

# INTUCKER

MARCH 2021 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 3

## WHERE'S THE PARTY?

TUCKER FACING ANOTHER YEAR OF  
UNCERTAINTY AS MAIN STREET EVENTS  
WRESTLE WITH BIG DECISIONS

# EDITOR'S NOTE



This month's issue of *InTucker* has a definite "looking ahead" slant to it. As you flip through, you'll see pieces on the future of our children going back to school, the burgeoning debate over urban camping, the naming of some of our Tucker parks.

But I wanted to use this column to look back, and to say some thank yous. As you read this, we have just finished the inaugural Tucker Restaurant Week. Judging by the response our 18 participating restaurants received, you probably visited a time or two over the course of the week. So, thank you for that.

I also want to thank our Convention and Visitors Bureau, Discover DeKalb. James Tsismanakis, Laura Ramos, and their team were with us every step of the way, brainstorming, strategizing, and churning out amazing marketing materials to help make this event a success. They also created a companion piece – a restaurant guide that you will soon be seeing all over town. More importantly, that guide will be seen at hotels, welcome centers and other places that will entice visitors to come and enjoy our restaurants.

Lastly, this Tucker Restaurant Week concept wouldn't be possible without our amazing restaurateurs. Selling and marketing this concept would be difficult if our restaurants were, as the kids like to say, "meh". But Tucker unquestionably has some of the best and most exciting restaurants around. The food is delicious, the menus imaginative and the warm atmosphere unparalleled.

Well done to all involved in this first Tucker Restaurant Week. I can't wait to do it all over again next year!

**MATT HOLMES**  
INTUCKER EDITOR

# IN THIS ISSUE



### ON THE COVER

Tucker is itching for a party, but just how quickly will the pandemic allow for crowds back on Main Street? Hear from some of our festival organizers on page 6.



### BACK TO SCHOOL?

Parents and students have received word on a return to face-to-face learning. The details on how school leadership will keep students and teachers safe on page 12.



### BUSINESS BOOM

March is Women's History Month and, as it turns out, one female entrepreneur is making her own history here in Tucker. Get to know her on page 10.



### CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

One Tucker woman has made it her mission to help the less fortunate in our community. On page 14, read about her special relationship with the police and how it's making a difference.



### ASK RIP

The Mayor and City Council decided a fitting tribute for two longtime Tucker leaders would be naming some of the City's parks in their honor. Rip looks at which parks are getting new names on page 15.



# INTUCKER

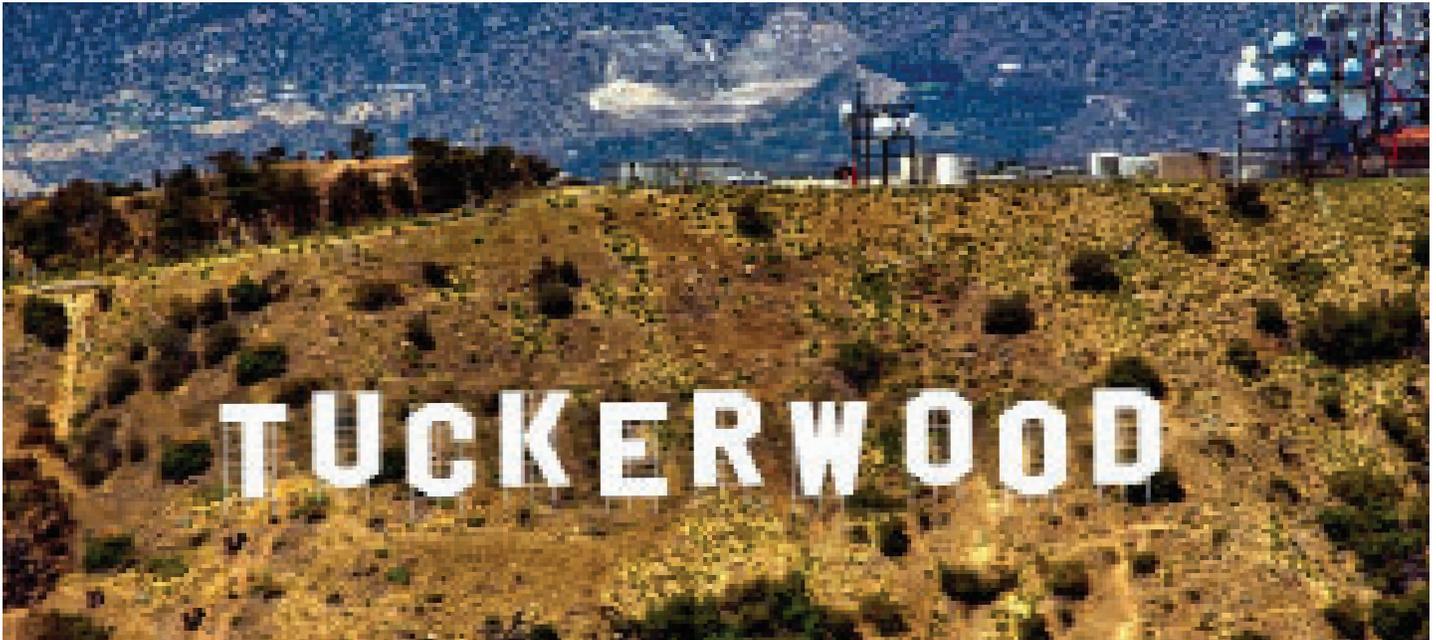
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# From the Mayor:



HBO. Disney. Netflix. FOX. New Line Cinema.

These studios make some of the most entertaining and compelling shows and movies around. And you know what else they all have in common? Tucker.

That's right, our Tucker, Georgia has been featured as the backdrop for Emmy-winning shows, Oscar-winning movies and other critically acclaimed works. A-list actors ranging from Jason Bateman to Jennifer Aniston have used our Tucker Recreation Center. A couple years ago, scenes from an episode of "Ozark" were shot in the business right next to mine. I even got Laura Linney to stop by and say hello to my office manager who, as it turns out, is a huge fan.

I bring all this up for a few reasons. First, hosting these kinds of productions is a great boost to any city's reputation. Here in Tucker, I like to think we wear our film history as a badge of honor. Anytime you watch "I, Tonya" or stream "Stranger Things", you're not just watching some fictional town, you're proudly watching Tucker. Second, the film industry has a significant economic impact. Whether it's Mark-Paul Gosselaar ducking into Local 7 in between takes or a local caterer being called on for craft services, our businesses are making money thanks to these productions. Lastly, I bring this up now because we are seeing a noticeable increase in the number of film permits being processed by our partners at the DeKalb Entertainment Commission. After taking a hit due to the

pandemic, the film industry is back! That means hundreds of our Tucker friends and neighbors who work in the industry are going back to work. And that is great news!

Film scouts are out in our community, looking for new and interesting places to shoot. Maybe you're like me and you've gotten a call about your home or business. The folks at the DeKalb Entertainment Commission are available to help walk you through the steps of being a part of one of these productions. You can read up on all their efforts to sell DeKalb County as a film destination at [www.dekalbentertainment.com](http://www.dekalbentertainment.com). You'll also find that these productions aren't just big time TV shows and movies. They are commercials, music videos, small independent films, and other forms of digital entertainment, including video games design and engineering; all of these are making an impact on our local economy.

So, welcome back film industry. Tucker is open for business and ready for our close-up!

**FRANK AUMAN**  
MAYOR

# City Council Update



## DATES TO KNOW

**March 1**  
Downtown Development Authority

**March 3**  
Traffic Court

**March 8**  
City Council

**March 10**  
Traffic Court

**March 16**  
Zoning Board of Appeals

**March 17**  
Municipal Court

**March 22**  
City Council

Tucker's Mayor and City Council held a pair of virtual meetings during the month of February, discussing and deciding on several issues via Zoom. The biggest of the issues discussed was an ordinance on "urban camping". This ordinance would seek to curb homelessness in Tucker by forging a partnership between the City and DeKalb County Police to offer resources and assistance to those camped out on public property. It mirrors efforts which have passed in surrounding cities including Brookhaven, Chamblee and Dunwoody. After extensive debate at the meeting on February 8, Council further discussed the issue at the work session on February 22. They ultimately decided to revisit the issue at a future meeting.

Council took action on a handful of other items during that meeting on February 8, including reappointing three members to the City's Zoning Board of Appeals. Jason Burton, Bob Espy and Neil Stubblefield were reappointed to serve two-year terms into 2023. They also passed a resolution to name two Tucker parks in honor of community leaders who recently passed away. Read more about that vote on page 15.

Earlier in the meeting, Council got presentations and updates on several projects including:

- Progress being made by the City's Convention and Visitors Bureau, Discover DeKalb. The organization's executive director and CEO James Tsismanakis briefed Council on the impacts of COVID on tourism, while also promoting the City's upcoming Tucker Restaurant Week.
- The five-year update on the Tucker-Northlake Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). This item was discussed and then adopted by Council on a 6-0 vote.
- Plans to enhance three bridges crossing I-285 in Tucker. The enhancements would include upgrades in fencing, lighting, and other amenities at Henderson Road, Northlake Parkway, and Lavista Road.

At the work session on February 22, Council heard presentations on the Fiscal Year 2022 budget schedule, as well as plans for the Parks and Recreation Department to install an outdoor fitness court on the site of the abandoned DeKalb County Library, which the City owns. In a brief meeting, they approved a pair of resolutions, one to urge the state legislature to take action on an annexation in the Northlake area. The other expressed support in having the state legislature remove term limits from Tucker's City Charter.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will be Monday March 8 at 7 p.m.

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# 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](mailto:dgschoeppner@dekalbcountyga.gov)*



Should it be illegal to be homeless? I think we can all agree the answer is no.

Let me pose another series of questions:

What would you do if someone began living in your front yard? If you asked that person to leave and they refused, what would you do? Would you call the police to report them for trespassing?

What if that same person then decided to move to the sidewalk in front of your home? Would you expect the City to ask the person to move? Well, right now the City does not have the same rights you do as a property owner in this regard.

While the above scenario is not as likely to happen, what about on Main Street? Should someone be allowed to live on the sidewalk in front of one of our local businesses? When the City begins to construct the Tucker PATH trail system, should they allow people to live along that public right-of-way?

I pose these questions because the City has recently considered adopting an "urban camping" ordinance. The purpose of this is, quite literally, to keep citizens from setting up residence on public rights-of-way, like my examples above. DeKalb County Police, as well as law enforcement from surrounding municipalities, were instrumental in providing advice, experience and guidance in the creation of this ordinance.

This ordinance would make camping on public property an arrestable offense, but only after the person has been given clear notice that they are not supposed to be there and ample opportunity to leave on their own.

The resistance to this ordinance has mostly been in the form of folks that view this as an assault on persons experiencing homelessness. In my 19 years' experience as a police officer, this is a very narrow way of looking at the extremely complex issue of homelessness. Chronic homelessness won't be solved by this ordinance, but it can be a tool to encourage people to accept services.

Another common objection is that the City should be exploring ways to help the homeless and not arrest them. I don't view these things as mutually exclusive. Again, I have almost two decades of experience with my share of responding to calls about people experiencing homelessness.

I always asked them why they didn't go to a shelter. Some would say it was because the shelter wouldn't let them stay there while they were on drugs. Others said they would just rather stay on the street. Unfortunately, I never once had a homeless person accept a ride to a shelter. I know it may take years of effort and coordination for someone to accept this help, but I kept trying.

Early on during the pandemic, the DeKalb County Homeless Task Force was able to successfully place some people experiencing homelessness from throughout the County in hotels for temporary shelter. I'm hoping this first step will help them obtain more permanent housing and support.

Even with the support of DeKalb County's Homeless Task Force and the resources they provide to us including social workers, some people considered chronically homeless will not voluntarily accept help.

Does this mean we should allow people to live in the public right-of-way, under bridges and areas around underpasses, and along the railroad tracks? These places are not designed for, nor maintained as, living accommodations. It is a public safety risk for individuals living in those spaces as well as for others who use those spaces for their intended purposes.

Recently in Marietta, an alert CSX train conductor was able to stop his mile-long train from running over a man identified as homeless who fell on the tracks and could not get up due to hypothermia. And who can forget March of 2017 when the bridge on I-85 caught fire and collapsed? As it stands now, landscape crews cannot perform basic maintenance along two sections of highways in our city due to the unsanitary living conditions of camps. We've been informed GDOT does not have enough resources nor HAZMAT-trained crews to do the work either.

DeKalb County Police, along with the County's Homeless Task Force, have visited these areas offering services and the help has been refused. What if we had a law that encouraged them to accept support or, as a last resort, through a judge compelling them into a program? It's not the most elegant solution, but there has been some success with DeKalb County's mental health and drug courts.

Having said all this, I will say again that it is an extremely complex issue. While I don't have a solution (if any of us did, it would be solved by now), not adopting this ordinance and maintaining the status quo is not a solution either.

# COVID CANCELLATIONS: ROUND 2

SOME OF TUCKER'S MOST BELOVED EVENTS ARE PONDERING THEIR FUTURES AMIDST THE PANDEMIC



It was mere days before one of the biggest events on Tucker's social calendar. Competitors had bought their beef, beans and any number of other ingredients. Organizers had the bands lined up, the stage ready to go, tents purchased. And participants were starting to feel that rumble of hunger deep within their collective stomachs. Then it all came to a screeching halt.

"We had ordered hand sanitizer units and handwashing stations not really knowing what to expect," recalled Luis Finley, a member of the Old Town Tucker Merchants Association (OTTMA), which organizes the Tucker Chili Cookoff. "Days before the Chili Cookoff, as we watched more cases being reported, schools starting to close, and then major league sports postponing/cancelling games and events, we knew it was time to cancel."

Finley and his team of volunteers had the distinct misfortune of scheduling their signature event on March 14, during the very weekend when the whole of American society shut down for the COVID pandemic. At the time, before "coronavirus" was a household term, there was no shortage of opinions about the cancellation.

"Some people and restaurants had already made their chili. They were upset because they didn't know what to do with five-to-ten gallons of chili," Finley explained. "At this time, we

didn't know what this virus would bring so it was all cautionary. It seemed the majority of the community was on our side at the time, thinking we would be able to have the Chili Cookoff in the fall....I didn't receive any calls personally, but I remember some people asking 'why?' almost like they were a little perturbed."

Over the course of the year, Tucker Day was postponed, then cancelled. Movie on Main was nixed. The July 3 fireworks show had to go virtual. Every other major Tucker celebration was either reimagined or just shuffled off to 2021.

Now 2021 is upon us, the COVID vaccines are slowly rolling out and the cancellations are starting anew. For a second straight year, there will be no Tucker Chili Cookoff, at least not in March.

"At this point we still don't think it is an appropriate time to host a large-scale event," Finley explained. "If there were a Chili Cookoff and people were to catch COVID-19 from the event, it would damage the reputations of the City and all the businesses involved."

With the Chili Cookoff postponed, attention now turns to Tucker Day. The event is held annually on the second Saturday in May and, because there's no consensus about what the pandemic and the much-maligned vaccine rollout will look like at that point, there's also no consensus about whether Tucker Day will be cancelled for a second straight year.

*(continued on page 8)*

# COVID TIMELINE

**March 2020**

Tucker Chili Cookoff  
(POSTPONED)

**April 2020**

- Tucker Farmers Market (DRIVE-THRU)
- Tucker Cruise-In (CANCELLED)



**May 2020**

Tucker Day  
(POSTPONED)

**June 2020**

Movie on Main  
(CANCELLED)



**July 2020**

Celebration of  
Independence and  
Fireworks Spectacular  
(VIRTUAL)

**August 2020**

National Night Out  
(POSTPONED)



**October 2020**

- Taste of Tucker (CANCELLED)
- Rescheduled National Night Out (SOCIALLY DISTANCED)
- Rescheduled Tucker Day (CANCELLED)
- Rescheduled Tucker Chili Cookoff (CANCELLED)
- Trunk or Treat (CANCELLED)



**December 2020**

Holiday on Main  
(CANCELLED)

**March 2021**

Tucker Chili Cookoff  
(POSTPONED)

(continued from page 6)

"We're really taking this day-to-day," said organizer Honey Van De Kreke. "I can't tell you how I would hate to postpone from May as we did last year. We are all shaking our heads and trying to make the best decision. I wish there was another way to do Tucker Day other than face to face, but that's the whole point."

Tucker only has a small handful of events throughout the year that shut down Main Street. The Chili Cookoff and Tucker Day are two of the biggest, meaning they draw thousands of people from all over metro Atlanta. According to Discover DeKalb, the City's Convention and Visitors Bureau, cancelling these types of events can have a sizable economic impact on the City.

"The regional reach of an event like Tucker Day is more significant than you might think," said James Tsismanakis, Executive Director and CEO of Discover DeKalb. "When Tucker Day doesn't happen, it means a huge opportunity lost for our restaurants and, believe it or not, there's an impact on the hotels, as well. All of that tax revenue that would be pouring in from out-of-towners represents a very real, very tangible loss."

Although many event organizers have been left with no choice but to cancel, others have pivoted, taking the proverbial lemons and turning them into lemonade.

Nancy Qarmout, head of the Tucker Farmers Market, is one such person. By its very nature, a farmers market is a big gathering of people, talking and interacting in relatively close quarters. Even though it is outdoors, it has the potential to be a COVID nightmare. Knowing this, Qarmout got an idea last spring of how to change up her business model and keep the market going.

"We converted the market to online ordering with drive-thru pickup to provide a safe way for the Tucker community to continue to connect with local farmers and producers," Qarmout explained. "Spring and summer were extraordinary times. As the food chain struggled to keep up in our local grocery stores, our local farmers and producers were able to help fill the gap. COVID-19 has shed light on the value of our local food systems and led to a greater appreciation of them."

Still other events, like the monthly Tucker Cruise-In, have struggled to find a way to get around the realities of the pandemic. The Cruise-In, which runs from April through October and features classic cars lining Main Street on the second Saturday of each month, is another event that is outdoors, yet puts hundreds of people in close contact as they admire one another's vehicles.

"Some were pretty critical, but most understood the awkward position we were in," said Cruise-In organizer Chip Cofer. "Postponing the Tucker Cruise-In was not an easy decision, but observing COVID safety measures is a must, especially on public property."

One thing is for sure: as soon as it's safe, Tucker's Main Street parties will be back bigger and better than ever. For now, the waiting is the hardest part.



# TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

## SHAY CRIDER, REVENUE SPECIALIST

### **What is your background in city government?**

This is my first experience with a government agency; however, I do have an extensive background in accounting and customer service which plays a huge part in my job duties here at the City of Tucker.

### **Why did you decide to come work in Tucker?**

I accepted this position because I was ready for a promising, professional career with a growing team!

### **What does your position do for Team Tucker?**

This position allows me to help business owners in our city complete the required tasks in obtaining licenses that are needed for the business. I also play a part in the municipal court department helping with screening everyone in on court days and taking court payments daily.

### **What is your favorite thing about working at City Hall?**

As much as I enjoy my role here, I enjoy the staff even more. Everyone I have interacted with has been so warm and welcoming. Me being a "people person," I really like that everyone has great qualities in themselves. It makes for a great work environment.

### **What is the most challenging aspect of the job?**

Remembering that we live in "COVID times" and making sure I am doing my part in following the guidelines to keep everyone safe.

### **If you weren't in city government, what job would you be doing?**

I am sure I would be doing something in the financial/accounting field. It is an area of comfort for me and I really enjoy doing it.



## *Off the Wall*

### **What's your go-to streaming service?**

Netflix because you can never NOT find something to watch on there. There is usually always something that is binge-worthy!

### **What was your first car?**

Ford Contour. I can't remember the year and the car was falling apart piece by piece (the bumper was bonded on with duct tape!), but I loved that car and went many places with it!

### **Where will we find you if you are not here at work?**

I really enjoy spending time with my family and going on spontaneous day trips. Other times I am enjoying time at home or kayaking occasionally. I also enjoy shopping!

### **If you could visit one place in the world, what would it be? Why?**

Bora Bora. I love the mountains and I love the ocean, but you can't really have both at the same time anywhere around here...but you can there! They have hammocks in the water that overlook mountain views surrounded by tropical waters! Sounds perfect to me!

# BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



Since 1991, March has been recognized as Women's History Month; a

month dedicated to female strength and empowerment, an opportunity to celebrate iconic women who have changed history, and a chance to also encourage new generations to continue to dream big and know that anything is possible.

One local, female entrepreneur who dreamt big and is continuing to reach new heights is Nadia Changani, founder and CEO of Noorani Trading, Inc. They are a manufacturer of oil-based air fresheners, perfume oils, diffusers, hand sanitizers and numerous other fragrant goods. In business since 2005, Noorani's 82,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and warehouse has been tucked away in Tucker's Mountain Industrial corridor area for over a decade, quietly etching out a multi-million-dollar product line.

"I am truly blessed," were the first words I heard from Nadia when I began the interview by asking how she was doing. "I have no complaints," she responded when asked about her journey to success as a female business owner of Indian descent.

## QUALITY AND PRIDE

Nadia speaks very passionately about the importance of providing quality products and products that are made in America. She prides herself in making the best quality items.

"Here we believe in quality over quantity," she asserts, adding that all of their products are 100 percent concentrated and oil based. "What sets us apart

is definitely our quality, as all of our scented products are comprised of luxurious oils, fragrances, and are simply the best smelling goods you'll find.

"The quality of what I sell reflects on me as a person and that is important to me. All of our products are bottled and scented in the United States."

She adds that putting 'Made in America' on a label is the easy part, but actually making it happen is more challenging than you may think. Although some of her raw goods are imported, Nadia proudly proclaims that everything she makes is made in Tucker. A sign of the times, Nadia has just gotten her hand sanitizer certified by the FDA.

"There are a lot of hand sanitizers out there that are not of great quality, and that product effectiveness is really important during this pandemic," she explains.

When asked who's her competition in the marketplace, she offers an interesting answer: "I am my biggest competition. I am constantly challenging myself to do more, go bigger, aim higher. I work about 80 hours a week, first because I love what I do and second because I want to do my best for my customers, most of whom have been with me since the beginning."

Being a woman and being of Indian descent has not afforded her special treatment or opportunities either, she says. She proudly states that she has never received special women- or minority-owned funding for her business. She recalls that years ago, when her company really started to take off and sales were climbing, she went to a local branch of a well-known bank for assistance to keep up with the demand. Her loan request was denied.

"They told me I was growing too fast! I could not believe it," she recalls.

She found another banker, who happened to be female, and got the funding she needed. "And I've been with them ever since. I am grateful for her faith in me."



## CALLING TUCKER 'HOME'

When she moved to the U.S. from India, Nadia lived with family members who resided in Tucker. When the warehouse space in Tucker came available in 2016, she says it was a great space for her growing business and offered a slightly more convenient commute from her current home in Loganville. And, ironically, before starting her company in 2005, she worked for a wholesale company that was just down the street from her current Mountain Industrial warehouse location.

"I'm ready to move back to Tucker," she said. "It will make it even more convenient for me, and besides, I love Tucker."

# BUSINESS OF THE MONTH PINEHILL AWARDS

Tucker has more than its fair share of small, family-owned businesses. One such business has been operating on Hugh Howell Road for the past 20 years.

"We've become a family here," explained Danny Liska, co-owner of Pinehill Awards.

Liska and his wife Rebecca own and operate Pinehill, providing trophies, medals and engraving services to the community. Although they've been in the Tucker location since 2001, the business itself dates to the mid-1970s, when a family member began screen printing out of his home in Conyers. Eventually, Danny expanded the business to include trophies, and they've since grown the operation into one of metro Atlanta's premier trophy shops.

Like many businesses, Pinehill was rolling along before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In a recent video for the City, the Liskas described how federal CARES Act money helped them to survive the downturn.

"Twenty nineteen was a great year. It was actually our best year ever. January and February of 2020 were our best months ever," Rebecca Liska recalled. "March hit and everything stopped."

They said things like corporate events, sports leagues, school awards and family reunions were all cancelled, forcing them to pause their business.



"We lost about 60 percent of our business during the pandemic," Rebecca said. "Income decreased, however expenses like rent, insurance, utilities, all of those things stayed the same. So, we're using the [CARES Act] money to pay for those costs that haven't decreased like our sales have."

With the distribution of vaccines hopefully helping the pandemic to turn a corner, the Liskas are now faced with another big change: a move. The building the business has occupied for the past two decades was recently sold, leading the couple to look for a new location. The plan, they said, is to move into space just down the street on Hugh Howell. In reality, they could move the business anywhere. Rebecca Liska, however, says they wouldn't dream of leaving Tucker.

"We love living and working in Tucker and we wouldn't go anywhere else."

"Tucker's going to be our place," Danny added. "We know who's coming in, their history, problems, celebrations. That's the main thing, you know, is the celebrations. The stuff that they do, and you get to know people, you become connected that way."

Until they move, Pinehill Awards is located at 4297 Hugh Howell Road. You can find them online at [www.pinehillawards.com](http://www.pinehillawards.com).



# BACK TO SCHOOL

## STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS BRACING FOR A RETURN TO FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING

For months, the issue of reopening schools was very much a partisan one. As cases of coronavirus have roller coasted up, then down, then to a holiday surge, and now back down again, the tide has started to turn in the debate over face-to-face learning. No longer is it a red vs. blue issue; President Biden has endorsed a safe return to class, while the CDC and leading scientists has been advocating for it, as well. The majority of metro Atlanta school districts have moved to hybrid learning, giving parents the option to keep their students home or send them to school.

DeKalb County was not one of those school districts. That is until February 23. That was the date when Superintendent Cheryl Watson-Harris let the community know that the District was ready to resume in-person learning. Shuttered since March of last year, many students will head back to class on March 15, right around one year to the day that they last found themselves in school.

“While the return to normalcy is an answer to the prayers of many students and parents, questions remain for many in the community about preparations for a return to class and just how safe in-person learning is going to be.”

At the Board of Education meeting on February 8, Watson-Harris addressed board members, discussing a wealth of issues related to the topic, including what she called “myths” being perpetrated by some who are against a return to face-to-face learning. One such myth was the idea that “hundreds of teachers” are quitting rather than return to the classroom during a pandemic. Watson-Harris said that’s simply not true. She stated that, since teachers returned to school buildings during the first week of February, only 17 certified staff members had resigned. That amounts to a fraction of one percent of the district’s more than 7,000 educators.

She went on to discuss the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE), stating another myth is that schools don’t have it. Watson-Harris assured the Board that she and her regional superintendents personally oversaw the delivery of PPE to each of the district’s schools. She further stated that each school has been provided a two-month supply of sanitation and cleaning supplies, including a four-week buffer of supplies in the event there was a disruption to the supply chain.

Another of the myths she tackled was the notion that there is insufficient heat in school buildings for students and teachers. Watson-Harris told the Board that heat has been turned on in all DeKalb County schools. She admitted that some buildings are not heating evenly, in which cases the district has purchased and supplied safe space heaters to keep classrooms warm.

“The CDC’s five mitigation strategies and other strategies will lower the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in schools,” Watson-Harris told the Board. “I share this as a reminder of the process, a very thoughtful transparent process, the school district implemented in terms of communication, in terms of a commitment to always be guided by the recommendations coming from the CDC, and to apply that to a timeline. We have not changed course, [no] bait and switch with metrics. We have been consistent.”

Watson-Harris said that she will continue to rely on the best advice and guidance of the CDC. While that guidance has changed over the course of the past few months, she said that science will dictate when students go back to class. She also reiterated her promise to parents that they would be given a two-weeks heads up before students are able to report back.

At this point, students will be headed back to class in two waves, starting on March 9 and March 15. According to Watson-Harris, DeKalb County Schools and their staff will be ready to ensure that students and teachers remain safe when they walk through those doors.

## MITIGATING DANGER

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been advising school leaders on how best to aid students and teachers in returning to the classroom. They have put forth five mitigation strategies that schools should follow for a successful return to face-to-face learning.

1. Wearing masks correctly
2. Social distancing
3. Hand washing
4. Cleaning and disinfecting
5. Contact tracing in partnership with the DeKalb Board of Health



All photos courtesy of DeKalb County School District

# Tucker Cluster

## Updates & News

### IMPORTANT DATES

**March 9**  
Phase II Reopening

**March 12**  
Early Release Day

**March 15**  
Phase III Reopening

**March 15**  
Board of Education Meeting

## BRAG SHEET

### MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

• Learning remotely is no excuse to be without books! Last month, Midvale held a virtual Book Fair in cooperation with Scholastic. A percentage of all purchases made went right back into the school.

### SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

• Smoke Rise kindergartners conquered the 900 books reading challenge. They also got to take a virtual field trip on the GSU Biobus.

### TUCKER MIDDLE

• A group of Tucker eighth grade students have qualified as semifinalists in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest! TMS is one of only two semifinalists in the State of Georgia and have already won \$15,000 in Samsung technology for the school.

# CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

## BECKY BURNETT

"I am Officer Johnathan Crego with the DeKalb County Police Department, and I am assigned to the Tucker Community Policing Unit. I have been an officer with the County for seven years (all at Tucker) and would like to nominate Ms. Becky Burnett as the City of Tucker Citizen of the Month.

I had the privilege of meeting Ms. Burnett through mutual friends over a year ago. As my charity work with the homeless community grew, so did my need for more items. I was running low on supplies and expressed the situation to Becky. Becky was able to coordinate with her friends and Tucker First United Methodist Church members by collecting a police car's worth of clothing, shelter items, hygiene kits and other items to give out to people in need. I was astonished at the amount of items she was able to collect by herself on such short notice.

After distributing those items, Becky continued to re-supply myself and other Tucker Precinct officers with supplies to give out to needy families/people within our community, all on her own accord. As the weather got cold, she coordinated a collection of more than a dozen new sleeping bags, a box full of hygiene kits she made and numerous boxes of winter clothing to distribute. Throughout our time working together, we were able to supply over four car loads of items to give out to more than 30 people.

Ms. Burnett was also instrumental in getting the word out to the community through social media, which brought in even more donations. Ms. Burnett was able to shed light on the charity work officers within the community are doing with Tucker residents, building a great bond between the citizens of Tucker and DeKalb County Police Department.

Becky reached out to several non-profit organizations within the Tucker community to meet the new team, and even sat in on several of our meetings, providing valuable ideas for all of us. During one of the meetings, one of our team members received a call about a homeless female in need at a nearby Walmart. Becky heard about the female and eventually, out of her own goodwill, paid for the female's lodging at a hotel, numerous meals, clothing and even paid to get the female's wheelchair fixed. Becky has spent a long time with this female in need by providing

companionship and care, just because she is such a deep, caring, and thoughtful person.

Becky has housed homeless citizens in her own home, spent countless hours collecting items to distribute, paid for meals, provided clothing and has become a vital part of bridging the relationship between the police and the citizens of DeKalb. I have never met a more caring or compassionate person in my life and am fortunate enough to know her and all she has done for the community. The City of Tucker is blessed to have such an upstanding citizen within the community and this is why I would like to nominate her for the Tucker Citizen of the Month."

*Nomination by Officer Johnathan Crego,  
DeKalb County Police Department*



# “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.*



Naming a park can be a complicated process. In my decades in Parks and Recreation I've seen new parks come online and everyone seems to have an idea for what the name should be. Some ideas are good, some are...well...unique. As we see here in

Tucker, sometimes a park's name just fits.

Henderson Park sits along Henderson Road in the area settled by Greenville Henderson almost 200 years ago. Peters Park honors William McKinley Peters, one of the founding members of that particular community.

Other times, it's a little more open ended. We assumed responsibility of Smoke Rise Park from DeKalb County back in 2018. They had named it long ago and, because of the location of the park in Tucker's Smoke Rise community, you could say the name fit. But there were already a couple other parks that went by the name of "Smoke Rise". Plus, the country club also bore the name. "Smoke Rise" almost became like "Peachtree" in other parts of metro Atlanta.

The same goes for Smoke Rise Bath & Racquet. This longtime staple of the Smoke Rise community came under city control just last year. We had our first, very successful swim season there last summer. People flocked to the tennis courts and the newly lined pickleball courts. Despite social distancing mandates, hundreds of families came out to enjoy these new public amenities. But there was still that name.

At the City Council meeting last month, our Mayor and Council took a big step; one that I think will resonate for years to come in the Smoke Rise community. They voted to name these parks in honor of a pair of community leaders who we recently lost. Smoke Rise Bath & Racquet will now be Rosenfeld Park. Bill Rosenfeld was a good man. He was someone who gave all he had for the betterment of the community. As a City Councilman, he worked closely with the Parks and Recreation Department on a number of initiatives, but the most notable one was the acquisition of Smoke Rise Bath & Racquet. As you know by now, we unfortunately lost Bill back in January at the age of 77. As we discussed ways to honor his legacy, I couldn't think of anything more appropriate than putting his name on this park, which he advocated for so passionately.

Similarly, Council voted to name Smoke Rise Park after longtime Smoke Rise resident and visionary Bill Probst. I didn't know Bill, but I've certainly heard stories. It's pretty much

agreed upon that it was Bill's vision and expertise that helped lay the groundwork for the Smoke Rise community. He was a great neighbor, a great leader and left his imprint not just here in Tucker, but across metro Atlanta. Unfortunately, he passed away last year. Probst Park has a nice, alliterative ring to it, and the name will ensure that future generations of Tucker's park users will know about the contributions this man made.

As with any major change, it will take time for us to retrain our brains to call these parks by their new names. But we're helping with that. In the coming days and months, new signage will be coming to all our parks. Specifically, you're going to see monument signs welcoming folks to "Rosenfeld Park" and "Probst Park". And before you know it, pickleballers will be texting each other "Let's meet up at Rosenfeld!" Hikers will congregate for wooded walks and declare "Some of the best hiking in Tucker is at Probst!"

These are positive changes, which I think further enhance what our Tucker Parks and Recreation system mean to the City.



# TUCKERGA.GOV

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## TUCKER *Community Corner*



### **3/4, 3/11, 3/18, 3/25 – 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](http://TFMOnlineStore.com).

### **3/11, 3/25 – Rehoboth Boost** **4-7:30 p.m., 2997 Lawrenceville Highway**

High School students are invited to attend “Rehoboth Boost” on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. There will be games, food and dedicated time to work on assigned schoolwork.

### **3/21 – THSF Annual Golf Fundraiser**

**1-6 p.m., 1145 Stonewall Jackson Drive**

The Tucker High School Foundation Annual Golf Fundraiser takes place at Stone Mountain Park and supports academic and enrichment programs at the school. Register to play at [tuckerhighschoolfoundation.com/golf](http://tuckerhighschoolfoundation.com/golf).