

# INTUCKER

JANUARY 2022 VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 1



## THE NEXT WAVE

AS A NEW TERM BEGINS, COUNCILMEMBERS-ELECT  
LOOK TO MAKE THEIR MARK IN TUCKER

# EDITOR'S NOTE



They say the only constant in life is change. Don't believe it? This issue of *InTucker* is living proof.

You see right from the cover. New faces. Some are familiar. Some maybe not so much. But they are our new City Council representatives. If you didn't get to know them on the campaign trail, you'll get a better picture starting on page 13. They're here to serve and it's important for you to find out who they are and what they stand for.

There's also change happening within our Economic Development department. On page 14 you'll meet Jackie Moffo, our new Economic Development Manager. Her job was created because Tucker is in the unique position of balancing existing business growth while also attracting new businesses to the City. In other words, there's too much going on for our tiny Economic Development team to handle, so we had to add a new position. What a problem to have!

And talk about change, have you heard what's been going on at Tucker's Smoke Rise Elementary School? I'm not just talking about the beautiful new building they moved into at the start of the school year. There is some serious teaching and learning happening within those walls. From an underperforming school to one of the highest scoring in the State of Georgia! You're going to find out how that change came about on page 10.

Sometimes change can be difficult. Sometimes it can be complicated. That's especially true when there's a lot of change happening all at once. Heck, we've even changed to a new year! Here in Tucker, the change keeps on coming. Let's embrace it together and make 2022 our best year yet!

**MATT HOLMES**  
INTUCKER EDITOR

# IN THIS ISSUE



## ON THE COVER

They're just four people, but they're now stepping forward to represent their friends, neighbors and thousands of others in the community. Get to know the new City Council on page 6.



## HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

It's been quite a turnaround at Smoke Rise Elementary School; such a turnaround that now the school is getting some big accolades. Hear from the principal who's making it happen on page 10.



## CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

They're three very different people who have spent the past several years with very similar goals in mind: doing what's best for Tucker. Get to know our outgoing City Councilmembers on page 13.



## BUSINESS BOOM

You've seen the construction for much of the past year, so when will the businesses at the Hugh Howell Marketplace development be opening? Angela Brooks goes digging for answers on page 8.



## ASK RIP

This month Rip is looking back on 2021 and looking ahead to 2022. Read up on all the accomplishments and all the exciting things to come on page 15.



# INTUCKER

Matt Holmes- Editor-in-Chief  
Dede Musser- Design  
Sonja Szubski- Photography

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## VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

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# From the Mayor:



It's a new year, which means an opportunity for all sorts of new beginnings. For the City's government, it means a new City Council here in Tucker. We have never had so much turnover as what we'll experience after the new year; Virginia Rece took her seat immediately following the special election and, in January, we'll swear in Roger Orlando, Cara Schroeder, and Alexis Weaver. You'll get to know them over the coming months, of course, but I want to take this opportunity to let you know that each of these individuals brings their own set of experiences and unique expertise to governing our city. We've already begun an "onboarding" process with each of them to help them have everything they need for a fast, productive start to their service, and I'm excited to work with each of them as we all strive to keep moving Tucker forward.

The election season we just endured was like no other in our brief history, and unlike what most small- and medium-sized cities expect. There have been lots of lessons learned for those paying attention, and we'll find out soon enough the effect those lessons have on future elections. City elections are different from almost every other type of election; for a lot of good reasons, they are non-partisan and held in odd-numbered years, apart from all other elections to drive home those distinctions. They're over for now, but in less than two years, we will have three council seats up again. Pray that the lessons learned include an ever-increasing respect for, and understanding of, their importance and their purpose.

In the meantime, we have more elections immediately ahead. In 2022, we will elect every member of the Georgia General Assembly, both the House and the Senate. We'll

also elect every member of our congressional delegation from Georgia, and all of those elections will take place with newly re-drawn districts. And if that weren't enough, we will also elect a U.S. Senator and a Governor for our state. The primaries for all those races will be in May, already less than six months away, and the general election will pit the resulting nominees against one another all the way until November. It's sure to be daily news for practically the whole year. It's my hope the campaigns will be helpful in selecting the right leaders, and not just a lot of acrimony, allegations and name-calling that broadens the artificial dividing lines so many would draw between us.

It's also my sincere hope that 2022 will be a time when our community and its leaders, whether elected, volunteer, or those who've earned a kind of moral authority, will continue to set the example for public discourse and political problem-solving. May we be examples of civility and decency that others in our community can mirror. May we remember that elections don't define us, our actions and our relationships do. It is this mindset that makes Tucker so special, and will help Tucker to thrive in the new year and for years to come. I'm looking forward to the future. We, as city leaders, have so much on our plates that we have no choice but to look ahead.

**FRANK AUMAN**  
MAYOR

# City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and City Council held one meeting during the month of December, finishing out their business for 2021.

At that December 13 meeting, Council cast several votes including granting a deferral on a special land use permit (SLUP) application to re-locate the Tucker Station Chick-fil-A to the site of the old Greater Good BBQ on Hugh Howell Road. The deferral will allow the petitioner more time to examine transportation options, and residents in the area more time to respond to those transportation options, specifically the proposed closure of Rosser Terrace to prevent anticipated cut through traffic. A public meeting will be held on January 18 at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall for residents to weigh in on the Rosser proposal. The land use case will now go back to a first read before Council on January 24.

Beyond that vote, Council determined a host of other land use issues, including:

- denial of major modifications to approved conditions for a townhome development at 3281 Tucker Norcross Road. The petition sought to allow for more rentals in the development.
- approval of rezoning for a drive-thru facility at the new retail and dining development at the intersection of Hugh Howell Road and Mountain Industrial Boulevard. The restaurant, situated at 4650 Hugh Howell Road,

is advertised to be a gusto! franchise location.

- approval of a SLUP to allow a massage establishment at 2088 Idlewood Road.
- approval of city-initiated rezonings for six properties in the area of Richardson Street and East Ponce de Leon Avenue.
- deferral of city initiated rezonings on 1220 and 1250 Richardson Street. Council also extended a moratorium on those properties for 90 days. The issue will come back before the Council at its meeting on March 14.

The other land use case Council heard was a first read and public hearing for a SLUP petition to redevelop a gas station at 4118 Lavista Road. The case will be back before Council for a second read, public hearing and anticipated vote in January.

Earlier in the evening, Council held a special called meeting to honor Pat Soltys, Matt Robbins and Michelle Penkava as they complete their terms in office. Mayor Auman presented each with a proclamation to thank them for their service.

The Mayor and new City Council will meet on January 11 at City Hall. New councilmembers will be sworn in at 6 p.m. and the meeting will follow at 7.

## DATES TO KNOW

**January 5**  
Municipal Court

**January 11**  
City Council

**January 12**  
Municipal Court

**January 19**  
Environmental Court

**January 20**  
Planning Commission

**January 24**  
City Council

# WANT BREAKING NEWS?

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



# nextdoor



The City of Tucker hosted members of the DeKalb Municipal Association at City Hall on December 16. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)



# ON THE BEAT *with Lt. Berg*

*Lt. J.W. Berg is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be contacted by email at [jwberg@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:jwberg@dekalbcountyga.gov) or by phone at (678) 597-9040.*

In this month's "On the Beat", I'd like to introduce you to some individuals who often work behind the scenes here at Tucker Precinct.

If you are ever the victim of a property crime, the detectives in our Criminal Investigation Division, also known as Tucker CID, can help. These individuals often don't get recognized for the grueling, detail-oriented work they do identifying criminal offenders, recovering stolen property and helping to bring closure to what our police officers respond to on a daily basis.

Most of you know that our job typically begins with a 911 call. When a call for service comes in, a Tucker Precinct territory police officer (one assigned to patrol in the general area of the call) will quickly be dispatched to handle the incident. Our police officers are experienced in handling a wide variety of calls including traffic accidents, customer disputes, shoplifting, automobile thefts, domestic assaults, robberies, burglaries and many others. Upon arrival, the responding officer will render aid to any victims, secure the crime scene, collect items of evidence, make an arrest if able and, finally, document the incident in an official police report.

While the uniformed police officers are the ones you will see most visibly on the streets of Tucker, we are fortunate to have a great group of detectives to call on for assistance. Per department policy, our officers are required to notify our Tucker CID detectives of any major property crime including robberies, entering automobiles, burglaries, forgeries and felony thefts. Other major crimes, including homicides and felony domestic violence cases, are investigated by other CID divisions located at our headquarters off West Exchange Place. Our Tucker Precinct CID detectives, all of whom excelled as officers, are the in-house experts for our busy precinct.

On significant cases such as pedestrian robberies, our Tucker detectives will be notified and respond to the scene. The responding detectives will assist the officer by interviewing any witnesses, collecting physical evidence, and attempting to speak with any suspects who may have been detained. After this initial response, the detectives typically head back to their office to begin the tedious nature of investigating leads and locating further evidence. The detectives will then write their own reports, colloquially titled "court sups". In the end, while it was the police officer who originally responded to the call, it will be the detectives who ultimately obtain warrants and assist in prosecuting these felony crimes.

If you are the unfortunate victim of a serious property crime in 2022, your interaction with us will begin by meeting one of our uniformed officers. You will be given a business card with the case number of your report (a number beginning with "22"). If the crime fits our criteria, the incident will then be assigned to a Tucker detective who will work to further investigate your case. In most situations, you will be getting a follow up call or letter from our CID unit within a few days.

Our Tucker Precinct detectives are located here at our precinct (4451 Lawrenceville Hwy., however our lobby is still closed due to COVID). If you have any questions about your case that the officer was not able to address during your initial encounter, please feel free to give our CID detectives a call. They can be reached at our general precinct number, (678) 937-5301, then select option "5".

In the end, please remember that our officers, backed up by a group of professional detectives, are here to serve when called. If we don't get a call from you this year, we will not take it personally. That is probably a good sign!

## GEORGIA LAWS TO KNOW IN 2022

O.C.G.A 40-6-75(c) Duty to remove vehicle from public roads; removal of incapacitated vehicle from state highway. The law reads in part:

"When a motor vehicle traffic accident occurs with no apparent serious personal injury or death, it shall be the duty of the drivers of the motor vehicles involved in such traffic accident, or any other occupant of any such motor vehicle who possesses a valid driver's license, to remove said vehicles from the immediate confines of the roadway into a safe refuge on the shoulder, emergency lane, or median or to a place otherwise removed from the roadway whenever such moving of a vehicle can be done safely and the vehicle is capable of being normally and safely driven, does not require towing, and can be operated under its own power in its customary manner without further damage or hazard to itself, to the traffic elements, or to the roadway.... "

NOTE: This law was enacted to prevent further accidents after an initial traffic incident. Essentially, if you can move your vehicles to an adjacent parking lot or onto the shoulder of the road after an accident, please do so for your safety. There is no need to stay in the middle of the road and wait for an officer; our experienced officers will still be able to determine what happened at the time of the accident.

# TAKING OFFICE



**ROGER W. ORLANDO**

It is with extreme gratitude to the voters of District One that I am joining a governing body that thus far has performed with auspiciousness, honor and integrity in Tucker's first five years as a city. I have big shoes to fill. The previous, dedicated service to our community by Ms. Pat Soltys from District One [Post One], simply put, was honorable and I hope to serve our entire city in the same principled and distinguished manner.

It is my desire to contribute toward the continued upward trajectory of Tucker as a fairly new city, as it will become a desired destination for residents and visitors alike. Tucker can only achieve this goal as a community if it is safe, and public safety perhaps is my number one agenda item. Public safety is the sine qua non, or that which must come before anything else in order to see new development, peaceful residency and for visitors to feel welcome in our community for working, dining, or shopping purposes. I intend to keep a close eye on public safety in addition to all of the other duties and issues that come with this opportunity to serve; if not only for my constituency, but by the very fact that my family lives here as well.

I am grateful to have this public service opportunity and I am ready and willing to work hard for my neighbors and this city, speak to and listen to my constituents, and to advance all that Tucker has to offer.



**VIRGINIA RECE**

*I think there's no higher calling in terms of a career than public service, which is a chance to make a difference in people's lives and improve the world.- Jack Lew*

I have been serving on City Council for 5 weeks. It's been a whirlwind! During the campaign, I promised to make decisions thoughtfully. I promised to represent Tucker with integrity and make decisions thoughtfully and carefully. To say I'm honored that our community put its trust in me to serve our community would be an understatement. I'm so excited about working on the ideas and vision I set forth during the campaign, by collaborating with my fellow city council members to realize our ideas together.

I would love to make Tucker the most walkable city in the state, maybe even the country. I think it's possible! I hope to help complete and expand on our Master Trail Path for sidewalks and bike trails and help expand transportation options especially Bus Rapid Transit. I hope to help improve public safety through quality economic development and partnering with our Tucker Police Precinct. I hope to work with my fellow city council members to finalize a Non-Discrimination Ordinance.

I believe the community knows I truly enjoy serving our community and want to do good around me. I hope to learn how to help our city in ways that will improve our quality of life with peace and harmony for our future generations.

# AFTER A FALL OF CLOSE ELECTIONS, NEW OFFICEHOLDERS EXAMINE PRIORITIES FOR CITY COUNCIL



**CARA SCHROEDER**

I am proud and honored to have been elected to serve on Council. My involvement in the Tucker community has a deep history. It has been a goal of mine to serve on City Council because fulfilling the duties of the new District 2 Post 1 leader means engaging neighbors and friends.

It is a priority, in the first 90 days, to review the current resolution on the Non-Discrimination Ordinance. Weighing the community's input will be part of the process, and perhaps organizing a commission of leaders to join us to address this effort is the right path forward. I feel it is important to engage neighbors who are also leaders in the community to participate. Some of my other priorities include partnering with our Development Authority and the CIDs to make the Lawrenceville Highway gateway into our city more inviting and welcoming; continuing to monitor the traffic calming and public safety project plans; and addressing Tucker's Growth as we face new development and future economic expansion.

I will embrace the feedback of the prior Council and Team Tucker in the hopes that the new team for 2022 will approach our business for the City wisely. We will work together in collaboration and with a common vision to accomplish the important work of serving the people of Tucker.

To Michelle Penkava, Matt Robbins, and Pat Soltys: may I express how much we appreciated your leadership and service during the first 5-6 years of our founding Cityhood. Thank you for your support during this important transition of leadership.



**ALEXIS WEAVER**

I am very excited to serve on the Tucker City Council, and I'm honored and humbled that the voters in District Three decisively placed their confidence in me. I'm proud that our council race had the highest turnout, and I received that as an affirmation of the energized leadership and inclusive values I promised to bring to the position. Diversity is Tucker's greatest strength. This is a message I repeated throughout the campaign. Yet, there is still so much work to be done. My number one priority over the next four years is hearing from YOU, the residents of Tucker. I plan to work tirelessly to make sure everyone's voice is heard. I will truly listen to your concerns, amplify those voiced concerns and then respond with action. That's my commitment to you. As a working mom with three children and an active volunteer, I see the breadth of our community and regularly interact with Tucker residents across generations—from serving with NETWorks Cooperative Ministry to cheering on my kids playing rec sports at Henderson Park, Fitzgerald Field and Rehoboth Baptist Church. I understand what it means to care about your community but not always have the time for additional activities. I plan to help make engaging in decision making more accessible. As a nonprofit leader and urban planner with two decades experience in economic and community development, I'm eager to explore creative ways to address challenges and seize on opportunities so that everyone can flourish and thrive, including passing a non-discrimination ordinance in the days ahead. Please reach out and introduce yourself ([aweaver@tuckerga.gov](mailto:aweaver@tuckerga.gov))—I'm ready to work for YOU!

# BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



Is it ready yet?

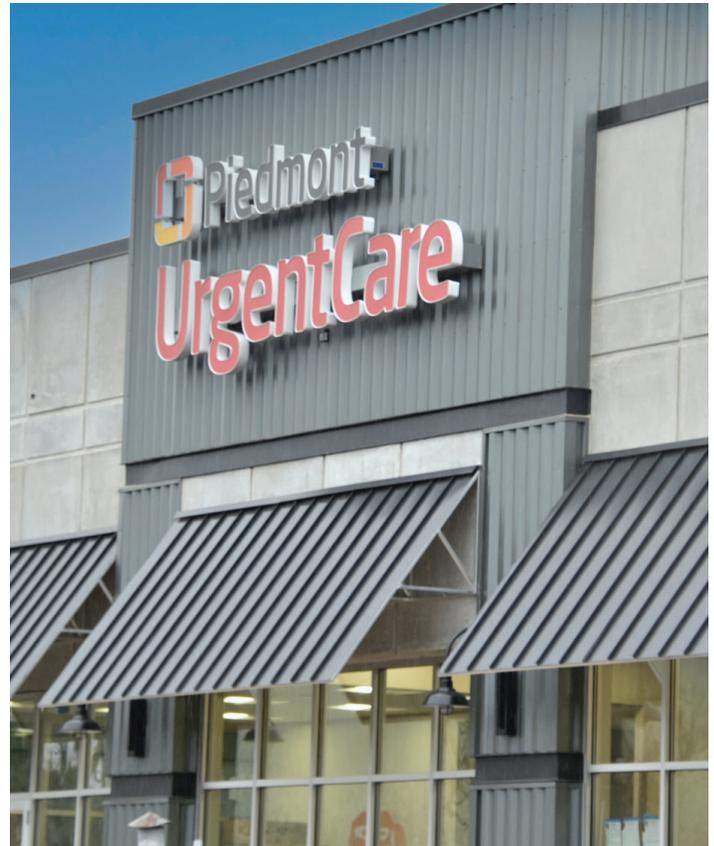
Like waiting for a tasty winter soup simmering on the stove, everyone wants to know when the new Hugh Howell Marketplace will be ready for consumption. Not that it's been that long, as the groundbreaking took place in October of 2020, but the excitement and anticipation of something

new has folks in Tucker asking 'when does it open and what's going to be there?'

With popular grocer Publix as its anchor tenant and over 90 percent of the available spaces leased, according to developer Branch Properties, the 89,510-square-foot mixed-use development will include these delicious eateries:

**Antico Sporto**, a brand new concept for Atlanta-based Antico Pizza Napoletana. The first one is launching at the Marketplace.

**Bite of Korea**, a food truck company opening its first brick-and-mortar restaurant.



**Buffalo Wild Wings GO**, a smaller format of the national chain designed specifically for takeout and delivery.

**First Watch**, a national restaurant chain specializing in breakfast, brunch and lunch.

**gusto!**, a local fast-casual restaurant specializing in fresh bowls and wraps.

**Jersey Mike's Subs**, a well-known American sub sandwich chain.

Branch Properties Partner Jesse Shannon said Publix's new 48,000-square-foot store is scheduled to open this month, "with the remaining tenants opening as they complete their respective build-outs, ready their inventory and fulfill their staffing needs." So, the decision when to open will be unique to each, but it is expected that things will reach a critical mass of tenants opening in the April/May timeframe.

"We're a new city, but we're growing up, and this is a really great example of how we are responding to people's changes in their wants and needs," said Jackie Moffo, Tucker's Economic Development Manager. In her newly created role, Moffo is



higher sales in those locations than they do stand alone or in a strip center or other type of center without a grocery anchor.”

Several service and healthcare-oriented tenants have also signed on to join the Marketplace center, including ATI Physical Therapy, Chase Bank, Piedmont Urgent Care, Scenthound Dog Grooming and The Joint Chiropractic.

“Medical facilities in open-air, surface park centers have been a trend for a few years now,” said Shannon, “and medical providers are finding that being in this type of co-location environment has proven helpful in driving traffic for their type of customer.”

“We are showing development that is up-to-date and addressing the needs of today. This is going to benefit our residents because it is meeting their current needs, and Tucker is ready to evolve and pivot as the times change,” Moffo added.

“Despite challenges and delays associated with the nationwide labor shortages and supply chain issues, we’re pleased to be able to bring this to fruition in under a year,” said Shannon. “Materials and labor shortages is a common thread across all of construction [due to the pandemic], but from a blighted 300,000-foot industrial warehouse to a vibrant shopping center, you can’t underestimate what it can do for the Tucker area, and we’re proud to be a part of that.”

You can follow the progress at [www.branchprop.com/property/hugh-howell-marketplace](http://www.branchprop.com/property/hugh-howell-marketplace).

working to attract new businesses and developments to the City. You can read more about her work on page 14.

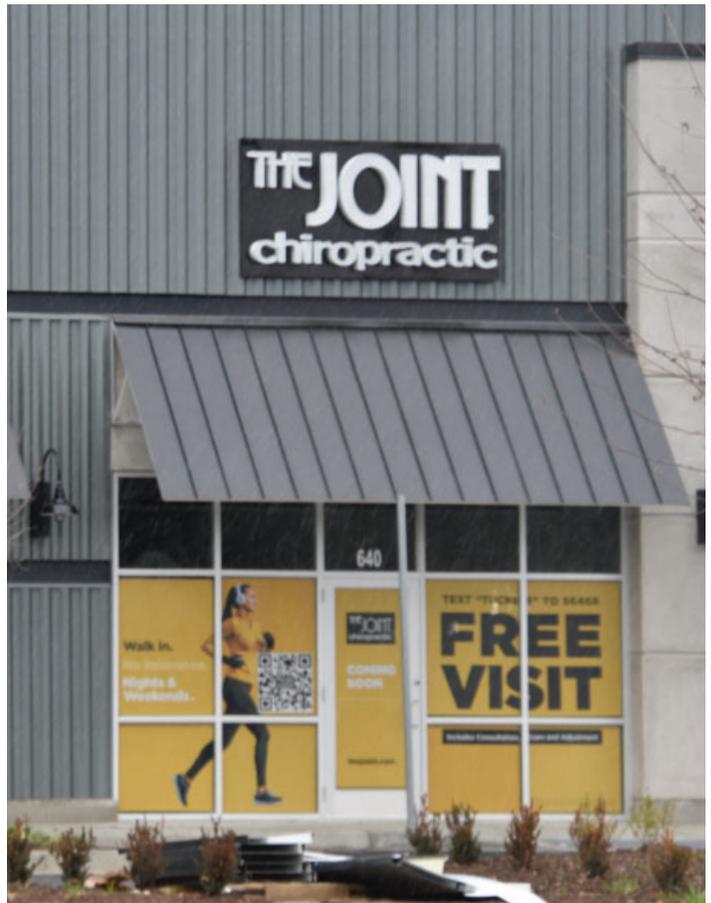
If you’re unfamiliar with some of the names of the restaurants, that’s no coincidence. Before the Marketplace, none of these eateries called Tucker home.

“When planning a new development for a community, we look for a mix of retailers that are not already in a particular market area,” said Shannon. “We generally do what’s called a ‘tenant void analysis’ to determine what tenants are not there and see if they might be interested in a particular development.”

“The Marketplace continues to build on Tucker’s vision as a place where you can live, work and play. It adds to Tucker’s growing quality of life, and it’s a great opportunity to expand the boundaries of Tucker by bringing in consumers and businesses from outside the community,” said Moffo.

In this case, Publix’s desire to modernize and to expand solidified it as the anchor in this new development.

“That definitely helped drive tenancy interest,” Shannon added. “A lot of times when we announce Publix in planned development, and there’s a cadre of tenants that like to be in the mix because in a shopping center environment they’ve found tremendous benefit to co-locating with a successful grocer especially such as Publix....On average, they generate



# MAKING GAINS

## SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY RECOGNIZED FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



Exciting things are happening at all seven of Tucker's cluster schools. Students are achieving and growing, and great strides are being made inside and outside of the classroom. No school is a better example of that than Smoke Rise Elementary.

The school has been on an upward trajectory for several years now, a turnaround that has drawn attention at the local and now even the state level. On December 3, Georgia's State Superintendent of Schools Richard Woods met with Smoke Rise administrators and toured the newly constructed school, an opportunity to see firsthand how progress is being made there. He also celebrated with staff the accomplishment of being named an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Distinguished School.

"It's nice to have some celebration at this time after what we've been facing over the past couple of years," Woods said. "It's proof that education and learning continue on. They don't stop."

The turnaround at Smoke Rise started in December 2014 when Pamela

McCloud became the school's principal. She admittedly took over in a difficult position, at a time when student achievement had fallen well below state standards. Over the course of the past seven years, McCloud and her staff have gotten the school STEM certified and brought test scores back to the point where they are now at an 89.2 percent College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score, among the highest scores in the State of Georgia.

"We've worked real hard to get to this point," McCloud said. "It's been an awesome journey."

The principal says the school's progress started with her efforts to connect with staff. Once relationships and priorities were established, she reached out to parents and students at the school to get them onboard. Several years later, they're all one harmonious group.

"Watching Principal McCloud and her talented and dedicated staff work together over the past several years to transform Smoke Rise Elementary has been amazing," said Lyle Collins, a member of the Smoke Rise Principal

Advisory Council. "They often say it is a true blessing to teach and help raise all of our beautiful children. The recent accomplishments by the school show their passion is at work daily."

Parents point to McCloud's philosophical stance ("We don't have the word 'no' at our school anymore; it's either 'yes' or 'not yet'") and her belief in inclusion ("When we say 'all students' with a capital A-L-L, we mean all students have to be taught") as reasons for her success as a principal. But it's the cultivation of a family environment at the school that has helped Smoke Rise to meet – and surpass – its achievement goals.

"Everyone has a part in this from custodians to the cafeteria," Woods explained. "If you're a part of this education family, you're a part of the team."

With the STEM certification, the ESEA honor and the skyrocketing achievement scores, Smoke Rise has built a basis for success in the years ahead. It's just another example of the tremendous progress being made at our Tucker Cluster schools.



# Tucker Cluster

## Updates & News

### IMPORTANT DATES

#### January 3

Teacher Planning Day

#### January 4

First Day of Second Semester

#### January 17

Schools closed for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

## Brag Sheet

### BROCKETT ELEMENTARY

- Teachers have completed at least two international baccalaureate (IB) units and students have really internalized the IB Learner Profile. They are recognized and celebrated for exhibiting the Learner Profile of the month.

### IDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

- Boasting the most diverse student population of any Tucker Cluster school, on December 5 Idlewood hosted an event for the Ethiopian community.

### SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

- The school hosted a Friends of Tanzania book drive, while co-sponsoring a food drive with neighboring Mountain West Church.

### TUCKER HIGH

- To help the less fortunate at a critical time of the year, the school sponsored an International Baccalaureate canned food drive this fall.



## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

# SMOKE RISE COUNTRY CLUB



Tucker is a community replete with gathering places. For some, it's a restaurant on Main Street. For others, it's a house of worship. Still others congregate in one of Tucker's many parks. But since 1999, Tucker's Smoke Rise community has boasted one of the finest gathering places in all of DeKalb County: Smoke Rise Country Club.

The club, which sits in the Kanawha neighborhood, boasts that it is "Tucker's best kept secret" and a place to "rejuvenate, relax, enjoy". The list of amenities reads like a wish list of anything that active families or individuals could want. They boast a semi-private, par-72, 18-hole golf course. There are eight tennis courts on site for recreational or league play. Members can take a dip in the junior Olympic-size swimming facility. Inside the clubhouse there is a dining room, a ballroom and even a boardroom for those important meetings.

Paul Carey is the general manager of Smoke Rise Country Club. After just four months on the job, Carey says he gets why this is such a special place to so many in the community.

"The Cofers, who were instrumental in starting this club, saw that this would give people in Tucker and Stone Mountain a place to gather," Carey said. "We currently have around 400 members, including people who have been here from Day One, to new younger families who are just moving in."

As the club seeks to expand its membership base, Carey points to the newly constructed Smoke Rise Elementary School and the potential for a beneficial partnership.

"We as a country club hope to support the new school and their families with junior golf and tennis programs," he explained.

Beyond the athletics, Smoke Rise has a robust offering of social programs. Last month, they did a Santa Brunch for over 150 people, and they hold brunches and events throughout the year for New Year's Eve, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and the Fourth of July.

"We are not at the top of the line when it comes to price," Carey shared. "We're not a club that asks for a \$20,000 initiation fee. We aim to be reasonable and affordable for families. We start at social memberships for as little as \$90 a month and our top line membership with golf and tennis is only \$380 a month."

The club has a membership director, Rylee Knight, who can answer any questions for potential members. Additional information can be found at the club's website [www.smokerisec.com](http://www.smokerisec.com).

## CITIZENS OF THE MONTH

# PAT SOLTYS, MATT ROBBINS, MICHELLE PENKAVA



Tucker is lucky to have a wealth of people who love and care about their community. Not only do they love Tucker; they find ways to put that love into action to make Tucker better. I've noticed it ever since I moved here, and I've been told that it's been a characteristic of the community for the generations preceding.

Three of the people who I've come to know, and who I would like to nominate for Citizens of the Month, are Pat Soltys, Matt Robbins and Michelle Penkava. *InTucker's* editor has a rule that no one serving on City Council or on an appointed board of commission can be named Citizen of the Month. That's why I think this is the perfect time to nominate these three public servants: their time as elected officials is over!

For the past four years, Pat Soltys has served District One as a City Council representative, essentially wearing two hats: that of City Councilmember and that of real estate industry leader. I'm not sure how she's managed to do it, but Pat has maintained her professional

success, while throwing her whole self into the needs and concerns of her constituents. She is a fixture in the Smoke Rise community and, even though she's stepping back from City Council, I know she will continue to be active in advocating for a better Tucker.

Exiting from the seat in District Two is Matt Robbins. Matt Robbins is my friend. Matt Robbins is everyone's friend. At 81 years old, he is among the liveliest and most outgoing people that I've ever met. Matt served six years on Tucker's City Council, but that's not what he's proudest of. Most mornings you can find Matt downtown reading to the blind. On weekends, he's often spotted chatting up parents and coaches at TYSA games at Henderson Park. As he leaves Council, Matt has the distinction of being the only person to serve as Mayor of Tucker other than Mayor Frank Auman. For his 80th birthday, Matt was made, by mayoral proclamation, honorary Mayor for a Day. He took on the responsibility with a gusto that I know he will bring to his post-Council life.

Michelle Penkava has been a force on City Council since the very beginning. A pivotal figure in Tucker's cityhood movement, Michelle has represented the residents of District Three with great passion and advocacy since 2016. Like Councilman Robbins, Michelle was term limited and was unable to run for re-election. Despite that, she accomplished many great things, especially late in her tenure. This includes her work to transform Chamblee Tucker Road into a complete street, which will hopefully force drivers to slow down and keep our pedestrians and cyclists a little bit safer. I know I'm not alone in my curiosity about Michelle's next steps; she is such a devoted public servant and she has so much more to give to our Tucker community.

While this month is about celebrating our new councilmembers-elect, I think it would be fitting for these three great individuals to be honored together as *InTucker's* Citizens of the Month.

*Nomination by Derik West*

# TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

## JACKIE MOFFO, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

### **What are the day-to-day responsibilities of an Economic Development Manager?**

My day-to-day responsibilities include collaborating with local, regional, and state partners to accomplish economic development initiatives for the City of Tucker which include business recruitment, retention and expansion, and marketing. My daily activities also include acting as a liaison and programming developer/implementer for the Tucker Downtown Development Authority, Tucker Urban Redevelopment Agency, as well as Tucker's local Community Improvement Districts.

### **Tell us about your professional background...**

I began my career in retail management and commercial sales with the Sherwin-Williams Paint Company. Selling to manufacturing plants, hotels, and the hospitality industry taught me a lot about the needs and demands of those sectors from an inside perspective. I applied this knowledge to my first economic development position as the Business Development Specialist for Athens-Clarke County's Economic Development Department. I expanded my economic development knowledge and experience working in the Metro Seattle market as the Vice President of Business Development for an economic development non-profit, the Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County in Tacoma, Washington. In coming home to Georgia, I knew I wanted to stay in the economic development field. I love coming to work knowing that my efforts help to make my community better and stronger.

### **What is your vision for Economic Development in Tucker?**

My vision for Tucker would be to create an Economic Development Strategic Plan that would create a pathway for Tucker to grow and support its current businesses while attracting new likeminded businesses, redevelopment, and talent with a community focus.

### **What do you like best about the job so far?**

I have loved falling in love with Tucker! Every day I have had the opportunity to learn something about Tucker's history or meet a member of the business community. Residents and businesses I have met have shown such wonderful interest and care about the future of Tucker. Their passion and commitment to this community is what makes me grateful and excited to be a part of Tucker's future.



## *Off the Wall*

### **If you're not in the office, where would we most likely find you?**

If I'm not in the office, you'll most likely find me at home working on a renovation project with my dogs, in my "workshop" (I enjoy refinishing furniture as a hobby), or on the golf course.

### **What is your favorite type of music?**

I enjoy modern folk music, and 2000s alternative/indie rock. Favorite bands include Bon Iver, Iron & Wine, MGMT, and Florence + the Machine. I would be lying if I didn't also add that I am a huge pop fan and love Britney Spears and Lady Gaga.

### **Have any New Year's resolutions?**

This year I am putting out a rather large challenge for myself as I hope to begin learning Spanish.

### **What's the last book you read?**

Admittedly I am more of a podcast listener and audio book person, but lately I have been re-reading some of the classics and am currently in the middle of Moby Dick.

# “ASK RIP”

by Rip Robertson, Parks and Recreation Director



Well, as we put the wraps on yet another year and begin anew, I would like to highlight some of what we

were able to accomplish in 2021 and tease about some of what's to come in 2022.

We emerged from the pandemic at full speed in late 2020 and really set our goals high for 2021. We were able to host our very first, in-house youth basketball season, albeit with some participation limits. It was a huge success with lots of fun and learning. We concluded the season by crowning our 10 and under all-star team as the GRPA District 6 champions and hosting the GRPA eight and under state tournament. Get excited about some 2022 March Madness; you can come out and watch your Tucker 10 and under team compete as we host the GRPA state 10 and under championships on March 4 and 5.

We then turned our attention to spring and youth baseball. We had over 125 kids register and play in our inaugural youth baseball program, and again had a great time. Our eight and under coach

pitch team competed in the GRPA state tournament in Gainesville and played two very close games. It was a phenomenal first season and we are too excited to get started this season. Beginning January 15, we will open baseball and softball registration for Tucker residents only. If our youth basketball registration is any indication, you may want to sign up early. We filled up quickly in basketball, so register early to make sure you have a spot for spring. Full registration will be available on February 15 (the same day pitchers and catchers report to Spring Training).

As spring turned to summer and kids got out of school, we again hosted Summer Camp. The participation was huge and, due to some continuing caution, we had to limit our numbers. We are confident that this year's camp will be fully available and encourage our families to register early. If last year's fun packed summer is any indication, spots will go quickly. There will be plenty of fun with sports, crafts, swimming and learning. Registration will open on February 14.

For fall fun, we hosted the Haunted Trail, Campfire & Cocktails and our North Pole events with incredible participation.

We also have some very exciting news for spring 2022: we have partnered with

GGLeagues to offer our new eSports leagues. Registration opens January 31 for several popular games (Madden 21, Rocket League, Fortnite and more). The season will begin in April. The Parks and Recreation Department is exploring the possibility of creating a new and exciting gaming room.

Of course, our adult community had many exciting opportunities in 2021 with our very popular Adult Field Day, and this year's event will be expanded to include more competition and live music. Stay tuned for that coming in May. We hope to add live music and games in our parks this summer.

January will provide time for service with the MLK Day of Service planned in Tucker for Monday January 17. We will have improvement projects in several of our parks and greenspaces, as well as a food drive to benefit NETWorks. There is still time for you to volunteer by checking our website at [tuckerga.gov/parks/events](http://tuckerga.gov/parks/events).

Continue to check our website and Facebook pages for full information about current and upcoming programs. We are excited about the new year and always encourage our community to get involved both physically and by giving us feedback or suggestions for new opportunities.



The Mayor, members of the City Council and community volunteers gathered on December 17 for the ribbon cutting of the new Fitness Court at the Church Street greenspace in downtown Tucker. (Credit: [tuckerga.gov](http://tuckerga.gov))



## TUCKER Community Corner



### **1/5 – Lifelong Community Meeting**

**7-8:30 p.m., Zoom**

Tucker Lifelong Community Project is committed to creating a “home for a lifetime” by expanding accessibility of service programs, diverse housing and transportation options, and by encouraging healthy lifestyles. Find the Zoom link at [tuckercivic.org](http://tuckercivic.org).

### **1/17 – MLK Day of Service**

**9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Various Parks**

Tucker Parks and Recreation invites you to a “Day On” of service with three opportunities to give back: Henderson Park clean-up, Church Street greenspace beautification and a supply drive benefiting NETWorks. More information can be found at [tuckerga.gov/parks/events](http://tuckerga.gov/parks/events).

### **Every Thursday – Tucker Farmers Market**

Though the weather may be cold, the Tucker Farmers Market continues online all winter long! Be sure to complete your orders by the Wednesday morning before market day. Orders can be made at [www.TFMonlineStore.com](http://www.TFMonlineStore.com).