

INTUCKER

APRIL 2023 | VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 4



TUCKER'S SUMMER OF FUN IS ON THE HORIZON

EDITOR'S NOTE



This is a busy time here at City Hall. Lots of planning, conducting studies and looking forward to our City's future.

Budget season has started so while we are conducting current business we are also looking at how to prioritize our City funds for the next fiscal year. This is always an exciting time as we work with our electeds to identify important projects, consult with our Comprehensive Plan as a guide and dream about Tucker's future.

In this issue, the Mayor writes about community engagement and how to communicate with the City in various ways. Citizen input and feedback is what drives our City and it is important to have an invested community. I have always said 'Tucker loves a meetin'. We show up and speak out, share ideas and want to be part of the solution.

Check out our Business section for an update on the Economic Development Strategic Plan. A first for the City, this study and plan will help shape the growth of our business community. The ribbon cutting for Soap Doggy Dog (what a fun name!) was a great celebration and their unique mobile service is a great addition to Tucker.

The well-loved TKR Summer of Fun is back with some added events...again. We've got your summer nights planned with live music on the first Fridays, movies in the parks on the third Thursdays and of course the July 3 Celebration of Independence and Fireworks Extravaganza.

We are finally able to officially welcome our new DKPD liaison, Lt. Ridling. Most of you will recognize him as he keeps us safe at all the Tucker street festivals. It is my pleasure to introduce Sgt. Obester as the writer for our monthly On the Beat. It has been a joy working with him over the years and I love reading his articles.

Take care and stay safe, my Tucker.

SONJA SZUBSKI
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER

Summer is just around the corner and we are excited to announce the First Friday line-up and new addition of Third Thursdays on page 8.



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

This month's honoree comes from a long-time Tucker family and has spent her life serving others. Congratulations Patricia Smith! Page 10.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

City of Tucker's Inaugural

Small Business Resources Expo

THURSDAY
APRIL 20
2023

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

- Event will feature:
- Agencies and resources that you may not be aware of
 - Opportunities for one-on-one interaction with small business experts
 - Information about loans, grants, workshops, online classes and consulting assistance available at low- or no-cost

REGISTER NOW FOR THIS FREE EVENT
TKRSmallBiz.eventbrite.com

Tucker City Hall
1975 Lakeside Parkway, St. 350B
Tucker GA 30084

For more information email abrooks@tuckerga.gov

RESOURCE TOPICS

- Business Planning
- Finance
- Growth and Development
- Workforce Training and Talent Acquisition

INVITED AGENCIES

- Decide DeKalb
- Small Business Administration
- WorkSource DeKalb
- Piedmont College
- Small Business Development Center
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- And more

BUSINESS BOOM

Our Economic Development Dept. is working hard for Tucker. Learn about the inaugural Small Business Resources Expo and EDSP on page 7.



TEEN MENTAL HEALTH

Read why two Tucker Tigers returned to their home field to share awareness about World Teen Mental Health Day on page 12.



INTUCKER

Sonja Szubski - Editor-in-Chief

Dede Musser - Design

Marcus Etienne &
Robin Stevens - Contributors

Printed and mailed by
AtlantaPrintAndMail.com, Inc.

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

INTUCKER is a monthly publication of the City of Tucker, Georgia.

All rights reserved.

MMXXIII



From the Mayor

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being Mayor of Tucker is the opportunities I get to go out to events and engage our residents. My wife Gaye and I especially enjoy speaking with our elementary school students. A major part of the second-grade curriculum in our Tucker Cluster is Government, and I am always honored to speak with the classes about the role of our local government. One of my favorite questions to ask them is a stumper but there is always one student who eventually gets it right: "Who is the Mayor's boss?" The answers run the gamut from the President, to the Governor, to my wife (lots of giggles) until one child will raise their hand and say, "My Mom" or "My Dad." They listen in surprise as I say yes and explain that I and the other elected officials serve at the pleasure of our residents. It is our job to fulfill our duties as expressed in our oaths of office and our City Charter. If we don't, our bosses will certainly hire someone new.

There are many opportunities for citizens to provide feedback and comments to the Council and to me. We have our twice-monthly public meetings at City Hall. There is time set aside at the beginning of the regular meetings for public comment, when each speaker is allotted 2 minutes to comment on whatever is important to them. While the Council and I can't interact or answer questions during this time, we listen and can follow up as needed. This is your time to say what you want and make sure you are heard. You may attend in person or even virtually via Zoom. We also have public hearings on many of the items we consider, which is time specially set aside for you to be heard on specific issues. But beyond that, we're your neighbors, and we expect to hear from you wherever we meet up. And of course, I invite you to reach out via email with any questions or concerns after watching our meetings or

reading our many publications. If you are unable to attend City Council meetings in person or watch live, there is a video link on past agendas to watch.

One of the more fun ways to engage our citizens is through our many street festivals. The City always tries to have a presence at all public events whether it is our event, or a volunteer led event like Tucker Day or the Tucker Chili Cook-off. This month the City is hosting a Spring Fling on April 15 at the Church Street Greenspace to kick off the baseball season and celebrate the end of a rainy winter. The City will have tent at the event to engage with our residents on the Comprehensive Plan 5-Year Update. The Comprehensive Plan is the main document that the City uses for guidance on plans and goals as we move forward. The current plan was adopted by Council back in 2018 and is required to have a five-year update. The focus of the update will be to renew the Community Work Program, adding tasks that will further advance the goals of the original Tucker Tomorrow Plan.

Full information and dates for public engagement for the five-year update can be found on the Plans and Studies page on our website, tuckerga.gov. The Council, City staff and I are here to work for you, the community of Tucker. We are residents and invested stakeholders and we encourage your input. I hope to see you at the Spring Fling and our bi-monthly City Council meetings.

**FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE MEETING DATES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Community Survey: To be released in early April
- Community Meeting #1: April 15, 2023 at Tucker Spring Fling (Church Street Greenspace)
- Community Meeting #2: May 4, 2023 at Tucker City Hall

PUBLIC HEARING DATES:

- City Council: March 27, 2023
- City Council: May 8, 2023
- Planning Commission: May 18, 2023
- City Council: June 12, 2023
- City Council: June 26, 2023

City Council Update



Mayor Auman swears in Charles Dewitt as the newest Director on the DDA before the start of the March 27 meeting.

Tucker's Mayor and Council held two regular Council meetings in March. Mayor Auman explained that in recent years the second meeting of the month is typically a work session and a way to have public discussion and presentations. While the City is standing up the Public Works department and with the upcoming budget season, both monthly meetings will be scheduled meetings until further notice.

Council unanimously approved the ordinance to add an amendment to Tucker's building code to require better sprinkler systems in multi-family units.

Tucker Council also unanimously approved four contracts pertaining to probation services for the municipal court, a Housing Study awarded to KB Advisory for \$74,700, Street Resurfacing awarded to Allied Paving for \$3,291,521.65, and Sidewalk Design on E. Ponce de Leon awarded to Keck and Wood in the amount of \$91,885. The final contract for design and construction documents for parking and pickleball courts at Tucker Recreation Center was awarded to Root Design for \$77,000 with a 6-1 vote.

Approvals of resolutions for adoption followed. The proposed budget amendment for FY '23 was approved unanimously. The Mayor then presented appointments for three boards for approval. Jason Burton, Bob Espy and Neal Stubblefield were reappointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals with a 6-1

vote. Terry Grandison and Josh Wallace were reappointed to the Public Facilities Authority with a 6-1 vote. Finally, Charles Dewitt's appointment to the Downtown Development Authority was approved 5-2.

In the second meeting of the month, the council heard first reads on two ordinances required to move forward with the addition of Public Works to the City's services. The first is to amend the code to create a Stormwater Utility. The second is to amend the Charter of the City of Tucker to accommodate the results of the referendum from November on the addition of public works and address the last outstanding recommendation of the charter review commission to increase the maximum number of days between first and second reads from 60 to 65 days.

The meeting was also the kickoff of the Comprehensive Plan Five-Year Update with the first of two public hearings. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2018 and the Department of Community Affairs requires a small update at the five-year mark. The study and update will concentrate on celebrating accomplishments and reworking the Community Work Plan. Public hearing and community engagement dates for the process can be found online at tuckerga.gov/ttupdate.

The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be held on April 10, 2023 at 7 p.m. at Tucker City Hall, 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B, Tucker, GA 30084.

DATES TO KNOW

April 3

Downtown Development Authority

April 4

Zoning Board of Appeals

April 5

Traffic Court

April 10

City Council Meeting

April 12

Traffic Court

April 19

Environmental Court

April 20

Planning Commission

April 24

City Council Meeting

FOLLOW US



nextdoor



ON THE BEAT with Sgt. Obester

Lt. J. Ridling is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be contacted by email at jridling@dekalbcountyga.gov or by phone at (678) 597-9040.

"The more things change, the more they stay the same" is the saying of the day here at Tucker Precinct. Before I explain, let me first introduce myself.

My name is Sergeant John Obester, and I am one of the Day Watch supervisors here at Tucker Precinct. After a memorable career working throughout DeKalb County, I was assigned to Tucker several years ago. While I prefer to stay behind the scenes (and out of trouble), I have been asked to write this monthly On the Beat article for the city. Captain Berg's promotion and reassignment has provided me with the opportunity to finally realize my dream of becoming a famous writer. Unfortunately, my 15 minutes of fame ended many years ago! My primary responsibility now is to ensure our great officers stay on their toes, at least during the daylight hours.

Speaking of great Tucker Precinct officers, we are fortunate to have several former officers back in our building - in expanded capacities. The first is my former partner on Day Watch, our new Tucker Precinct Commander, Major Mathew Harden. Since leaving Tucker Precinct years ago, Major Harden

has gained a wealth of experience and knowledge during his various assignments with the Department. These experiences include working as a supervisor and manager in our Special Victims Unit (SVU) and in our Support Services Division. More recently, Major Harden spent time as the Assistant Precinct Commander of our East and North-Central Precincts. Major Harden is a patient, thoughtful, and experienced individual who I know will make Tucker the most responsive police precinct in DeKalb County.

We are also fortunate to have a new Assistant Precinct Commander here at Tucker, Captain Donnie James. Although he never worked at Tucker Precinct as an officer, Captain James is very familiar with the area through his various stints in our Criminal Investigations Division (CID), including as a supervisor in our Narcotics Division (like Miami Vice, only without the Ferrari and nice clothes). Captain James also spent a good amount of time leading our nationally known police academy based in Lithonia. He brings a researched-based, instructional mind to Tucker Precinct which will be of immense benefit to our younger officers.

Finally, we are extremely lucky to have back our new City of Tucker Liaison Officer, Lieutenant Joseph Ridling. Some of you might remember a younger (and beardless) Lieutenant Ridling when he was assigned to Tucker as an officer with our Interactive Community Policing (ICP) Unit. For many years, the ICP officers were afforded the opportunity to delve deep into various community issues throughout DeKalb County. Today, there is no DKPD officer that knows the Tucker area better than Lieutenant Ridling. Plus, he brings his world-famous beard to our team!

While you may be overwhelmed hearing all the "new" names at Tucker Precinct, rest assured that everyone – those of us who have been here all along and those who have returned – want the best for the community. Having known and worked with our updated leadership team for many years, today I am extremely optimistic about the future of Tucker Precinct. While some things may have changed, our commitment to the safety and security of the Tucker community has not.



Major Mathew Harden



Captain Donnie James



Lieutenant Joseph Ridling

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

SOAP DOGGY DOG

This is what you might call a tale of two businesses. One of the newest businesses to open in Tucker, Soap Doggy Dog, promises to literally bring a pooch-pampering experience to your door.

"People have busy lives, and because we come to them, that saves time and gas money, which we all know is at premium prices these days," said owner Kim Briscoe. Her mobile grooming trailer is a fully contained dog bathing and grooming service on wheels.

The other business is Swept Away Cleaning and Janitorial, whose co-owner Starlene Kirkland passed away in 2022 at the age of 54.

The two businesses are officed next door to one another on Hanfred Lane. There exist many versions of the quote "There's no such thing as a coincidence," but they all have similar meanings. Basically, everything that happens is the result of a calculated move that leads us to where we are. Briscoe's and Kirkland's offices being next door to one another is no coincidence either. The two women shared a friendship, mentor-mentee

relationship, and an entrepreneurial spirit that propelled them each to launch and run successful business ventures. "The loss of Starlene is doubly hard for me because she was my mentor," said Briscoe. "She had been working with me for about six months before her passing and is the reason that I was able to lease my space."

The phrase "circle of life" as defined by Collins Dictionary represents the infinite nature of energy; if something dies, it gives new life to another. Kirkland was featured in the May 2021 issue of InTucker magazine talking about the impacts of COVID-19 on her home cleaning business. "Business was down 50 percent in April of 2020," said Kirkland. "People were afraid to have us come and clean. They just didn't feel comfortable having people other than immediate family inside their homes." But she would not be defeated. She took it upon herself to watch marketing videos on YouTube and to step up her PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) game and cleaning protocols, thus pivoting her business to stay afloat.

Briscoe's journey through the pandemic was also negative in the beginning. "I was laid-off from my corporate job of 12 years," said Briscoe. She needed an income. "My next-door neighbor told me about a part-time dog bathing job at FurBusters located in downtown Tucker. I took the job and immediately realized that dog grooming was my new passion!" Yet another connection between the two, both cleaning businesses one for dogs and one for homes. To stumble upon the connections between these two ladies was serendipitous.

Briscoe said about three years ago, when she fell in love with her then 12-week old standard poodle named Yoshi, "around week 16, he was so fluffy, I couldn't see his eyes!"

"I failed to read the small print," she added. "Poodles are one of the highest maintenance breeds to own!" But she was already smitten. "I had little experience with serious dog grooming, I quickly learned via OTD (On-The-Dog) training! After a few bad hair days, several Grooming for Dummies books, and tons of YouTube videos, I perfected the poodle cut!"

Flash back to how Kirkland's business was impacted by the pandemic, but as her own boss, she had the responsibility, determination and accountability to



herself and her employees to keep the business solvent.

"The idea to go mobile came to me when the whole world shut down and closed its doors," said Briscoe. "People were hesitant to leave their homes and masks were required everywhere." She reflected that Soap Doggy Dog seemed like a perfect fit at the perfect time. "Little to no human contact, bring your dog to the door on a 6-foot leash, and we take care of things from there. It's been a wet and woolly ride, but over 1,000 dog grooms later, I'm still waggin!"

Briscoe says she's excited to be back in Tucker now with her own business. "I just get a welcoming vibe from the people I've met here." Tucker is her second office location. "Business is great which has allowed us to grow and expand."

The circle of life continues. Kirkland's business legacy is being carried on by her business partner and, suffice it to say, her entrepreneurial spirit is being carried on through Briscoe and the birth of her dream business. "She was a huge advocate for me, she was a savvy businesswoman, and a good person, I miss her," said Briscoe."

Soap Doggy Dog services a 10-mile radius of the 30084 zip code. Appointments and inquiries can be made on the website: soapdoggydog.com



BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



The city is hosting its first-ever small business resources

expo on April 20

from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

at City Hall. The event, themed Creating Connections, will bring together subject matter experts from local and regional agencies to aid, counsel, and refer small business owners and entrepreneurs to information and resources to maintain and strengthen their company. Registration is strongly encouraged, free and open until April 13. Entrepreneurs and small business owners can register to attend by visiting TKRSmallBiz.eventbrite.com.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The city's economic development strategic plan (commissioned by the City Council) is on track for completion and expected to be adopted by Council at its April 10 regular meeting.

This plan and its recommendations will:

- Provide the specific steps needed to guide Tucker's economic development policies, programs, and investments over the next five years
 - Empower the City to define its vision, mission, and values to guide planning, zoning, and economic development priorities
 - Attract high-quality investment and redevelopment activity
 - Help strategically shape the character of redevelopment within the city
- Consensus-building workshops for the plan were held at City Hall for the

public outreach portion of the data gathering which included two surveys (with nearly 300 responses), five public meetings, and two business lunch-and-learns. Those workshops served as an opportunity for public comment on the information gathered. Evaluation of the feedback and other research and metrics acquired will be used by the KB Advisory consultant team to form their recommendations tactics and for how the plan should be executed.

KB Advisory offered the first overarching draft recommendations based on community data and of public input at the city council's work session February 27.

Last August KB Advisory Group's bid won the contract to create an economic development as required by the city's overall comprehensive plan.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT QUARTERLY UPDATE

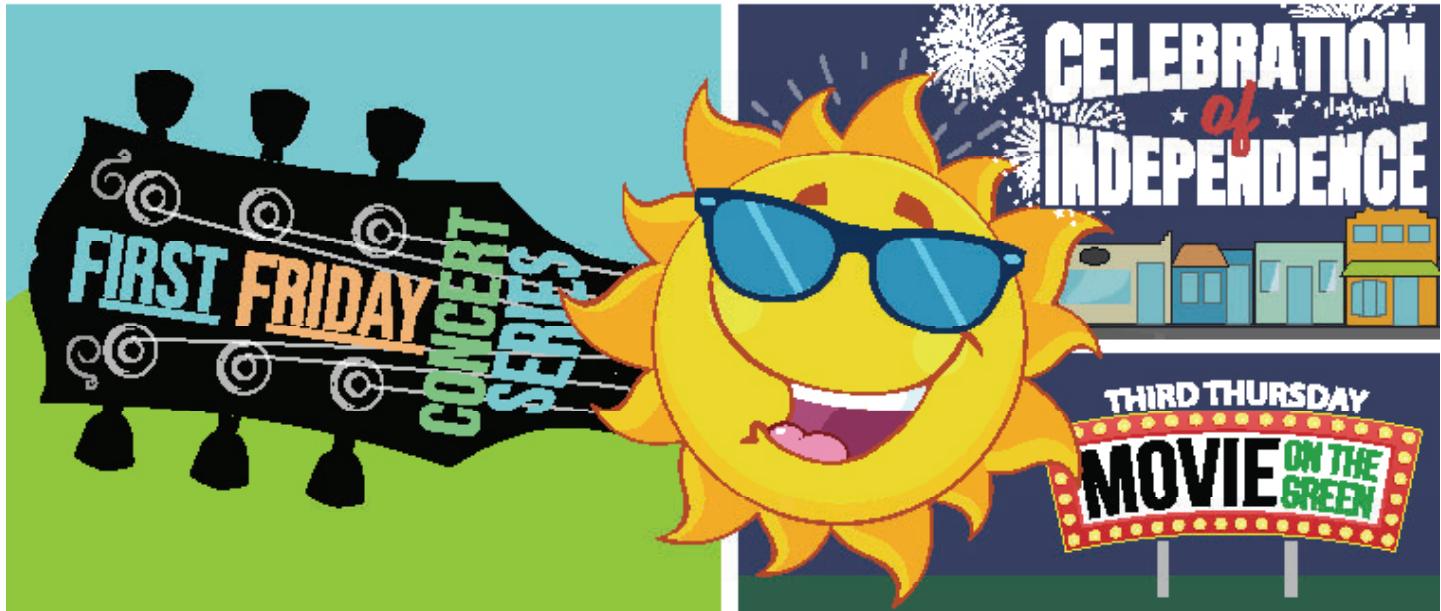
The city, in partnership with Discover DeKalb, wrapped up the third year of Tucker Restaurant Week activities in February. Twenty-three local establishments signed on to serve up special fare and special prices to entice potential diners to come out. Participation and interest in the event has grown larger each year.

As of March 13, forty applications for new Occupational Tax Certificates, often referred to as business licenses, were received by the city.

Two of those new businesses chose to have ribbon cutting ceremonies presented by the city. A ribbon cutting was also held to celebrate NETworks Cooperative Ministries' move to a new, larger location.

SETTING THE SUMMERTIME SCENE

ANNUAL TKR SUMMER OF FUN



TUCKERGA.GOV/SUMMER



/tuckerparksrec



/tuckerparksandrec

TKR SUMMER OF FUN RETURNS WITH NEW SERIES

Tucker has a rich history of community-led events. Tucker Day has been a staple of the spring for years, save for a quick stint in the fall due to COVID. Taste of Tucker has graced both Main Street and our tastebuds for 13 years. Christmas on Main was a longtime annual, community-run event until the City assumed its responsibility.

In 2018, when the City first raised the idea of holding a new series of events for the Tucker community, Mayor Auman was reluctant. When existing events are so beloved by many residents, it would be thoughtless at best to take away from the important volunteer efforts that make up the heart of Tucker. However, time has shown that City events have not overshadowed the work of community members. Instead, Tucker's residents have more opportunities for fellowship and celebration, and TKR Summer of Fun has proven to be an exciting addition to our calendars.

First introduced in June 2018's "From the Mayor," TKR Summer of Fun began as a series of three events: Movie on Main, an Independence Day "fireworks extravaganza," and the City's National Night Out celebration. For our inaugural Movie on Main, nearly 300 people set up chairs and blankets on Main Street to watch *The Greatest Showman*. On July 3, our Independence Day Celebration featured an impressive fireworks display downtown

and drew out many residents to Main Street to observe the holiday and the fun. Our second annual National Night Out was held at Livsey Elementary and served as a valuable chance for residents to learn more about local law enforcement and thank them for their service.

In the years since its inception in 2018, TKR Summer of Fun has evolved, gaining new events and losing others. Adult Field Day joined the roster in 2022 only to be moved to the fall for 2023 to keep participants out of the heat. National Night Out has moved to the fall as well. New in 2022 was the First Friday Concert Series, a sequence of concerts held on the First Friday of every month and featuring musicians Nathan Angelo, The Woodys, The Mike Veal Band, and A1A Band for May, June, August, and September respectively.

This year, new events once again join the roster to make the 2023 TKR Summer of Fun, spearheaded by the City of Tucker Parks and Recreation Department, our biggest yet. Third Thursday succeeds Movie on Main as an opportunity for residents to watch movies together. Instead of Main Street, attendees will gather at different parks around Tucker and are once again invited to bring chairs and blankets to make themselves comfortable on the Third Thursdays of May through September.

THIRD THURSDAY



- May 18 – Moana
Church Street Greenspace
- June 15 –
DC League of Super Pets
Montreal Park
- July 20 – Shrek
Henderson Park East
- August 17 –
Puss in Boots: The Last Wish
Peters Park
- September 21 – Coco
Church Street Greenspace

CELEBRATION OF INDEPENDENCE



Our Independence Day Celebration returns this year. We invite you to join us July 3 on Main Street for fireworks, food trucks, and live music by Mark Ware, a songwriter and country artist hailing from Monticello, Georgia. There will be plenty of fun for the whole family including a kids zone with bounce houses and other activities.

Also returning for 2023 is the First Friday Concert Series. This year's artists span a wide range of genres including country, Americana, 90s covers and more.

The Nashville, TN-based Sugar Lime Blue kicks off the concert series on May 5 with their unique style that combines jazz, blues and country. June 2's performance will feature Departure, the Journey Tribute Band with a 15 year history of emulating the iconic 80s rock star look, sound and feel. Atlanta local After School Special will bring classic 90s hits to the stage on August 4. Rounding out the series on September 4, the returning A1A Band will perform their Official Jimmy Buffett Tribute Show.

Each of the First Friday Concerts starts at 7 p.m., and attendees are invited to begin setting up at 5:30. Third Thursday movies begin at 7 p.m., and the Independence Day Celebration on Main Street will begin at 6 p.m. with fireworks set to launch after 9.

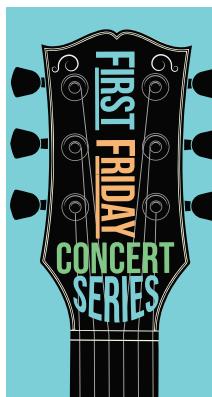
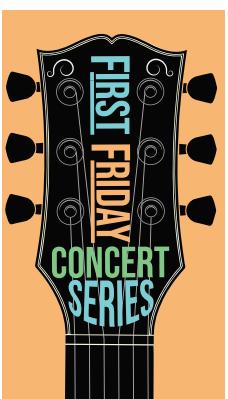
FIRST FRIDAY



MAY 5, 2023
SUGAR LIME BLUE



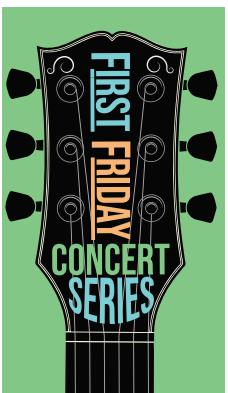
JUNE 2, 2023
DEPARTURE



AUGUST 4, 2023
AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAL



SEPTEMBER 1, 2023
A1A BAND



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

PATRICIA RAMEY SMITH

Having the privilege of working with this servant-leader has been amazing. You are always greeted with a "Hi there." Then you notice the beautiful person before you with a radiant smile, eyes that really see you, ears to listen to your thoughts and an unbelievable caring heart. She is quick to listen and slow to speak. But when she does, her words have a quality of wisdom and understanding. This is none other than Patricia Ramey Smith.

She is the youngest of seven. She grew up in Tucker, attended Smoke Rise Elementary School and Tucker High School. The mother of Gary and Emmy Award-winning Terry, one daughter-in-love (as she calls her), three grandsons whom she adores. A woman of great courage and even greater faith, at an early age she became a widow and several years later was moved by God to relocate her family to Columbus, Ohio. There she received her mastery of grant writing and working with non-profit organizations. In the early 2000s she moved back to Georgia to be close to her aging parents. She now resides in the family home on Tucker Industrial Road (formerly Ramey Road, named for her family).

For many years Patricia was the executive director of a homeless shelter for women and their children where she provided aid and counseling to help them get on their feet. She collaborated with many philanthropists,

celebrities, and politicians to bring awareness to this need. With this collective knowledge, in 2018 she became an intricate part of the revitalization of the Peters Park Community. Her efforts include organizing cleanups, fund-raisers, instituting a prayer vigil before each cleanup and all events for Peters Park, and going before the Mayor and Council to advocate for her community. She was also very instrumental in writing a matching grant for our beloved William McKinley Peters Park for adult exercise equipment. She worked diligently with the City of Tucker for the installation of landscaping on Elmdale Road, sign toppers and three gateway signs for Peters Park.

In June 2022 faced with an enormous challenge in her life, emergency brain surgery, Patricia with phenomenal faith recovered in a remarkable period of time. Patricia says, "God spared my life for a reason, and I'm going to live out my purpose of what God wants me to do."

Patricia is currently Senior Executive Director at MWR Financial. There she helps provide financial services, tools and educational materials to propel members towards financial security. Along with this, she is now working to establish The Peters Park Community as a 501(c)(3).

Patricia is a person that deserves recognition, and we nominate her for Citizen of the Month.

Nomination by Linda Clark and Virginia Turks



TEAM TUCKER

Spotlight

LILLIAN LOWE, BUILDING PERMIT TECH

What has been your career journey that led you to Tucker?

Continuing education and gaining new skills to successfully accomplish the roles and responsibilities assigned for completion. My career journey includes working with people to accomplish their goals and providing great customer service. Communication and organization skills are essential to providing current and accurate information in a friendly and timely manner. The love of working with

companies and people to accomplish all goals set for various projects and visions.

What is your role and responsibilities for the Building Department?

As a permit tech my day includes processing and issuing permit applications for residential and commercial trades (plumbing, electrical, and mechanical). I also email review comments to customers and process open records requests for the Building Department.

What do you enjoy most about Team Tucker?

I enjoy working (9am-5pm) with professionals that I can learn from, and who encourage each other daily. I like the established core values, beliefs, and culture. The established procedures and policies in place are setting the stage for future growth and enhanced quality of life for Tucker. We are motivated here at Tucker to help the city be the best it can be!

Off the Wall

What are some of your hobbies?

Some of my hobbies include painting, cooking, and sewing.

If your friends had three words to describe you, what would they say?

Trustworthy, dedicated, and kind-hearted.

What is the movie you could watch over and over?

The Sound of Music

What is your fondest childhood memory?

Time spent with my grandparents, "Running after a woodpecker in the country with my cousins and watching a beautiful monarch butterfly sit on my right shoulder."

Who has had the biggest influence in your life?

My grandmother.



TUCKER ALUMNI RETURN HOME TO OFFER SUPPORT TO STUDENTS



As Tucker High School students slowly filled up the auditorium, THS graduate, former UGA football player and NFL player Jonathan Ledbetter overheard kids' conversations. As they were looking in their gift bags, the kids said that "they gave us soap because they think we stink," which he found funny.

Ledbetter and fellow THS alumni pro football player Elijah Sullivan helped host a talk with students for World Mental Health Day through his foundation, Led a Better Way.

"I am just very grateful that me and Eli here were able to help try to push them to be successful individuals and successful kids after high school." Ledbetter said.

The event consisted of a speech from Ledbetter, special guests and prizes. The NFL defensive end spoke to the students, explaining why he was there and the importance of mental health.

"The reason why we are here today is because of teen mental awareness," Ledbetter said. "I know there is a stigma around mental health. Not everyone wakes up feeling ok. It's ok not to feel ok. It's ok to feel bad. It's ok to express those feelings with people you care about and others around you."

During the event Ledbetter instructed the students to take a journal out of the gift bags they received and write three characteristics that described them. The former Tiger then went around the

auditorium and asked them to share what they wrote. Ledbetter explained to them that journaling can help with mental health. The former Bulldog said that he journals every day. He writes how he feels and suggested they do the same to improve their mental health. During the event Ledbetter told students another way to improve their mental health is to speak positivity to themselves.

"I am going to tell y'all a little bit of my transition," Ledbetter said. "You guys are probably like, 'who is up here talking to me? He did not do this and this and that. He is probably a little goody boy' and what not."

After leaving THS Ledbetter went through an identity crisis. Ledbetter said he knew he was good at football but was not sure if he wanted to be a football player. Ledbetter shared that as a freshman he was arrested for possession of alcohol and marijuana and for drinking and driving, and it is by the grace of God that he is still alive today afterward.

"I fell asleep at a stoplight for 35 minutes with my foot on the brake with ongoing traffic in front of me," Ledbetter said. "I was the first car at the stoplight. The police officers and investigators had no idea how the car did not move and how I did not get hit by multiple oncoming cars and how I am still alive. When I went to jail that day, I feel like God came over me because other than the beginning, I have no recollection of anything else."

During that period Ledbetter thought getting in trouble with the law was his identity. Ledbetter is thankful for positive friends that helped him get back on track.

"The village that started with me at Tucker High School and the people who I continued to talk to and poured into me surrounded me and protected me," Ledbetter said.

Ledbetter's support system also helped him get through another tough period in his life. He was not drafted to the NFL while watching live at a party with over 250 guests and media.

"I cried in my aunt's house in front of all my guests," Ledbetter said. "I thought my life was over."

Ledbetter said his family and friends encouraged him, and he eventually worked his way into the NFL as a free agent. His friend Sullivan, who played football for Kansas State University and plays in the United States Football League, echoed the same sentiments of having a support system.

"You got to have a strong support system around you," Sullivan said. "There are going to be times when you are kind of going to doubt yourself. There are times where you are probably not doing the right thing. No matter what, it is always good to have a group of friends who you can talk to."

Towards the end of the event Ledbetter led a meditation with the audience. He later stuck around for pictures and autographs. The two Tucker 2015 graduates were glad to give back to their alma mater.

"I think everything in the event went well," Ledbetter said. "I really like the beginning. Man, these kids are crazy. I usually forget. We come in here to try to talk all sophisticated and stuff like that, but these are high school kids. We put a bunch of stuff in their bags, and they were like 'they gave us some soap, they think we stank.' I just started dying laughing. No matter what, kids are just kids."



TUCKER CLUSTER

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

April 3-7
Spring Break

April 17
Board of Education Meeting

BRAG SHEET

BROCKETT ELEMENTARY

- Brockett Elementary partnered with Councilmember Cara Schroeder to clean up their outdoor garden and set up raised beds for each grade.

IDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

- Idlewood Elementary placed first in the 21st Annual Sagamore Hills Mathematics Tournament versus other elementary schools in the DeKalb County School District.

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- Livsey students placed third in the 21st Annual Sagamore Hills Mathematics Tournament versus other elementary schools in the DeKalb County School District. They recently held their STEM Night for 50 families, and 3 students won DeKalb Watershed's Art Calendar Contest.

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

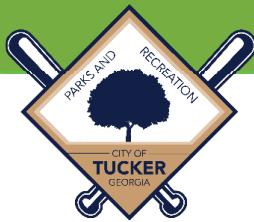
- Smoke Rise Elementary held a student art show and auction March 15 and STEM Night February 7, giving students the opportunity to show off their creations and achievements. Staff recently presented about their journey from a "Focus School" to a "Distinguished School" at the ESEA Conference in Indianapolis.

TUCKER HIGH

- Tucker High celebrated Black History Month in February by incorporating HBCU college readiness, and 100 students were accepted to college programs throughout the month.

FIT & FUN IN TUCKER

contributed by Tucker Parks and Recreation



Fitzgerald Park's water and sewer upgrades have been completed and it's time to move to our next phase in the renovation process. The next step will be a complex phase that will include new lighting on Fields 1, 2 and 4 and hope to get ordered and installed this summer. It will also include the installation of a new turf field on field 2 that will serve as the main playing field. It will host youth football, lacrosse, and soccer to start and have other uses as we expand and add new programs. This phase will then include the completion of renovations, including repaving the drives, expanding parking for easy accessibility for the entire community, sidewalks and upgraded stormwater controls. There are also new and upgraded facilities with restrooms and concessions planned.

The Mayor and Council recently approved a contract to begin design and engineering for new parking and a pickleball facility at the Tucker Recreation Center (TRC). This approval will assist our department in expanding the availability of pickleball programming and provide much needed parking at the TRC. This project will be paired with the rebuilding project of the tennis courts at Rosenfeld Park and provide a second full tennis facility for our community. These two projects will be scheduled to allow full use during the construction phases of each. The TRC parking and pickleball court project is projected to take between 12 – 16 months. During the construction phase of the parking and pickleball project, we will design and engineer the

rebuilding of the tennis courts at Rosenfeld Park. The Rosenfeld project will include much needed stormwater control to alleviate the current erosion issues in, around and under the current tennis courts and a complete demolition of the wall and courts and rebuilding tennis courts on the same location.

During the construction phase at Rosenfeld Park, the Henderson Park courts will be available for tennis play and can accommodate all levels of play. We hope to have both projects completed by spring/summer of 2024.

The Johns Homestead Park dam replacement and park renovation is in the engineering and design phase. There are some geotechnical studies, as well as dam engineering concepts being completed and will be submitted to various permitting authorities for feedback and approval. Once we have the preliminary plans completed and any feedback incorporated, there will be a community meeting to discuss the plans before moving to the next phase for this project. This is a vital project for the city and surrounding communities, providing upgraded stormwater, new dams and many upgrades to the park. It will also include additional parking and new access points that will provide the surrounding communities with access to the trails, lake, and pavilions. This will be a lengthy process and we hope to be under construction later this year or in early 2024.

The Parks and Recreation Department is always busy doing something in the parks or at the TRC. You can find detailed information about what we're up to at tuckerga.gov/parks.



Upcoming Events

SIP-N-STROLL APRIL 29 3-5 P.M.



SUMMER SEASON AT OUR POOLS OPENS MAY 20!

KELLEY COFER PARK

4259 N. Park Drive
Tucker, GA 30084

POOL & SPLASH PAD HOURS:

Monday/Wednesday - Saturday 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Tuesday Closed

ROSENFELD PARK

2088 Glacier Drive
Tucker, GA 30084

POOL HOURS:

Mon/Tues, Thursday - Saturday 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Wednesday Closed



TUCKERGA.GOV/PARKS/EVENTS

TUCKERGA.GOV

1975 LAKESIDE PARKWAY, SUITE 350, TUCKER, GA 30084
678.597.9040



TUCKER Community Corner



4/8 – Tucker Cruise In

11 a.m.

Main Street

Tucker's classic car show returns for another fun season! Come see a variety of cars, motorcycles, and other antique and classic vehicles. Awards are presented at 2 p.m.

4/21-23 & 28-30 – Main Street Theatre presents "Steel Magnolias"

Various Times

Tucker Rec. Center

4898 Lavista Road

Main Street Theatre takes on the classic story of six Southern women and how their experiences bring them closer together. For more information and tickets, visit mainstreettheatre.org.

4/22 – Tucker Historical Society Plant Swap & Share

8 a.m.-Noon

Church Street

Greenspace

4316 Church Street

Tucker Historical Society's annual Plant Swap and Share continues with its 21st year at a new location this year. Bring a plant and take one home with you! Donations are welcome.

4/22 – Spring Funfest: A Love and Peace Festival in Tucker

1-7 p.m.

First Christian Church

4532 Lavista Road

Enjoy youth programs, games, short films, and more fun at this family-friendly event to promote peace and positive change. The event is free to attend.