

CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

# INTUCKER

Published by the City of Tucker, GA

MARCH 2018



## FROM THE MAYOR

Those of us who call Tucker home know what a special place it is. We have close-knit neighborhoods, innovative schools, rich history, thriving businesses and an active faith community. Every once in a while, our feeling is reaffirmed when some of our neighbors from outside of Tucker ask to come in and be a part of the City.

It's a process called "annexation" and it's something that recently folks seem to be talking a lot about. To our original 2016 cityhood map, we have added residential properties (Westwood and Wanda Woods), churches (Pleasant Hill Baptist), hotels (Masters Inn) and commercial parcels from north, south, east and west.

There are a variety of ways a property or neighborhood can be annexed into a city. Some of them can be controversial, especially when a city initiates the process and everyone in the area to be annexed isn't necessarily enthusiastic about it. All of these Tucker annexations happened because property owners came to us saying, "We've always thought of ourselves as Tucker, so let's make it official."

Over the next month, we expect to officially welcome some new neighbors on opposite sides of the city: the Briarcliff Village Shopping Center across the street from Northlake Mall (March 1), and several prominent businesses along E. Ponce de Leon, including Eagle Rock Studios and Graphic Packaging International (April 1). They are going to be great additions for our city, adding important elements to our goal of being a place where a person can live, work, play and pray, all in their hometown. Extending our mix of restaurants and retail, as well as good jobs in the film industry and manufacturing, is right on target for us. And Tucker is right on target for them, as indicated by the fact that they petitioned us, rather than us going out and trying to force them in.

In the coming days, please make Briarcliff Village, its shops and property owners feel welcome, and take pride in being the home of some great employers. And if you know anyone who has questions about annexing into the City of Tucker, we're always here to help.

## DATES TO KNOW

March 12  
City Council

March 14  
Community Council

March 20  
Zoning Board of Appeals

March 26  
City Council



Want to look back at everything that happened in Tucker in the month of February?

Check out the *Tucker Rewind* feature on our YouTube page!



## CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

With 2018 continuing its very busy start, the Mayor and City Council met four times in the month of February. The first of those meetings took place on February 5, when the Council voted to approve a moratorium on new land use applications that would seek to rezone properties to the higher-density RSM classification. Applications that were already accepted by staff before that vote are still being allowed to go through the legislative process.

On February 12, Council held public hearings on a pair of residential developments along Lawrenceville Highway. One of the developments, proposing 24 single-family detached homes on the north side of Lawrenceville Highway just west of Northlake Parkway, was unanimously deferred during the Council's February 26 meeting. The other, planned for 56 townhomes on the south side of Lawrenceville Highway just west of Cooledge Road, was also unanimously deferred at the same meeting. Both will be presented at the March 26th regularly scheduled meeting.

Sandwiched in between, Council held a special called meeting on February 20 to allow a public hearing on the annexation petition by the owners of Briarcliff Village Shopping Center. The vote on that annexation took place at the February 26 meeting; a unanimous approval by the City Council. Briarcliff Village officially became a part of the City of Tucker on March 1.



## WE PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE...

Students from the Pre-K class at Tucker First United Methodist Church Preschool led the Pledge of Allegiance at the City Council meeting on February 12. If you know of a group that would like to lead the Pledge at an upcoming City Council meeting, email [info@tuckerga.gov](mailto:info@tuckerga.gov).

# TUCKER Q&A

## HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION

DeKalb County residents face an April 2 deadline to claim their Homestead Exemption, an opportunity for significant savings on their property tax bills. Even though Tucker is an incorporated City within DeKalb and has a zero-millage rate, Tucker homeowners can still apply for the Homestead Exemption, if they haven't already in the past.

Sheri Boritz from the DeKalb Tax Commissioner's Office took time to address some frequently asked questions about the Homestead Exemption.

**Q: What is the Homestead Exemption?**

**A: It's actually something that everyone who owns and resides at their house is entitled to have. It usually saves the homeowner about a third of the annual taxes and all they have to do is fill out a one-page form, which can be done on our website. Your car tags have to be registered there and you have to file income taxes from that property. Other than that, you get to have that savings for as long as you own and reside at that house.**

**Q: How are owners of multiple properties affected?**

**A: If you own multiple properties, you can only live in one. So that's the one that you have a homestead in. Any other properties that you have, whether they be rental properties or business properties, would not be entitled to the savings.**

**Q: How do you apply for a Homestead Exemption?**

**A: The easiest thing to do is go to our website, which is [dekalbtax.org](http://dekalbtax.org) and you can fill out the form online. You'll get a confirmation email within about 30 seconds. You'll see the savings at first on your assessment notice when it comes out in June and then again when the tax bill comes out in August.**

**Q: Does the Homestead Exemption apply to residents in the City of Tucker even though the City has a zero-millage rate?**

**A: A Homestead Exemption is built into the legislation that created the City. It works the same way as the County exemption. Right now, we are processing all of those City exemptions in conjunction with the County exemption. If you already had a County exemption when Tucker got created, we're going ahead and automatically applying the Tucker exemption. So, there's nothing anybody has to do.**

# ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SCHOEPPNER

Some of you may have seen where I have recently posted on Facebook that an arrest had been made in the incident where the water tower on Lawrenceville Highway had been tagged by a graffiti artist. The water tower was one of several locations to be tagged by this person. Others include the backside of the Starbucks on Lawrenceville Highway, Freemason's Square on Main Street and NETWorks in Downtown Tucker. This arrest now means that the case will be sent over to the District Attorney's office for prosecution.

Since prosecution will happen sometime down the road, I'm not going to go into the specific facts of the case or who is involved. What I would like to focus on is how this case was almost ended before it ever really got started. This is important because many of our cases, up to and including murder, run into the same problem: lack of witness cooperation.

The water tower case began back in December when there was a post on Tucker Town Talk about someone tagging an area behind the Starbucks. This post got a lot of attention. In fact, the day after the post appeared, our tagger returned and added "eat your Facebook" to the original tag. While this was going on, I had been contacted by a witness telling me about the tag on the water tower and even telling me who was responsible. Independent of this, I had been contacted by three other people. All three of these folks named the same person as my suspect. The problem was that all three of these witnesses were adamant about being anonymous. I tried my best to convince them otherwise, but we ultimately had to proceed without them.

What impact did this have on the case? Since there was only one witness, the magistrate judge took the somewhat unorthodox step of setting this case up for a hearing. At the end of the day, we had



[FACEBOOK.COM/DGSCHOEPPNER](https://www.facebook.com/dgschoeppner)

the hearing, the witness testified and the judge found them to be as credible as we did. However, if we had the support of those three additional witnesses, I don't think the added drama of a hearing would have even happened.

This tagging case is just one small example of cases being put in jeopardy because witnesses either don't come forward or don't want to testify. The impact is that cases can go unsolved and justice can be denied to the victim. I understand that it is scary to involve yourself with criminal investigations, especially for serious crimes, but if the folks who see something don't say something then it is a very real possibility that some cases will not have a favorable outcome.

## POLICE BLOTTER

### DRIVE-THRU BANDITS

At the end of last year, several businesses in the City of Tucker were burglarized by a subject who would remove the glass from a window or drive-thru of the victims' business. Once inside, he would use tools to cut open the safe. Some of the businesses include Starbucks, Marco's Pizza and Chipotle. Two suspects were arrested for a similar crime in Dunwoody. Tucker Precinct detectives worked with Dunwoody P.D. and were able to charge these suspects for the Tucker burglaries, as well.

### CHECKMATE

On January 23, we were notified about several checks being stolen from a business on North Royal Atlanta Drive. We were able to positively identify the thief as an employee at the business. We positively identified this person after he was careless enough to make the stolen checks out to his girlfriend.

### TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE ...

On February 15, DeKalb Police investigated a fraud complaint where the suspect had items delivered to an address in Tucker. When detectives made contact with the person who received the delivery, they discovered that the "suspect" had ordered the items through a third party and paid for it using PayPal. So, it now becomes a more complicated investigation as we try to ascertain the identity of this third party, who is the real suspect. The message here is if you see a deal on the internet that is too good to be true, it probably is.

# ROBOKIDS: STUDENTS PREPARE FOR BATTLE INSIDE TUCKER WAREHOUSE



Inside a modest warehouse unit deep within Tucker's industrial corridor, there's a hectic scene unfolding. Seven teenagers and a handful of very devoted adult mentors scramble around, some toting metal parts, others operating heavy machinery. It's a controlled chaos as they work in concert toward a midnight deadline. The end result: a robot.

This is the Reboot First Robotics team, a group of homeschool students from across Metro Atlanta who gather nightly in Tucker to prepare for competition.

"We started in 2011 with three kids," recalls team organizer Denise Turner. "I was a single mom who wanted to start a robotics team."

What began then as an extracurricular activity for Turner's son and two friends has blossomed today into a well-oiled machine, preparing students to pursue engineering paths at top flight schools from Georgia Tech to the Air Force Academy.

One of those students is Joshua Ponder, a fresh-faced high school senior from Lawrenceville who has been a part of the robotics team for four years. He struggles to repress a smile as he talks about going to robotics competitions with his teammates.

"I love it, honestly," Ponder says. "Some people say it isn't a sport, but it is a sport. You're competing to win."

Turner agrees, saying when she attends these competitions "it's like being a mom on a football team. Only robotics competitions are louder."

The team has high hopes heading into district competitions this month in Duluth and Dalton, but if not for the Tucker connection, they may

not be anywhere.

"Our kids were basically working out of a cold garage," Turner recounts. "I started making calls to find us a better place for the kids. I got in touch with a person who said 'I know somebody named Emory Morsberger. You need to give him a call.'"

Morsberger is the long-serving head of the Stone Mountain Community Improvement District (CID) here in Tucker. After getting Turner's call, he reached out to some of his member businesses and found that warehouse distribution firm Shaheen & Company had the space the robotics kids needed. For the past two years, they've enjoyed their own dedicated space in a climate-controlled warehouse where they can build their robots and prepare for battle.

On this night, Turner watches her charges make their last-minute adjustments and realizes she's presiding over something special.

"It's beyond exciting," she says. "Their focus is awesome. They actually come here to focus and work. They don't want to do anything other than this."

And for the students? They want to win, but they enter into competition knowing they've already succeeded.

"Colleges and employers love this," explains Ponder, who will study Aerospace Engineering at Middle Tennessee State University in the fall. "This is helping us to get engineering jobs. Technology is the way of the future."

While they can see the big picture, the Reboot kids want to put that future on hold. At least until they – and their robot – can bring home some hardware.

# TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

Cynthia Strozier - Finance Manager



## OFF THE WALL

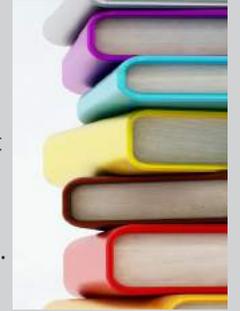
**What's your favorite Tucker lunch spot?** I haven't eaten at many places, but I would say Local 7.

**Have any hobbies?** My hobby is reading.

**What's the last song you listened to in the car?** "Better Days" by Le'Andria Johnson

**Do you have any hidden talents?** When it's crunch time, I become a problem-solver.

**If you could invite three people (living or dead) to a dinner party, who would you invite?** My mother Anna and my brothers George and Oliver.



### How did you come to work in Tucker?

I finished high school in May 1990 and started technical school for an Associates in Accounting the next month. I went on to earn my Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, Masters in Forensic Accounting and Masters in Accounting. I have worked in the Accounting field for 26 years in the private and public sector. I have one year of experience in government. When I interviewed for the position of Finance Manager for City of Tucker, it piqued my interest. I felt it was a position that would challenge me to grow in my career.

### What do you enjoy most about finance?

I love learning the process of how revenues are generated, how the revenues tie together and how the revenue cycle ties to the day-to-day operations. I also enjoy forensic accounting and collaborating with other departments.

### What do you enjoy least?

When I can't balance and it's beyond my control of balancing.

### What have you liked about the City of Tucker since you began working here?

Tucker reminds me of my hometown, which is small. Everything is close by and everyone is familiar with each other.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!



The DeKalb Entertainment Commission held their board meeting in Tucker on February 8.

The Commission, which is an arm of Decide DeKalb, actively works to bring film, music and digital productions to the County. It also focuses on partnerships to develop job programs that will train workers to compete for jobs in each of these media.

# TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH STEEL MART

Steel Mart has been processing and selling carbon steel to structural fabricators and contractors for over a quarter-century in the Metro Atlanta area. As the business has grown, so has the need for more space. They outgrew their original facility in Norcross, then ran into the same problem after resettling in Doraville.

In 2010, they moved to a large tract of land on Lawrenceville Highway in Tucker. Now Steel Mart has run out of space again. So, are they looking for a new home? “No way”, says co-founder Paul Carling.

“The location here, being close to 285 and 85 with trucks and logistics, you can’t beat it,” he explains.

That’s why Carling and his partner Brian Satsky are growing Steel Mart’s Tucker footprint by building a brand new 47,000-square-foot processing center and distribution warehouse. The facility, which is set to open this summer, will sit on four acres adjacent to their current property.

“We have a need for accessibility, for our trucks to get from Lawrenceville Highway through our property,” Carling says. “The



Atlanta area is a hot seat for construction and renovation right now, so we’re seeing a benefit from that.”

Steel Mart, which does business across Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, employs 130 workers – 120 of them right here in Tucker. Last year, Carling says they did \$45 million in revenue and – with discussions happening in Washington, D.C. about massive infrastructure investments – they are planning to get even busier in the coming years.

Steel Mart is located at 3476 Lawrenceville Highway.

## CITIZEN OF THE MONTH JULIE TODD

“This May, Tucker High School will graduate its first class of STEM students thanks to the dedication of science teacher and THS STEM Coordinator, Julie Todd. Since Ms. Todd initiated the program four years ago, she’s been busy volunteering more than 30 afterschool hours weekly working towards the goal of state certification.

“Ms. Todd’s efforts have paid off for our students. The graduating STEM students have traveled as a cohort throughout their school days, using problem-based learning to study science, technology, engineering and math. They have participated and competed in extracurricular VEX (robotics), Science Fair and Technology Student Association activities, as well as athletics and the arts. They are able to impress prospective colleges with their Capstone Projects and internships, in addition to their rigorous AP and Dual-Enrollment classes.

“With no budgetary money earmarked for STEM programs, Ms. Todd and the THS STEM teachers have had to fund the program by applying for private grants. These grants have helped pay for projects for the school, such as the aquaponics greenhouse. Other projects have directly benefitted our Tucker community. Students have teamed with Friends of Kelley Cofer Park to improve the wildlife habitat and lake conditions. Through their continuing work and the work of Ms. Todd, citizens will all be able to enjoy the park for many years to come.

“Thank you, Ms. Todd for bringing this invaluable program to Tucker High School. Our students and our community are lucky to have you!”

*Nomination by Jennifer Winterscheidt*



# “ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS

The city of Tucker is blessed to house such a diverse group of parks which are enjoyed by thousands of people each year. Our Parks and Recreation staff has a solid plan in place as we move towards transitioning management of the parks from DeKalb County and to make sure that immediate improvements can be made. Over the long term, we're going to rely on our Parks and Recreation Master Plan to help identify the opportunities and challenges presented by our parks. Our Mayor and City Council will approve a contract for the Master Plan in April after which we will begin the process of forming a steering committee and engaging stakeholder groups for feedback. The entire Master Plan process should take six to nine months to complete. Should you have an interest in serving on the steering committee or getting more involved in our parks, please email us at parks@tuckerga.gov.

Now on to your questions...

**Brian Dewey - I would like to know the latest information on the park land at the end of Smoke Rise Drive. I think it is known as the “Lords” property?**

The park you're referring to is 31 acres of beautiful, undeveloped land. Some folks use it for hiking, but obviously there's a lot of potential there. Potential for what? There will be plenty of opportunities for the community to help decide that. This park area will be discussed at length throughout the Master Plan process.

**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.**

In the meantime, City Councilmembers Bill Rosenfeld and Pat Soltys have organized a meeting on March 14 to explore community interest in a “Friends of Our Parks” group for the three Smoke Rise area parks. That meeting will start at 7 p.m. at Smoke Rise Country Club and would be another opportunity for you to weigh in with your ideas on these parks.



**Lisa Shinew – I know my voice is among the many who believe there needs to be a bathroom in Henderson Park. “Functional and safe” need to be the guiding thoughts when it comes to this bathroom. What are your plans?**

There's a new bathroom facility coming to Henderson Park on the Henderson Road side. This is a project that has been in the works for several months, funded by money from your DeKalb County commissioners. We do not have an exact date of completion for that project. I can tell you that, as part of our Parks Maintenance agreement, there will be daily maintenance of this new facility.

While it's not the bathroom facility some have called for on the Livsey side of the park, it is certainly a step in the right direction. And rest assured, we are still discussing logistics of a bathroom on the Livsey side.



## **TKR** COMMUNITY CORNER Tucker, GA

### **3/10 – Tucker Chili Cook-Off**

1 - 5 p.m., Main Street

Your \$5 entry gets you access to taste all the chili prepared by event contestants and gives you one vote to help award the coveted People's Choice prize. To take part in the event or volunteer, e-mail jameywilson@gmail.com or call (404) 556-7666. Find complete details at tuckerchilicookoff.com.

### **3/11 – Tucker Criterium**

7 a.m.- 4 p.m., Downtown Tucker

The Tucker Criterium bike race is back! Various age groups and skill levels will race through Downtown Tucker. Bring the family and enjoy watching this intense competition.

### **3/18 – THS Foundation Golf Tournament**

1 - 5 p.m., Stone Mountain Lakemont Golf Course

You golf on the weekends anyway, so why not do it for a good cause? The Tucker High School Foundation is asking \$400 for a foursome or \$100 for individuals. Registration is available online at tuckerhighschoolfoundation.com. All proceeds support students and staff at Tucker High School.

### **3/24 - Henderson Park Workday**

9 a.m.-12 p.m., Livsey side of Henderson Park

Be a part of helping park visitors to not get lost! Come out to help install new White Trail markers. Meet at the playground by the lake. Work gloves are always a plus and sturdy shoes are a must.

# TUCKERGA.GOV

City of Tucker      Email : [info@tuckerga.gov](mailto:info@tuckerga.gov)  
4119 Adrian Street      Facebook : [facebook.com/cityoftucker](https://www.facebook.com/cityoftucker)  
Tucker, GA 30084      Twitter: [@cityoftucker](https://twitter.com/cityoftucker)  
678-597-9040      Instagram: [@cityoftucker](https://www.instagram.com/cityoftucker)

## TUCKER HIGH SHINES ON NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Tucker High School's football team earned accolades throughout the 2017 season, but perhaps the proudest moment for Coach Bryan Lamar and his staff came well after the season was over. The February 7 National Signing Day saw 17 Tiger players sign Letters of Intent to continue their football careers at the collegiate level.

"The opportunity to go and play college football is an absolute blessing," Lamar told the packed auditorium. "Football is going to end for every single player. I don't care who you are. No matter how good you are, football is going to end. The question is 'what are you going to do next?' It's all about the opportunity to get a free education...and to get an opportunity to get that degree."

Of the 17 seniors who will play at the next level, five of those are signed to play at Power Five schools, including four young men headed to the Southeastern Conference.



## TUCKER HOSTS ROLL CART RECYCLING EVENT



The City of Tucker is partnering with DeKalb County's Sanitation Department to host an event where people can trade in their old recycle bins for new roll carts. The free event will take place on March 24 from 12-3 p.m. behind Tucker Recreation Center. Get more details at [tuckerga.gov/rollcart](http://tuckerga.gov/rollcart).

**PLEASE DELIVER TO:**

