



CELEBRATING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

# INTUCKER

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MAY 2018



## FROM THE MAYOR

I am really excited about this month's *InTucker*, as it is the first we've published geared specifically toward our youngest residents. We know that children are the future of our community and that summer can be an exciting, yet difficult time for them. As we head into summer, our staff wanted to highlight some ways to help Tucker's kids stay active – both mentally and physically.

Inside, you'll read about our new and improved, top-notch yet affordable, Summer Camp being hosted at Tucker Recreation Center (page 7). You'll also find that Tucker's library is the place to be for some great, free children's programs throughout the summer (page 4). For families who need a little help, I hope you'll look into the exciting partnership the Tucker Farmers Market has established to get fresh fruits and veggies on your table, regardless of your income (page 2).

It all goes to show that we're focused on making Tucker a great place to live – for all its residents.

With that in mind, a quick note on our upcoming Fiscal Year budget. The City Council and I voted unanimously to approve a \$12.8 million budget for FY '19. This balanced budget funds our parks, addresses much needed road repaving and accomplishes our goal of maintaining a zero-millage rate for the residents of Tucker. The priorities you'll find in this budget were set with an eye to the future, following a vision that really has been guided by you.

If you've not been engaged with our budget process thus far in cityhood – municipal finances can tend to be pretty dense stuff – I would encourage you to take some time and visit [tuckerga.gov/finance](http://tuckerga.gov/finance), where you can see how literally every cent of money is being collected and spent at City Hall. You'll get a good primer on May 8 at the first-ever session of our University of Government Affairs at Tucker. This program is free and open to anyone with an interest in learning how their City government functions. And remember, our government functions for you. But it functions a lot better with you.

## DATES TO KNOW

**May 11**  
State of the City Address

**May 14**  
City Council

**May 15**  
Zoning Board of Appeals

**May 24**  
Planning Commission

**May 24**  
Last Day for DeKalb  
County Schools

**May 28**  
Memorial Day  
(City Hall closed)

**May 29**  
City Council



## CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

April was “budget month” for Tucker’s City Council, as they held two meetings and two work sessions to hammer out the budget for Fiscal Year 2019. All the work culminated on April 23 with a unanimous vote to approve a \$12.8 million budget. The plan spells out funding for the City’s newly acquired parks, as well as setting priorities for the new SPLOST program. As the City grows, this budget allows for the creation of six full-time staff positions, including a Field Superintendent, an additional Code Enforcement Officer and a new Community Development planner. It also funds much talked about needs like a pilot program for security cameras in Tucker parks and upgrades to the restrooms at Tucker Recreation Center.

At the meeting on April 9, Council took action on a pair of transportation matters, as they approved contracts for a Transportation Master Plan and a Trail Master Plan. They then authorized the Mayor to execute four intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) with DeKalb County. The IGAs, which promise the County will continue to provide roads and drainage, storm water, police and 911 services to the City of Tucker, were subsequently approved by the DeKalb Board of Commissioners.

At the April 23 meeting, Council voted to deny a rezoning for a residential development along Lawrenceville Highway. The project, which called for 25 townhomes and 20 single-family detached homes to be located on the south side of Lawrenceville at Bishop Drive, failed on a 5-2 vote.

Council also unanimously adopted the City’s first-ever Comprehensive Plan. The Plan, which is the culmination of the year-and-a-half long “Tucker Tomorrow” input process, will guide land use and development decisions to be made in the City for decades to come.

The next scheduled City Council meeting is May 14 at 7 p.m. at the City Hall Annex (4228 First Avenue).



Students from Smoke Rise Prep led the Pledge of Allegiance at the April 23 City Council meeting.

## TUCKER FARMERS MARKET HELPING FAMILIES THROUGH GRANT PROGRAM

Healthy eating is something most people strive for, but it doesn’t always work out. With this in mind, Tucker Farmers Market Manager Nancy Qarmout forged a partnership three years ago, one that to this day is helping Tucker families to put more fruits and vegetables on their table.

“We draw folks from all over,” Qarmout says. “We’re a diverse community and it’s important for us to be able to provide access for everyone.”

That access comes courtesy of an arrangement with Wholesome Wave Georgia and their Georgia Fresh for Less program. Under this program, customers at participating Farmers Markets in Georgia can double their EBT money up to \$20, so long as they’re buying healthy.



“Our mission is to increase access to fresh, healthy, locally grown food for all Georgians and to also support Georgia farmers,” explains Wholesome Wave Georgia’s Rachael Kane.

The farmers are among those most excited at the results the program has spawned. Lynn Teddlie of Straight from the Backyard farm says she’s thrilled to be helping families in need gain access to fresh produce.

“It’s a win-win situation,” Teddlie says. “I feel like I’m giving back to the community as well as trying to make a living.”

So how do you take advantage? Each Thursday night through the fall, the Tucker Farmers Market will be open downtown. EBT cardholders can go to the main tent and redeem those extra benefits.

# ON THE BEAT WITH LT. SCHOEPPNER



[FACEBOOK.COM/SCHOEPPNER](https://www.facebook.com/schoeppner)

If you speak to enough police officers, you will discover that most have had an interest in law enforcement since they were young. I think I was in junior high school when I gave the first serious thought to becoming a police officer. The law enforcement profession recognizes this and looks to cultivate this interest shown by some young people with the "Police Explorer Program".

DeKalb County's Explorer Program had fallen into disuse for some time, but was revived two years ago.

The Police Explorers are a law enforcement-focused youth group that is sponsored by the Boy Scouts and the Police Athletic League. It is open to young men and women between 14 and 21 years of age. The Explorers meet every Tuesday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Fire HQ building at 1950 West Exchange Place in Tucker. They are led by retired Captain Frank Kliesrath and retired Lieutenant Melanie Knight.

Potential explorers go through a routine background check and need to be of good character. They receive training that is based on classes taught at the Police Academy. Some of this training includes leadership, good citizenship, verbal judo and various aspects of community service. It is also common for the explorers to be tasked with helping officers assigned to the Police Athletic League. One of these recent functions in Tucker was during the Main Street "Trunk or Treat" on Halloween. Members of the Explorers are also eligible for exclusive college scholarships when they graduate high school. The ultimate goal of this program is to help young men and women lay a strong foundation with which to start a successful law enforcement career. Even if Explorers doesn't lead to a police career, the training and community service experience can be immeasurably helpful with young

people seeking careers in the private sector.

Anyone interested in the DeKalb Police Explorers can call the Police Athletic League at 770-724-7479. You can also email Lt. Knight at [meknight7631@gmail.com](mailto:meknight7631@gmail.com). If you have an interest in public safety, but don't think that being a police officer is your thing, there are also Explorer programs for fire and EMS sponsored by the DeKalb County Fire Department and American Medical Response. They can be reached at 404-840-0564.

**Interested in becoming a DeKalb County Police Explorer**  
DEKALB COUNTY POLICE EXPLORERS POST 1816  
1950 WEST EXCHANGE PLACE, TUCKER, GA 30084

**JOIN NOW**

**GET YOUR HANDS ON THE CHALLENGING FIELD OF LAW ENFORCEMENT.**  
Law Enforcement Exploring offers young men and women ages 14-21 the chance to work along side police officers to gain team building and leadership skills. Explorers will also participate in community events and activities.

Questions about the Explorers program, contact Lt. ME Knight (Tel) 404-210-7380 or email [meknight7631@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:meknight7631@dekalbcountyga.gov) or [meknight7631@gmail.com](mailto:meknight7631@gmail.com)

## POLICE BLOTTER

### CAUGHT IN THE ACT

On April 11, our officers responded to a call for a theft at 4750 Hugh Howell Road. It seems thieves were stealing copper from the old Sears Building. The officers arrived in time to corner a suspect inside the building. Through diligent police work, three suspects were eventually arrested for burglary.

### HERE TO HELP

You often see police officers on the news making arrests or chasing the "bad guys", but at its core, our job is to protect our citizens. On April 12, a Tucker citizen reported to DeKalb Police that they were trying to cross Lavista Road at Main Street with their one-month old child; not an easy task. That citizen reported that a DeKalb officer stopped to direct traffic to help parent and baby get safely across the road. It's a small gesture, but exemplary of the care our officers have for their community.

### BRINGING HOME THE HARDWARE

The job of a police officer can be tough, so sometimes it helps to have some fun. On April 7, officers from across the region competed in the Sports Car Club of America's "Top Cop Challenge" at Atlanta Motor Speedway. Detective Armstrong, who works in our Traffic Specialty Unit, left the field eating his dust. He won first place in the event and brought home a nice trophy to be displayed at our headquarters.

# LITERACY + LEARNING = SUMMER FUN FOR TUCKER KIDS

For moms and dads who stay home with their children, summertime can be a challenge. Trying to find activities to keep the kids occupied is often exhausting, not to mention costly, and it can have them running all over Metro Atlanta.

Fortunately, the key to a stress-free summer that won't break the bank might just be at your Tucker library.

"We're here to serve the community," explains Senior Librarian Elisabeth Harris. "I'm not concerned about noise and activity...I'm not a shush-y librarian!"

Harris, who the kids call "Miss Elisabeth", oversees the children's programs at the Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library. She and her team are about to embark on an ambitious summer schedule of free classes and events, one that offers engagement opportunities to children of all ages virtually every day in June and July.

On Tuesday mornings, Harris opens the library an hour early for parents of babies or young toddlers. The Building Blocks class gives youngsters time to play with toys, sing songs and get exposed to books for the very first time.

"We're working on pre-literacy skills, the rhythm of language and helping parents to interact with their child," Harris explains.

It's a different experience on Wednesday mornings at the Tales for 2s class, a gathering Harris affectionately describes as "chaos". Parents and their two-year-old kids come in for a half-hour session of age-appropriate stories, rhymes and songs designed to target their developmental needs. That class is followed by one that is near to the librarian's heart: Spanish for Toddlers.

"Before I became a librarian, I taught French and Spanish at the Lovett School," Harris recounts. "With foreign language, it's definitely the younger the better."

For elementary-age children, the library offers an array of summer activities. A weekly movie series will open in June, while students can also take advantage of book clubs, public speaking seminars and an animation workshop.

While these classes for the younger groups often draw dozens of parents and kids, Harris admits programming for older students has long been a challenge. Tucker's library recently turned to Adult and Teen Services Librarian Jason Beyer to revamp offerings for teens and preteens. This summer, they will offer everything from live music to improv, even classes on robotics and belly dancing.

This summer, Monday nights will be family nights at the library. Rather than age-specific activities, the staff has scheduled a series of diverse offerings to entertain parents and children. This will include storytelling, a magic show, a petting zoo and a shadow puppet night.

"We encourage families to come to the library at least once a week during the summer," Harris says.

With all of these events on tap, a weekly visit may be underselling things. The staff at Tucker-Reid H. Cofer Library is making a traditionally mundane setting the cool place to be for Tucker families this summer.



## AVOIDING THE BRAIN DRAIN

Summer break is a time when students' minds often go into vacation mode. To help them avoid "brain drain", Miss Elisabeth has three tips for parents.

### 1) Read for Pleasure

"The wonderful opportunity that summer presents is reading for pleasure. It's a lifelong skill that you can enjoy into old age. Students often enjoy books that are part of their school curriculum, but sometimes want to choose their own books. Our reluctant readers often enjoy non-fiction books. The key is finding the right book for your child."

### 2) Set a Routine

"The benefit of coming to the library is we offer children fun things to do, but in an academic-type setting. Make it your summer routine to come to the library once a week and the whole family can pick out books they want to take home and read."

### 3) Have Conversations

"Discuss with your child what they are reading. Discuss with them what you are reading. When reading to young children, don't just read the words on the page. Talk about it and ask them questions."

# TEAM TUCKER SPOTLIGHT

**Matt Holmes - Communications Director**



## OFF THE WALL



**What is one thing your co-workers don't know about you?** I've had a guitar for about 15 years. At long last, I am taking classes to learn how to play the thing. A couple months in, I am a whiz at *Yankee Doodle*.

**What's your favorite movie?** Back to the Future. It's got Family Ties-era Michael J. Fox, Huey Lewis acting AND singing and, of course, the DeLorean. Oh, that DeLorean. Nothing is better.

**Most famous person you've ever met?** Mayor Frank Auman. Chipper, Glavine, Smoltz and Maddux are all a close second.

**Favorite Atlanta memory?** The '96 Olympics. It was the year of Kerri Strug, Dream Team II and Michael Johnson's gold shoes. But we didn't have big money to spend on tickets. So, my dad and I went and saw the Australian baseball team at Fulton County Stadium and a barn burner between the women's basketball teams from Zaire and South Korea. Not great competition, but once-in-a-lifetime memories, for sure.

### How did you come to work for the City of Tucker?

I spent more than a decade in print and broadcast media, including three years at 11Alive and four years at 92-9 the Game here in Atlanta. While I enjoyed the fast-paced nature of live TV and radio, it's a tough industry for someone with young children. Fortunately, a lot of my professional background has been immensely helpful in starting up communications efforts here in the City of Tucker.

### What is a typical day like for a Communications Director?

One of the things I love is that the job changes from day-to-day. Some days I spend quite a bit of time engaging residents on our growing social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Nextdoor). Social media is an avenue for us to share important information with our residents, as well as to spread positive news about what's happening in Tucker.

I also dedicate time to writing press releases on everything from what's happening in Tucker cluster schools to our new Parks and Recreation Department, as well as our SPLOST efforts. It all culminates each month in the publication of what you're reading right now, our *InTucker* newsletter.

Recently, I've been managing our website redesign project. This new [tuckerga.gov](http://tuckerga.gov) website will have a new look, but also new functionality that will help our Tucker residents and business owners to have greater ability to answer questions and solve problems online.

### What is the biggest challenge of your job?

Explaining how City government works. It's really a challenge and an opportunity because if a citizen can grasp the intricacies of the Mayor, City Council, ordinances, zoning, etc., they can truly become invested in their community.

I spent years as a reporter attending City Council meetings and County Commission meetings. The job was always to translate hours of minutia into something that viewers cared about and could relate to. That job remains the same running communications for a new city.

### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love our City staff, our elected officials and the projects I'm getting to lead, but I'd be lying if I gave any answer other than "the commute". After working for the better part of a decade in Midtown, I've quickly learned that living and working in Tucker is amazing. Both my sons are in school here in Tucker, so I can drop them off in the morning and pick them up in the evening. If they have a school event, I'm able to hop in the car for a couple of minutes, be there and be back to City Hall without fear of traffic jams. That kind of work-life balance is truly the biggest perk of the job.

### What do you do in your free time?

At this point, free time is at a premium. When I'm not working, I've got a six-year-old and a two-year-old who occupy most of my time. You might find us bicycling and tricycling in our cul-de-sac, playing basketball at the Y or going on adventures with the family dog.

# TUCKER COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH MASSAGE ENVY

It's been a little over a year since business started booming at the new Tucker Meridian Shopping Center. But as customers flocked to anchor stores like Dick's Sporting Goods and Sprouts Farmers Market, there remained curiosity about the other businesses that would be moving in.



"Customers who are shopping in the center often visit the Massage Envy and share they were driving by each week and seeing the construction development and wondering when we would open," Jackie Jenkins says. "We are now fully open!"

Jenkins and her Massage Envy team welcomed the community officially at their grand opening on April 7. She says she's excited to be opening a business she knows will thrive in her hometown.

"I first moved to Tucker in 1995," she recalls. "I feel like I know my neighbors well on my street, we do things together as a collective street and there is an active City Council that believes in the growth and sustainability of Tucker."

While Massage Envy promises to make Tucker more relaxed, it's also making Tucker more prosperous. The location opens with a staff of 18 employees, with the expectation of expanding the staff by 12. That's 30 jobs being created right here in Tucker.

Jenkins plans to have a booth at Tucker Day on May 12 to greet neighbors she may not have met and to spread the word about her new mission to help Tucker feel its best.

## CITIZENS OF THE MONTH HARRY & KATHY POWELL

"It's been said that through small and simple things, great things come to pass. Harry and Kathy Powell exemplify that expression. Shortly after moving to Tucker in 1998, they began to connect with other service-minded individuals. The Powells learned quickly that descriptions of various local organizations (business, civic, etc.) eventually fade and the common word that unites us all is 'Tucker' It's our synonym for community.



Harry is a past president of the Tucker Business Association and Kathy was instrumental in starting the Tucker Historical Society. Both have served as president of the Historical Society. Yet they've done more than simply march along with a title. As a result of their inner commitment to do good through community service and volunteerism for nearly 20 years they've helped shape Tucker with tangible results and led the way for others to follow.

The preservation of Browning Courthouse (an image that is on the City Seal), the annual Garden Tour, the Tucker Plant Swap & Share, recognizing the value of Johns Homestead and many other events would not have come about without their personal commitment to serve. As a couple, they've been side-by-side every step of the way; not always in the limelight, not always getting credit, but doing what needed to be done in a way that quietly benefits others today and tomorrow. That's the Tucker Way. The Powells are examples worth emulating."

*Nomination by Matthew Lee*



## COMMUNITY CORNER

### 5/5 – ARTucker at Tucker Recreation Center 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road

The Spring ARTucker show returns. Purchase original artwork from over 30 local artists. Painters, jewelers, potters, photographers and more will be on hand at Tucker Recreation Center to show you their latest works. Enjoy this family-friendly tradition with face painting, balloons and food trucks!

### 5/12 – Tucker Day 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Main Street, Tucker

Tucker's longest running street festival is returning to Main Street with amazing vendors and food offerings. The Opening Ceremony kicks things off at nine, followed by a human powered parade starting at ten. That will be followed by live music on two stages and dancing in the streets until 5 p.m.

# “ASK RIP” ANSWERS YOUR PARKS QUESTIONS

Since I joined Team Tucker late last year, I've had the pleasure of meeting and talking with folks from all over the City and surrounding areas. These people can be very different, but their questions are often the same. As this edition of *InTucker* gets us ready for summer, I would like to take the opportunity to answer two of the most common questions I've received, both relating to summertime.

The first question, of course, has to do with summer camp. As you've hopefully heard by now, Tucker's Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a summer camp for students ages five to 14. This is an all-day camp in partnership with the YMCA that will take place at Tucker Recreation Center. We established a strong partnership with the YMCA folks in our after-school program this winter and we are excited to continue that partnership into the summer. Students will be able to swim, play sports, do arts and crafts, as well as engage their minds through educational activities. This is being offered at a cost of \$95 per week, a price that includes a hot lunch and snack each day. Parents can drop their students off as early as seven o'clock each morning knowing their child will be safe and receive the best possible care.

The second question I've gotten is about the pool at Kelley Cofer Park. We know, just as you do, what a true asset this pool is to the Tucker community. But it can be better. And in Summer 2018, it will be better.

In addition to basic maintenance upgrades, we are contracting with Aquatics Management Inc. to provide lifeguards and handle day-to-day operations of the pool. One of the reasons we are so excited to partner with Aquatics Management Inc. is their commitment to safety. Each morning, their lifeguards will offer free swim lessons to any children who have paid admission to get into the pool. I want you to read that again: FREE swim lessons. And it's all with the goal of keeping our children safe. The pool opens on Memorial Day and admission will be \$5.00 for folks 12 and older, \$3.00 for children and seniors. Annual passes will be available (call us for information and pricing). I really expect that this summer, more than ever before, Kelley Cofer Park will be the place to be to beat the heat in Tucker.

Finally, we've spent a lot of time building and improving programs for our children and our seniors. I want to make sure that our adults know that we're working on programs for them, as well. We have entered into an agreement with ZogSports to bring coed kickball to Henderson Park and coed softball to Kelley Cofer Park starting in June. Men's basketball and coed volleyball leagues will begin in July. You, your friends, your coworkers and anyone else who wants to get active and have some fun this summer can sign up on our website, [tuckerga.gov/parks](http://tuckerga.gov/parks).

Oh, and when we mention those parks, they are now officially "Tucker Parks". We assumed responsibility from the County on April 10 and we are looking forward to having our parks family-ready for the summer.

You've heard us make some big promises about the level of service you're going to receive in your Tucker parks and at the Recreation Center. With all these great activities and partnerships happening this summer, I hope you'll see that we are working to make our Parks and Rec Department second-to-none.



***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.***



## **5/19 – Tucker Historical Society's 17th Annual Garden Tour**

**9 a.m.-5 p.m.**

Visit some of Tucker's most beautiful places, meet the gardeners, learn and be delighted and inspired. Purchase tickets (\$15 in advance, \$20 day of) at Tucker Flower Shop, The Custom Frame Shop and The Garden Enthusiast. The tour is a rain or shine event!

## **5/19 – Tucker Optimist Club Spring BBQ**

**11 a.m.-3 p.m., 4291 Lynburn Drive**

Come out and support the Tucker Optimist Club at their Spring BBQ at Tucker Christian Church. Chicken or pork plates can be purchased for \$10.00. They will also be selling whole chickens and pork butts.

# TUCKERGA.GOV

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## TUCKER DAY IS MAY 12!

GET READY FOR A WEEK OF EVENTS  
LEADING UP TO TKR'S BIG DAY!

### MONDAY MAY 7

Know someone in need of a medical or dental check-up? Send them to our Free Community Health Screening at Tucker Recreation Center from 4-8 p.m.!

### TUESDAY MAY 8

Get to know your City government and how it functions at the first-ever session of the "University of Government Affairs at Tucker". In your seat by 7 p.m. or you'll be counted tardy!

### THURSDAY MAY 10

We honor the folks who make Tucker great at our Volunteer Appreciation Evening.

### FRIDAY MAY 11

Mayor Auman looks back at the past year and ahead to the future in his second annual State of the City Address beginning at 4 p.m.



Friends of Henderson Park hosted Tucker's Mayor, City Council, DeKalb County Commissioners and officials from Park Pride and the Home Depot Foundation at the April 21 ribbon cutting of the park's newly redesigned White Trail. The event also served as a celebration of Earth Day 2018.



**PLEASE DELIVER TO:**