as a Facilities Services team to celebrate Tom McConnell at his retirement breakfast and to thank him for the years of dedication he has given to the University of Tennessee. Tom's steady leadership, deep knowledge, and commitment to serving campus have made a lasting difference for our department and the people we support every day. We are grateful for everything Tom has done for Rocky Top, and we wish him the very best in a well-earned



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Celebrating Tennessee Arbor Day



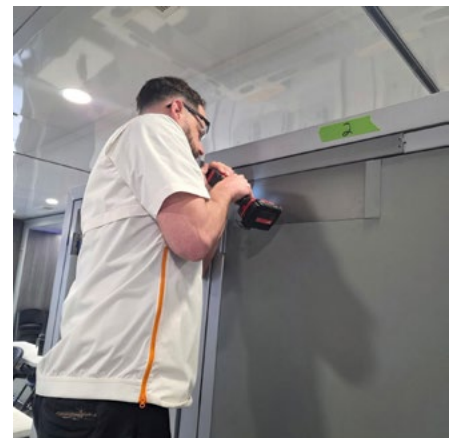
On March 6, we celebrated Tennessee Arbor Day as Facilities Services teamed up with the University of Tennessee Office of Sustainability to plant a new tree in the Claxton courtyard, continuing our commitment to caring for the campus we all share. Efforts like this help support the university's continued recognition as a Tree Campus USA campus.

Trees do more than beautify our spaces. They provide shade, improve air quality, and leave a legacy for future Vols.

Thanks to everyone who joined us to plant, celebrate, and enjoy a cookie or two along the way. Small acts like this help grow a greener campus for generations to come.

Lock & Key Services Levels Up at Assa Abloy Training

During the spring semester, Lock and Key Services team spent time sharpening skills, boosting expertise, and taking service to the next level at Assa Abloy training. Every key turned, every lock mastered is all about delivering excellence, and this team models it so well! Great job, guys!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Wayne and Kody Parsons Awarded ISE Master's Degrees

For one father and son, earning a master's degree from UT's Tickle College of Engineering became more than an academic achievement. It became a shared experience, a chance to learn alongside one another and a reminder that some of life's most meaningful milestones are even better when they're shared. Read their story and discover what brought them to Rocky Top, what they learned from each other and what this special accomplishment means to their family.

Read more [here](#).



From Crisis to Control: Building a More Resilient Campus After Elliott



When Winter Storm Elliott brought record-breaking cold to campus, UT Facilities Services faced a crisis that exposed vulnerabilities across the university's infrastructure. In the years since, the team has turned those hard lessons into lasting improvements, strengthening systems, preparing for extreme weather and building a more resilient campus. Discover how UT moved from crisis to control and what Facilities Services has done to make sure the next major storm tells a different story.

Read the full story: [From Crisis to Control](#)

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

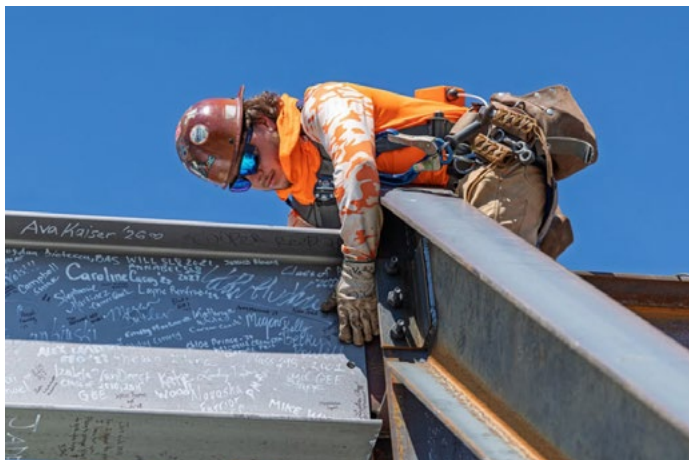
TDEC Grant Will Help Expand Electric Fleet at UTFS

What does it take to move a campus fleet toward a more sustainable future? For UT Facilities Services, it starts with a grant, a plan and a commitment to finding smarter ways to serve Rocky Top. A new TDEC grant is helping expand the department's electric vehicle fleet, bringing nine all-electric utility and recycling vehicles to campus and reducing emissions along the way. Discover how Facilities Services is turning a proposal into progress, one vehicle at a time.



Read the full story: [From Proposal to Pavement](#)

Randy Boyd Hall Topped Out in April



As of April, Randy Boyd Hall has officially topped out on Rocky Top, marking a major milestone in the project's progress. With the structure now reaching its highest point, the building is taking shape as a new home for learning, collaboration and big ideas at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Facilities Services is proud to play a role in bringing this transformative project to life as construction moves toward the finishing touches and its next chapter.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

FS Staff Participate in IMT Exercise



Preparedness takes teamwork. In May, campus partners from UT Public Safety, Facilities Services, OIT, and other strategic areas came together for an IMT exercise focused on strengthening coordination, communication, and response procedures. Exercises like these help ensure our campus teams are ready to put plans into action when it matters most.

A Summer Refresh for Rocky Top

When the spring semester winds down and campus gets a little quieter, our teams get to work on the details that keep the University of Tennessee looking its best.

This summer, the Facilities Services Paint team gave the beloved Smokey statues around campus a fresh touch-up, just one of thousands of detail projects taking place behind the scenes. From painting and repairs to routine maintenance and improvements, each project helps refresh campus and prepare Rocky Top for the return of another semester of Big Orange energy.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The Right Tools for the Climb

Some campus landscapes are more challenging than others, but the Facilities Services Turf Management team has the right equipment for the job. A remote-controlled mower allows crews to safely maintain steep hillsides while keeping operators out of harm's way. It's a smart approach that combines safer work practices with the technology needed to keep Rocky Top looking its best.



Facilities Services Safety Helps Crews Beat the Heat



In June, our Facilities Services Safety team hosted a Beat the Heat event, providing outdoor crews with electrolyte popsicles, cooling towels, and practical tips for staying safe in extreme temperatures.

From maintaining campus grounds to keeping critical infrastructure running, many of our team members spend long hours outdoors. Events like this are a reminder that safety is a shared responsibility and that a little hydration, education, and encouragement can go a long way.

Thank you to everyone who stopped by as we learned, hydrated, collaborated, and had a little fun together. Stay cool, stay safe, and take care of each other

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Summer Construction Tour Success

This summer, Chancellor Plowman traded her usual campus attire for a hard hat as she joined Facilities Services staff and campus leaders for a firsthand look at several new construction projects coming online this fall. The tour offered a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the spaces taking shape across Rocky Top and the teams working to prepare them for the students, faculty and staff who will soon call them home.



Floor goals alert! Mastering the Art of the Shine

Our Building Services team is getting down to the details at Zeanah Engineering, where crews are stripping and restoring terrazzo floors while passing along valuable skills to the next generation of Facilities Services professionals. With experienced team members like Hawk Coin sharing their expertise with newer staff like Llewelyn Grant III, it's hands-on training that keeps both our floors and our people shining.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Good Food, Great Teammates, Big Heart

Good BBQ, friendly competition and a dunk tank made this year's Facilities Services Summer Picnic one to remember. From lawn games and banana pudding to brave volunteers taking the plunge, the day was all about celebrating the people who make this team special. Even better, every dunk tank donation will help provide holiday food boxes for Facilities Services employees in need later this year. It was a fun day with an even bigger purpose, and another reminder that we're proud to be the Best Vols in the business.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Safety Starts in the Trenches

At UT, safety is one more way Vols take care of Vols. In July, the Facilities Services Safety team coordinated trench safety training for Utilities Services, giving crews hands-on knowledge and practical skills to work safely underground. It's a great example of collaboration in action and a reminder that, behind every project on campus, our teams are looking out for one another and making sure everyone gets home safely.



Training Team Hosts First-Ever Tech Week

This summer, our Facilities Services Training team knocked it out of the park with their first-ever Tech Week, equipping employees with practical skills that make a difference every day.

From improving radio communication to exploring how to safely and responsibly incorporate AI into daily work, the week was packed with opportunities to learn, grow, and work smarter together.

A huge thank you to our incredible Training team for planning and leading another outstanding week of professional development. Your commitment to investing in our people helps build a stronger, safer, and more connected Facilities Services team.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

UT Office of Sustainability Hosts the CSSN Annual Conference

UT recently welcomed sustainability leaders from across the country for the Collegiate Sports Sustainability Network Annual Conference, and Facilities Services was proud to support the event through our Office of Sustainability. The conference brought together professionals, researchers and athletics leaders to share ideas and explore innovative ways to advance sustainability in collegiate sports. From efficient facility operations and resource conservation to fan engagement and student-athlete leadership, the conversations highlighted the many ways sustainable practices can make an impact. At UT, that commitment is woven into the work we do every day, from building operations and utilities to grounds stewardship, waste reduction and resilient infrastructure.



STAFF APPRECIATION NOTES

My name is Scott Aldrich and my family visited UT from Florida a few weeks ago for the US Swimming Futures Championship at the Allan Jones Aquatic Center. Please help me get this thank you note to the right people to recognize and show our appreciation towards the staff at the facility.

On Saturday, August 1, we were dropping our son off at the entrance to the building. While he was getting out of the car, his cell phone slipped out of his pocket and fell straight through the storm drain along the side of the road. We looked as best as we could, but couldn't see anything or find it anywhere at the bottom of the drain. We thought it was gone forever, and my son who was getting ready for the biggest swim of his life that day was devastated. If you have teenagers, you might understand the importance of their phones.

Realizing it was a Saturday morning, our hopes weren't high for the phone recovery, but the staff at the front door promised to help me as much as they could. I would first like to recognize Robert from the Event Staff team that monitors the doors. Robert stayed with me and walked me around the whole facility, looking for the right person to help. We tracked down Jason from the maintenance team who was busy with balancing the pool chemicals but said he would try to help. I walked away, still heavily doubting any prospect of getting my son's phone back. Went back out to the parking garage and sat there for a while trying to figure out what else we could do.

At this point, it started to rain pretty heavily. Thinking for sure that now the phone would just be washed away, we drove out planning to just go grab a breakfast sandwich and come back to watch the swimming event. As we drove out, we could see Jason laying flat on his stomach in the rain with a flashlight in his hand, trying to look for the phone in this storm drain. By the time we could turn the car around and get back over to where the drain was, 2 additional guys were with him, and they were all pulling the phone out.

We are extremely grateful to the event staff - Robert in particular, as well as Jason from the maintenance team at the facility for working in the rain to retrieve my son's cell phone. They truly went above and beyond what we expected, and I hope you can pass along my family's appreciation.

Sincerely,
Scott, Haley, and Bennett Aldrich

Employee Comment Box Locations:

- Facilities Services Complex Break Room & Shop Area
- Hodges Library outside room 171a
- Steam Plant (near time clock)
- Landscape Trailer Breakroom
- The electronic employee comment box can be found at tiny.utk.edu/fscommentbox.



AUGUST

Gilbert Cuaron

8/30

OCTOBER

SEPTEMBER

Sam Adams	8/1		Ayva Dorris	10/1	
Austin Patrick	8/2		Beth O'Neill	10/2	
Tina Davis	8/2	Bryan Lord	9/1	Paul Langford	10/3
Brickey Hearon	8/3	Kyle Moffett	9/1	Paul Hash	10/3
Chhorvy Sullivan	8/3	Rick Cannon	9/2	Don Turney	10/3
Timothy Lett	8/3	Bryn Mareno	9/4	Logan Capps	10/3
David Brown	8/4	James Saunders	9/4	Haniska Prinston	10/4
Bobby Tharp	8/4	Gary Thaxton	9/4	Michelle Lawson	10/6
Jacob Herron	8/5	Ted Coward	9/4	Nathan Ownby	10/6
Steve Henry	8/5	Benjamin Gouffon	9/4	Ed Maples	10/8
Matthew Smallwood	8/5	Brystol Reno	9/5	Eliza Casado Sanchez	10/9
Justin Brooks	8/5	Rebecca Cinnamon	9/6	Art Tezak	10/9
Charles Tolbert	8/6	Tristan Conard	9/7	Dean Wessels	10/10
Doug Giles	8/7	Samuel Milejczak	9/7	Frank Scott	10/10
Ron McKinnon	8/7	Abdessamad Idrissi	9/8	Robert Dykes	10/10
Daniel Neal	8/8	Paul Coin	9/8	Lynn Hall	10/11
Zachary Spradlin	8/8	Britt Patterson	9/11	Kimberly Smith	10/12
Susan Jarnigan	8/9	William Hatcher	9/11	Kimberly Childress	10/12
James Norris	8/10	Amanda Johnson	9/12	Owen Bales	10/14
Martin Pearson	8/10	John Childress	9/14	Robert Skeeter	10/14
Veronica Cross	8/11	Mike Gage	9/14	Dedra Cotner	10/15
Randy Huelsman	8/11	Helen Hennon	9/14	Billy Matthews	10/15
Peyton Ogle	8/12	Paul O'Brien	9/15	Hannah Schmidt	10/15
Darren Latham	8/12	Steve Henderson	9/16	Marianela Cruz Avila	10/16
Clayton Miller	8/13	Kyle Smith	9/17	Jay Price	10/16
Steven Bielecki	8/14	Megan Teegarden	9/17	Martin Murae	10/16
Mike Cain	8/15	Mike Musselman	9/18	Tina Johnson	10/18
Ashley Savage Gilliam	8/15	Ricky Hughes	9/18	Nathan Wood	10/18
Chris Fritts	8/15	Hunter Coleman	9/18	Wayne Parsons	10/19
Casey Brewer	8/16	Debra Flannery	9/19	Ronald Cox	10/19
Kenny Reynolds	8/16	James Reno	9/19	Troy Soumeillan	10/20
Jamison Ridenour	8/16	Marie Ervin	9/20	Lucas Garcia	10/20
John Bragdon	8/17	Wyatt Nipper	9/20	Dana Archer	10/21
Mary Dodrill	8/18	Tom Anderson	9/21	Sandra Britt	10/21
Hannah Griffin	8/19	Yelena Yakovleva	9/21	Frank Wyrick	10/21
Dreama Bailey	8/20	Brent Sauls	9/22	Beverly Schubert	10/22
Jonathan Hutsell	8/20	Case Whitaker	9/22	Bailey Guinn	10/23
Jacob Whorrall	8/21	Garrett Kellerman	9/23	Shelton Woodruff	10/23
Joshua Lane	8/21	O'Mond Hester	9/23	Stan Elder	10/25
Travis Reno	8/21	Matt Barlow	9/23	Chris Mabe	10/25
Thomas Herrell	8/22	Dedra Giles	9/24	Cody Smith	10/25
A'Deindra Wells	8/22	Ed Oliveri	9/24	Buddy Weaver	10/26
John Childress	8/22	Michael Leeper	9/25	Justin Treece	10/28
Charlotte Clabough	8/22	Rick Ditz	9/25	Jim McCarter	10/31
Mason Walcott	8/23	Melissa Connell	9/26	Malcolm Shoffner	10/31
Jeremiah Cook	8/23	Jesse Frazier	9/26	Scottie Davis	10/31
Judy Welch	8/24	Tyler McMahan	9/26		
Brian Guinn	8/24	Devin Lord	9/26		
Jason Hughett	8/25	George Clevenger	9/26		
Sandy Kelly	8/25	Dawn Johnson	9/28		
Charlie Boles	8/25	Isaac Dalton	9/28		
Hannah Wallace	8/26	Josh Dyer	9/29		
Chris Hovatter	8/28	Jim Tolbert	9/30		
Royetta Roop	8/28	Blake Hill	9/30		
Meseret Zewde	8/29				
Russell Jessee	8/29				
Jimmy Yarber	8/29				
Bill Witucki	8/29				
Jackie Wheat	8/30				