



CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

INTUCKER

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FROM THE MAYOR

Each family has its own set of traditions when it comes to the holidays. Whether it's the big rival football game, watching Christmas movies throughout the month of December or a midnight service on Christmas Eve, it's being with family and friends that makes it meaningful.

One tradition shared by many of the families I know happens at the dinner table on Thanksgiving Day. Before the turkey is carved, each person gets a turn to share something they're thankful for. By the time you go around the entire table, you're not thinking so much about food or football; you're thinking about what really matters. In that vein, I'd like to share some things for which I'm thankful as we prepare for Thanksgiving in Tucker.

Caring Colleagues – It takes a lot of people to run the City we call home. We have a staff that genuinely treats Tucker as their own, working diligently and with great spirit on behalf of all of us. I'm especially thankful for my friends on the City Council. You may not see it, but we sometimes have our disagreements. For all our differences, every one of us knows that every one of us is committed to a strong, healthy future for Tucker. These public servants have time and again risen above selfish desires and the worst aspects of politics to do the right thing as they see it, while sincerely considering all points of view. Tucker is so much stronger, and will be for many years, because of their civility.

Good Neighbors – Gaye and I know some of our neighbors, but it wasn't until recently, when someone suggested a neighborhood block party, that we got to know many, many more. Nearly 100 people showed up for food and fellowship. It was great to put names with faces and find out some commonalities we share. These are the people who are going to bring you soup when you're sick and keep an eye on your house while you're on vacation. I'm grateful to know them better.

Family – I'm saving the best for last here, but welcoming a granddaughter was the highlight of the year for Gaye and me. If you've seen me since Finley was born, chances are you've seen a picture or three of the most amazing baby in the world. She's healthy and she's happy, and she, along with three daughters and two sons-in-law, is a reminder of how critical it is to strengthen and preserve our great communities for the future, and that the effort is worth it.

This community has a lot to be thankful for, too. I hope you'll take time this Thanksgiving to stop and count your blessings. Tucker is certainly one of mine!

DATES TO KNOW

November 12
Veterans Day
observed
(City Hall closed)

November 13
City Council

November 14
Community Council

November 22-23
Thanksgiving
observed
(City Hall closed)

November 26
City Council

November 29
Planning
Commission

PLANS & STUDIES PUBLIC MEETINGS

November 1
Historic Resource
Study

November 7
Signs/Overlay
Rewrite

November 14
Parks & Recreation
Master Plan

November 15
Transportation
Master Plan

Complete info at
tuckerga.gov/plans



CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

The Mayor and City Council met twice in October, overseeing agendas that were dominated by transportation.

At their meeting on October 8, City Engineer Ken Hildebrandt provided Council with an update on the City's SPLOST-funded resurfacing projects, as well as the Intersection Safety Analysis conducted for the City. Twenty-three of Tucker's worst-conditioned streets are scheduled for resurfacing before the end of the year, including Mountain Industrial Boulevard, which is midway through its resurfacing.

Hildebrandt also briefed Council on the City's plans to address complaints about the traffic conditions at the intersection of Fellowship Road and Lawrenceville Highway. Following a SPLOST-funded resurfacing, the City will reverse one lane of Fellowship northbound to create an additional southbound lane. This will help traffic to move more smoothly by creating dedicated left and right turn lanes, as well as a straight lane to carry traffic across Fellowship toward Idlewood Road.

Council then voted to authorize City staff to apply to GDOT to make Mountain Industrial Boulevard a state route and Hugh Howell Road a local route. The swap would open Mountain Industrial to additional grant money and potentially increase the beautification and traffic flow throughout that corridor. It would also aim to reduce congestion and pass-through traffic on the Smoke Rise portion of Hugh Howell Road.

At the meeting on October 22, Council voted on a pair of land use cases. The first case was a City-initiated rezoning that will change the zoning of 2825 Mountain Industrial Boulevard. The property, which is currently a Georgia Power substation, goes from a Medium Density Residential-2 (MR-2) zoning to a Local Commercial (C-1) zoning. The other case involves 2291 Wender Drive, a largely undeveloped property at the back of the Winding Woods neighborhood. The rezoning takes the property from Small Lot Residential (RSM) to Residential Medium Lot-85 (R-85). After holding public hearings, Council voted 6-0 to approve both rezonings. There is no proposed change in use and no proposed development of either property, the rezonings merely follow the recommendations of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Council also held a first read on changes to the City's alcohol ordinance. The new ordinance would move the permissible start time for Sunday alcohol sales from 12:30 p.m. to 11 a.m. The change would only apply to on-premises consumption at places like eateries and wineries. A final vote by Council on the ordinance would only happen if Tucker voters approve the change in a November 6 referendum.

The next scheduled City Council meeting will be Tuesday November 13 at 7 p.m. at the City Hall Annex (4228 First Avenue).

ARMY VET CHOOSING TO SERVE IN TUCKER



Just about everyone has some set of goals they want to accomplish in life. Very few, however, can check those goals off their list quite like Tucker Precinct's newest police officer.

"I had wanted to do this for a long time," says Officer R. Mejia. "I've wanted to do a lot of little things: graduate college, serve in the military, be on the police force."

Growing up in Southern California, Mejia says service was something he was interested in from a young age. He recalls attending community meetings with his father, where he watched Los Angeles Police Department officers interact with residents. He was so impressed with the concern they showed for the people in that community, it shaped his life's path.

"There were a lot of good LAPD cops and they loved what they did, loved the uniform," Mejia recalls. "These officers were getting the community's ideas and trying to problem solve, asking 'what's best for the community?'"

After studying criminal justice at the California State University, Los Angeles, Mejia decided to pursue another of his goals, enlisting in the United States Army. He spent three years in the National Guard and five more on active duty, completing one tour in Afghanistan and seeing combat action.

"Just about everything we did there is classified," Mejia says. "It was stressful. You had to see everyone as a threat."

After serving out a five-year contract this March, U.S. Army E4 Specialist Mejia decided it was time to accomplish another of his goals; he became DeKalb County Police Officer Mejia.

"I was stationed at Fort Benning the last four years and I actually enjoyed Georgia," Mejia explains. "I was coming up to Atlanta every other weekend. I enjoyed the people here and the cost of living is a lot less."

Determined to stay in Georgia, and just two days removed from leaving the military, Mejia entered DeKalb's Police Academy. Upon graduation, he became one of five new officers assigned to work the Tucker Precinct.

(continued on page 6)

ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SCHOEPPNER

You likely saw on the news or on social media that Gwinnett County Police Officer Antwan Toney was killed in the line of duty on October 20. He was shot while investigating a suspicious vehicle near Shiloh Middle School. Since I started with the DeKalb County Police Department in 2001, there have been six officers killed here in the line of duty. I have known most of these officers in some way or another. In this month's newsletter, I'm going to use this solemn occasion to remember these men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice for their community.

I hadn't even been with the department a year when Officer Ann Guinta was killed in a traffic accident on July 20, 2001. I worked the evening shift at Center Precinct and she worked during the day watch. The day before she died, she cut through the roll call room; she on her way home, I waiting for my shift to start. She, another officer and I made small talk for about a minute and she left. The next day she was gone. She left behind a six-year-old son.

When Officer Dennis Stepnowski was killed in a shootout at a Stone Mountain apartment complex on June 29, 2006, I was still working evening watch at Center Precinct. I remember hearing the radio traffic as officers at the scene tried to race him to the hospital. Officer Stepnowski was on the SWAT team and generally was someone that newer officers aspired to be like. You seriously consider your mortality when you see someone as fit and experienced as Step get killed.

I was working in the Major Felony Unit when Officers Eric Barker and Ricky Bryant were shot to death on January 16, 2008. They were killed investigating a suspicious vehicle at an apartment complex on Glenwood Road. We worked 18 to 20 hour days to identify the suspect and then to get him into custody. Officers Barker and Bryant each left behind a wife and four children.

Officer Ivorie Klusmann had been with the department for less than a year when he was killed in a car wreck on August 10, 2013. He was



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responding to assist another officer to investigate a suspect driving a stolen car. He left behind two children.

The most recent officer to lose his life in the line of duty was Officer Kevin Toatley on September 19, 2015. He was hit head-on by a wrong-way driver and his vehicle burst into flames. Officer Toatley was a seven-year veteran of the department when he died.

There have been 24 other officers killed in the line of duty before my time at the DeKalb P.D. going back to 1919. The most common causes are car wrecks and gunfire. Part of being a police officer is accepting that every day you go to work may be your last. There are very few other professions which have the same expectations.

POLICE BLOTTER

HOT PURSUIT

On September 21, the business owner at 200 Arbor Circle confronted a suspect who was stealing items from the business and from vehicles parked nearby. Once police were called, an officer responding to the scene bravely chased the suspect onto the roof of an adjacent business. The officer was able to take the suspect into custody at that point. The suspect was charged with burglary and entering auto.

RAP BATTLE

On October 10, police were called to 4893 Lewis Road in reference to a person shot. While responding, officers stopped a vehicle matching the suspect's description. One of the occupants of the vehicle stopped was identified as the shooter and he was arrested for aggravated assault. The investigation into the incident revealed that the shooting stemmed from a dispute over rap lyrics.

BURGLAR BUSTED

On October 22, police were called to a burglary at 5430 E. Ponce de Leon Avenue. As officers responded, they observed the suspect across the street from the location. They gave a short chase and were able to apprehend the suspect and make an arrest for burglary.

HISTORICAL STUDY LOOKS TO UNCOVER TUCKER'S PAST



If you know anything about Tucker, you know that its history is critically important to those who call the City home.

"Those who live in Tucker are passionate about its history because it's their history," says Tucker Historical Society Vice President Trish England. "Whether their family has lived here for generations like mine or they are new to the area, something about Tucker draws people in."

Incorporated as a city for just shy of three years, Tucker has been a recognized community since 1892. Its history actually dates to the early 1800s when a war veteran named Greenville Henderson was given 3,000 acres of land by Georgia's governor as a reward for military service. Henderson settled on the land, which includes much of what we know today as Tucker.

"We have cemeteries dating back to the 1830s, a district courthouse that survived the Civil War, a train depot from 1892, Johns Homestead, the Peters Park Community and wonderful examples of houses spanning distinct styles throughout the 20th century," England explains. "Understanding more about the spaces where memories are made is really important to our future."

While much of Tucker's history is well-documented, there are still some stories out there that aren't known. That's why the City contracted with New South Associates to conduct a Historic Resource Report, documenting Tucker's history – both told and untold. The Stone Mountain-based business is no newcomer to municipal storytelling. With offices across the southeastern United States, this team of archaeologists, historians and architectural historians have looked at numerous cities, uncovering rich stories from the past.

"We want to develop an understanding of Tucker's history. Where did it originate from?" asks Jackie Tyson, New South's Associate Director for History. "It's going to be interesting to find out more about the industries of Tucker, the Sears Building. Where did the workers live? What kind of stories will we be able to tell?"

The study, which kicks off with a Public Meeting on November 1, will rely heavily on Tucker residents to share stories of the previous generations.

Tyson says it's especially important to get a look at Tucker's diversity.

"The challenge is uncovering the history of those who weren't discussed in the older history," she explains. "Minority communities, women...we want to tell an inclusive and full story of how they contributed to the history of Tucker."

At the November 1 meeting (7 p.m., City Hall Annex) New South will make a brief presentation and then open the room to residents who want to share their stories. Historians will be on hand with audio recorders to take oral histories. There will be a scanner for people who have old family photos or historical documents to share..

If residents cannot attend the November 1 meeting, they will be able to share their stories with New South historians via email through January. They will take those stories, combine them with their own staff historical research and compile a narrative on the history of Tucker.

"The report will be making recommendations on what should be preserved," Tyson says. "Are there areas the City Council need to look at before things get developed? Hopefully we're going to shed some light on some areas folks didn't consider before. In essence, it's going to be a helpful planning tool."

"It's exciting to have New South working to discover what we may not know about Tucker's past," England says.

A final presentation of the Historic Resource Report is scheduled to go before the Mayor and City Council on April 8, 2019. You can keep tabs on the report process and all the other plans and studies happening in the City at tuckerga.gov/plans.

PRESERVING TUCKER'S HISTORY

Tucker's history isn't just something we look back on. In fact, Tucker residents are working today to preserve and celebrate our history!



Rehoboth Cemetery - A team of volunteers spent their Saturday cleaning up this historic cemetery back in September. They are looking to organize more cleanup days in 2019.



Browning Courthouse - Tucker Historical Society recently raised money to do asbestos remediation. It may not look any different, but the work done will help preserve the courthouse for future generations.



Little Miller Grove Baptist Church - The congregation at one of Tucker's oldest community churches, nestled in the Peters Park neighborhood, gathered on October 28 to celebrate 104 years.

TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH IORA PRIMARY CARE



The Centre on Hugh Howell got some new life last month as Iora Primary Care opened its doors in the space formerly occupied by Hallmark. The shopping center's newest tenant has been working hard to answer one common question: "What is Iora Primary Care?"

"Iora is a primary care doctor's office for adults on Medicare," explains Megan Prock McGrath, Iora's Director of Public Relations and Communications. "Each patient gets a team to keep the patients healthy. You'll have a physician or a nurse practitioner, a health coach... these people don't get paid for services, they get paid to keep people healthy."

Iora started eight years ago in Boston with the goal of putting patients at the center of the health care system. The model took off and has spread across the country, with three Georgia locations ready to open this fall, the first being Tucker.

"When you invest in relationships with people, you can help them to get healthier," Prock McGrath says, adding that Tucker clients won't feel like they're in a doctor's office, but will experience everything from puzzles to yoga and even cooking classes.

Iora held a formal ribbon cutting at the Tucker location on October 25. They're hoping to make an important impact on their new neighbors.

"Ideally, success would look like having an engaged patient population that is healthier," Prock McGrath says. "Our patients are healthy, happy and we're having a long-term impact on their lives."

Iora Primary Care is located at 4420 Hugh Howell Road. You can find them online at www.ioraprimarycare/tucker.

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH REV. TROY BUSH



"October was Pastor Appreciation Month and I appreciate my Pastor, Troy Bush, for all the things he does for Rehoboth Baptist Church and its members.

"He cares for the hurting, the sick, the bereaved and for those just down and out. He performs funerals, visits the sick and the widowed and treats each one as Christ would have treated them. In the recent rezoning hearings in Tucker, he was always kind and considerate to those who opposed the rezoning and he encouraged others to act the same way.

"But for all of that, I am nominating him for Citizen of the Month because of his great concern for the people in Tucker. Friday is his day off, yet each Friday morning finds him at Tucker High School helping with breakfast for the football players. He has headed up an initiative at Rehoboth to reach out to young boys most at risk for becoming gang members and to make sure they have a place to hangout outside of that sphere of influence. He has encouraged a group from Rehoboth to partner with Brockett Elementary School to do tutoring with second grade children who are reading behind grade level. Some other programs he has encouraged or been a part of can't be mentioned because of their sensitive nature, but they reach out to some of the most vulnerable among us.

"Pastor Bush truly is our Citizen of the Month and I hope he will be chosen as Tucker's Citizen of the Month."

Nomination by Brenda Wise

TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

Tunan Hu - GIS Analyst



What does a GIS Analyst do? GIS stands for Geographic Information System, so my day-to-day work mainly focuses on dealing with geographic data. I maintain the City's critical data (zoning, parks, code enforcement, etc.), collect needed data for analysis from other sources and maintain the public open data site. I provide visualized geospatial analysis to Council and staff. This includes, but is not limited to, maps, web maps, spatial analysis and land use plans. I also develop geospatial web apps that can be utilized by the public. These include CityMap, Tucker Outdoors and Timeless Tucker.

What kind of education did you need to get to your current position? I graduated from UGA in 2016 with two Master's Degrees and a GIS Certificate.

What is something people don't realize about your job? The easiest way to understand GIS is to consider it as "maps", yet GIS is more about data. One big project I was working earlier this year is the 2020 Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation. As the lead liaison, I inspected approximately 16,000 listed dwelling units provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and ended up augmenting their address list with about 400 of our own. The City's LUCA submission will ensure an accurate census count, which provides several benefits. Primarily, it plays a major role in how the federal government allocates more

OFF THE WALL

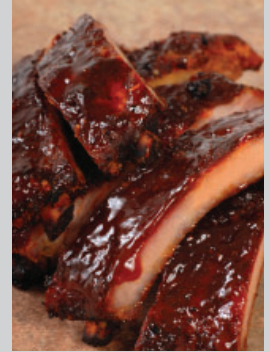
Favorite food? Chinese food, but I have started to like BBQ more and more.

Have any hobbies? Hiking is one of my favorite outdoor sports. I'm hiking on Stone Mountain every Sunday.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Listen to music, doing lite exercise, watch TV programs of international affairs and, of course, some video games.

If you could meet anyone living or deceased, who would it be? Steve Jobs. I always admire the geniuses that changed the world and hope I could talk with one of them.

What's your life philosophy? All of the things will be past, live fully.



than \$675 billion across 26 federal agencies for tribal, state and local government programs and services. More addresses, logically, means more funding from programs that base their disbursements on population count. Projects like this could ensure our citizens get what they deserve and that makes me truly happy.

You don't just work in Tucker, you live here, too. What do you like about living in Tucker? Tucker is a nice and quiet community with easy access to the rest of the Metro Atlanta area. To me, it's really valuable.

ARMY VET CHOOSING TO SERVE IN TUCKER

(continued from page 2)

"Recruiting and retaining talented police officers who possess the right skill sets for the DeKalb County Police Department and its mission of community policing, while maintaining focus on public trust and legitimacy, is paramount," says Tucker Precinct Major Greg Padrick. "Officer Mejia fits that mold and he, along with other officers hired by the DeKalb County Police Department, will enhance the ability to provide effective service delivery and ensure the well-being of the Police Department. We are excited to have him on our team."

How dedicated was Mejia to the idea of becoming a police officer? To hear him tell it, it took quite the sacrifice.

"I actually took a [five-figure] pay cut coming to the police," he explains, "but I have the desire to do the job. Did it hurt? Yeah. But it's worth it to do the job."

Mejia admits police work can be stressful, but he says he's having fun with it. While the camaraderie among peers is reminiscent of his time in Afghanistan, he says the people he gets to work with in the community are the biggest difference. "It's different here in that you're trying to help people solve their problems," he explains. "Not everyone is a threat. Not everybody is trying to kill you. Ultimately, you're actually helping people."

As a new officer, Mejia has a couple more weeks of working with a Field Training Officer. He'll be eligible to begin patrolling Tucker on his own on November 16, which coincides with his 34th birthday.

What happens after that is uncertain, but if Mejia's track record is any indication, it will likely involve setting – and accomplishing – a new set of goals.

“ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS

I want to use my column this month to update you on some of the exciting things happening in Tucker's Parks and Recreation Department.

The first – and most visible – is the new playgrounds being installed at parks throughout Tucker. Last month, Kelley Cofer Park's antiquated playground became the first to be dismantled and the first to be replaced with a nice, new playground structure. We're especially excited about this one as it is wheelchair accessible and has play stations for children with sensory sensitivities. It was important to us and to your City Council to have at least one place where all kids can play regardless of their circumstances. Over the next couple of months, you'll see new playgrounds installed at Montreal Park, then at Henderson Park and finally at Tucker Recreation Center. We have federal grant money lined up to replace the playground at Peters Park as part of a complete park renovation in the near future. You also may have noticed the playground construction happening at the Community Garden side of Henderson Park. This is a project funded through DeKalb County that is just now coming to fruition.



We want these playgrounds installed and open for use as soon as possible. We know you do, too. So to help us make that happen, I want to ask that you please stay off the new playgrounds until we let you know they've officially opened. We had one very excited family who came out to Kelley Cofer Park after the work crews had left for the day and they let their kids play on the structure. Unfortunately, the workers had just poured new concrete footings that were not yet dry. The next day they had to go back and redo all their work, setting the project back and costing the City more money.

We are as excited as you are, so please help us spread the word about these great new playgrounds and that we need to wait to enjoy them.

The other thing I wanted to mention is how proud I am of the Parks and Recreation staff. Last month, we hosted the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association (GRPA) District 6 meeting at Tucker Recreation Center. Recreation professionals from as far away as Macon came here to Tucker for a special awards banquet. I'm happy to report that our Operations Manager Jason Collins and Recreation Leader Crystal Dawson both accepted awards. Jason won the honor for Maintenance/Operations Network Professional of the Year, while Crystal won for Recreation Programming Network Professional of the Year. We also claimed the prize for top Special Event for our July 3 Celebration of Independence and Fireworks Extravaganza. That one was a collaboration between our Communications and Parks and Recreation Departments, but as many of you know, it would not have been possible without generous corporate sponsors and great community partners. The GRPA state awards will be given out on November 6. I'll be sure to keep you posted on how Tucker fares.

Well, that's enough bragging for now. Make sure to stop by Tucker Rec Center over the coming weeks as we've got big plans to help you get into the holiday spirit!



Rip Robertson is the first Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He takes the job with years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works. Rip is a former Military Intelligence Analyst for the U.S. Army and is active with the Army Reserve.



TUCKERGA.GOV

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COMMUNITY CORNER

11/3 – Electronics and HME Recycling Day

9 a.m.-2 p.m., 3969 Lawrenceville Highway

The Rotary Clubs of Tucker and Stone Mountain will host an Electronics and Home Medical Equipment (HME) Recycling Day to benefit Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC). Donations of working or non-working equipment can be made in the parking lot of Handy Ace Hardware.

11/3 – Henderson Park Cleanup Day

9-11 a.m., 2723 Henderson Road

Japanese chaff, an invasive plant with the ability to spread rapidly, has been spotted in Henderson Park. This can be identified and safely removed, but it's going to take your help! Meet at the Lake Erin Picnic Pavilion on the Livsey side of the park and make sure to bring gloves and wear closed toe shoes.

11/3 – Tucker Optimist Club Fall BBQ

11 a.m.-3 p.m., across from 4325 First Avenue

Profits from this barbecue sale go to local youth-oriented projects. Chopped pork plates and half-chicken plates will be available for \$10, but you can pre-order a whole pork butt for \$40. Visit tuckeroptimistclub.org to pre-pay.

11/3 – ARTucker

11 a.m.-5 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road

Check out this art show and sale featuring local artists. Wonderful metal work, painting, paper and jewelry are all available. Kids will enjoy music and free face painting!

11/8 – Job Fair in honor of Veterans Day

10 a.m.-1 p.m., 2997 Lawrenceville Highway

Tucker Civic Association hosts this annual event pairing job seekers with companies who are looking to hire. Priority early entry will be given to military veterans at 9:45 a.m.

11/8 – Tucker High School Band Showcase

7-9 p.m., 5036 Lavista Road

Tucker's Fall Band Showcase will feature the THS Marching Band and their Ambush of Sound. A \$3 donation for admission is appreciated.

11/12 – Atlanta Regional Commission presents "Access to Services"

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road

Seniors are invited to learn more about services available to them in the community. Light snacks provided by Sprouts.

LENDING A HAND



A group of Tucker High students is showing selflessness can make a big difference for families in the community. Look for it in the December issue of *InTucker!*

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