



# INTUCKER

AUGUST 2025 | VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 8



## TUCKER CLUSTER SPOTLIGHT



# ELECTED OFFICIALS

**FRANK AUMAN**  
Mayor

**ROGER W. ORLANDO**  
District 1 - Post 1

**CARA SCHROEDER**  
District 2 - Post 1

**ALEXIS WEAVER**  
District 3 - Post 1

**VIRGINIA RECE**  
District 1 - Post 2

**VINH NGUYEN**  
District 2 - Post 2

**AMY TROCCHI**  
District 3 - Post 2

## CITY SOCIALS



**nextdoor**

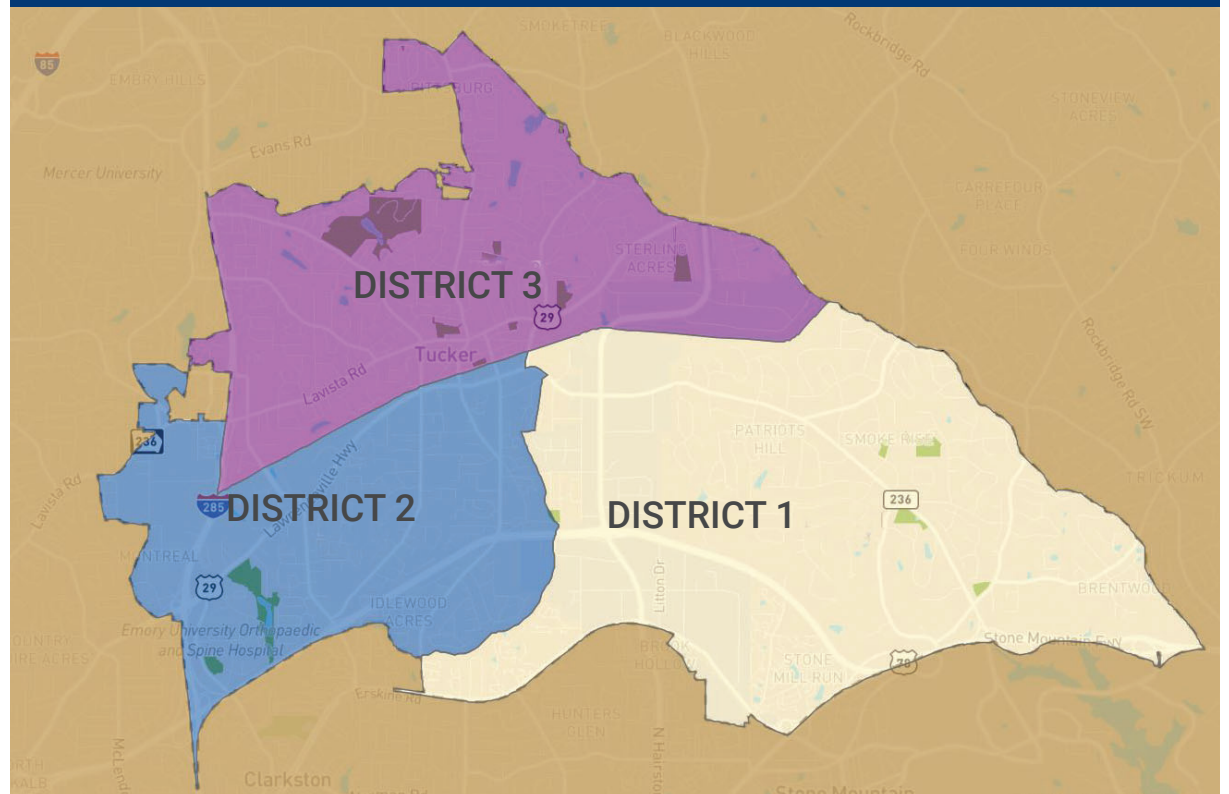
## INTUCKER STAFF

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Sonja Szubski

**Design**  
Dede Musser

**Contributors**  
Marcus Etienne &  
Robin Stevens

## DISTRICT MAP



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**SONJA SZUBSKI - COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**



Y'all know that I am a proud mother of two children that have come up through the Tucker cluster of schools. They both started in Kindergarten and my eldest is a senior this year.

Enrolling my children in public school, specifically in the Tucker cluster, was a very conscious decision. I did not attend public school as a child and as my children approached school age I dug in deep and did my research on the Tucker schools, repeating the process every time a transition or opportunity neared. With every moving-up transition, I consciously made the decision to keep my children enrolled in the Tucker cluster.

No school or district will ever be perfect or able to meet every child's unique needs and every family should evaluate what works best for them and their children. I just happen to be lucky enough that my children have thrived academically with few social hiccups. What drew me to stay with Tucker was the level of parent engagement and support at the schools. The Tucker cluster is known well amongst teachers for how supportive the families and the community are, which enables our schools

to continue to pull the best and brightest.

There are several ways parents and community stakeholders can engage with our schools.

Each school has a PTO/PTA. These are made up of parents and community stakeholders as well as school administration and teachers. Most meet monthly, have an elected board and various sub-committees that find new and creative ways to raise money to directly support the students and teachers.

Some schools have foundations. These are organizations that are a little more autonomous than a PTA and are also fundraisers to support students and teachers.

Then there are Principal Advisory Councils. PACs are elected schoolwide and are made up of administrators, teachers and parents. Their main purpose is to work with the principals and receive updates on scores, school initiatives and improvements.

Each of these organizations is a great way to get to know your child's school and be a voice with the school district. I encourage the entire Tucker community to find a way to support our schools. Attend spirit nights, volunteer as tutor or join the PTA. Every way counts and is important.





# FROM THE MAYOR

Education has long been a community strength in Tucker.

The Tucker cluster of schools in the DeKalb County School District have been models of growth, rigor and innovation. And thanks to the HOPE scholarship, the Georgia Board of Regents has been able to retain much more of Georgia's brain power, skyrocketing the prestige of and accessibility to higher education in Georgia.

Although it's not an academic event, I'm thrilled to announce that Georgia's flagship, The University of Georgia, has selected Tucker to be an official Game Watching site this Fall! You're invited to join us as our Church Street Greenspace is transformed into an official UGA Game Watch site! Starting off small in our inaugural year, we are hosting three watch parties on the Church Street Greenspace: The Georgia Dawgs versus University of Tennessee on September 13, University of Alabama on September 27 and University of Florida on November 1 (check the schedule closer to the date, as kickoff times may change). All are welcome to come on down for some old-fashioned rivalry and the game on the big screen. These watch parties will be set up much like our Movies on the Green; bring some chairs or a blanket, your favorite snacks and a cooler, or you can purchase food and drink onsite.

While we expect lots of visitors for these events, we hope you'll be there as well. Whoever you cheer for on any given Saturday, this will be a great, high-energy time to gather for food, fun and fellowship, so please mark your calendars!




**Sic'em**

**9/13 – GEORGIA V TENNESSEE**  
3:30 P.M. KICK-OFF

**9/27 – GEORGIA V ALABAMA**  
7:30 P.M. KICK-OFF

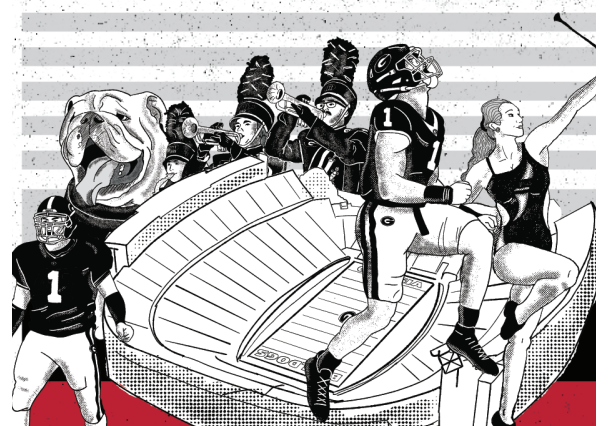
**11/1 – GEORGIA V FLORIDA**  
3:30 P.M. KICK-OFF

# DATES TO KNOW

- **AUGUST 1**  
First Friday Concert Series  
Knick & the Knacks
- **AUGUST 2**  
Special Called City Council Meeting
- **AUGUST 4**  
Downtown Development Authority
- **AUGUST 5**  
Zoning Board of Appeals
- **AUGUST 6**  
Municipal Court
- **AUGUST 11**  
Mayor & City Council Meeting
- **AUGUST 13**  
Municipal Court
- **AUGUST 14**  
Lawrenceville Highway Intersection Improvements Open House
- **AUGUST 20**  
Municipal Court
- **AUGUST 21**  
Planning Commission
- **AUGUST 21**  
Movies on the Green  
Shrek
- **AUGUST 25**  
Mayor & City Council Meeting



# NEVER BARK ALONE





## FEATURE STORY

# A CLOSER LOOK WHAT IS THE TUCKER CLUSTER?

It's back to school time! The Tucker Cluster of schools is made up of five elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. All are unique in what they offer to our community of children, and all are schools of excellence. The schools are governed by the DeKalb County School District and led by the county wide elected Board of Commissioners and the District Superintendent.



### **TUCKER HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDED IN 1918**

PRINCIPAL: DR. ERIC PARKER  
ATTENDANCE: 1,600 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: TIGERS

THS offers an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Program, A+ Certification Program offered through the Technology Education department, Business Industry Certification and Advanced Placement. X



### **TUCKER MIDDLE SCHOOL FOUNDED IN 2004**

PRINCIPAL: CANDACE STEADMAN  
ATTENDANCE: 1,200 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: TIGERS

TMS proudly offers STEM, CTAE, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program, and they are a Steven Covey Leader in Me School. TMS has an award-winning STEM program and earned the distinction of dual STEM certification through both Cognia and the Georgia Department of Education for the 2025–2026 school year. The middle school is also adding Computer Science and Entrepreneurship to their CTAE programs. Some of the goals for the upcoming school year for TMS are expanding STEM offerings, ensuring every student is connected to a program, club, or activity. Also, another goal the school has is to improve student achievement in Math and in English Language Arts. Along with that they want to grow their community partnerships.



### **BROCKETT ELEMENTARY FOUNDED IN 1961**

PRINCIPAL: ANTOINETTE SEABROOK  
ATTENDANCE:  
MASCOT:

The school provides a highly varied and challenging program of education that allows students to develop academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. The PTA and local businesses actively support the school and they are aggressively seeking certification as an International Baccalaureate School.

Through parental partnership with administration, the school has an amazing garden that is used by several teachers to enhance their student's learning.





## **IDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY FOUNDED IN 1967**

PRINCIPAL: ROBIN ELDER  
ATTENDANCE: 500 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: MUSTANGS

Idlewood offers a variety of special programs, including art, music, band, and a garden club, and proudly identifies as the Mustangs. One of the school's main goals for the upcoming year is for every staff member to "Stir Up Success". Idlewood truly special with its diverse population and experienced staff, creating a unique and supportive learning environment. As the new school year approaches, the school community is most excited about the reduced student population, upcoming renovations, and the opportunity to serve every child every day in a more unified space.



## **LIVSEY ELEMENTARY FOUNDED IN 1971**

PRINCIPAL: SHAWNA PICKETT  
ATTENDANCE: 400 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: LEOPARDS

Livsey has received state recognition for being a Distinguished School for English Language Arts and Math, along is also a STEM certified school. They are committed to fostering academic excellence by supporting every student in reaching their full potential through high-quality instruction, data-driven practices, and a culture of continuous growth. The school's Science Olympiad Team has made it to the State Science Olympiad for over ten years to represent DCSD. Livsey is a small community school with wonderful students, parents, and staff. The school had HVAC, vestibule and other building renovations over the summer and they are excited about the newly renovated school.



## **MIDVALE ELEMENTARY FOUNDED IN 1966**

PRINCIPAL: DR. TARA DOUGHERTY  
ATTENDANCE: 425 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: MUSTANGS

Midvale Elementary is an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program and is an Advanced STEM certified school making it Tucker's only STEAM based elementary school.

Midvale's student and parent population is very engaged with a strong Parent Teacher Organization that hosts multiple fundraising events throughout the year, best known for the silent auction.

The building has undergone several improvements in recent years with E-SPOLST allocations.



## **SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY FOUNDED IN 1969, NEW CONSTRUCTION IN 2021**

PRINCIPAL: DR. KRYSTE TATUM  
ATTENDANCE: 860 STUDENTS  
MASCOT: JAGUARS

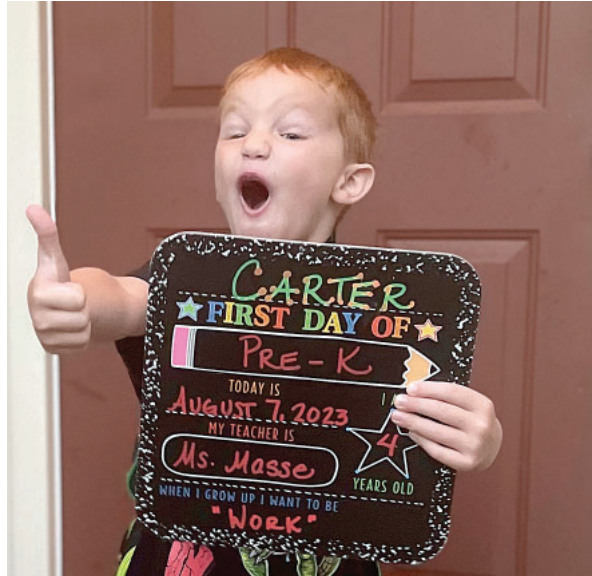
Smoke Rise is STEM certified and offers technology integration such as Lego Robotics along with computer coding, music and art programs, Environmental Club, National Jr. Beta Club, Strands of Pearls, Boys of Distinction, and Science Olympiad. One of the goals for the upcoming school year is to increase student achievement.

The school has a strong community and parental involvement along with a proven track record of award-winning excellence. Smoke Rise has multiple state and national recognitions including National ESEA Distinguished School, Georgia Title I Distinguished School and Georgia Beating the Odds School.



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

# TUCKER PRE-SCHOOL & CHILDCARE OPTIONS



The City of Tucker has pre-school and childcare options to serve the community. Early childhood education is important because it ignites children's basic learning, aids in child development, along with creating a foundation for later academic, social, and emotional growth. In addition to the state funded Pre-kindergarten program, DeKalb County School District has started a Pre-K3 program at select schools with the hope of expanding services in the coming years.

For those that do not win a lottery seat for the state or county funded programs there are provide pre-schools options all around Tucker and the surrounding area. Many are part-time with the option of a full day and can start enrollment as young as six months.

**Grandma's Finest Learning Center** is located at 4114 Bancroft Circle Tucker, Ga 30084. The Center was founded in 1984 and it is a family-owned business. They offer childcare for infant ages to 5-years old.

**Primrose School at Emory Healthcare - Northlake Campus** is one of the newer pre-schools in Tucker. They opened in August of 2024. Located at 4820 Briarcliff Road, the Primrose School of Emory Healthcare-Northlake Campus is for children of Emory Healthcare and Emory University employees and children in the greater Northlake area. Emory employees are eligible for subsidized tuition based on income at the Emory Healthcare – Northlake Campus only.

**The Sunshine House** is located at 720 Montreal Cir, Tucker, GA 30084. The academy offers programs for ages six-weeks old to eight-years old.

**Turning Sun School Gwinnett** is located at 5801 Hugh Howell RD. They offer care for half days (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.), school days (8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) and extended days (8:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).

**Turning Sun School Tucker** is located at 3142 Lawrenceville Highway. This convenient location provides five extended care options a per week from 8:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Area churches also host various levels of schooling, childcare and pre-K:

**Main Street Preschool** is located at 5073 Lavista Road and offers a variety of day programs for children ages 12 months to 4 years.

**Rehoboth Preschool Academy** is located at 2997 Lawrenceville Highway. Enrollment ages are 12 weeks to 3 years for full day care.

**St. Andrew's School** is located at 4882 Lavista Road. This school offers preschool options for 1-year olds through pre-k, extended and after school care.

**Tucker First Weekday School** is located at 5095 Lavista Road. Hours are 1 a.m. to 1 p.m. for children ages 6 months to 4 years old.



## CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

# SIMONE WOODLEY

At just 19 years old, Simone Woodly is already making waves as a rising star in journalism, and this month, she's being recognized as Tucker's Citizen of the Month for her extraordinary dedication to storytelling and community connection.

A sophomore at the prestigious Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University, Simone is no stranger to the spotlight. She's spent nearly half her life in Tucker, and it's here that her passion for journalism first took root. In fact, she knew as early as seventh grade that she wanted to be a journalist.

By the age of 15, Simone was already hitting the streets of Tucker with a camera, tripod and mic, capturing the stories that define the heart of her hometown. Over the past five years, she has interviewed a host of beloved local business owners—from The Corner Cup and Matthews Cafeteria to Hot Betty's, Papi Ali's, Blue Ribbon Grill, Kaylee's Sweet Shop, and Cakes and Castles. She even sat down with Mayor Frank Auman, a career highlight for the young reporter.

Her commitment to community storytelling goes beyond interviews. Simone also served as a Marketing and Social Media Intern for Blue Ribbon Grill, using her skills to help promote one of Tucker's local staples. Her reach has extended beyond Tucker into Chamblee, where she's profiled business owners at Three Dollar Café, the charming Jenovelle European Café, Dekalb Junior League and many others.

Today, Simone is thriving as a Summer 2025 reporting intern with Decaturish and Decatur Dish, where she continues to tell powerful stories that matter. She's producing content for both digital and television platforms, blending her natural curiosity with a sharp journalistic eye.

What makes her story even more inspiring is her resilience. Simone has navigated the challenges of ADHD, transforming what many view as a hurdle into one of her greatest strengths, fueling her creativity, drive, and unique perspective.

A proud product of Tucker and DeKalb County, Simone Woodly is not just an aspiring journalist, she's already a storyteller of impact. And with her ambition, talent, and passion, she's only just getting started.

*Nominated by  
Velvet Woodley*





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CONTRIBUTED BY ANGELA BROOKS  
BUSINESS OUTREACH SPECIALIST



On the cusp of its 10-year anniversary of becoming a city, Tucker is experiencing tremendous growth and development within its small but mighty 20-mile radius.

“When I tell people that I work for the City of Tucker, I get such positive responses,” says Economic Development Director Erica Rocker. “They love Tucker. They live here, or they want to live here, they’ve heard only good things about it.” That’s great brand recognition to have out in the ether, she adds.

Rocker took on her new role in May of 2025, but she brings with her decades of experience in economic development, and she likes what she sees in Tucker. “The City has a lot to offer for residential and business growth and investments.”

Tucker is an excellent mix of old and new, she says. Although the City itself only turns 10 next year, “we boast the bones of one of the nation’s oldest mall developments, Northlake, in our backyard. The 50+ year old property has been the subject of a quite a bit of interest lately from developers from all over the country,” according to Rocker.

Rocker divvies up the City into four main character areas: Northlake, Downtown, Lawrenceville Highway and the Mountain Industrial Corridor. “These cores are uniquely categorized by industry mix and type and contribute to forming beneficial industry clusters,” she says.

The Northlake area represents Tucker’s office and medical core. Lawrenceville Highway is a significant corridor through the City, bridging the industrial, suburban, and downtown retail character. While Mountain Industrial boasts a long-standing industrial manufacturing cluster.

The Northlake area includes neighboring Northlake Festival, Northlake Square, and the

Tucker Exchange. Northlake itself is part of a growing national trend where obsolete retail is reimagined as mixed-use hubs. The site has seen incremental change since ATR acquired it in 2016 from Simon Property Group, most notably Emory Healthcare’s 2020 lease of 200K SF in former Sears and Kohl’s space.

Lawrenceville Highway is a busy road with a strong commercial property presence and some residential sprinkled in. It serves as a major corridor with easy access to I-285. Rocker says the City’s Access Management and Beautification Plan for Lawrenceville Highway is aimed at improving the corridor. Focus areas include active transportation, safety, speed management, transit, cost and more. “We’re also excited about the Hebron Hills townhomes currently in development on Lawrenceville Hwy.” Currently under construction are 32 new townhomes at its intersection with Hebron Hills Drive. “This will be an excellent addition to this traditionally commercial stretch, adding rooftops to our economy and answering our need for more housing density,” she says.

The City’s Downtown corridor is experiencing a high volume of activity with new businesses moving in and daily inquiries about leasing or sales opportunities for possible redevelopment. “I get calls almost daily from a developer or agent that wants to know more about what Tucker has to offer, and that’s a great problem to have,” says Rocker.

Also downtown, the City broke ground in fall 2024 for its Tucker Town Green project. The 1.88-acre space is just off Main Street, the heart of downtown. The park and green space will serve as the City’s gathering space for events, concerts, movies and family activities. It will feature meandering water, art sculpture, landscape features and a custom pavilion. “There will also be much needed parking spaces added which can also serve downtown shopping and dining guests when the facility is not in use,” says Rocker. The space is scheduled to open in the fall of 2025.

“Browning Village, a 52-unit townhome community by JW Collection is another housing development that we are super excited about,” says Rocker. Located on Lavista Road just off Main St., this upscale development will bring instant value and more availability to a tight residential market. Construction is underway.

The Mountain Industrial corridor is defined by the long stretch of Mountain Industrial Boulevard that winds through the eastern perimeter of the city. It’s home to many of the city’s manufacturers, both large and small. Manufacturing has been a staple in Tucker’s economy. “The industry grew over 50% countywide from 2018-2022,” says Rocker. “This makes it one of our target industries to focus our strategic planning efforts on. We are working with our employers to address the talent pipeline for years to come.”

Additionally, in partnership with the Tucker Summit Community Improvement District (which services the MIB corridor businesses), the City has a planned project to widen MIB to accommodate dual left turn lanes on the north and southbound approaches and the widening of Hugh Howell Road to make room for a right turn lane on the eastbound approach to MIB.



“This is a heavily trafficked passenger car and big rig area. The goal for the project is to allow for better traffic flow and safety improvements at this intersection,” says Rocker. This is important for our residents, visitors, and manufacturing businesses.

“This upcoming year will bring many opportunities for the City to explore, and I’m excited to be part of making things happen.” In addition to seeing a host of projects come to fruition, the City will celebrate the 10-year anniversary of its incorporation. “It’s a great time to be in Tucker, says Rocker.



# BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

## THE TREE OF LEARNING

The Tree of Learning is bringing creativity along with innovation to education and child development to the community of Tucker. A 501c3 non-profit nature base program that is dedicated to guiding individualized education, the Tree of Learning curriculum is based on the learner's curiosities with an emphasis on connection to the natural world. The center provides educational workshops at their facility, along with learning opportunities out in nature and visiting area schools. Cassi Beach, the Executive Director and owner, began her career as an educator in Atlanta Public Schools.

"I was born to do this," Beach said. "God put me on this earth to help children."

After earning her bachelor's degree in early childhood education, Beach began teaching but left after a few years because she thought that it was best for her family to become a stay-at-home mom. Afterwards Beach started working with Tucker Parks and Recreation and became part of the leadership team for the summer camp program. During that time, she felt called to start something of her own. She earned a master's degree in educational leadership and, in 2022, took a leap of faith to launch The Tree of Learning. Her organization offers three types of programs they include the LEAF (Learn, Experience, Apply, Flora & Fauna) program, BARK (Being A Real Kid) program and ROOTS (Reflective Organic Opportunities For Time and Space). The LEAF program is where she offers pop-up programs at her facility, pre-schools, k-12 schools, birthday parties and parks. Through that program she also provides opportunities for girl scout troops to earn their nature badges.

"That is really fun," Beach said. "I like it that in the beginning they are like eww bugs but by the end of it they are like, yeah bugs!"

The programs have resonated with kids of all ages, from Girl Scouts to preschoolers at The Goddard School. Beach brings a hands-on fun experience to the children where they can interact up close and personal with nature.

"We would come to the school and provide all the supplies that we needed to help them learn about insects," Beach said. "I put an incubator in their classroom, and we hatched chickens at the end of the year. We had a hatch day party so that was really fun. I taught in their outdoor classroom. I created the lessons that went along with their monthly themes, so I worked with them with what they were already doing."

The BARK program is a program she offers for homeschooling kids and non-traditional schooling kids. This summer Beach started ROOTS, a camp program that quickly became a hit. In its first year, Beach hosted three camps in



June and found so much success that she wants to continue the camps. During her camp she taught the importance of Juneteenth and plans to have this lesson every year for her campers.

"I ran a camp for the week of Juneteenth intentionally because I think it is really important on that week of June to teach kiddos the history of Juneteenth," Beach said. "We actually read the Emancipation Proclamation out loud and were able to dive into that history a bit and at the end of camp we got to celebrate with our Kona Ice of Tucker and the students got to pie and slime the counselors. I still can't get the applesauce out of my shoes. I guess I have to get a new pair."

Another popular addition this year was the "Mommy & Me Tea" outing, held for Mother's Day. It offered moms and their children a chance to bond with each other through nature-themed arts



and craft. Beach said the event was a big success and she hopes to make it an annual tradition.

The Tree of Learning makes full use of Tucker's many parks, turning them into outdoor classrooms. Through her time with the City recreation department, Beach discovered and fell in love with the area's parks—many of which are now regular locations for her programs.

"I am so blessed to be in the community of Tucker where we have the opportunity to learn and grow right alongside with the kiddos, it's just awesome," Beach said. "It's great because of my time working in the Rec Center, I was able to really fall in love with Tucker. I am so grateful for the time I had there and to Mr. Rip and all the amazing people at the City that took me under their wing and gave me the opportunities to grow my leadership skills. I would not be the leader that I am if it was not for that experience."

Her favorite parks include the Tucker Nature Preserve, Henderson Park, and Montreal Park. These outdoor spaces provide organic learning experiences, such as the time her class visited Kelly Coffey Park and discovered a Hercules Eastern Beetle. They turned the sighting into a hands-on research project.

"My favorite part is the freedom to be creative while helping children break through their own limits," Beach said. "I want to help them become risk-takers, problem-solvers, and good friends. That's the best part of what I do."

To learn more, visit [treeoflearninginc.com](http://treeoflearninginc.com)



# WHAT HAPPENED AT THE COUNCIL MEETING?

## CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

The Tucker City Council met for their sole meeting of July with Mayor Pro-Tem Cara Schroeder leading the meeting in the Mayor's approved absence.

In honor of National Parks and Recreation Month, the Friends of Tucker Parks led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Mayor Pro-Tem presented a proclamation to the Parks and Recreation Department.

During the motion to approve the evening's agenda, an item to amend the contract for the purchase of properties on Montreal Way to extend the closing date was added to the consent agenda. The addition, the evening's agenda and the consent agenda were then all approved.

An ordinance to create a City Marshal office was voted 6-0 to defer a decision to the first August meeting. The same was also voted to defer a deciding vote on the proposed text amendment for Chapter 46 Zoning for the purpose of updating the regulations for drive-thru facilities and drive-thru restaurants.

The Council heard a first read of an ordinance to amend the zoning code for general clean-ups and then voted 6-0 on two resolutions.

- A resolution amending the fee schedule for Fiscal Year 2026-specifically for Parks and Recreation programming and film permits.
- A resolution authorizing participation in the Amicus Brief in the Chang v. City of Milton Appeal.

Tucker's Mayor and City Council meet the second and fourth Monday of each month. Meetings are held at City Hall and streamed online at [tuckerga.gov/agendas](https://tuckerga.gov/agendas).

Tucker City Hall is located at 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350, Tucker, Georgia 30084.

Thank you to Jac Colatosti of Troop 129! As part of his 2025 Eagle Project, he created and installed drop-off boxes at City Hall and Tucker Recreation Center for United States flags in need of retirement.

If you have a United States flag in poor condition, you can bring it to the drop-off boxes at City Hall and TRC during regular business hours.





AROUND TOWN

# UPCOMING EVENTS IN TUCKER

# TUCKER

RECREATION CENTER

**AUGUST 9**

**10 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**OPEN HOUSE**



**4898 LAVISTA ROAD**

**SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE**



**EXPLORE PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES**



[tuckerga.gov/parks](http://tuckerga.gov/parks)

ALL AGES WELCOME

YOUTH TEENS

ADULTS SENIORS

[TUCKERGA.GOV/SUMMER](http://TUCKERGA.GOV/SUMMER)

**AUG. 21**

**SHREK**



**7 P.M.**

**Heart Breaker**



**SEP. 5**

**FIRST FRIDAY CONCERT SERIES**

**SEP. 26**

**WICKED**



**7 P.M.**





# TUCKER *Community Corner*

