



INTUCKER

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PROTECTING THE PLANET

TUCKER'S EARTH DAY FESTIVITIES AIM TO MAKE IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM DIFFERENCES IN THE COMMUNITY

EDITOR'S NOTE



This month's issue of *InTucker* is one that looks at new beginnings. In these pages, you're going to meet a shop owner who is pouring her livelihood into starting a brand-new business here. You'll meet the newest member of our Parks and Recreation team, who worked in different parts of metro Atlanta before deciding Tucker was where she wanted to be. You'll also hear from a football lifer whose job has taken him coast-to-coast, yet he chose Tucker as the place to advance his career.

What do they all have in common? Well, for one, they're all, more or less, brand new to Tucker. Each of them made a conscious decision for why they wanted to make Tucker their professional home. And, if I'm to hazard a guess, Tucker will be better off for each of them making that decision.

The other commonality, and it's something we've all faced at some point, is that they are the new kids in town. I remember when I moved to Tucker almost 12 years ago. More recently, I remember starting to work for the City of Tucker not quite five years ago. Both of those transitions were made so much easier by the kindness and openness of the community. Neighbors dropping by to say hello, share a kind word on my Facebook wall, stop to have a chat on Main Street.

We are truly a welcoming community. And the newcomers profiled in this month's issue of *InTucker* are already finding that out, I'm sure. If you see them around, maybe take a minute to say hi, make them feel at home. Being new to a place isn't easy, but it's a whole lot easier here in Tucker.

MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



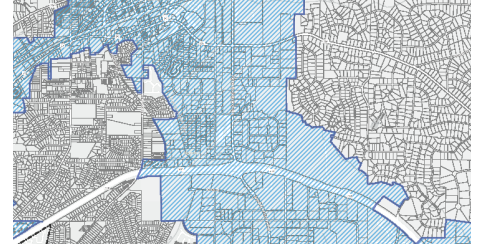
ON THE COVER

Earth Day is just around the corner. On page 12, check out how the City of Tucker is planning to celebrate, and how that celebration will make Tucker a little more green!



FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

He's the new man on campus! On page 6, get to know James Thomson, who's charged with leading our Tucker Tigers back to state glory.



BUSINESS BOOM

In her monthly column, Angela Brooks takes you inside the City's Downtown Development Authority, explaining their mission and how it could help Tucker.



COMMUNITY LEADER

They say idle hands are the devil's workshop. On page 9, get to know our Citizen of the Month, a lady whose volunteer activities make her a subscriber to that notion.



ASK RIP

It's busy season at the Tucker Recreation Center. On page 15, Rip looks at some exciting new programs in our parks system, and says hello to a new friend!



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From the Mayor:



I know by now you've heard me say that I have a vision of Tucker as a place where you can "live, work, play and pray". I talked about that when I was campaigning for office way back in 2015, I've mentioned it in speeches when representing Tucker in other cities, and they are words that I truly mean from the bottom of my heart; I wish that for all of us here in this great city.

But there's a second part to the "live, work, play, pray" concept that I'm not sure everyone has caught on to. When I talk about being that community where you can basically do everything in life, I also mention I want for you to be able to do it "for the length of your life and the breadth of your life." That's a really important point. We like seeing young couples move in here as much as the next city does. But you know what's even better? When we create a place where that young couple can raise their children, become empty nesters, retire and live out their days all in the same place.

That's the concept of an age-friendly city.

According to the World Health Organization, Tucker is an age-friendly city. It's an official designation, and it's one we're very proud of. Now don't get me wrong, I played a very, very small role in us receiving this distinction. The credit really goes to a group of dedicated volunteers, who petitioned the WHO to make this happen. (Side note: isn't it always a group of dedicated volunteers making things happen here in Tucker?)

Tucker resident Lois Ricci led a team that poured over the WHO criteria for becoming an age-friendly city. They wrote letters, worked with city staff and, ultimately, submitted an application for Tucker, which the WHO accepted. Recently, we found out our age-friendly designation was reaffirmed by the WHO for another three years.

Why does this matter? Well, from a global perspective, it's estimated that the 60+ population is going to double by mid-century. By 2050, 22 percent of people on planet Earth will be 60 or older. So, the steps we're taking here in Tucker are only going to become more important. That includes things like installing wheelchair ramps at the ends of our new sidewalk projects, building senior adult playground equipment in places like Peters Park, working with MARTA to install simme-seats at bus stops, senior programming at Tucker Recreation Center and on and on.

As someone who will, before long, be in that 60+ category, I am grateful for the work that is being done to make Tucker age-friendly. Moreover, I am proud of those volunteers, like Lois, who are invariably the engine that keeps Tucker going strong. And that's true for all of its citizens.

FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR

City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and City Council gathered twice during the month of March, once for a meeting and then later for a work session.

The meeting, which took place on March 8, saw approval of a much talked about ordinance on urban camping. The ordinance, which mirrors similar efforts in Brookhaven, Chamblee, and Dunwoody, will give police officers additional tools to assist homeless citizens and connect them with much needed social services.

Council also held first reads and public hearings on a trio of issues. One hearing dealt with a series of amendments to the Fiscal Year '21 budget. Another was for discussion of a special land use permit for drive-thru lanes at the soon-to-be constructed CDC Credit Union branch at Northlake Mall. The third was for an amendment to the City Zoning Ordinance. The changes are largely clerical, made to clarify elements of the Zoning Code. All three issues will come back before Council for second reads, public hearings and anticipated votes on April 12.

Earlier in the meeting, they approved a number of measures including:

- a contract to stabilize historic Johns Homestead. The project is being funded completely through money allocated by DeKalb County Commissioner Steve Bradshaw.
- a contract for construction of a trail bridge along the south side of the lake at Kelley Cofer Park.
- a contract for \$38,425 to install a UV lighting filtration system inside Tucker Recreation Center.
- a resolution to accept a grant for construction of an outdoor fitness court. The court will be situated at

the city-owned site of the old DeKalb County library on Church Street.

- a contract with Pittman Construction not to exceed \$4.05 million for resurfacing 62 streets across the City. Of the \$4.05 million, \$2.16 million will come from SPLOST funds.
- a contract for \$63,000 with Southeastern Engineering, Inc. for construction inspection on the road resurfacings.

At the March 22 work session, Council received a presentation on the Chamblee Tucker road safety study that was completed by consultants from VHB.

One of the alternatives presented to the current layout of the street is to make improvements to make Chamblee Tucker more like a complete street.

That would mean installation of bike lanes, pedestrian activated crosswalks, a potential reduction in speed limit and a reduction from four to three lanes. Council also received a presentation on the Tucker Summit Community Improvement District (CID) Freight Cluster Plan. The plan looks at ways to improve transportation connections, predominantly in the Mountain Industrial area, to better facilitate trucks and vehicle volume in the future. Lastly, they discussed possible text amendments related to auto uses within the City. Staff is looking to balance the needs of the auto oriented businesses in the City, while addressing complaints and concerns. Those concerns include safety, environmental hazards and businesses expanding over time without complying with zoning regulations.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will be on Monday April 12 at 7 p.m. at City Hall (1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B).

DATES TO KNOW

April 5

Downtown Development Authority

April 7

Traffic Court

April 12

City Council

April 14

Traffic Court

April 15

Planning Commission

April 20

Zoning Board of Appeals

April 21

Municipal Court

April 26

City Council

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



nextdoor

ON THE BEAT *with Lt. Schoeppner*

Lt. D.G. Schoeppner is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be followed at [facebook.com/dgschoeppner](https://www.facebook.com/dgschoeppner) or emailed at dgschoeppner@dekalbcountyga.gov



One of the greatest challenges in combating crime is the random element. Most crimes are crimes of opportunity. Someone that is predisposed to committing crimes sees an easy score and takes it.

Because of this, solving these crimes is incredibly hard. This month we'll talk about how an ounce of prevention really can be worth a pound of cure.

Last year, the pandemic really brought this into focus. Our residential burglaries were down by over half. This was because more people were home for longer periods of time. This meant fewer opportunities for criminals to commit these crimes. However, this was contrasted by auto thefts. Last year, we had a seven percent increase from 2019. How does this happen? It's opportunities that we are handing to the criminals.

Many of our auto thefts last year were from gas stations. Folks would drive up to the pump and leave their car running, either because they think they will only be there for a minute or because they have keyless ignitions on their vehicles. Criminals will wait around convenience

stores, for instance, looking for just this type of opportunity. Once the driver is away from their car, the criminal will "slide" right into the driver's seat and take the vehicle. This is literally how that term came to describe these sorts of crimes.

There are other ways that criminals prey on our inattentiveness. Just a couple weeks ago, one-year-old Royalty Grimsby was kidnapped when her mother's car was stolen. Mom was a delivery driver. She left her car running, with the child inside, while she made a delivery. Criminals preyed on this moment and took the vehicle. After a 14-hour manhunt, we finally recovered the young child and reunited her with her mother.

No one wants to have their property stolen. They most certainly don't want harm to come to their loved ones. That is why we all have to appreciate that a few moments is all that it takes for any of us to become a victim. That is also why we all must be constantly vigilant. If we can all work toward that goal, we can fight crime by not letting it occur to begin with.



Elizabeth Grimsby holds her daughter Royalty after they were reunited by DeKalb County Police on March 18.

NEXT MAN UP



Coaching changes are pretty rare when you're talking about the Tucker High School football team. So, when head coach Bryan Lamar left earlier this year to pursue a new opportunity, a lot of people were interested to see who would be selected as his successor. For a program that has multiple state championships and is a perennial playoff participant, the stakes were high.

School leadership did a comprehensive search and ended up going with an unconventional choice. Florida native James Thomson has an extensive and diverse football resumé, but not much experience as a head coach at the high school level. Coach Thomson sat down with *InTucker* before a recent weightlifting session to talk about his background in football, his philosophy toward coaching and his goals for the Tucker Tiger program.

InTucker: Tell us about the transition and how you ended up in Tucker.

James Thomson: It's been a great transition. Dr. [Eric] Parker is a fantastic principal. He's the best I've worked for. So, I'm humbled by this opportunity. Any time you take over a program, the first thing that you have to do is understand the tradition and I think that's where I'm at right now is trying to learn and really just immerse myself in this school and community.

InTucker: What was it in the hiring process that made you want to come here to Tucker?

JT: I looked into it. I did my research and this city is something special. Of course, the tradition. We know what the football program is and the kind of kids we have here, but you know the City and everything together, I think this is one of the best jobs in the State of Georgia.

InTucker: What were you like as a player?

JT: (laughs) Overachieving. I'm 5' 10" and I played quarterback, so I had to find ways. This was in an era that you had to be tall to play, so it taught me the value of hard work and sacrifice and those things. I played as long as I could, they made me stop and now I coach.

InTucker: With your offensive background, what can we expect Tucker's offense to look like on the field?

JT: I've interned in the NFL. I coached at UCLA. So, we learned pro schemes. I think that that's something that maybe most high school coaches aren't familiar with. I've done that everywhere I've been and that's what it will be here. You'll see the same offense that you see run on Sunday by all 32 teams. So I'm excited by the possibilities that we can bring here to Tucker.

InTucker: Where did you intern in the NFL and what was it like?

JT: I [interned] with the Jaguars. It was when [Jack] Del Rio was the coach and it was awesome. You just learn how sophisticated football is. In high school we're taught that it's

simple, and it is. You try to keep it simple, but if you want to get into the game, you want to learn the game, they do it at a high level and there's nuances to it that you have to understand.

InTucker: You have to learn work ethic, too...

JT: Even in L.A. there were nights I slept in the parking garage. We were probably getting out at 2 a.m. and then back in the office at 5. So, it was rough.

InTucker: Have you had time here at Tucker to take stock of the talent you have in the program?

JT: The kids have been lifting and it's been great so far. We're talented. I think everybody knows that. It's my job not to mess it up.

InTucker: This is a program that has won state championships, but the results haven't been to that level in recent years. How do you get back to that level?

JT: Football has a lot to do with luck, too. I think each game that was lost...I can't say that I'll be better. I can say that we're going to work hard at it. We're going to be competitive and we're going to do everything we can. I guarantee you we're going to be an overachieving team.

InTucker: What is your temperament as a coach?

JT: You ask five different people, you'll get five different answers. (laughs) The thing with me is I truly care about the kids. Not just getting them into college, [but] I care about them 10, 15 years down the line. If you look at my coaching staff, it's all people that I've either coached or played with. So, relationships matter to me. Where I'm from, that's a big thing. Being able to trust people is big and so that's the biggest thing with me is actually building relationships with these kids and caring about them 10, 15 years from now.

InTucker: Do you have a mentor in the coaching business?

JT: I've got two. My head coach, whose name is Bill Gierke, in Orlando. He coached me and taught me how to care about kids. And my uncle, the guy who got me into UCLA, Kennedy Polamalu is, I mean, he's kind of my hero. He's always what I aspire to be in how he manages men and takes over a room. It's something that I envy.

InTucker: You're from football-crazy Florida. How does it compare to Georgia in terms of high school football?

JT: Florida football is athletic. The kids down there are fast and big and you have a lot of players that can play fast. The quality of coaching is better in Georgia. Me personally, that's a challenge for me. I like the bigger challenge, going up against better coaches in a cerebral game. That's probably the biggest difference. But it's still the south. It's just as important here as it was in Gainesville, Florida, as it was in Deland, Florida.

InTucker: What's the five-year plan for this program? How quickly could we see success?

JT: Right away, right? Right away. Hopefully it continues and we continue to grow and, again, I just build on this tradition. I'm just here to help build.

InTucker: What are you doing this offseason with the players?

JT: COVID has made this very difficult. You take over the program, you don't really have the kids in the day and it's hard to build relationships with them and for them to get to know you....It's a challenge in this COVID era taking over a program when you don't have your hands on the kids. The goal is to get everybody to know me over time. I think it'll happen, just [over] a longer period. It would have [taken] a week or two in a normal year, now I think it's probably going to take about two months.

InTucker: You've been spotted out at Fitzgerald Field talking to the parents of the younger kids. Why is that important?

JT: You've got to build those relationships, right? They're coming here. They'll be Tigers soon. So, it's very important. I'll say this, though, when you talk about community and, like I said, I value where I'm from and I want those kids to feel the same. I want them to represent Tucker and to really have pride in the City.

InTucker: College coaches are offering eighth and ninth graders scholarships. You can't wait until eighth grade to start identifying talent. How early can you tell if a young man is going to be able to play in your program?



The Tucker Tiger football program hasn't reached its normal heights in recent years. They'll rely on new Coach James Thomson to bring the program back to state prominence. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

JT: (laughs) We used to joke about it. We could tell that if we saw the mom and dad get married, we could tell you if their kids would be something. So, genetics plays a big role in it and you can tell those traits early.

InTucker: Being from Florida, which professional team do you support?

JT: I'm a Dolphin fan, but I'm rooting for the Vikings for my uncle. Really, I just like football. It really is about the Magic, the Orlando Magic for me.

InTucker: You've been at the NFL level, the college level, now here you are at the high school level. Why high school?

JT: This is the truth, and sometimes it's hard to believe, but this is where I belong. I've had opportunities to advance, but you can change a kid's life at this level. I mean, a complete 180. You can change their life. When I was at college, I was assigned with the running backs. My goal was to get my running back [to increase their production]. So, it was different. The reward to me personally...it wasn't as rewarding. The goal is to feel like I can help change lives here.

InTucker: What are the challenges of being a high school coach?

JT: I think everybody wants the best for their kids. Parents want the best for their kids, everybody wants what's best, but not everybody knows the best path to take. So, educating is the most difficult challenge I think any high school coach faces.

Tucker Cluster

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

April 5-9
Spring Break

April 19
Board of Education Meeting

BRAG SHEET

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- Livsey celebrated Read Across America Week March 1-5 and had an amazing Virtual Book Character Dress Up Day where students were able to dress as their favorite storybook characters. Students enjoyed coming to class dressed up and sharing their favorite books.

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

- Members of the community can celebrate the new Smoke Rise Elementary School building by purchasing a commemorative brick. Bricks will be placed at the entrance of the new school and displayed for years to come. If interested, please place your order at bricksrus.com/donorsite/smokerise. The deadline is May 31.

TUCKER MIDDLE

- Jadon Macon and Jacqueline Garcia (7th grade) and Demyiah Royal (6th grade) all took first place at the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) state competition. By virtue of their first place finishes, they will all advance to the National FCCLA competition in July. FCCLA chapter sponsor, Mrs. Christine Mayfield, led the program to an Honor Roll award for the seventh straight year.



Watch the complete interview with Coach Thomson on our YouTube channel, youtube.com/cityoftucker.

TIGERS IN THE NFL



Tucker has rightfully gained a reputation as a football powerhouse. But while young men graduate each year and go on to scholarships at Division 1 programs, only a small handful fulfill the dream of playing in the National Football League. Here is a list of the former Tucker players currently suiting up on Sundays.

A.J. Bouye, CB
Free agent

Neiko Thorpe, DB
Seattle Seahawks

Dwayne Harris, WR
Chicago Bears

James Vaughters, LB
Chicago Bears

Duke Shelley, CB
Chicago Bears

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

SUSAN GILBERT

I would like to nominate Susan Gilbert as a City of Tucker Citizen of the Month. Susan and her family officially became Tucker residents a few years ago. Susan is unique as she is both a business leader, as well as a community volunteer and leader.

Susan is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Apogee Interactive, Inc., which is known across the energy utility industry as the leading provider of energy saving software. Apogee Interactive is also located in Tucker. Prior to this, she trained energy auditors from coast to coast and helped launch energy audit programs for businesses across Georgia under a newly established State Energy Office initiative. Susan is a graduate of the University of Kentucky with a major in physics and a minor in mathematics. Her first job after college was teaching at Lithonia High School here in DeKalb County.

Susan is extremely active in the Smoke Rise community. She writes for and is secretary of the *Smoke Signal*, which has been published monthly for over 50 years. Susan is a member of the Board of Directors of the Smoke Rise Country Club and has been instrumental in keeping it alive and thriving during the pandemic. She is a leader in the Kanawha Community Association and is responsible for organizing neighborhood team captains throughout that community. Susan is a trustee of Georgia's Developmental Disabilities Ministries (DDM), a nonprofit charitable corporation serving adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

She is a member of the Smoke Rise Baptist Church and serves as a deacon and member of the financial committee. What I find extremely interesting is what Susan has done with a Sunday school class at Smoke Rise Baptist. The Discovery Class, before the pandemic when we went to church in person, had on a regular Sunday about 30 members. Now with Susan leading the Discovery Zoom Class, there are upwards of 60 class members each week. Many come from all over including class attendees from Alabama, New York, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee – all due to Susan's leadership. Many, including myself, are not Smoke Rise Baptist Church members, but are drawn to the Zoom class.

Nomination by Frank Luton



BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



A vision for making Tucker a destination for living, working, and playing requires capital investment,

economic viability, and business and community involvement. All of these essential elements are among the strategic priorities of three appointed boards created for the betterment of Tucker: the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA), and Public Facilities Authority (PFA).

Since the City's incorporation in 2016 – and derived from several city plans and studies – the Mayor and City Council have authorized the establishment of these organizations as tools and resources for economic growth and development designed to improve many aspects of the overall community. This month, we'll get to know those boards and how they function here in Tucker.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

The DDA focuses on promoting economic growth and revitalization throughout the City's commercial areas by focusing on key redevelopment projects.

"When people think about the DDA, they think because of the name that we only focus on downtown and Main Street, when actually we cover all of the commercial parcels in the City," said Damyon Claar-Pressley who currently serves as its chair.

The DDA is charged with catalyzing beneficial sustainable development for the City and is expected to play a vital role in implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Master Plans,

as well as attracting new businesses to Tucker.

Sandy Springs-based Pontoon Brewing Company in March announced that it's expanding operations into Tucker. Such projects serve as examples that also help to support the retention of existing business by enhancing business districts, attracting new labor pools, and bringing future additional growth with them that other business already here can benefit from.

Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA)

The URA is one of the City's more recently-formed organizations and is charged with making recommendations to the Mayor and City Council to evaluate and prepare for redevelopment opportunities within the City, including proposed funding programs for reinvestment projects, community redevelopment, and incentive programs and tools to spur economic development and employment and encourage private sector investment.

"It's great that Tucker now has a URA because when you have successful, thriving economic development and you have formed mutual partnerships that you can be proud of, it transforms the place in which we work, live, and play and that is good for everyone," said URA board member Derik West.

Established in the fall of 2020, the four-member board serves as an economic development tool focused on the rejuvenation of blighted or run-down properties and areas in the City including implementing gateway corridor improvements to enhance the appeal of areas such as Mountain Industrial and Lawrenceville Highway. Working from its Council-adopted Urban Renewal Plan, specifically defined areas support revitalization of blighted property

thereby stimulating private investment using public revenues created by redevelopment. This can lead to the attraction of new jobs, new businesses and elimination of existing factors preventing growth of economic value. An application for a State Opportunity Zone is being prepared that will create a \$3,500 state tax credit for every additional job at key parcels in the Urban Redevelopment Area.

Public Facilities Authority (PFA)

The PFA serves as a financing and ownership partner with the City for major developments, obtaining favorable financing and funding for public equipment, buildings, services, and facilities.

"With the creation of this local facilities authority, we'll be able to secure beneficial, low-cost financing for the City to help complete facilities projects we otherwise might not be able to fund, such as parks and recreational facilities," said board member Josh Wallace.

Georgia law prohibits a local government from entering into long-term contracts to spend public funds beyond one year, so the City can agree to pay rent to the authority for the use of public facilities such as the City Hall building. The PFA is then able to use a contractual pledge of the future rent payments to raise capital, which is then used for the acquisition, design and construction of the public facilities.

It's often said that government works better when its citizens get involved, and all of these organizations are made up of local residents and business people working together for the greater good of Tucker.

For more information about the boards, their meeting agendas, minutes and logistics, go to www.tuckerga.gov.

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

NAILED IT D.I.Y. STUDIO

Chrissy Kuzel has been out of the workforce for quite a while; nearly a quarter-century, to be exact. In that time, she raised three daughters and began the work of raising a grandchild. While making her way as a full-time mom and grandma, Chrissy found herself constantly tinkering, working on do-it-yourself projects that she would often donate for the benefit of the PTA. One day, Chrissy decided to turn her volunteer tinkering into a full-fledged business.

She realized that vision with Nailed It D.I.Y. Studio, which opened last month in downtown Tucker in the space formerly occupied by a similar business, Custom Crafts by You. Nailed It is a joint effort combining Chrissy's love of projects with her husband Peter's business acumen. They plan to mix those areas of expertise with a warm hospitality that will make them a community staple for crafters of all skill levels.

"Anyone can walk in off the street," Chrissy explained at the business' ribbon cutting on March 13. "They can go to the design center, pick their wood base, pick their design...pick their wood, sit down at the bar and we walk them every step of the way through the D.I.Y. project."

Chrissy made the decision early on to partner with Nailed It, a franchise based out of South Carolina. The business, established in 2014, currently has 27 locations across 10 states. The Tucker location is the first in Georgia, with another location slated to open in Fayetteville later this year.

The success of the Tucker location will have a lot to do with developing a loyal group of "regulars", but Chrissy sees another important revenue stream that she hopes to capitalize on: the party market. She is planning on everything from kids' birthday parties to youth camps to scout outings, even hosting women for bachelorette parties, bridal and baby showers.

"D.I.Y. is not just a trend," she said. "It gives people skills that are marketable for the future, especially young people. The part that I love the most is the relationships people can build and that I can build with people as they come in the door."

As for the location, right in the heart of Tucker, that has significance, too.

"We moved away from here as our kids grew up and we just want to be back in Tucker," she reflected. "We love what they've done to the downtown area. It's fantastic. It's very cute and we like the vibe."

Nailed It D.I.Y. Studio is located at 4292 Railroad Avenue in downtown Tucker. You can find them online at tucker.naileditdiy.com, as well as on Facebook and Instagram.



TUCKER CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

This month marks the 51st annual Earth Day celebration. Communities around the world will take time on or around April 22 to think about Mother Nature and what can be done to better serve and protect the planet.

Here in Tucker, the City and its partners have been laying the groundwork for an ambitious Earth Day event; likely the biggest ever seen in these parts. The event, happening from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. on Saturday April 17, will encompass all parts of the City, and will combine the concepts of recycling, education, and beautification.



WHAT EARTH DAY MEANS TO YOU?

"It's a reminder to appreciate the beauty of the earth and to be good stewards of the environment."

*~Shawn Stone~
Friends of Tucker Parks*

"It gives us an opportunity to celebrate the beauty of the world at the same time being motivated to protect our world by volunteering. Henderson Park has been that place and beautiful space to adventure to for over 20 years."

*~Cara Schroeder~
Friends of Henderson Park*

"I think of Earth Day every day I'm out. I've traveled quite a bit and have seen some amazing scenery: sunrises, sunsets, mountains, deserts, oceans. Always amazing."

*~Rip Robertson~
Parks and Recreation Director*

"It means that I have lived through (and ON) that first-ever Earth Day gathering in early 1970, through (and IN) the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (12/2/70), through (and WITH) delegation of functions to the States, through (and BESIDE) passage of many laws covering water, air, and land contamination, every action wrapped around community engagement, environmental justice and enforcement, and through (and ONGOING) a revitalized ecological commitment globally, nationally and yes, in Tucker to protect our fragile Earth."

*~Matt Robbins~
Tucker City Council,
43-year employee of EPA*

"Planting a fruit tree is about the future of our planet. It is a true act of optimism and faith."

*~Mike Fillon~
Tucker Orchard Guild*

"Earth Day is a time for the community to celebrate Tucker's beautiful parks and greenspaces. Whether it's through a Friends of Tucker Parks workday, or just exploring on your own, Tucker's parks offer so many ways to get out and enjoy nature."

*~Beth White Ganga~
Friends of Johns Homestead*

TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

JEN YOUNG, RECREATION LEADER

What is your background in Parks and Recreation?

I am originally from a Tucker-sized town in Michigan. Parks and Recreation is where I found my love for the outdoors. I enjoyed wading in the creeks, softball games in the spring and many celebrations in the park under the pavilion. I went on to receive a degree in Recreation. For the last 11 years I have been a Director of Summer Camp, Youth Sports and Teen Programming.

Why have you chosen this as a career path?

I have a love for the outdoors. Over the last 15 years, I have been making my way to each National Park, with the intention of one day having hiked in them all. Parks and Recreation creates an essential space held for the health and well-being of our Tucker community. Coming to work each day to not only serve the community, but bring programs to space that I too enjoy is why I chose this career path.

What made you want to come to Tucker?

Tucker has a special place in my heart. As a transplant to Atlanta many years ago, I was looking to connect to a community and find people. Friday night softball came across my Facebook page and it was hosted at Kelley Cofer Park. My first real connection to Atlanta happened here in Tucker. It has a great community of people, wonderful schools and a beautiful park system.

What does your position do for Team Tucker?

My role will be to launch new programs out of the Rec Center and the parks. One of those will be Summer Day Camp. I look forward to getting creative and innovative for the Tucker community.

What are your immediate goals with this job?

Providing a safe, fun and meaningful place for the youth of Tucker. We are launching our summer camp this year and we are looking forward to having the best summer EVER.

Off the Wall

Do you have a nickname? How'd you get it?

I do. Jack. I would tell you...but, depending on who you ask, there is a different answer as to the origin. I like to think of Jack Jack the baby from "The Incredibles".

What is your favorite sport to watch?

I really love sports...I like to support sports at many levels. I am an Atlanta United fan for sure and look forward to some in person games down in the pit.

Where is the most exciting place you've visited?

I traveled to the Republic of Georgia and had a wonderful experience in Tblisi and the Black Sea. The landscape is diverse and breathtaking.

What was the last album you purchased?

Elizabeth & the Catapult. I LOVE live music at small venues. Buying a real album is supporting the artist. So, I bought all three of her albums at her show in Atlanta. A live music venue is a great way to bring people together.



“ASK RIP”

Rip Robertson is the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tucker. He brings to the job years of experience in Parks and Rec, as well as Public Works.



This is one of those months where I feel like there's so much going on in our Parks and Recreation

Department that I just want to dive right in. So without further ado, let's step up to the plate and swing into...

...baseball! That's right, America's pasttime is alive and well here in Tucker. Our first ever Parks and Recreation spring baseball league gets started on Saturday April 17 at Kelley Cofer Park. We are pleased to have Mayor Frank Auman joining us to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. It's not his first first pitch. You may remember a few years ago when he was selected by the Atlanta Braves to throw out the first pitch at a Spring Training game down in Florida. I'm told he threw a strike then, so let's hope he finds the plate this time around.

In all seriousness, we have more than 100 young men and women signed up and ready to show off their talents at the bat and in the field. They'll learn the fundamentals and rules of the game and, most importantly, they're going to have fun while playing in our league. Speaking of fun...

...the weather is just right for getting outside and getting some exercise. Thanks to our Mayor and City Council, we're soon going to have a new destination for folks to go and break a sweat; we're installing an outdoor fitness court. This court will be located on the site of the soon-to-be-demolished old DeKalb County library building, which is owned by the City. You may not have



Tucker's popular Adult Field Day is set to return this May. It's one of several popular events put on throughout the year by the Tucker Parks and Recreation staff. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

seen these fitness courts many places around metro Atlanta, but I've seen them get a lot of use throughout parts of California. When put in an accessible area, they are incredibly popular. Whether you're looking to do a HIIT workout, some incline pushups, dips or planks, these fitness courts give you the opportunity to get a great workout in an open space, rather than being cramped inside a gym. And there's no contracts or monthly membership fees; just show up and get to work! And while we're getting to work...

...we have a new staff member who I hope you'll get to know. Jen Young started last month as the newest member of our team. Jen comes from a long background with the YMCA of Metro Atlanta, so she knows recreation! You can read more about Jen in our Team Tucker Spotlight on page 14. What I really want you to know is she is part of a team that is critically important to achieving our mission of getting Tucker residents of all ages active. Jen and Joe Stewart, who I'm sure you know by now, are our Recreation Leaders. They are responsible for everything from sports leagues to special events like the Pi Day Pi K and

Adult Field Day. If there's something fun happening in our city's parks, chances are they've got a hand in it. Which brings me to their biggest responsibility...

...youth camps. Signups are underway for our popular Summer Camp, which will start in June. Just like last summer, this year's camp will be socially distant, with all the CDC protocols being taken. Our counselors and campers will be masked and much, if not most, of the camp time will be spent outside. We will extend our hours to the pre-pandemic 7 a.m.-6 p.m. to accommodate working parents. I am so proud of what this camp has become and could not be more excited to have Jen step in to serve as the Camp Director. Telling you that your kids will be in good hands? That doesn't even begin to explain how good I think our camp is going to be.

Before we get there, we'll have a good trial run with our Spring Break Camp happening April 5-9. While space is limited, I invite you to send your youngsters to try it out and to get to know our staff. I think you'll be glad you did!

TUCKERGA.GOV

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TUCKER *Community Corner*



Thursdays in April – Tucker Farmers Market

4-6 p.m., 4882 Lavista Road

The Tucker Farmers Market has gone virtual! Order online by Wednesday at 8 a.m. for pick up or delivery on Thursday. The Farmers Market website is TFMOnlineStore.com.

4/8 – Tucker Civic Association Board Meeting

7-9 p.m., Zoom

TCA is a non-profit volunteer organization of residents and business owners. Learn more about Tucker Civic, their initiatives and find meeting Zoom links at www.tuckercivic.org.

COMING UP IN MAY – Adult Field Day

4-8 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road

We are excited to once again host Adult Field Day in May. Stay tuned for details on a night of games, inflatables, food and fun. Childcare will be included in the price of admission.