



INTUCKER

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ORDER UP!

TUCKER'S SECOND ANNUAL
RESTAURANT WEEK HAS THE RIGHT
INGREDIENTS FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

EDITOR'S NOTE



I am a fan of classic holiday movies. Not a Christmas goes by that I don't turn on "Home Alone" or "National Lampoon's

Christmas Vacation". On

Halloween, my family enjoys watching the Disney film "Hocus Pocus". And, on Independence Day, nothing beats a screening of, well, "Independence Day".

In the pantheon of Hollywood holiday movies, there really is only one film to watch on February 2. Bill Murray's "Groundhog Day" is a hilarious, yet tedious look at a man who is forced to live the same day over and over again. It resonates not just because this week we celebrate Groundhog Day, but because it truly feels like we as a society have been living this movie. This month marks two years since "coronavirus" became part of our national lexicon. And no one seems to know when we can finally put this behind us.

This hit home recently as I got two phone calls from my kids' principal; each of them had been exposed to a COVID-positive classmate over consecutive weeks. Now both of my kids wear masks and both are fully vaccinated so they were able to stay in school and avoid quarantine. Most importantly, neither tested positive. But the constant concern surrounding this virus is exhausting in so many ways.

I'm no expert on viruses, but I do know movies. And at the end of "Groundhog Day" (spoiler alert!) Bill Murray's character wakes up one morning and finds that finally, at long last, the date is February 3. Similarly, someday soon we will find our February 3 and be done with this vicious cycle of COVID. In the meantime, keep taking your precautions, get your vaccinations and let's look forward to a return to normal!

MATT HOLMES
INTUCKER EDITOR

IN THIS ISSUE



ON THE COVER

Dining nirvana is just a couple of weeks away. On page 3, hear from Mayor Auman as he gears up for Tucker's second annual Restaurant Week.



GIRL POWER!

STEM education is becoming more and more popular in Tucker's cluster schools. On page 8, find out how one elementary school is placing the focus on engaging their young ladies in STEM pursuits.



BUSINESS BOOM

The path to Tucker has been a bumpy one for one local medical professional. Learn how he's overcome some obstacles to help add to the City's wellness in our Business Boom column on page 10.



CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

She's a passionate parent, who makes herself right at home in a Scout meeting. On page 13, get to know one motivated mom, Kristi Bluett.



ASK RIP

She's the longest-tenured member of Team Tucker having worked at Tucker Recreation Center longer than most of her coworkers have been alive! Get to know Miss Louisa on page 15.



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From the Mayor:



February marks the occasion of the second annual Tucker Restaurant Week. This event started a year ago as a partnership between the City of Tucker and our convention and visitors bureau, Discover DeKalb. It aimed to bring diners from across metro Atlanta to Tucker – all parts of Tucker, from Northlake to Main Street to Hugh Howell and Mountain Industrial – to sample what our diverse group of restaurants had to offer. The event was an award-winning, overwhelming success. Our restaurateurs raved about the new faces they were seeing and the influx of business they were getting during an otherwise slow period, especially considering we were in the midst of a pandemic.

I'm sure this year's event, which is happening from February 23rd through the 27th, will be another smashing success. As I reflect on Tucker Restaurant Week and its origins, I am filled with gratitude and awe about some less-considered aspects of it. I'll explain.

As an entrepreneur, I understand the inherent risk in starting your own business. I have not, however, experienced the particular risks taken on by those in the restaurant industry. According to a survey by CNBC, even

prior to the pandemic 60 percent of new restaurants will fail within their first year. That same survey shows that 80 percent fail within the first five years. Those are some daunting odds in any pursuit, but especially one that requires the capital investment of a restaurant, way before the first dollar of revenue is generated.

That's what makes Tucker's restaurant scene so impressive. Matthews Cafeteria is the granddaddy of them all, a genuine local institution, open for nearly 70 years and just as popular today as it ever was. About a decade ago, a local ownership group took a gamble on Main Street and brought Local 7 to Tucker. Thanks to great food and great service, they quickly found an eager market and became a community gathering place. Not only have they defied those odds and found great success, they also paved the way for a burgeoning restaurant scene on Main Street and, in fact, a more general reputation for Tucker as a place with a lot of restaurants worth exploring. Las Colinas (another long-time favorite) benefitted from diners looking

(continued on page 7)

City Council Update

Tucker's Mayor and new City Council met twice during the month of January. The first meeting, which took place on January 11, was historic as Mayor Frank Auman and three new councilmembers took the oath of office. Councilmembers Roger Orlando (District 1), Cara Schroeder (District 2), and Alexis Weaver (District 3) all were sworn in, joining Virginia Rece (District 1), Noelle Monferdini (District 2) and Anne Lerner (District 3) on the City Council. The body got to work by electing Councilwoman Lerner as the new Mayor Pro-Tem. That role would have her conduct City Council meetings in the event that Mayor Auman is unable to be present.

They then cast four votes, the first of which revises the Downtown Development Authority boundary to include parts of the Northlake area. Next, they approved easement acquisitions for a sidewalk project along Old Norcross Road. They then awarded a contract for installation of bus pads, benches and other seating at seven MARTA stops around the City. Lastly, they voted to approve a pair of special land use permits (SLUPs) with amended conditions for a gas station development at 4114 Lavista Road.

Council held a special called meeting and work session on January 24. The big item on the agenda was the first read and public hearing for a SLUP that would allow the Chick-fil-A at Tucker Station to relocate across Hugh Howell Road to the site of the old The Greater Good BBQ. Because this land use case was before Council on a first read, there was no action taken. A second read and anticipated vote are scheduled for February 15.

They then voted to approve a handful of board appointments recommended by Mayor Auman. Those new board members will be filling vacancies on the Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Public Facilities Authority, Urban Redevelopment Agency and Zoning Board of Appeals. During the subsequent work session, Council received presentations from City Engineer Ken Hildebrandt on progress being made on the safety of Brockett Road, as well as upcoming road resurfacing, sidewalk and trail construction priorities.

The next meeting of the Mayor and City Council will take place on Tuesday February 15 at 7 p.m. at City Hall (1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B).

DATES TO KNOW

February 1
Zoning Board of Appeals

February 2
Traffic Court

February 7
Downtown Development Authority

February 9
Traffic Court

February 15
City Council

February 16
Environmental Court

February 17
Planning Commission

February 28
City Council



Mayor Auman (right) and three new councilmembers were sworn in on January 11 at City Hall. Joining the Mayor were (left to right) Roger Orlando, Cara Schroeder and Alexis Weaver. (Credit: tuckerga.gov)

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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 or by phone at (678) 597-9040.

As I mentioned in last October's "On the Beat" article, responding to incidents of domestic violence is one of the most heartbreaking and difficult things we do as police officers. Being human, our officers often find it easy to empathize with a victim of physical or emotional abuse. Many of us have had at least one sibling, parent, child, friend or someone else we have known that has suffered from being in a dysfunctional – or worse – relationship. However, as professional law enforcement officers, we are always required to be objective and thorough in every decision we make; being "fair but firm" and making our decisions based on facts and not emotions.

Fortunately, in addition to our own natural empathy, throughout our careers we receive a great amount of training in how to respond to incidents of domestic violence. Beginning as recruits in our highly regarded, 26-week long Police Academy in Lithonia, our officers receive over 40 hours of instruction specifically on the laws and dynamics of family violence. While at the Academy, the recruits are also required to participate in frequent realistic "role playing" scenarios to further fine tune their interpersonal skills when responding to the variety of emotional 911 calls that they will be responding to upon graduation. In addition, all DeKalb County Police Department recruits graduating our Police Academy are required to complete a weeklong, state-mandated Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training course. This intensive course involves classroom instruction, site visits to mental health facilities and additional role playing activities. While not geared specifically toward domestic violence, the skills learned in this advanced class further help to guide us in our response to a variety of situations including those involving family members that may be suffering from addiction or mental illness.

We are also fortunate that the State of Georgia takes family violence very seriously. Over the years, Georgia has enacted a specific set of laws that direct law enforcement in how to respond to calls of abusive family relationships. In the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.), section 19-13-1 defines what relationships qualify under "family violence". This code section goes on to describe the criminal laws that are frequently violated in these abusive relationships, often situations where the police have been called out to help. O.C.G.A. 17-4-20 and 17-4-20.1 further delineate when and how law enforcement officers are to intervene when responding to incidents of domestic violence. More recently, in January 2021, Georgia further clarified this code section, adding in language and guidance to

help law enforcement officers when they encounter situations involving violence from both parties in a relationship.

While the space here does not allow me to go into all the laws and circumstances that guide our officers when responding to domestic violence calls, I do want you to understand that the family violence laws in Georgia and our DeKalb Police policies are clear: we will respond to the call, investigate thoroughly, document the situation and, if probable cause is found that an act of family violence occurred, we will make an arrest. The cycle and dynamics of domestic violence that we know from both our personal experiences and that we learn about in our training must be broken. It is part of the oath that we take to "protect and serve".

If you or someone you know is suffering in an abusive relationship, I encourage you to obtain help. There are a variety of resources out there, from statewide hotlines (1-800-334-2836 – the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence) to more local resources (404-688-9436 – the Women's Resource Center www.wrcgv.org) based here in DeKalb County. Of course, if the situation arises, we are also here to help, beginning with a call to 911.

GEORGIA LAWS TO KNOW IN 2022

O.C.G.A. 40-5-33 Change of Address or Name. The law reads in part:

"Whenever any person, after applying for or receiving a driver's license, shall move from the address named in such application or in the license issued to him or her or when the name of a licensee is changed by marriage or otherwise, such person shall apply to the department for a license showing the correct name or address within 60 days. Failure to change the name or address shall not deem the license invalid..."

NOTE: This law was enacted to ensure that if a traffic ticket must be issued, or some other official document needs to be forwarded, the State of Georgia has your correct address/name on file. While your driver's license is still valid, our officers can and may issue you a traffic citation under this code section to kindly encourage you to update your information with the State.

TAKE A HIKE

CITY OF TUCKER AWARDED FEDERAL TRAIL GRANT



The City of Tucker announced last month that the City has secured a grant from the federal government to fund part of a proposed three-mile multi-use trail to connect Tucker's downtown to the bustling Northlake retail district. The trail would ultimately require additional funding and approval from the City, with the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District (CID) contributing funds, as well.

"Anytime your city is awarded this kind of grant, it's a big deal," said Tucker Mayor Frank Auman. "This trail was first proposed back in 2005 by the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and has been included in subsequent LCI updates. It's a project that, when the time comes, our Council will look forward to gathering public input and making a decision on how to proceed."

The federal government is contributing nearly \$1.5 million in funding for the proposed project, almost \$1 million of that being dedicated to right-of-way acquisition. The City of Tucker would have to commit to just over \$350,000, while the Tucker-Northlake CID has agreed to put up \$50,000 toward engineering. The funding plans have been in the works since 2019, when the City and the CID submitted an application to the ARC for federal funds for this project.

"With Council approval, this project will help close the gaps between residential and commercial property in Tucker and provide an opportunity for regional connectivity," said Tucker-Northlake CID Executive Director Matthew Lee. "From the pedestrian bridge over Fellowship Road to the shared use path across I-285 at Northlake Parkway, the proposed Tucker-Northlake Trail will bring people together in ways that haven't been available."

Plans call for the trail to originate at the future Tucker Town Green in downtown Tucker and stretch all the way to the reimagined Northlake Mall. It would be predominantly off-road greenway with some side path segments. The trail wouldn't just help people get around Tucker. Plans call for a connection to the anticipated Top End I-285 Regional Trail, providing access to the Peachtree Creek Greenway, PATH 400, the Silver Comet Trail, and others. With final approval, preliminary engineering could begin later this year with right-of-way acquisition beginning in 2023. The City and CID would be eligible to apply for federal funding for future phases of the project.

The Tucker-Northlake Trail route is a part of the City's 2018 Trail Master Plan, which lays out a network of more than 30 miles of multi-use trails throughout the City of Tucker. The Trail Master Plan can be viewed online at https://www.tuckerga.gov/plans_and_studies/trail_master_plan.php.

FROM THE MAYOR (continued from page 3)



for more opportunities on Main Street. Hot Betty's and Ford's opened during the height of the pandemic, as did FarmED, over near Lawrenceville Highway and Northlake Parkway. Papi Ali's also opened on Main Street during the pandemic, and the Blue Ribbon Grill at Northlake was purchased by a local family during the same time (read more about them on page 12). Tucker Brewing, who already had made a multi-million dollar investment in Tucker, added a full food menu while the pandemic raged, and has become a local staple for German food, beer, and family fun. Other local favorites like Shorty's, Grecian Gyro, Magnolia Room, El Taco Naco, and Bell Street Burritos have worked hard to adapt to serving the public during the pandemic, and the good people of Tucker have responded with their continued devotion. Even a couple of outlets we don't think of firstly as restaurants have joined in and are now sought out for their food menus and service as well as their main businesses serving coffee (Corner Cup) and fresh cut meats (Tucker Meat Market).

Tucker Restaurant Week is about extending and expanding our reputation as a place for people who love to dine out or take out. We've set that goal not only because all of us who live here enjoy the presence of great local restaurants, but because to have them, we know we have to acknowledge and appreciate their investment and the risks they're

taking, and do all we can to help them succeed against the odds.

Tucker Restaurant Week is aimed especially at supporting locally owned restaurants, as opposed to national chains, who typically have their own large marketing budgets and programs. The local entrepreneurs we'll feature serve a huge variety of cuisine in a range of locations and atmospheres at different price points. But what they all have in common is that these brave souls took a huge chance by making an investment here in Tucker. And not only are they doing well businesswise, we are grateful for the good they are doing in our community. Every single one of them. When we talk about what makes Tucker such a special place, let's remember to get out and support our restaurateurs and honor the impact they're making every day.

I can't wait to see you at Restaurant Week!

FRANK AUMAN
MAYOR



GIRLS WHO GAME

NEW PROGRAM GEARED TOWARD GETTING YOUNG GIRLS INTERESTED IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

While women make up 48 percent of the workforce, their employment has lagged in the field of computer science. According to Pew Research, only 25 percent of computer science positions are held by women. A new effort within our Tucker Cluster schools is aiming to change that.

Girls Who Game uses gaming to develop STEM and leadership skills. The program began in Canada and has since grown to encompass teams across North America. Participants in the program, called “girl champions”, work together with their teams in the world of Minecraft Education Edition to create in-game structures that model solutions to real-world problems. Each of these problems is framed as a mission for the teams to complete as part of a competition. For this year’s competition mission, girl champions were challenged to “activate connectiveness and belonging in [their] own community.”

“All the girls are operating as teams to collaborate, to figure out our needs and our community and bring that to life in the Minecraft world,” Simone Kelly says.

Kelly, who leads the gifted program at Livsey Elementary School, has already been teaching students how to code both in class and through the Girls Who Code program. Girls Who Game explores the flipside of computer science, what she calls “the output.”

“It’s to get them interested and get those minds going using the computer program,” she explains, “and the computer program that we use is Minecraft.”

The Livsey team of 12 fourth- and fifth-grade students has met every Wednesday since September to work

on their mission in their Minecraft world. To accomplish their goals, they brainstormed together and then split off into smaller groups to work on different spaces.

“In real life...everybody wouldn’t be working on the same thing...they become the curator, so to speak, of whatever is in that space,” Kelly explains.



While the mission may seem to be the biggest aspect of the program to an outsider, it is far from the program’s only focus. Throughout their time in the program, girl champions learn about a variety of women in STEM such as Dr. Donna Strickland, Katherine Johnson and genetic virologist Dr. Sheila Ochugboju.

Despite the heavy computer science element of the program, Kelly believes that it promotes a variety of learning topics.

“It does involve all of their core learning... standards. They’re working it through and they’re doing it the way we would love for all our learning to take place, right? Solving a problem utilizing what you already know. And if you don’t know,

how do you get that information...to deal with the problem?”

Several unexpected problems popped up over the course of the mission. Some of these were due to the constraints of the program.

“The girls have decided that one of the things is that everything has to be accessible,” Kelly explains. This was a problem given that there are no ramps in Minecraft. Everything is made of cubes. “Some of them decided, well, you know what? There’ll be no stairs ever. So everything is one level.”

Livsey’s objectives as a STEM-certified school came into play.

“Part of our goal is to encourage...all minority groups to get involved in some kind of STEM area,” Kelly explains. “I am fortunate to have not only girls, but I have girls of varying backgrounds and so they’re represented.”

Minority groups are proportionally underrepresented in STEM, per Pew Research. Black and Hispanic populations make up seven percent and eight percent of computer science careers respectively as opposed to 11 percent and 17 percent of the American workforce as a whole.

At Livsey, this year’s mission is now coming to an end, but Kelly is far from finished.

“I’m doing Girls Who Code next,” she explains. “[Girls Who Game] is kind of an all-year thing...I’ll probably do a summer one, but we’ll see.”

With programs like Girls Who Game and educators like Ms. Kelly encouraging interest in STEM fields, the future looks bright for the next generation of computer science professionals.



Tucker Cluster

Updates & News

IMPORTANT DATES

February 14
Board of Education Meeting

February 18
Schools closed for February Break

February 21
Schools closed for Presidents' Day

BRAG SHEET

LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- Livsey held its annual STEM Night virtually on January 27. In addition to lots of learning and fun, there were prizes awarded for Flipgrid Designs.

MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

- On January 22, fourth and fifth graders from Midvale competed in the DeKalb County Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl. Team Midvale won every round they competed in!

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY

- Smoke Rise readers are creating "footprints toward new beginnings" by reaching their Accelerated Reader word count benchmarks. More than 100 students have met their reading goals and the student body as a whole has read almost 12 million words!

TUCKER MIDDLE

- The Tiger boys basketball team (pictured top left) was named DeKalb County School District's regional champion for 2021-'22. Congratulations to Coach Williams, Coach Dawson and the team!

TUCKER HIGH

- THS students (pictured middle and bottom left) competed in the SkillsUSA Conference on January 14, finishing second in the Quiz Bowl competition. That performance clinched a spot in the state competition later this month at the Georgia World Congress Center.

BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Coordinator



Tucker's businesses are as diverse as the community itself. In honor of February's Black History Month, Angela Brooks takes a look at one Tucker business owner who has forged a unique path to success.

It's often said that healers and men (or women) of God are "called" to do what

they do, and for Dr. Donovan Christie his faith ultimately played a big part in his dedication to the pursuit of wellness and compassion for others. For him, medicine was a calling.

Encouraged by his proud Jamaican mother, Christie, who came to the United States at age 10, did become a physician, but his path to true satisfaction was a winding one with some rough terrain along the way.

As the founder and owner of ANWAN (ANWAN stands for All Natural Wellness and Nutrition) Dr. Christie is board certified in internal medicine, preventive medicine and pediatrics. He is a graduate of Fordham University and the Albert Einstein School of Medicine, both in The Bronx, New York. He also has a master's degree in administrative medicine.

His first medical endeavor post-residency was working at a federally funded community center in New York, which proved an eye-opening experience.

"During that time in the 1990s, HMO's and insurance companies had taken over healthcare by putting up all these rules for prior authorizations and also trying to [place limits on] physicians in terms of the amount that they would pay them," Christie recalled. "I quickly learned that it was all about money for the insurance companies, so I wanted to know more about them."

That led Christie to work for Cigna and Aetna, the latter a job that eventually brought him to metro Atlanta.



"I was making good money with stock options and other perks, but I felt empty," Christie recalls. "I didn't feel as though this is what God wanted me to do....I had become disillusioned with the way insurance companies treated doctors and patients, and I left because I just wasn't fulfilled."

It was at this point that Christie found himself at a crossroads. Armed with experience in corporate America, community health experience, and a master's degree, he decided to shift his focus to prevention, wellness and lifestyle medicine.

Medicine played a role in his personal life, as well. After seeing her son become a doctor, Christie's beloved mother died at the age of 68 from congestive heart failure.

"My mom died because she had everything that a lot of Black people get," Christie explained, listing "hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes [and] obesity....Losing her to disease was yet another driving force that pushed me to pursue prevention and wellness."

After some struggles in getting his company off the ground, Christie opened ANWAN Wellness in Hapeville in 2002.

"I gave my business card to friends and former colleagues, and by word of mouth,

[the business] blew up by 2005," Christie recalls. "Before I knew it, I was overflowing my space, and that's when I moved up to Tucker."

Just across Lawrenceville Highway from Main Street stands the building that Christie purchased and built out to accommodate his wellness and regenerative centers: the ANWAN Professional Building. His staff consists of two doctors, two nurse practitioners (one of which is his wife Jacqueline), a massage therapist, and a chiropractic naturopathic doctor to support his emphasis on the prevention of disease. On the second floor of his building, is the ANWAN Regenerative Center, his concierge practice.

"I do concierge medicine, which is more of a holistic approach to health care," Christie explained. "What motivated me in 2015 to open up this program is that it caters to people who are more professional and who can afford a concierge membership. I love it because I don't have to rush in and out. Patients don't have to just spend 10 minutes with me and I'm on to the next patient, I can spend a full hour with you if that's what's needed."

In addition to his multiple practices, Dr. Christie found time to create his own line of branded vitamins and supplements and he has written a book entitled "Invigorate Yourself with Lifestyle Medicine".

"I love it when people lose weight or tell me that their dry skin is gone, or that we reversed their hair loss or relieved their insomnia. When all of that goes away and they feel great, that's the most rewarding part for me, and that's what drives me to do what I do."

ANWAN is located at 2227 Idlewood Road.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

For generations, Peters Park has been at the heart of our Tucker community. Featured in the 2019 City of Tucker documentary “Four Streets”, this historically African-American neighborhood has been home to some of Tucker’s longest-tenured residents, families living in the area for nearly three-quarters of a century.

But over the years, an aging neighborhood needs a little upkeep. The City of Tucker has worked closely with leaders in the Peters Park community, finding funding from a number of sources to make a series of improvements to help this neighborhood – and these neighbors – flourish. It has truly been a partnership and one that is evident by just walking these four streets.



To increase walkability and accessibility in the Peters Park community, the City has prioritized sidewalk construction. In 2020, the City paid about \$320,000 to install sidewalks along Elmdale Drive. Tucker Industrial Road was done in 2021 for roughly \$150,000.



As part of an effort to beautify and add to the community feel of Peters Park, the City planted a row of 30 dogwood trees along Elmdale Drive in 2021. Elmdale Drive is a critical entryway into Peters Park and the beautification of Elmdale adds to the sense of place in this historic community.



Residents in Peters Park told the City they wanted better signage to let visitors know the neighborhood they are in. In response, former DeKalb County Commissioner Nancy Jester stepped up, allocating funds to purchase and install street sign toppers identifying the historic Peters Park neighborhood. More prominent gateway signs have been designed and will be installed later in the year.



In 2020, the Tucker Parks and Recreation Department completed work on a reimagined William McKinley Peters Park, right in the heart of the Peters Park community. The new park equipment featured one of the biggest playgrounds in the City of Tucker, as well as swing sets – including an ADA accessible swing. Construction also dealt with flood concerns and improved parking for parkgoers.

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

BLUE RIBBON GRILL



Tucker Restaurant Week is unique, in that it is a true mix of old and new businesses. But one business stands out from the rest as it is both old and new.

“The Blue Ribbon Grill opened in 1985 and has had many owners over the years,” says the restaurant’s newest owner, Jennifer Greene. “We officially started working at the Blue Ribbon Grill on February 1, 2021.”

Blue Ribbon Grill has been serving a devoted clientele in Tucker’s Northlake area for more than a generation. Located between the reimagined Northlake Mall and Briarcliff Village Shopping Center, people don’t flock to Blue Ribbon Grill because of its posh surroundings. Instead, Greene explains, it’s the people and the food that keeps them coming back.

“People love that we have had long-time staff at our place, the longest being Beth at 29 years,” Greene explains. “They call us the ‘Cheers’ of Tucker because our staff knows regulars by their names, what they order and when they come. The food is also a draw and, for some, the drinks as well!”

Greene and her husband took over the restaurant without any formal experience in the industry; she had an advertising background, he was in media operations. Both shared a dream, however, and decided that running a restaurant was the path for them.

Quickly, the new restaurateurs were hit by the cold reality of COVID.

“For a while, we tried to keep everything the same at the restaurant because that is what most people requested,” Greene recalls. “We had to remove some favorites from the menu because of the rising food costs during the pandemic. We hope people will be patient and realize that we intend to offer those items as specials for now and bring them back when costs go back down.”

One thing the pandemic can’t touch is Blue Ribbon Grill’s signature dish: the meatloaf. Greene says it is one of the menu items that keeps customers coming back for more.

“I would have to say that the pot roast on Wednesdays might even sell more than the meatloaf,” she says. “It is a huge favorite that many love and comes with mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, and glazed carrots. We have people come every week for it.

“For 2022, we plan on adding new items for each season based on foods that are available and loved during those seasons like peas and carrots in the spring or watermelon salad in the summer.”

Blue Ribbon Grill will be participating in Tucker Restaurant Week from February 23-27. You can find them at 4006 Lavista Road or online at www.blueribbongrill.com.

CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

KRISTI BLUETT



Connected communities don't just happen. It takes some really special people who are willing to give their time to make it happen. Kristi Bluett is one of the people who makes Tucker the amazing place that it is.

Kristi and her husband Peter have lived in Tucker for as long as I have known them. By day, Kristi is a paraprofessional for the DeKalb County School District. But by night...well, Kristi is a little bit of everything.

Consider the impact she has made with our local Scout Troop 129. The youngest Bluett, Lucas, has been actively engaged in Scouts for several years and Kristi has been right there with him. She serves as the Advancement Chair for the troop, tracking badges and accomplishments for the scouts. Believe me, that is no small order! She also aids scouts who are working toward Eagle Scout status, ensuring that all i's are dotted and t's are crossed. She has been integral in organizing and running the Troop 129

Christmas tree lot at St. Andrew's Presbyterian. And she is a mainstay at Scout campouts, using her love of the outdoors to make sure the kids have a safe and fun time out in the wilderness.

When Lucas was a student at Midvale Elementary School, Kristi was very active in the school's PTA. The feather in her cap was organizing the school's Fall Festival which, at the time, was the main fundraiser for Midvale. Her passion for helping has not ceased since Lucas moved on to Tucker Middle.

What it boils down to is this: Kristi continuously goes above and beyond for her troop, her community and her family, all while bringing joy to those who know her. I think she is the perfect choice to be honored as Tucker's Citizen of the Month.

Nomination by Patrice Keeter

TEAM TUCKER *Spotlight*

KERRY CALDWELL

What do you do as a Plan Reviewer?

I review all construction plans that are submitted to the City for compliance to the currently adopted construction codes by the State of Georgia. I provide feedback to the applicants regarding any changes that need to be made to the construction documents when needed. Once I approve the plans, I record the results in our permitting software.

Tell us about your extensive background in building and permitting...

After I graduated from college in 1987, I worked as an Industrial Engineer for seven years for a precast concrete producer in Georgia. I became an estimator and a project manager for them until 2002. I began working for a general contractor at that time as a construction estimator and did that until 2005 when I decided to change careers and work as a building inspector and plan reviewer. Most recently, I worked for Jacobs Engineering as a chief building official and now as plan reviewer for the City of Tucker

How have building processes and standards changed since you started back in the 80s?

The International Code Council publishes updated building codes every three years, and the State of Georgia adopts the new codes every six years. Each new iteration of the codebooks increases in size and complexity. The types of materials used in construction and construction practices have changed a great deal over the last 30 years. As technology and manufacturing capabilities continue to evolve, I expect that we will continue to see changes occur.

How is Tucker different from other places you've worked?

I have been very blessed in my career to work as part of some great teams. Tucker is no exception. I am excited to be a part of the great staff at the City of Tucker.

What do you like best about the job?

Doing my part to make sure that buildings are built correctly, making them as safe as possible for our residents or tenants.



Off the Wall

What are some of your favorite hobbies?

My wife and I both have Harley Davidson motorcycles. We love to ride with the Christian Motorcyclist Association and with other groups of friends and family.

Are you a pet lover?

We have two grand dogs that live with us. They are spoiled, but we love them.

If you could vacation in one place, what would it be?

I would love going on an Alaskan Cruise one day.

What is your favorite movie?

Any movie with John Wayne would qualify.

“ASK RIP”

by Rip Robertson, Parks and Recreation Director



Over the last three decades in our great City of Tucker, many things have changed.

But one thing you can count on staying the same is our beloved Louisa Joseph. Many of you know her as Miss Louisa. If nostalgia leads you back to the Tucker Recreation Center, you will see Miss Louisa at the front desk and instantly remember a time that she greeted you on the way to your gymnastics practice, after school program, pottery, dance, or martial arts class.

Many of you asked me over the last few years if Miss Louisa still works for the Tucker Recreation Center. The answer is a resounding “yes”.

Since many in the community have such fond memories with Miss Louisa here

at the Recreation Center, I wanted to share her story with the whole Tucker community. In 1981, after graduating college with a Psychology and Humanities degree in her home country of Pakistan, she moved to the United States where she married and settled in Brookhaven. Miss Louisa is married with a son, daughter and three beautiful grandchildren.

Her first professional job in the U.S. was working for a childcare facility for \$3.45 per hour. In 1990, she started working for DeKalb County Parks and Recreation as a Recreation Assistant at Briarwood and then Mason Mill Park before settling here at the Tucker Recreation Center. For 31 years, she has walked the halls of the Rec Center keeping kids safe, engaging in after school programming, and meeting many members of the community. When I was newly joining Tucker, it was clear from Day One how much the community

loved and supported Miss Louisa, as I received numerous solicitations asking if she would join the Tucker Parks and Rec team. Equally, Louisa loves this community as she tells the staff often that she stayed in Tucker because she gets to enjoy all ages and diverse groups at the Rec Center.

Last year, Miss Louisa retired from DeKalb County School District as a para-pro at Hightower Elementary. She has always been one to read and does not miss a morning mass; even during the pandemic she would watch it virtually. New to retirement from her full-time job, she is looking forward to spending more time in the garden, attending our Tucker Parks and Rec Senior Outings, and of course working here at the Recreation Center.

We welcome you to stop by the Rec Center to thank Miss Louisa for 31 years of service to the Tucker community!





TUCKER Community Corner



**2/4 – Gwinnett-Tucker
Toastmasters Club
833 Open House**
7:30 a.m., Zoom

Ever wondered about the Toastmasters? This open house is a great opportunity to observe a meeting and find out how Toastmasters can help you reach your goals for 2022.

**2/12 – Valentine’s Day
Dance Class**

3 p.m., 4898 Lavista Road
Expressions in Motion Dance is providing this opportunity for parents and children to bond through dance! No prior experience needed. Registration is \$25 per pair.

**2/14 – Fourth Annual
Valentine’s Day
Celebration for Seniors**
12:30 p.m., 4228 First Ave.

Seniors from in and around Tucker are invited to enjoy their Valentine’s Day at Tucker City Hall Annex. Lunch, jazz music and a movie are all included in the \$10 registration fee.

**2/16 – Spaghetti
Dinner Fundraiser**
5-6:30 p.m.,
4315 Church Street

Come out and support the Tucker First United Methodist Church community, kids and school. This spaghetti dinner fundraiser is drive-thru only. Pre-order your meals now at www.tuckerfirst.org/weekday-preschool.html.