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Welcome TO CHESTER COUNTY

On behalf of the Henderson | Chester County Chamber of Commerce, it is our pleasure to welcome you to a community that is actively growing, building and investing in its future. Chester County is in the midst of a season of progress. Recent and ongoing projects—like the construction of new educational facilities and the building and renovating of FHU campus buildings—are tangible signs of our community's commitment to growth.

We take pride in our small-town atmosphere, but we're not standing still. Our local leaders, business owners and residents are working together to create spaces that serve the needs of today while building a strong foundation for tomorrow.

Whether you're here to visit, study at Freed-Hardeman University or plant your roots, we're excited to have you in Chester County. This is a place where vision and progress meet Southern hospitality, and we're glad you're part of the story.

On behalf of the chamber,

Blake Hopper Executive Director Craig Casey President (2025-26)

Cay lang

#HENDERSONTN

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CHESTERCOUNTYCHAMBER.COM

Chester County AT A GLANCE

Population 17,498



286 SQUARE MILES ELEVATION 446 FEET

INDUSTRY

AGRICULTURE
MANUFACTURING
EDUCATION SERVICES
RETAIL
HEALTHCARE

WEATHER

51.5 INCHES OF RAINFALL 4.7 INCHES OF SNOWFALL 69.8 AVERAGE HIGH 45.5 AVERAGE LOW

SCHOOLS

CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY
TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY

2025-2026 HENDERSON/CHESTER COUNTY **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD MEMBERS** President - Craig Casey Michele Little Vice President - Heather Griffin Eric Miller Secretary/Treasurer - Stephanie Ray Tanya Oliver Past President - Chasity Burns Renee Phelps Terry Bell Neal Smith Ellen Brown Stacy Smith Mayor Barry Hutcherson Melanie Stoll Tony Hysmith Alicia Weaver Tiffany Jones Executive Director - Blake Hopper Superintendent Troy Kilzer, II Events & Membership Coordinator - Peyton Hemby Mark Barber





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Connecting a Community POWERING CHESTER COUNTY'S GIG-SPEED FUTURE

In the heart of West Tennessee, where tradition runs deep and community means everything, something quietly revolutionary has taken root. Since 2015, Henderson — home to just over 6,000 residents — has proudly carried the title of West Tennessee's first "Gig City," thanks to a powerful partnership between local leadership, Aeneas Internet and Telephone and Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation.

Aeneas, a West Tennessee company founded in 1996, started by offering the county its first dial-up internet service. Fast forward nearly three decades, and they've become the region's trailblazers in broadband technology, now owned by Southwest Tennessee Electric Membership Corporation. Their goal: deliver high-speed fiber internet to every home, business and anchor institution in Chester County—and eventually beyond.

"Expanding high-speed fiber access across Chester County and into surrounding areas has been one of the most ambitious and rewarding infrastructure projects we've ever undertaken," said Blake Stegall, vice president of telecommunications at STEMC. "It required a significant investment of both time and capital, but we knew it was the right move for the future of our communities. Our goal is to ensure that every household, farm, business and school in

our service area has access to the kind of internet speeds that unlock real opportunity—whether that's for education, commerce or just staying connected."

FIBER-POWERED POSSIBILITY

Gigabit internet—defined as speeds exceeding 1,000 megabits per second—was once the dream of big cities. But today, rural Chester County stands shoulder-to-shoulder with metro areas thanks to its fully fiber-capable infrastructure. That connectivity has helped bolster everything from education and agriculture to small business and city services.

City government was among the first to adopt the service. As soon as fiber became available, Henderson's municipal offices upgraded their systems to improve efficiency. City leaders then made it a priority to extend free Wi-Fi access to public spaces. Today, Gene Record Memorial Park and Sue Shelton White Park both offer open networks, inviting residents and visitors to stay connected while enjoying the outdoors.

A BACKBONE FOR BUSINESS

Local businesses have also seen the impact of fiber firsthand. High-speed internet now supports everything from point-of-sale systems to cloud-based tools, giving

























business owners the digital backbone they need to stay competitive in today's economy. Secure, high-speed access has become essential to keeping operations running smoothly and meeting modern expectations.

Entrepreneurs, remote workers and creatives are also reaping the benefits. With affordable access to gig-speed service, the county is attracting a new wave of business-minded professionals who might've once overlooked rural Tennessee.

FROM COUNTY LINE TO CLASSROOMS

While the service initially launched within Henderson city limits, STEMC and Aeneas have since extended fiber access to the entire county. Every household and business in Chester County is now fiber-capable—a milestone few rural regions have reached.

but a standard utility—available to every home, school and business. This wasn't just about faster internet. It was about transforming how people live, learn and work in rural Tennessee. That kind of transformation takes vision, trust from the community, and a commitment to long-term growth."

THE LOCAL IMPACT

This kind of infrastructure matters for more than just speed—it transforms lives. From students needing reliable internet for homework, seniors video chatting with grandkids and local business owners, high-speed fiber helps strengthen the bonds of community.

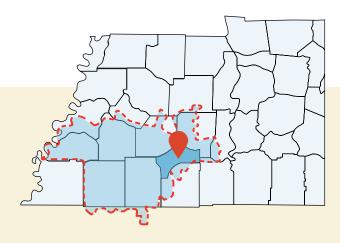
Through strong collaboration between Aeneas, Southwest Tennessee Electric, Pickwick Electric and Chester County leadership, delivering 21st-century infrastructure to rural Tennessee was made possible.

"This wasn't just about faster internet. It was about transforming how people live, learn and work in rural Tennessee." -Stephen Thorpe CEO of Appears

"Over the course of three years, we completed a phased investment that fundamentally changed the technological landscape of Chester County," said Stephen Thorpe, CEO of Aeneas Internet and Telephone. "Each phase brought us closer to a future where high-speed fiber is not a luxury

Chester County's digital transformation continues to set an example for rural communities nationwide.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SPREAD OF FIBER AENEAS INTERNET IN SOUTHWEST TENNESSEE, VISIT FIBER.AENEAS.COM



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LOCATIONS

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Middleton, TN

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Freed-Hardeman University CAMPUS UPDATES SERVE STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY



Located in the heart of downtown Henderson, Freed-Hardeman University has called Chester County home for over 150 years. Over that time, its campus has continually grown to meet the changing needs of its students. Through the ongoing FHU Next capital campaign, the university is raising funds to revitalize cherished spaces and construct new state-of-the-art facilities designed to serve both students and the broader community.

JONES FAMILY DINING HALL

FHU supporters, donors and friends recently gathered in the brand new Jones Family Dining Hall and Chick-fil-A® to mark the completion of a major FHU Next campaign project. A celebratory ribbon-cutting ceremony signaled the beginning of an exciting new era for FHU and its hometown of Henderson.

The idea for a new dining hall on FHU's campus first took root in 2019, and fundraising efforts began in 2020. The project was initially challenged by COVID-19 concerns and then by post-COVID-19 supply issues, but construction

began to move forward in early 2024. During his ceremonial remarks, FHU President David R. Shannon declared that despite difficulties, "God continued to provide, every step of the way."

The cutting-edge construction is a 21,000-square-foot facility that features both indoor and outdoor dining areas and two modern, efficient, well-equipped kitchens. The main dining hall houses seven food stations, each serving a wide selection of meal choices, and a neighboring Lion's Pride Express offers a convenient, quick source for delicious, nutritional meals on the go. Although there are hundreds of Chick-fil-A restaurants on college campuses, FHU's is unique because it features a full menu and directly faces Main Street, conveniently serving both university students and community residents.

According to Shannon, Jones Family Dining Hall was intended to create a warm, inviting space to enjoy community and nurture relationships. "FHU has always been about people and about relationships," he said.

"In addition to this beautiful brick and mortar is also the reality that there is a community that is strengthened as we gather around dining tables."

Among the honored guests at the ceremony was Grant Edwards, a Chick-fil-A franchisee and operator for 15 years. Edwards spoke about his admiration for Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy, whose favorite Bible verse was Proverbs 22:1: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches."

"Chick-fil-A has a good name, and Freed-Hardeman has a good name," Edwards said. "It is a privilege to be in business together, and I love it when two good names come together."

According to Shannon, one longtime FHU supporter deserves recognition for initiating the school's relationship with Chick-fil-A. "Special thanks should be given to Rosemary Brown. She first successfully connected us with Chick-fil-A, and none of this would have happened without her," Shannon said.

The generous contributions of the Jones family, founders of Jones Brothers Construction, were also invaluable in bringing this project to life. Patricia Force Weldon, a representative of the Jones family and a 1972 Freed-Hardeman alumna, credited the hard-working individuals who first paved the way.

"The real heroes of the story are my grandparents, Guy and Lucille Jones," Weldon shared. "They taught us to be honest, hardworking in everything we do, to always be faithful, and to love the Lord with all our hearts. As long as it starts there, everything else is gravy."

FHU also recognized several other individuals and businesses who had a hand in bringing this immense project to life, including John and Rosemary Brown, 4FDesign, the Alliance Corporation, E&T Contracting, First Bank, Creative Dining Services, the FHU Board of Directors, FHU Advancement and the elected representatives of Henderson and Chester County.









HALL-ROLAND AND PAUL GRAY HALL

Freed-Hardeman University has also breathed new life into some of its more historic buildings with the restoration of two of its oldest student residences, Hall-Roland Hall and Paul Gray Hall. The projects reflect the university's commitment to preserving its heritage while modernizing spaces for today's students.

The oldest dormitory on campus, Hall-Roland Hall, reopened during November's homecoming festivities to a crowd of alumni, current students and supporters. First constructed in 1921 and originally known as Oakland Hall, the women's dormitory has served thousands of students for more than a century. It was renamed in 1958 to honor former university leaders W. Claude Hall and C.P. Roland.

"Hall-Roland Hall dormitory stands as a beautiful testament to our heritage," FHU President David R. Shannon said at the ribbon-cutting. "It welcomed its first young women residents over 100 years ago, and it continues to serve through its dorm rooms, classrooms and offices." Recent renovations began in summer 2023 in partnership with E&T Contracting and were completed in time for the Fall 2024 semester. FHU First Lady Tracie Shannon led the interior design efforts, blending historical charm with modern functionality.

The updated space includes refreshed dorm rooms and bathrooms, communal sunrooms, a state-of-the-art kitchen and a newly furnished lobby. The lower level now houses the Veterans Resource Center, ROTC offices and a

home for the university's growing Esports program. Tracie Shannon said the decor was inspired by FHU's mission of faith, scholarship and service. Original artwork by alumna Jennalyn Krulish Speer was incorporated into the design to reflect those core values.

"Hall-Roland already is, and always has been, a beautiful building, and we wanted to accentuate that," she said. "We also wanted it to feel like home. Jennalyn's paintings beautifully represent our mission and community." Students praised the transformation. "It's so nice, and we have so much space," junior April James said. "My favorite part is the sunroom. It's quiet and bright, the perfect place to study or call home."

Freshman Mary Burleson agreed, calling the dorm "cozy and inviting." "It just feels like a home. A lot of us are super close, so it's fun to hang out and be together," she said. Even former residents took part in the celebration, including 91-year-old Joyce Steakley French, who recalled life in a corner room in 1952. "We all gathered in our pajamas for evening devotionals. That meant so much to me," she shared.

Across campus, another dormitory with deep roots has also been restored. Paul Gray Hall, a men's residence built in 1929, underwent extensive renovations funded through the FHU Next campaign and reopened during a recent celebration. The \$4 million project included updates to rooms and common areas, as well as the addition of a conference room and guest suite.



"Paul Gray Hall has been the first home-away-from-home for young men for more than 90 years," President Shannon said. "Her glory days are back. We thank each donor who has helped move this historic residence into the hearts of future students."

Located at the corner of Main Street and White Avenue, Paul Gray Hall is a well-known feature of Henderson's downtown. "It has been a landmark on Main Street for almost a century," said former Henderson Mayor Bobby King. "We are thankful for the donations, planning and work that have once again filled this historic building with students who have made Henderson their college home."

FHU First Lady Tracie Shannon again played a key role in designing common spaces, including a guest room and lobby. One standout feature is a mural by alumna Kristi Montague, which includes old photos of students and handwritten scriptures from residents through the decades.

Another nod to the past comes in the form of a Telechron wall clock, originally installed when the dorm opened. Long lost, it resurfaced during renovations and now hangs once again in its place of honor in the lobby. For the university community, these renovations mark more than just construction milestones. They represent continuity, connection and a commitment to building on the legacy of those who came before.

"These buildings hold stories," Mrs. Shannon said.
"By restoring them, we preserve the memories of past generations and prepare spaces for new ones to thrive."

With the reopening of Hall-Roland Hall and Paul Gray Hall, Freed-Hardeman University honors its past while confidently stepping into the future—one restored brick at a time.



DRYDEN AUDITORIUM

Dryden Auditorium, the central hub for daily chapel, largescale events, camps, graduations and much more, has been fully transformed—featuring fresh carpet, padded seating, premium lighting and sound, and a revitalized stage.

Originally funded in part by a \$250,000 gift from the family of alumnus and former Board of Trustees member L.W. Loyd, the auditorium has been a cornerstone of community life for decades. It was formerly named in honor of Loyd and his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Loyd Sr. Today, thanks to a generous gift from the Dryden family and additional alumni support through the FHU Next campaign, the auditorium enters a new era while preserving its historical significance.

Renovations were designed to improve both function and experience. The redesigned seating layout offers greater comfort and accessibility, while new sound and lighting systems support everything from daily chapel to theatrical performances and academic ceremonies. A fresh stage design brings modern flair while honoring the space's original character.

Visitors entering the auditorium are greeted by a more welcoming and spacious environment. Technical upgrades

have improved production quality across all campus events, allowing the university to better serve students, faculty and guests. Enhanced restrooms, improved acoustics and accessible design elements make the venue more accommodating to all audiences.

Besides university events, the auditorium also regularly welcomes certain community celebrations such as the annual Chester County High School graduation ceremony. Thanks to the longstanding friendship between FHU and CCHS, Henderson students at all levels can benefit from the building's numerous updates.

FHU Senior Vice President Dave Clouse noted the importance of the improvements in supporting the university's mission. "Dryden Auditorium is the center of activity at FHU," Clouse said. "We are so thankful to the Dryden family and the many other donors who made these upgrades possible. The new audio and visual capabilities have already proven to be a complete game-changer."

Additional features are planned as part of a second phase of updates, including an elevator and a new entrance with a covered drive-through. These enhancements will further position Dryden Auditorium as a functional, welcoming and inspiring space for future generations of students.

Chamber YEAR IN REVIEW

Chester County's Chamber of Commerce once again played host to a full slate of community favorites and festive traditions that brought people together throughout the year.

The 46th Annual Chester County BBQ Festival, presented by Centennial Bank, brought the flavor to downtown Henderson. Though moved to October due to inclement weather, the festival remained as lively as ever. Local vendors, food trucks, entertainers and volunteers filled the courthouse lawn with activity and community spirit. Harmony Goff was named Miss Chester County BBQ Festival, while Madison Bell and Portia Bradshaw claimed first place honors in the adult and youth talent contests, respectively.

In November, Henderson's own Hee Haw Hootenanny, sponsored by First Bank, returned to Williams Auditorium with over 30 cast members and entertainers taking the stage. Laughter, music and skits delighted crowds during the two-night performance, continuing the long-standing tradition of this volunteer-led production.

The 2024 Henderson Christmas Parade made its way down Main Street on a chilly December evening, sponsored once again by Anew Family Medical. Despite freezing temperatures, families lined the streets with blankets and earmuffs, ready to cheer on festive floats and characters including the Grinch and Santa himself. Cub Scouts Pack 25 won Best Overall and First Place Civic Float, and First Place Religious Float went to Next Level Church.



















A new holiday tradition took the stage at Williams Auditorium with A Chester County Country Christmas, where over 20 local performers, singers and musicians came together to share Christmas memories and favorite holiday classics. The heartfelt performances celebrated the season in true hometown fashion.

The Chamber also welcomed the Henderson Hometown Holiday Shopping Weekend, giving the chance to support small, local businesses and enter a Chamber Bucks giveaway. By visiting participating stores and restaurants, shoppers could enter for a chance to win one of two \$150 prizes.

In the spring, the Annual Membership and Awards Banquet was held under the theme An Evening in Full Bloom. Business leaders, community members and Chamber supporters gathered to celebrate achievements and milestones. Besso's Coffee was named Business of the Year, among several other honorees recognized for their contributions to the community.

The 2025 Chamber Masters Golf Tournament was held at Chickasaw Golf Course. Teams from across the county participated in a full day of friendly competition, with local businesses and Chamber supporters represented across the course. This year, the team from Lonnie Cobb secured 1st place in flight one, and First Farmers Co-op was the winner in flight two.



Communities

OF CHESTER COUNTY

Henderson

The surrounding counties of Hardeman, Henderson, Madison and McNairy each sacrificed land to make Chester County in 1879 by an Act of the Tennessee General Assembly. Henderson was quickly established as the county seat, since the 1857 construction of the Mobile & Ohio Railroad brought settlers to the tiny hamlet then called Dayton. A depot built on Front Street by the M&O was the center of the town's businesses. After the Civil War's conclusion, the population of the community exploded, with half a dozen businesses and about 20 residences established by 1871.

Henderson first made its name on the national stage during the Civil War, when Confederate guerrillas attempted to burn the M&O depot. Several local women banded together to extinguish the fire and save the depot. General U.S. Grant extended these women the protection of the Union Army against property loss and personal injury and entered their names in a roll of honor that listed civilians whose activities preserved the Union.

Other national attention-grabbers have included being the shooting location for the "Walking Tall" movies based on the life of legendary McNairy County Sheriff Buford Pusser. Bill and Minnie Howard and Waynell Jones represented Henderson barbeque and blues music at the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival in 1986. A tribute to the Howards can be found in the Chester County Courthouse.

A few must-sees include Chickasaw State Park; Chickasaw Golf Course; historic architecture and cemeteries; charming coffee shops, boutiques, restaurants and antique shops; Freed-Hardeman University; Williams Auditorium shows; and the annual Chester County BBQ Festival.

Sweet Lips

In 2003, author Gary Gladstone included Sweet Lips in his book, "Passing Gas and Other Towns Along the American Highway." Sitting just off Highway 100, Sweetlips has residents who claim that the community has existed since well before the Civil War. Legend claims that the name of the community was bestowed by a very weary, thirsty traveler, who proclaimed the region's water "sweet to my lips."

In addition to the community center and fire station, places of worship, historic cemeteries and outdoor activities enrich this vibrant community.

Enville

Enville joins Henderson as the only other incorporated community in Chester County. Frederick Sewell established a claim on land slightly west of the present location of Enville in 1826, when the land was still a part of McNairy County. Descendants of the Sewell family still live in a log home their ancestors built. The community went through several name changes before Enville was chosen to honor B.A. Enloe, a representative from the 8th Congressional District. Today the community straddles the Chester/McNairy County line and is a center of agricultural production in the county. The Enville Baptist Church, built around 1900, is a landmark of the area.

Talley Town

Talley Town stands halfway between Finger and Sweetlips, east of Henderson. Talley Town's claim to fame is the Plunk House and the Talley Store and Gin, both used in the 1970's "Walking Tall" films. Today new housing developments are springing up across land settled by families from Hardin County in the 1890s. Three historic cemeteries — Oak Grove (old and new) and Robertson — peacefully reside near the Plunk House.

Jacks Creek

Local legend explains the name of this community. It tells that a young man named Jack traveled with early settlers from North Carolina, and he disappeared after being sent to a nearby creek to bring water back to the camped settlers.

Several accounts relate that residents could not escape the sound of cannon fire from the

Battle of Shiloh, about 35 miles to the southeast. In 1863, a small skirmish between Confederate guerrillas and a Union outpost occurred close to the present intersection of Highway 100 and Highway 22A.

Once a bustling hub of ginning, blacksmithing and agriculture, Jacks Creek has changed with the times. For many years, the Ruby Masonic Lodge served the needs of Masons in the area. In 1938, an emergency airfield was installed on the Smith Farm and was the second largest landing field in the United States. Jacks Creek has one of only three National Register of Historic Places sites in Chester County: the Hamlett-Smith House, a privately-owned Greek Revival home from the 1840s.

Today, Jacks Creek has an award-winning elementary school, Jacks Creek BBQ, C & R Grocery, Siler's Old Time BBQ, the Jacks Creek Community Club, a post office, and several places of worship.

Mifflin

Established in the early 1800s, Mifflin has the honor of being the first community in what is today Chester County. Stores, dwellings, schools and churches were located in this bustling town. Union Army soldiers bivouacked in the front yard of the Buckley-Turner House and were fed and entertained by the townsfolk. Today, Mifflin is home to Jimmy Wells' Biggest Little Store and the Mifflin Community Mall. A street festival is held on Mifflin Day the first Saturday of every August. Memorial Park and the Ruritans Center are used frequently for community activities.

Hickory Corner

Hickory Corner, located in the extreme southwestern part of the county is primarily an agricultural area. The area was originally settled by North Carolinians. Like many small communities, the small schools in the area served the residents for social and civic activities. Today all schools are consolidated in Henderson. Recently, a community center was built to restore that function to Hickory Corner.

Deanburg

Deanburg, formerly known as Pultite, is located to the extreme western edge of the county along the Chester/Hardeman County line. Once a more bustling community, a tornado devastated it in 1923.

Large sections of Deanburg were purchased by the federal government in order to create the Chickasaw State Park and Chickasaw State Forest. Several buildings, lakes and recreation areas were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration to stem the tide of erosion and drought in the area. The park is visited by thousands of visitors annually. Several churches, a convenience store, a volunteer fire department and a community center also serve the needs of the community today.

Masseyville

Masseyville, a small community located along the Chester/McNairy County line, was settled before part of McNairy County was included in the formation of Chester County. Early settlers in the community were primarily African-American sharecroppers. The Hatchie Church served as both church and school for the community.

Woodville

Like Masseyville, Woodville was also once part of McNairy County. Woodville was a hotbed of strife during the Civil War, as the population was evenly split between support for the Union and the Confederacy. Eventually, Colonel Fielding Hurst formed a cavalry regiment of Union soldiers and established what historians have called Hurst Nation, due to the colonel's dictatorial management of this group of soldiers.

Montezuma

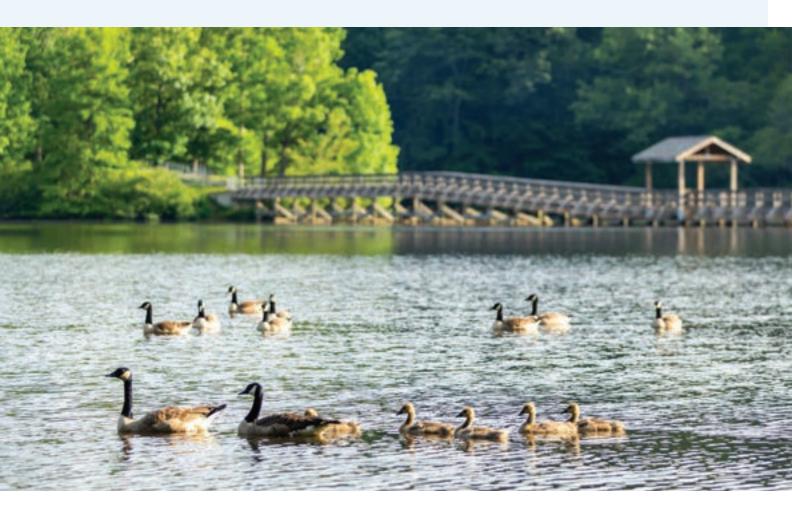
The community of Montezuma was originally known as Wambles Store for the family who first began to settle the area west of Henderson. A town was eventually laid out and renamed Montezuma for the Aztec emperor. Documents of the period record the very rich wildlife of the area. Citizens established the Montezuma Male and Female Academy, but the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church eventually relocated it to Jackson.

Montezuma narrowly lost out to Henderson when the decision to establish a county seat was made. Today, Montezuma has several farms, churches, housing developments and a community center.

New Friendship

The New Friendship Community is about six miles northeast of Henderson. Friendship Church was founded on a land grant from the State of Tennessee signed by Governor N.L. Brown in 1846. There were seven acres in the grant, with a meeting house and a spring on the property. The present building was erected in 1905. A bell in the steeple announced services and summoned men to dig a grave when a death occurred in the community. There are three cemeteries in New Friendship: New Friendship, Jones Cemetery and Ward's Cemetery.

One of the original families, the Brays, hosted a bivouac of soldiers headed towards the Battle of Shiloh. A diary was found in the old house in 1950, written by Mary Bray in 1876-77, that provides tremendous insights about the activities in the region. The New Friendship School is the only two-room school building still standing in Chester County and is used as a community center. Hill Top Fire Station serves New Friendship, Mifflin and Glendale.



Sometimes the best adventures aren't found in the bustle of a big city—they're rooted in places like Chester County, where the pace is slower, the skies are clearer, and the people still wave from the porch. Whether you're new in town or have called this community home for generations, here are seven meaningful ways to enjoy all that Chester County has to offer.

1

START AND END YOUR DAY UNDER OPEN SKIES

There's nothing quite like the wide-open skies of Chester County. Begin your morning watching the sun rise over the gently rolling farmland, and finish your day stargazing in the secluded fields and backroads of Jacks Creek, where the dark skies offer a breathtaking view. Pack a blanket and take in the quiet wonder—just you, the crickets and a canopy of stars.





2

WALK, PLAY OR UNWIND AT OUR LOCAL PARKS

Gene Record Memorial Park and Sue Shelton White Park are more than green spaces—they're gathering places. Whether you're taking a morning stroll, attending a family-friendly event or enjoying free public Wi-Fi, both parks offer room to breathe, reflect and connect.

3

SHOP AND SOCIALIZE AT THE FARMERS MARKET

On Friday mornings, 455 Church Street transforms into a hub of fresh food, neighborly conversation and small-town charm. From locally grown tomatoes and okra to handmade jams and baked goods, the Henderson/Chester County Farmers Market celebrates community as much as it does quality produce.





4

HIT THE TRAILS AT CHICKASAW STATE PARK

Located just a short drive from downtown Henderson, Chickasaw State Park offers scenic trails that wind through hardwood forests and around quiet lakes. Whether you're out for a mindful solo hike or a weekend adventure with family, this natural gem is the perfect place to reconnect with the outdoors.





Seven Things To Do IN HENDERSON CHESTER COUNTY 5

DIVE INTO LOCAL HISTORY

History lives in Chester County—not behind glass, but in its streets, stories and spaces. From walking tours to monuments, you can trace the legacy of figures like suffragist Sue Shelton White and learn how this corner of West Tennessee shaped the past and continues to shape the future.





6

JOIN A HOMETOWN CELEBRATION

From community festivals to Fourth of July fireworks, Chester County knows how to throw a gathering with heart. These events offer food, fun, music and a chance to feel the pulse of a town that knows how to show up for each other.

7

SUPPORT LOCAL ARTS AND AGRICULTURE

Whether it's a student art show, a craft fair under the pavilion or a Friday morning at the market, creativity and agriculture go hand in hand here. You'll find fresh eggs, handmade jewelry, wild blackberry jam and maybe even a new friend behind the booth.



In Chester County, the little things are the big things. From peaceful trails to friendly vendors, there's always something to explore — something rooted, real, and worth remembering. All it takes is a slower pace and a good pair of walking shoes.

In Chester County the little things are big things.





47TH ANNUAL CHESTER COUNTY BBQ FESTIVAL

September 26 & 27

HENDERSON HEE HAW HOOTENANNY

November 7 & 8 | 7 p.m.

HENDERSON HOMETOWN HOLIDAY **SHOPPING WEEKEND**

November 2025

HENDERSON CHRISTMAS PARADE

December 4 | 7 p.m.

A CHESTER COUNTY COUNTRY **CHRISTMAS**

December 12 | 6 p.m.

CHAMBER ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP + AWARDS BANQUET

April 2026

THE CHAMBER MASTERS 21ST ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

June 2026

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Chester County Schools BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE

The Chester County School District is laying the groundwork for student success with the construction of two major facilities—a new career and technical education facility and a multipurpose facility, both slated to open for the 2025-26 school year.

FILLING A NEED

Today's high school students are juggling more than just grades and extracurriculars—they're also thinking seriously about their futures. While many teens are still unsure of their paths after graduation, Chester County Schools are working to make that road clearer, more practical and less intimidating.

Students can now take advantage of a range of opportunities, including early college credit, job shadowing, technical training and career exploration, all in the comfort and familiarity of their high school environment.

"This is about more than just earning a diploma," Director of Schools Troy Kilzer said. "We want our students to be prepared for the workforce with the skills and direction they need to succeed after graduation."

In partnership with the state of Tennessee, local schools now offer up to five dual enrollment courses, at no charge, available through Freed-Hardeman University, the University of Tennessee at Martin, Jackson State Community College and the University of Memphis-Lambuth campus. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) programs in Jackson also provide support and dual enrollment courses for students seeking to improve their technical skills in pursuit of various jobs. Utilizing Chester County High School classrooms and shop spaces, CCHS partners with TCAT Jackson offering several programs of study including a welding program, criminal

justice, hospitality and tourism, building construction technology, advanced manufacturing, agriculture and automotive collision repair.

Current efforts seem to be working, as the state of Tennessee's Ready Graduate indicator shows county schools scoring at 89%, well above the statewide average of 49%.

The newly constructed school facilities will add to the current A.C. Jones vocational building to meet the needs of the growing number of students pursuing hands-on, workforce-ready education. Programs in automotive, horticulture, agriculture and small animal science will find a new home in the expanded space.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Construction began in May 2024, spurred on by acquisition of the Innovative School Model grant, which funds forward-thinking approaches to career preparation. The new facility, titled the "Chester County High School Vocational Center," will expand programs at Chester County High School and deepen partnerships with organizations like the TCAT in Jackson and work-based learning opportunities with local businesses and companies.

The facility construction management is through E&T Contracting, owned by CCHS graduates Edward and Tiffany Jones. James Carter, automotive instructor and one of the work-based learning coordinators at Chester County High School, said the need for space has never been greater. "We've seen a huge rise in interest in our programs," Carter said. "Students are eager to learn realworld skills, and this facility will give them the space and tools to do that comfortably and confidently."





Kilzer noted that it is natural to push for these types of programs because of how well students are connecting with them. "Students are there because they are invested; they get motivated by it. Many of these kids will stay after school until late hours, with no attendance or grades—just the drive to learn."

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Such physical upgrades are not only beneficial to the students who participate, but they are also an important investment for the Chester County community at large. As students gain hands-on training and practical skills, local businesses benefit from a steady pipeline of capable, career-ready employees.

In partnership with community stakeholders, the Innovative School Model Grant also helped fund another forward-thinking initiative: the "Portrait of an EAGLE" model.

Leaders in local government, businesses, industry and education developed this model to examine the modern landscape of career preparation needs for Chester County students.

After months of collaboration, community stakeholders identified five key attributes that local students should possess in order to be successful in their careers: adaptability, communication, critical thinking, empathy and integrity. Educators across the district are now committed to modeling and teaching these traits throughout each student's journey. Even the school mascot—the EAGLE—serves as a daily reminder of this vision, representing the motto "Employable Attributes Grow Leaders to Excellence."

"Our work-based learning program helps students gain experience in Chester County," Kilzer added. "And that is good for all of us."

With these new facilities and a shared vision for student growth, Chester County Schools are building more than just buildings—they're building a stronger future for the entire community.

Learn more about the Chester County Schools "Portrait of

an EAGLE" model by visiting ChesterCountySchools.org/mission-vision.

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Rooted in Community HENDERSON/CHESTER COUNTY FARMERS MARKET GROWS INTO ITS EIGHTH SEASON



On any given Friday between May and early fall, the Henderson Farmers Market bustles with community and commerce. Trucks back into the open-air pavilion at 455 Church Street, stands are assembled with care, and local produce and other goods fill the tables. What began in 2017 as a hopeful pitch has become one of the area's most beloved weekly traditions—connecting farmers, artisans and shoppers across county lines.

Now in its eighth year of operation, the market continues to thrive under the leadership of UT Agriculture Extension

Agent Steve Rickman, who also serves on the State Farmers Market Board. "This is one of the best things to happen for this community," Rickman said. "The first time the market opened, I was here at 6 a.m. and very nervous. Our first year was amazing—and it hasn't let up."

Originally constructed with a USDA grant 25 years ago, the pavilion sits beside Gene Record Memorial Park and the market from 7 a.m. to 12 noon each Friday, rain or shine. In fact, the market has never missed a single Friday—a testament to its consistency, even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when food access became even more essential. "COVID changed how people think about buying food," Rickman said. "It made folks look locally again. That helped solidify our market's role in the community."

Local, regional and even out-of-state vendors now line the rows. From tomatoes and okra to handmade jewelry and grass-fed beef, the market offers a diverse, rotating variety. "We've had vendors from neighboring counties and even one from luka, Mississippi, selling peaches, plums and tomatoes," Rickman said. "We've even had ice cream and coffee vendors here. It's really unlimited what we can do." Among the faithful is Mr. Ralph Austin, the market's longest serving vendor, who once told Rickman the venture would





never work. "Now he's here every Friday," Rickman said, laughing. His son, Jeff Austin, joins him to sell produce across multiple towns throughout the week, including Jackson and Savannah.

Another regular is Randee Zelenik—better known as the "Cookie Lady"—who brings years of experience in cake decorating and baking to the market every Friday. "I've loved to bake since childhood," she said. "It's such a joy to be here every week."

Kayla Rich, of Fox and Stag Farms, has been vending for three years. A stay-at-home mom originally from Washington state, she now sells fresh eggs and handmade jewelry at the market. "It's social, it's local, and it's a great way to connect," she said.

Tammy Thomas, who runs Jerry Thomas Beef alongside her husband, proudly shares that their meat is raised naturally—no steroids or additives. "We do everything ourselves," she said. "It's our passion, and we're fortunate we can do this full time."

For longtime Henderson resident Norma Kitchen, the market is a welcome stop each week. "I had a garden for years, but now I come here for my fresh veggies," she said, noting her favorite buys: tomatoes, cucumbers, squash and scones.

More than 200 farmers markets operate across Tennessee, but Rickman believes in what Henderson and Chester County offers to its citizens including education, agriculture and civic pride. Backed by the UT Extension Office and rooted in collaboration with 4-H, Family Consumer Science, and local economic development, Rickman said the work helps bridge generations. Rickman works with every fourth grader in Chester County through Ag Days and other programs focused on gardening, food preservation and ag careers. "It's the favorite part of my job," he said. "The success of the farmers market feels like my biggest accomplishment."

Looking ahead this fall, Henderson and Chester County will be home of the West Tennessee State Fair, which will move from Jackson to Henderson's 20,000-square-foot pavilion at 575 Fourth Street.

The market's reach continues to expand. Rickman's early work helped inspire markets in Lewis and Lawrence Counties. Recent upgrades to signage, radio ads and a billboard in Jackson have boosted visibility and attendance. The city also invested in a new gated entrance and added parking on Church Street, making access easier for the more than 1,100 attendees the market averages.

As Rickman reflects on the market's growth, he sees more than vendors. He sees legacy, education and opportunity. "We share our identity with the park," he said. "This location works. And we've done well. Really well."















1. Outstanding Citizen - Kirbi Fahs | 2. Business of the Year - Besso's | 3. Emerging Business of the Year - Stoll's Cafe | 4. Table centerpieces donated by Fiddlin' Goat Farm | 5. Henderson/Chester County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director - Blake Hopper | 6. 2025 Chamber Banquet theme: An Evening in Full Bloom | 7. Industry of the Year - Quality Metal Stamping | 8. Leadership Chester County Class of 2025 | 9. Excellence in Agriculture - The Fiddlin' Goat Farm | 9. Ryan Parnell Leadership Award - Terry Hearn

Chamber Awards

2024-25

The 2024 Chamber Awards, themed "An Evening In Full Bloom," brought together local businesses, leaders and community members for an evening of celebration, recognition and connection. Hosted by the Henderson | Chester County Chamber of Commerce, the annual event was held at the Henderson Church of Christ activity center, which was transformed with vibrant floral centerpieces, soft lighting and hanging lanterns that reflected the event's theme. The atmosphere was both elegant and welcoming, creating the perfect backdrop to honor this year's outstanding individuals and organizations.

The Chamber Awards aim to highlight excellence in business, leadership, agriculture and community service throughout Chester County. As always, nominees represented a wide range of industries, each contributing to the local economy and community in unique and meaningful ways. Award recipients are selected based on their contributions, impact and commitment to making Chester County a better place to live and work.

THIS YEAR'S AWARD RECIPIENTS:

Business of the Year: Besso's

Industry of the Year: Quality Metal Stamping

Emerging Business: Stoll's Cafe

Excellence in Agriculture: The Fiddlin' Goat Farm

Outstanding Citizen: Kirbi Fahs

Ryan Parnell Leadership Award: Terry Hearn





Each award presentation reflected the hard work and heart behind the individuals and organizations being honored. Many of the recipients have dedicated years to their fields and continue to invest in the growth and development of the region. Their stories serve as an inspiration to others and as reminders of the difference one person or business can make.

This year's Ryan Parnell Leadership Award recipient, Terry Hearn, who has lived in Chester County his whole life, described his hometown as "a great place to live, where everybody is your neighbor." Hearn serves as the production manager for Neo Products and is also heavily involved in works that benefit the Carl Perkins Center. While he was honored to receive the award, he emphasized that he is simply one of many hard working members of the Chester County community.

"Ryan Parnell was a good man, a good leader and a good member of our community," Hearn said. "To get any kind of award named after him was an honor. It's nice to be recognized, but there are plenty of people in Chester County who deserve to be recognized also! Everybody in this community works well together and is here to help each other. I just try to do my part and help people when they need help."

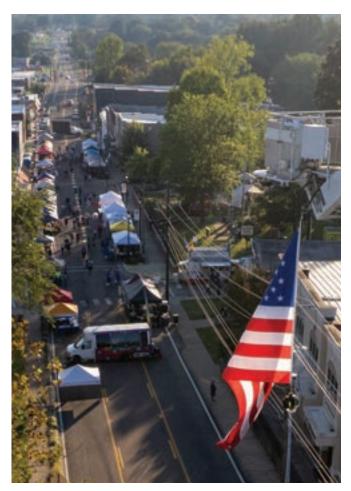
The 2024 Chamber Awards were more than a ceremony—they served as a celebration of the people and partnerships that keep Chester County thriving. With each honoree, the event showcased the depth of talent, service and entrepreneurship found in the region. As the community looks ahead to another year of growth, the evening reinforced the values that drive progress: dedication, innovation and a shared commitment to excellence.





46th Annual

CHESTER COUNTY BBQ FESTIVAL



When the scent of smoked pork fills the air, laughter echoes across the courthouse lawn and music spills from the stage on Main Street, you know it's time for the Chester County BBQ Festival.

Held in the heart of Henderson, the 46th annual event brought thousands together October 4-5, 2024, for a weekend that blended small-town charm with big-time fun. Hosted by the Henderson | Chester County Chamber of Commerce and powered by a dedicated team of volunteers, this beloved tradition continues to serve up unforgettable memories every year.

Lifelong Chester County resident Terry Hearn has been going to the festival since its inception in 1978, and he fully believes in the event's power to bring people together. "It's like one big family reunion on the courthouse lawn," he said. "If there is someone you haven't seen for a long time, you're bound to run into them there. I've known people who have moved away from Henderson but will take their vacation time to come back for the festival."

All weekend long, families found plenty to see and do. Children explored the Piglet Pen and splashed through the obstacle course, while rides and character meet-and-greets kept young guests smiling. Pageants, pedal pulls and costume fun gave kids a chance to take the stage and soak up the spotlight.

Local musicians, student performers and regional bands filled the E&T Contracting Stage with nonstop entertainment. Friday's talent competition featured acts of all ages. In the youth category, Henleigh Tipps was awarded third place, Brynli Young earned second place and Portia Bradshaw walked away with first place. The adult talent winners were Megan King in third place, Lindsey Russell in second place and Madison Bell in first place.

Saturday's Tennessee State Hog Callin' Championship brought laughs, cheers and a bit of friendly rivalry. The competition was fierce, with contestants aiming to win over the crowd with their signature whoops, squeals and pig calls. In the end, the 2023 champion, Marcus Williams, earned a second-place finish (and a \$500 prize), while Ashlee Surratt was crowned the 2024 Tennessee Hog Callin' Champion and rewarded with a \$1,000 prize.



























For those looking to get moving, the weekend offered something for everyone—from the early morning Pig Trot 5K to the Hog Wild Cornhole Tournament later that evening. The Gameday Tailgate Zone provided the perfect place to relax, refuel and catch a few football scores in the shade.

Car lovers and history buffs headed to the Swine n' Shine Car Show and antique tractor display, while furry friends strutted their stuff in the Mutt Strut Pet Parade. Other highlights included dunk booths, line dancing and plenty of local vendors lining the streets.

Hearn and his five grandkids—ages 7 to 16—make a point to attend every year, taking advantage of all the weekend has to offer. "It's just a good family-oriented event," he said. "You can go by all the booths and get homemade jams and jellies, cookies and pies, corndogs, funnel cakes, lemonade—almost anything you can think of. There's also good talent and fun games—it's just an all-around great few days."

Year after year, the Chester County BBQ Festival brings people together with food, fun, and community spirit. Whether guests are first-timers or longtime fans, there's always something new to discover and enjoy.

"Each year, the BBQ Festival continues to grow while keeping the small-town charm that people love," said Blake Hopper, executive director of the Chester County Chamber of Commerce. "Our community is constantly working to bring in new experiences while staying true to the traditions that residents and visitors have loved for nearly five decades. We can't wait to see everyone here in September!"

Mark your calendar—the 47th Annual BBQ Festival returns September 26–27, 2025. Want to be part of the fun? Visit chestercountybbqfestival.com to learn more, sign up as a vendor or get involved as a volunteer.





Williams Auditorium

A YEAR OF QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT





With a repertoire that included youth theatre productions, local talent showcases, stars of classic movies and nationally recognized musical artists, Williams Auditorium had no shortage of quality entertainment throughout its 2024-25 season.

Chester County residents put their own musical and comedic talents on display for the annual productions of Henderson's Hee Haw Hootenanny and A Chester County Country Christmas. Young performers wowed audiences with Chester County Youth Theater's "Newsies Jr." and CCHS Theatre's "The Addams Family."

Several nationally recognized artists also took to the Williams Auditorium stage this year. Musicians such as Rhonda Vincent, Shenandoah, Clay Walker, Jimmy Fourtune, Pam Tillis, John Berry and The Bellamy Brothers performed to packed crowds.

The venue even hosted a screening of the classic movie "Napoleon Dynamite" followed by a conversation with three of the movie's stars. Actors Jon Heder (Napoleon), Efren Ramirez (Pedro) and John Gries (Uncle Rico) answered fan questions, told behind-the-scenes stories and played games with the audience.













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