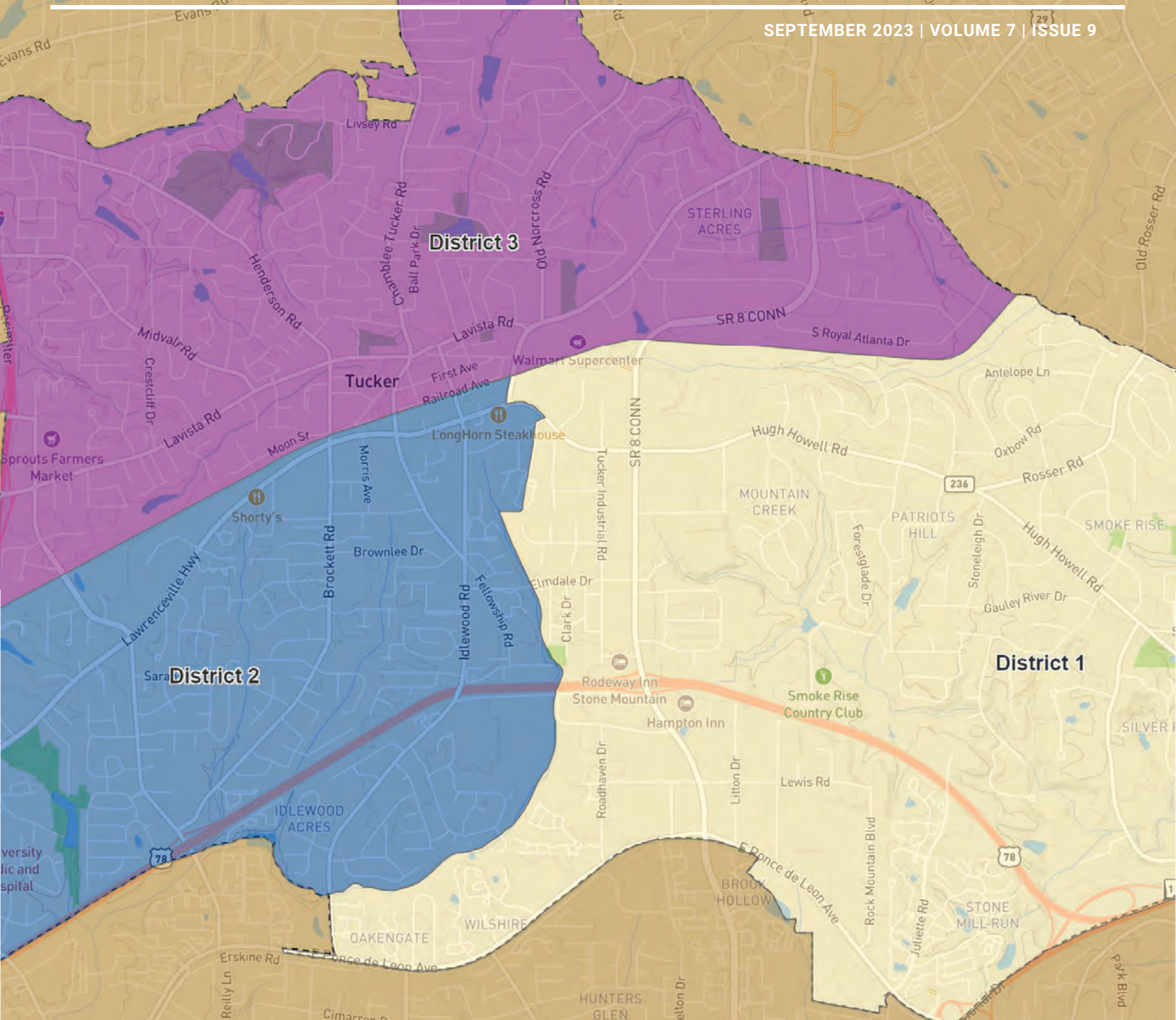




# INTUCKER

SEPTEMBER 2023 | VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 9



# STATE OF OUR CITY

# EDITOR'S NOTE



September is the month of Earth, Wind and Fire. Not really, and I am truly showing my age but as we have put

this issue together it has been playing in my head constantly so I thought I would share the joy via earworm!

National Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15 through October 15 and in recognition we highlight two local businesses and why they have chosen Tucker to fill out their life's dreams. Prime Meats and WeArGourmet are just two Hispanic-owned businesses in Tucker. The City's business outreach is actively working to be inclusive and welcoming as we expand our economic development.

Our Citizen of the Month is Terry Preston. A relatively new resident of Tucker, she has jumped right into the Tucker Way of community service. Terry is dynamic and is quickly on her way to being a true leader of the Tucker community.

Even if the weather doesn't show it, summer is officially over this month, and I am so looking forward to slowing down and snuggling in for the cooler months. But we remain busy and full tilt in City Hall, and I am excited for some upcoming changes we will be making to *InTucker*. I can't reveal them, but I do hope you not only notice but enjoy a new format and content starting in January of 2024.

As a citizen of Tucker, I would like to take advantage of my platform to thank those that qualified to run for City Council in this upcoming election. Knowing we have engaged and willing citizens to lead this City will forever fill my heart with Tucker Pride. When we created the City, we knew this would be a huge undertaking and I am consistently impressed. That being said, it is not the role of the City to educate about the candidates or play any role in the campaigns, Tucker Civic Association will be hosting a Candidate Forum on October 10. Please direct any inquiries to them.

**SONJA SZUBSKI**  
**INTUCKER EDITOR**

# IN THIS ISSUE



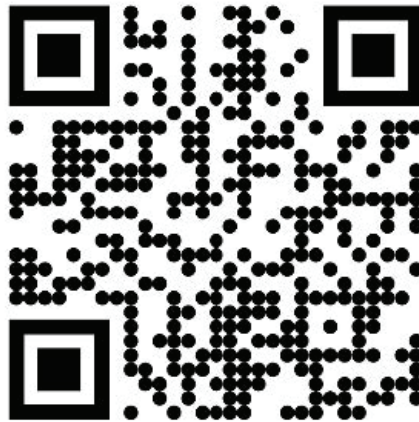
### ON THE COVER

The Mayor delivered the State of the City during the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in August. Read an abridged version starting on page 3.



### BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

Celebrating 30+ years in Tucker, and a complete office renovation, Georgia Eye Associates is a Main Street staple, learn more on page 13.



### ON THE BEAT

Our DKPD does an excellent job keeping us safe, learn more on how you can help with your home security system on page 5.

**CAMP SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER**

**SEPT. 23**  
**5-8 P.M.**

**CHURCH STREET GREENSPACE**

**JOIN US FOR FOOD, DRINKS & BACKYARD GAMES**

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

### FIT AND FUN INTUCKER

What's new with our parks and facilities? Read up on the newest positions, offerings, athletics and upcoming events on page 14.



# INTUCKER

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**VOLUME 7**  
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# From the Mayor

## STATE OF THE CITY

For those not already familiar, there was once a spectacular and innovative automobile, known as the Tucker Torpedo, or the Tucker 48, a uniquely pontoon-shaped auto, briefly manufactured in 1948.

The Tucker 48 had an engine in the rear, a curve-tracking third headlamp, real air conditioning, a number of innovative driver safety features, and even had a new kind of transmission the inventor called the "Tuckermatic" (a word we should find some use for!).

The Tucker was unique and brilliant enough that a movie was made about it 40 years after its introduction, in 1988. And yet, only 51 Tucker 48s ever came off the assembly line.

There were varying reasons for that Tucker's demise, including jealousy, aggressive competition, opposition from others in the auto industry and even opposition from the government.

Moreover, that Mr. Preston Tucker (the inventor) raced toward the future of the Tucker Motor Company without the foundations necessary for long-term, sustainable success.

You might say Mr. Tucker tried to do everything at once, and ended up with nothing. By 1949, he was bankrupt and out of business.

However in fairness to his genius, if you wanted to buy that Tucker automobile today, it would likely cost you in excess of \$3,000,000.

There's no other connection or parallel between Tucker the car and Tucker the City, but maybe some of you have already guessed where I'm going with this.

At seven and a half years old, the City of Tucker has been built on innovation and energy, but it's also been built with care and patience, for a purpose and for the long haul.

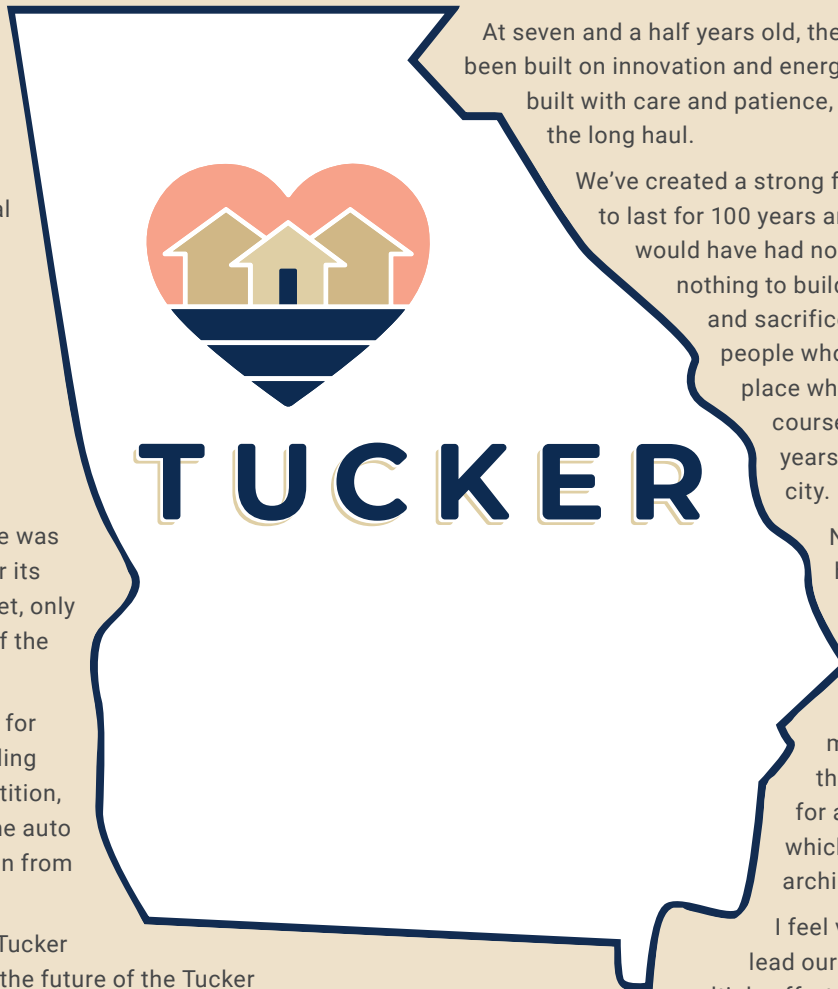
We've created a strong foundation that's built to last for 100 years and then some. But we would have had no place to build and nothing to build with but for the work and sacrifice of volunteers and people who simply loved on the place where they lived over the course of more than 100 years before we became a city.

Now you've been hearing me use the phrase Live, Work, Play and Pray for a long time, and in different ways. It's my way of expressing the elements necessary for a high quality of life, which is always our overarching goal as a city.

I feel very privileged to lead our city in coordinating multiple efforts to establish prosperity and more desirable

outcomes for all the citizens of Tucker, and one of the jobs of a leader is to define the vision.

And then to share that vision, inspiring others to buy in and build support for it. Tonight, I want to talk about the state of our city, using those four pillars of a high quality of life to give perspective on the work we have done, the work we are doing, and the work still to come.



(continued on page 6)

# City Council Update



The City of Tucker Mayor and Council met the second Monday of August for the first meeting of the month after a small break of only one meeting in July. August Citizen of the Month, Abigail Heizer, led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance and was followed by a proclamation for Donna S. Mann in gratitude and congratulations on her recent retirement from her position as the DeKalb County Education Outreach Specialist for the Tucker Precinct.

The first order of business was a 6-0 vote to excuse Councilmember Virginia Recee from attendance and a 6-0 vote to approve the consent agenda containing the meeting minutes from July 20 and a contract amendment for purchase orders for the Department of Public Works. The Mayor presented an update on the upcoming vote for SPLOST II that DeKalb County is proposing. The City is working with the County on an intergovernmental agreement on how the monies will be divided up, and the Council is discussing the plan for allocation should SPLOST II pass in November.

Josh Wallace and Terry Grandison were appointed by the Mayor and affirmed by the Council to join the newly created seats on the Zoning Board of Appeals with a vote of 6-0.

Pond presented on the Lawrenceville Highway Code Study and introduced the draft of the proposed text amendment to

the City Code to create an overlay district for zoning to the Lawrenceville Highway corridor. This was a first read and public hearing to provide feedback on the proposed code. The next community meeting will be held at City Hall on August 30. For further information and details please visit [tuckerga.gov/LHCodestudy](http://tuckerga.gov/LHCodestudy).

The next two items were first reads with public hearings for Special Land Use Permits, one for a personal care home in a residential neighborhood off Sandpiper Drive in District 3, and the other to allow for alcohol sales at a gas station off East Ponce de Leon in District 1.

Three contracts were presented and approved 6-0 for the following:

- Contract award for South Fork Peachtree Greenway design to Heath & Lineback in the amount of \$799,608.12
- A task order in the amount of \$72,884.83, which includes a 15% contingency, with Utility Asset Management for cleaning and video collection of pipe systems at 10 locations
- A task order in the amount of \$96,971.68, which includes a 15% contingency, with Cajenn Construction for stormwater maintenance and repair services of inlining and siphon hole repair

The Mayor and Council adjourned for a brief executive session and returned with no action but to adjourn the meeting.

Mayor and Council held a workshop session on August 28 and listened to six presentations. As there were no actionable items on the agenda, no votes were taken.

Tucker City Council meetings are the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. at Tucker City Hall, 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Suite 350B.

## DATES TO KNOW

- **September 4**  
City Buildings Closed in Observance of Labor Day
- **September 11**  
City Council Meeting
- **September 13**  
Traffic Court
- **September 20**  
Traffic Court
- **September 21**  
Planning Commission
- **September 25**  
City Council Work Session
- **September 16**  
Environmental Court

## FOLLOW US



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# ON THE BEAT with Sgt. Obester

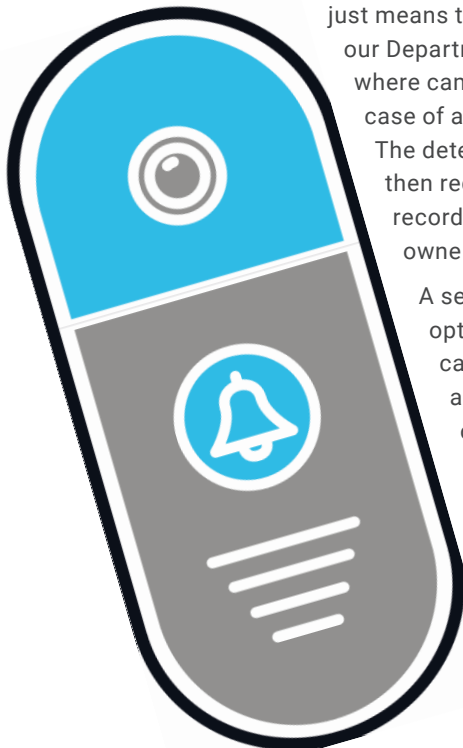
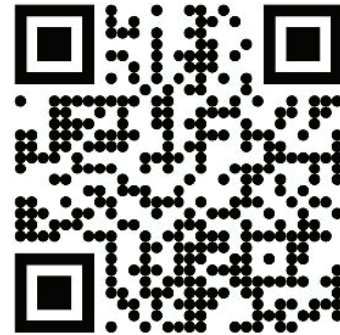
*Lt. J. Ridling is Tucker's liaison to the DeKalb County Police Department and can be contacted by email at [jaridling@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:jaridling@dekalbcountyga.gov) or by phone at (678) 597-9040.*

I love writing about technology. First, because it makes me sound younger than I am (don't ask). Second, and more importantly, it is because technology has fundamentally changed and enhanced the work we do in law enforcement.

In previous On the Beat articles, Captain Berg and I have written about our Department's use of technology, including articles about our advanced body cameras, our upgraded Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and our new police vehicles equipped with GPS and Bluetooth capabilities. For this month's column, I will be discussing our latest attempt at partnering with the community by using video surveillance technology, a program we call the Connect DeKalb County Initiative.

Gone are the days of video recording to VHS videotapes and CDs. Today, most video cameras digitally record their data and indeed many are "IP" cameras that can stream directly to the internet. With this advancement, video evidence showing crimes and footage of potential suspects are of higher quality and more easily processed by our detectives. The problem with video evidence is knowing where a camera is located and if it captured a criminal act. Fortunately, our Department has partnered with a company called FUSUS to help us integrate and monitor cameras throughout DeKalb County.

Recently, our Department began asking individuals and business owners to voluntarily register their privately owned surveillance cameras into a system called FUSUS. Registering your cameras does not give anyone outside of law enforcement access to them. It just means that an investigator with our Department can quickly identify where cameras are located in case of a crime related incident. The detective or investigator can then request copies of digital recordings via a digital drop box link sent directly to the camera owner.



A second – and entirely voluntary - registration level does offer the option of allowing DKPD direct and real-time access to a particular camera feed. While there is a cost to this option (for equipment and a subscription fee), again this is a voluntary program. All camera settings and camera access is controlled entirely by the camera owner and not the Department.

In the end, the goal of this initiative is to make our community safer by obtaining better evidence, solving more crimes, and ultimately reducing criminal behavior. For more information on this new initiative, go to [connectdekalbcounty.org/](http://connectdekalbcounty.org/) or scan the QR code above with your smart phone. The website has more information about the two levels of connectivity, a FAQ section, and a link to easily register your camera system.

## LIVING IN TUCKER

So first, we know Tucker is a great place to live. But what makes a place a place?

Well, there has to be some There- There. Many of you know the story – the first there here, as far as the history of Tucker, was Greenville Henderson’s Mill and orchards, granted to him in the early 1800’s as reward for his outstanding military service to Georgia.

This was long before there was a Decatur, or even an Atlanta. He made the Tucker area home for himself and his large extended family. There were farms and farmers in the area, and as more people saw its advantages, more people began to make it their home too. It became a place people wanted to live, because there was work, rail transportation, natural resources, land to own and to farm, and lots and lots of opportunity.

In 1892, this place got a railroad depot and a post office, both called Tucker for the first time, expanding access and opportunity. From there, we grew through the remainder of the Industrial Revolution, the invention and advent of the automobile, two world wars, the Great Depression, and all the other upheavals of American history, more and more people were attracted to live in Tucker.

The biggest housing boom came after World War II, as DeKalb County came into its own, largely due to the visionary leadership of DeKalb’s sole County Commissioner, Scott Candler, and a cadre of other leaders who wanted to keep improving their hometown, even though it wasn’t yet a city.

Many of you live in the homes they built for themselves or for others. The great neighborhoods we know from Edinburgh Estates to Winding Woods, to Wellington, and Smoke Rise and so many others were built to

take advantage of the many opportunities to also work, play and pray here.

Our efforts to make and nurture Tucker into a great place to live follow this same formula. We work hard on the other three elements (work, play and

pray), in order to continually strengthen the desirability of living here.

Our population has grown by at least 5000 new residents since we incorporated, all of whom chose to make the City of Tucker their home.

To accommodate our growing future, new neighborhoods are being built at Idlewood Station, The Enclave on Lavista, and at Trinity Park. And we’re adding a variety of housing for all incomes and needs.

All in all, we have nearly 1000 housing units comprising apartments, townhomes and single-family detached housing coming online in the very near term.

In the next few weeks, we will release an analysis of all the housing types in and around the city, which will help us determine what we most need to bolster in order to attract new residents who will continue to support our employers, our restaurants and retailers, our greenspaces, and our faith community. We will use that data to design our strategy in planning, zoning, encouraging and nurturing the kinds of housing investments that will have the biggest impact on improving our quality of life.

## WORKING IN TUCKER

Nobody loves to commute, can we agree on that? So it follows that if we want people to be able to live and work here in Tucker, we must constantly improve and add to live, pray and play aspects that are attractive to employers.

The history of industry and employment in Tucker is a proud one.

As the area evolved from primarily agricultural into one centered around commerce, the railroads played a huge role. Those rail lines carried in the goods people needed and carried out the goods that our industries and farmers produced, all the way back to Greenville Henderson’s fruit and the beverages he made from local crops.

The town that was laid out by the Georgia, Carolina and Northern railroad still forms the core of our downtown and is a bright part of our future one hundred and thirty years later.

Today one of our biggest and most innovative business citizens is also in the beverage business. You might have heard that Pepsico is underway with a \$300 million expansion of their plant here, adding hundreds of jobs to what will be one of their most advanced bottling plants anywhere.

We have a building supplies company, Cofer Brothers, whose 100th birthday we celebrated a few years ago, that was literally built on the railroad and has been there ever since. Chip Cofer pointed out to me that the bank on 1st Avenue that was once the Bank of Tucker is now Bank of America, and we have a



new community bank called Tandem, whose name itself is a reference to working together.

And speaking of small business, did you know there are over 1200 businesses in Tucker with fewer than 10 employees, and at least another 100 with between 10 and 15?

We have one of the most diverse business communities of any city you can find, and it is the backbone of our economy.

During the 1960's, some forward thinking leadership and investors began to build the Stone Mountain Industrial Park, bringing dozens and dozens of manufacturers and distributors to the area, and along with North and South Royal Atlanta, which came later, the properties comprising the Tucker Summit Community Improvement District have become one of the most important industrial areas in the county.

As a side-bar, going back to Living in Tucker, one of our largest residential communities, Smoke Rise, was envisioned and largely built by developer Bill Probst, specifically to provide housing for the people who would come to work in those same facilities and industries.

In fact it's a point of pride for me that I live in a house built by Bill Probst 45 years ago, and that we recently named one of the Smoke Rise parks in his memory.

On the west side of Tucker, Northlake Mall was opened to serve the shopping needs of the region, and businesses grew up all around it. We celebrated the mall's 50th birthday just last year. And speaking of long-lived businesses, a there's a cool coin and stamp collector store at Northlake Mall who just passed that same anniversary milestone, having been at the mall since the day it opened.

As the age of the shopping mall has passed, we're fortunate to have had some very smart and bold investors envision a new future for it. Underway now is a conversion to a multi-use development that already has close to 1600 employees of Emory Healthcare going to work there every day, and will soon include amenities like restaurants, personal services, entertainment, and quality retail, along with another generation of new employers.

We have another important partner, the Tucker Northlake Community Improvement District that works from Northlake all the way through our downtown. As a result of what has happened in that area, the Northlake Office sub-market has

among the highest rates of occupancy in the region, with an even brighter future ahead of it.



And to carry this success into the future, this year we completed Tucker's first-ever Economic Development Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan was a year-long, deep dive into what's here now in the way of industry and business and what's in the future. It addresses how we will leverage our strengths, shore up our weaknesses, and act on both to be ever more attractive to the kinds of employers we want.

For the first time, we have a Plan that provides a road map we can follow instead of constantly veering to the next shiny new thing. This time-investment should guide us toward making smart and thoughtful financial investments, keeping our eyes on the road and avoiding distractions.

## PLAYING IN TUCKER

Playing in Tucker means different things to different people. For the operations of the City, it certainly centers on our parks system, and I couldn't be prouder of our accomplishments there.

When we became a city, we acquired about 260 acres in 13 parks that were woefully neglected. It was not that these weren't great spaces, and not that the Friends of the Parks weren't doing everything they could, but these parks needed resources, significant reinvestment and professional attention, along with more quality programming to keep them active and attractive.

As with the city itself, we started from scratch. We replaced the playground equipment in every park and added safer surfaces for our children to play on.

We replaced every fence in every park to make them safer as well as more functional. We got the grass in shape, trimmed the trees, added security and lighting, and did everything we could to make them more inviting.

At the Tucker Recreation Center, we replaced the roof, the heating and cooling system, and renovated large parts of the interior.

We refined and added programming, including pickleball, volleyball and basketball courts, fitness facilities and meeting spaces and solar powered equipment for public use during emergencies, as well as providing a performance space for the volunteer-run Main Street Theater company, in the old Cafetorium.



Elsewhere, we've completed renovations of Cofer pool and Peters Park, and we're underway at Rosenfeld Park and Lord Family Park. We've added lighting for tennis and soccer in existing parks, and in the next 6-12 months, you'll see all new fields, including artificial turf, state of the art lighting, and new concessions, restrooms, locker rooms, parking, and pedestrian access at Fitzgerald. And as promised to our partners who donated the property to the city, we are returning the physical space to its former glory, and allowing the leaders there to continue to teach lessons about winning and losing graciously, and all the other life skills that come from competitive team sports.

Since we started our Parks and Rec Department, we have also ADDED over 30 acres in 5 new parks, including Rosenfeld Park, the Church Street Greenspace (perhaps my personal favorite space in the city), the Fitzgerald Sports Complex I just talked about, and our newest, signature park for downtown. We're in design phase for that one, which will include an amphitheater, shaded seating to enjoy lunch or a play date, and a range of other features for events and for spending your recreational time. We can enjoy the open space for now, but look for construction to begin after the first of the year and to take roughly one year to complete.

But that's not all we offer in the way of Play. We've of course had our extremely successful Main Street events like Tucker Day, Taste of Tucker, the Cruise ins, and many others, all run by volunteers since long before we were a city.

And the city itself has added some that are already a vital part of our community life. Our TKR Summer of Fun includes the annual Celebration of Independence and Fireworks Spectacular, our popular First Friday Concert Series, our Third Thursday Movie Nights and our National Night Out, coming up in October. And let's not leave out Adult Field Day, a highly competitive day that includes skill events like water balloon tosses and inflatable sumo wrestling suits.

All of this came together following the vision laid out in our first Parks Master Plan 5 years ago. This year, we are conducting our first major update of that plan so that our parks will continue to grow into a world-class system, so please look for your opportunity to participate in developing that plan.

I could go on, but Parks and Rec may require its own "State of the Tucker Parks" event at some point.

## PRAYING IN TUCKER

The fourth element of our successful future that HAS to be integrated with the others, Pray, is a shorthand way of

referencing our faith community. For good reason, this is the element the government has the least direct role in, but which is the most directly vital to our community's spiritual health, sense of purpose and well-being. It undergirds and makes sense of why we work on all the other elements.

From the time this area was settled, through all the other history we've discussed, churches and faith organizations have been part of the fabric of Tucker.

A few years ago, I gave this State of the City report, and I challenged that audience to just imagine if somehow, suddenly, the churches and other faith-based organizations in Tucker simply disappeared.

Who would feed the hungry, visit the sick? Who would come alongside you when you lost a job or a loved one? Who would provide resources to the destitute, and lovingly help them get back on their feet? Where else are we reminded of how meaningful life can be, but also that there is so much more to our existence than what we can see, feel and touch every day?

Government certainly can't do those things - I've said many times that it's people who have the capacity for love, and people who work and serve in government can and do express their love through their work. But government as an institution cannot love its neighbor. It's just not built for that.

That's why we are blessed to have multiple Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and Lutheran, Catholic, Mormon and dozens of other denominational and non-denominational churches leading in love.

They collectively hold services in a variety of languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese, even Hebrew and Aramaic. Muslim and Buddhist Temples and Jewish Synagogues help to weave our Tucker tapestry of faith.

Our role as a city government and as citizens, is to continually acknowledge and recognize the irreplaceable role which our faith community plays and the many needs they fill. We are served and made better by them, individually and as a community. We want to nurture them, honor them, and encourage them on their mission and as they do their work.

So we've talked about our history and recent and current work in the context of





these four pillars of Tucker community life, and I'd like to close with some thoughts about the future and how these principles will continue to guide our progress over the next 2 and a half years.

## LET'S START HERE

If you could afford that \$3,000,000+ price tag, you could probably find a Tucker 48 for your very own. It would be super-cool. You could show it off to your friends, maybe drive it around town enjoying its once-upon-a-time advanced features, maybe even take it down to the Tucker Cruise-In and share it with the motorheads. But its functions would be pretty limited to its time and the very specific things it was built for.

You could never ford a creek in it or climb a 30-degree incline like you could with a Jeep, for example, and you'd do more harm than good if you tried.

You couldn't tow your boat to the lake, or your trailer to a jobsite – The Tucker Torpedo might have been an engineering wonder, but it just wasn't built for those tasks.

It probably couldn't even keep up with traffic on today's 285.

Likewise, our City of Tucker was built and is being built with purpose, planning and vision. If we attempt to use it contrary to its purpose, we may do more harm than good.

So as we plan and work toward the future, the first and most important thing is to understand what our purpose is, what our capabilities are, and then deploy those capabilities to maximum advantage for our purposes.

We'll be at our best when we are doing the things that only we can do, or the things that we can clearly do better for ourselves than some other subdivision of government. We'll succeed when we focus relentlessly on the things we are built for, like taking care of common needs for a safe and attractive city, effective transportation, and appealing recreational facilities, which lead to investment by businesses and families. And we'll be at our best in the future only if we build something that does all the things we need it to do today AND is upgradeable to address the future, and not stuck in time like an antique car.

So we'll continue building and improving our roads. We expect to spend in excess of \$5,000,000 per year on them over the next six years; we will accelerate construction of 32 miles of multi-use trails (which will take tens of millions of dollars, some of it hopefully Other People's Money); we'll make massive stormwater and drainage system improvements citywide; and we'll continue to add to the appeal of our parks to make them one of the big reasons people want to live, work, play and pray here.

To accomplish all of this, we will also need new leadership for Team Tucker. In fact, if I was doing a SWOT analysis (and I have), the greatest potential threat on my list would be that we might fail to encourage enough of the thoughtful, level-headed leaders in our community to help keep us on course as elected

officials. People who run for the right reasons and with a right understanding of our role and our purpose.

It's not the purpose of tonight's event, but it makes me think of the story of Catch-22. Do you remember? It was a novel about the cold war, and a squadron of pilots continually being sent on a series of very dangerous missions.

The Catch in Catch-22 was, the pilots who were eager to go, who thought it was just awesome and exciting, were deemed not fit for duty. As long as you didn't want to go, because you recognized the difficulty and risk involved, you were deemed sane and qualified and had to continue on the missions. So I'm sorry to break it to you, but if you're a volunteer who's doing the hard, sometimes thankless work for the right reasons, serving on city council may be your next mission. If it seems daunting and hard and scary and thankless, please take my word for it – that understanding is the first qualification, and I'd love to talk to you about it.

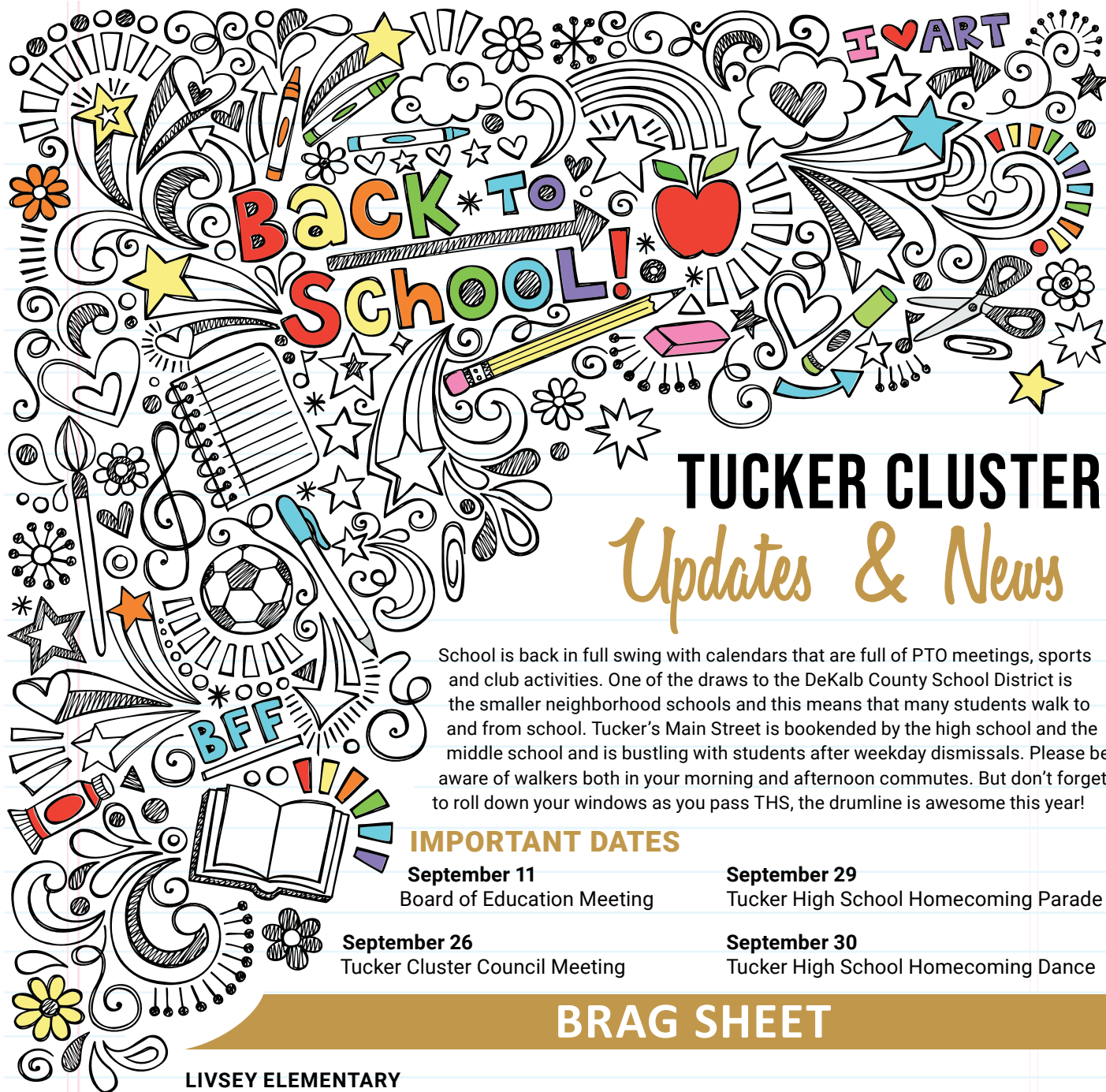
I'm only half-kidding about that, but whether you ever run for office or not, we know that our Volunteer Leaders will always be our greatest strength. Your continuing servant leadership and giving back, will remain the special additive of the fuel that drives our Tucker forward.

We are blessed to live in the great state of Georgia, and in metro Atlanta, a large community that is diverse, resilient and full of resources. It is among the nation's most successful and vibrant, by most every definition.

Within that larger space Tucker is special, and it's special because of the people who live, work, play and pray here, and who make sacrifices to enhance our quality of life. As your Mayor, and on behalf of our entire family, we are continually honored to serve you.



**FRANK AUMAN  
MAYOR**



# TUCKER CLUSTER

## Updates & News

School is back in full swing with calendars that are full of PTO meetings, sports and club activities. One of the draws to the DeKalb County School District is the smaller neighborhood schools and this means that many students walk to and from school. Tucker's Main Street is bookended by the high school and the middle school and is bustling with students after weekday dismissals. Please be aware of walkers both in your morning and afternoon commutes. But don't forget to roll down your windows as you pass THS, the drumline is awesome this year!

### IMPORTANT DATES

**September 11**  
Board of Education Meeting

**September 29**  
Tucker High School Homecoming Parade

**September 26**  
Tucker Cluster Council Meeting

**September 30**  
Tucker High School Homecoming Dance

## BRAG SHEET

### LIVSEY ELEMENTARY

- Livsey Elementary held their first Family Night Out of the year. Many families met at gusto! to eat delicious food and support their school.

### MIDVALE ELEMENTARY

- Midvale Elementary's Family Night Celebration was a blast! Students made new friends, explored the new playground, and enjoyed hot dogs and ice cream from food trucks with their families.

### TUCKER MIDDLE

- Tucker Middle School had two new electronic signs installed over the summer to help share events and information with the community.

### TUCKER HIGH

- Tucker High School's football season started August 18. Home stadium is Adams Field and tickets can be purchased on [gofan.com](http://gofan.com).

# CITIZEN OF THE MONTH

# TERRY PRESTON



Terry Preston is relatively new to the Tucker area, but she has quickly made it her home and found a fun way to serve her chosen community. Terry is a widow, a mother of two, a daughter and sister, as well as a compassionate outreach coordinator for a local hospice company. She is the perfect example of how to dive into your chosen community and make a difference, which is why I would like to nominate her for Tucker's Citizen of the Month. With a long career in community outreach, Terry is a friend to everyone she meets. The motivation to help and lead others with grace and fun comes naturally to her and it is made obvious in just one conversation with her. Terry is energy and positive vibes incarnated, and she spreads light and joy wherever she goes.

Growing up, Terry struggled with reading. As an adult she became aware of the disparity in academic success in children from various backgrounds and learned it could be directly linked to how toddlers are interacted with, particularly regarding exposure to words. An obvious and well-documented solution is reading to our children. The idea of starting a non-profit to help provide books to underserved children had been percolating for a bit and when the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered us all in it was the perfect time for the idea to blossom. Terry's inspiration was not only her childhood struggles but also seeing how teachers adapted to engaging students during the pandemic. One teacher started a bedtime story zoom for her students. Terry was so moved she decided to establish her own reading program.

The Radical Readers Clubhouse is a multicultural and multi-generational literacy program that connects with children and adults all over the world via social media, and in-person events to encourage them to read. Terry focuses on providing sufficient access to books and reading programs for children in low-resource communities. As part of its mission to promote literacy in under-resourced communities, the Radical Readers Clubhouse regularly organizes community book drives to collect donations of new and gently used books. Through Radical Reader's Clubhouse Terry is on a mission "to enhance the quality of life for those in need in our community who do not have access to books or reading resources, and to foster genuine and enduring relationships in our culturally diverse neighborhoods." Terry's outreach includes story time on Facebook Live every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. EST, and a free kids circle which takes place the second Saturday of each month at the Green Park Apartments here in Tucker. The kids that attend receive free books, can participate in awesome arts and crafts projects, are introduced to local authors and a pizza lunch. Green Park Apartments, and the community are a big part of the success of this program.

Terry has partnered with Citizen's for Family Activities in Tucker for several events, and I am so grateful to her for her mutual support and enthusiasm.

*Submitted by Camille Mahdi*

# BUSINESS BOOM

by Angela Brooks, Business Outreach Specialist



## BIENVENIDO A TUCKER

Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM) is celebrated annually from September 15 through October 15 to acknowledge the history, culture, and contributions of Americans whose ancestry can

be traced to over twenty countries in

Latin America, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Many labels are used for this pan-ethnic group, with the most common terms being “Hispanic” and Latina/o/x.

On the business front, in the past ten years Latinos have started businesses in the United States at a faster rate than any other group – a 44% growth rate – compared to only 4% for non-Latino owned firms according to the 2021 American Business Survey (ABS). Latin-owned businesses (LOB) make up approximately 20% of the businesses owned by all demographic groups. There are an estimated 4.65 million Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States with construction being the #1 industry followed by food services and administration.

To put that in perspective, recent Census data shows that there are an estimated 3.12 million black-owned businesses, 2.9 million Asian-American-owned businesses and approximately 90,000 businesses owned by those of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island descent.

One local organization helping to launch and support LOB businesses in the Atlanta metro area is the Latin American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia (LAAC). They have business incubator and accelerator programs that provide business hopefuls with the tools needed to launch and grow. Operations Manager Liz Rodriguez said, “We provide the resources and tools to help them succeed.”

“Not only Latino-owned businesses,” she added, “We help all businesses regardless of their membership status with the LAAC and that includes non-Latino-owned businesses.”

Two businesses in Tucker that have worked closely with the chamber are Prime Meats and WeARGourmet.

Part of the NORSAN LLC group, started in 1987, Prime Meats is a family-owned, private-packaging and distribution company that provides premium meat products to restaurants and grocery stores in the Southeast.

Like so many other small businesses, the company did experience a downturn due to COVID-19, but they had a great safety net.

Speaking at a LAAC conference, Norsan CEO and Chairman Norberto Sanchez cited diversification and having more than one line of business as being keys to long-term success and profitability. “If you have the potential and opportunity to be diversified, do it. Don’t depend on one single business,” he said.

WeARGourmet Sausage is another family-owned business. Frederico Etchechoury, a gourmet sausage manufacturer owner of WeARGourmet, brought a taste of Argentina to America and fulfilled a dream on behalf of his late father who was a pig farmer there.

“The recipes we use today were handed down from my father’s great grandfather,” Etchechoury said. He says the pride in his heritage is the basis for the products they “craft” and the traditions that they pass down. He still uses the original family recipes for the sausages, and so he has to get some of the ingredients from Argentina. “This is not cheap to do, but it is that important in order to stay true to our tradition.”

If you’re wondering what’s behind the name, according to its website, “We” represents the dedicated individuals who bring our customers the very best products. The “AR” stands for Argentina, the country we call home and where we draw our inspiration. Gourmet represents the level of quality we strive for in everything we do.”

Etchechoury began his journey in 2022 and runs his production and operations out of the PREP concept kitchens on Lakeside Parkway.

Tucker has a bounty of diverse businesses to shop with. HHM is a great opportunity to show your support for our local LOBs. Shop Latino Biz (SLB) Day on Sept. 15 has become the official kick-off event for HHM and a community day of action. Created in 2018, it was started to encourage support and to recognize the importance of LOBs to local economies across the country.

Tucker’s Mayor Frank Auman plans to issue a formal city proclamation and present it to the LAA Chamber in honor of Shop Latino-owned Businesses Day on Sept. 15, 2023.

So, remember to patronize one of the city’s LOB not only on that day and to shop intentionally and throughout the year with all of Tucker’s diverse small businesses.

## BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

# GEORGIA EYE ASSOCIATES



For over 30 years, Georgia Eye Associates has been providing the gift of sight to the Tucker community. The full-service practice offers a range of treatments from corrective surgery to contact lens fittings and employs both ophthalmologists and optometrists. Just last month they celebrated their longevity and recent renovation to their office on Tucker's Main Street.

During the celebration they shared their thoughts and love for Tucker,

"It was our turn to pay it forward and revamp everything we have had done over the 30 plus years since Dr. (Donald) Polland founded the practice," Dr. Kris Gillian said.

Georgia Eye Associates was founded by Dr. Donald Polland in 1988 and expanded the practice to Tucker in 1991. Their commitment to service above and beyond, along with their engagement with the Tucker community has endeared the office to the people of Tucker, and the Tucker location has become home to many of the office staff.

"We have four offices," Dr. Gillian said. "When I come here, I always feel like this office is kind of my family office. You know everywhere else is corporate and busy like in Buckhead or in Lawrenceville, even in Braselton. The hometown feel in Tucker has always been here, its warm and fuzzy."

Dr. Jeremy Chartash is the newest member of the Georgia Eye Associates team and has quickly felt part of the Tucker family.

"I enjoy giving the gift of sight," Dr. Chartash said. "Many patients don't realize their potential vision can be improved with other options than just glasses. I enjoy fitting patients with a

specialty contact lens that can optimize patients' vision despite their glasses never being able to see 20/20."

Dr. Brigette Rabitsch joined Georgia Eye Associates in 2006 and has loved the friendly hometown feel of Tucker. Over the years she has seen her patients grow up and bring their own children for her care. She shared it is an amazing feeling playing a small role in their lives and that they trust her with one of their most precious senses.

"I think it is a good thing having that hometown feel," Rabitsch said. "Going back to that trust factor especially after we had the privilege of working with patients over many years. They know that we are there to support them and we have been very blessed. The community of Tucker has been very faithful and has supported us over the years. So, I think it has been a win-win situation."

Dr. Rabitsch said one of the reasons why they stand out amongst other eye doctor offices is that the team treats their patients like family. Combined with the hometown feel of the city, Georgia Eye Associates and Tucker have a great relationship that they hope to continue for another 30 years.

"I would say what really kind of sets us apart is our desire to be thorough in our approach," Dr. Rabitsch said. "We want to make sure we treat each patient as an individual, that we take care of whatever needs they may have. We want to consider the whole health of the patient."

Georgia Eye Associates is located at 2368 Main Street, Suite #2, Tucker, GA 30084. For more information about the business and to make an appointment, please visit [georgiaeyeassociates.com](http://georgiaeyeassociates.com)

# FIT & FUN INTUCKER

*contributed by Tucker Parks and Recreation*



The Parks and Recreation Department is continuing to rapidly grow. We are excited to introduce the latest addition of an Outdoor Education Program Specialist to our department. The individual

in this role will be responsible for developing and facilitating various hands-on experiential learning opportunities for all ages within our community. The program specialist will also utilize the parks and facilities for outdoor and adventure programs such as habitats, insects, birds, challenge courses, and outdoor survival skills to name a few. By adding this addition to our department, it will allow for those in and around the community to discover and learn new things that the wonderful City of Tucker has to offer.

By providing a space to welcome outdoor education to the community, it will encourage learners to not only be active but to take the time to learn new skills and increase their understanding of both natural and human communities. It will also encourage learners to be creative and step outside of their comfort zone. By having our very own Outdoor Education Program Specialist in Tucker it provides the chance for a connection to be established between families and neighbors while also building a foundation that the community can continue to expand.

With 14 parks and 2 pools in the City, there is a lot to discover and learn. Outdoor programs will create the perfect setting for all subjects and topics as well as provide several unique practical experiences and opportunities for learners. Outdoor learning can also play a huge role in health benefits that relate to the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of individuals.

Tucker Parks & Recreation presents

## YOUTH CO-ED BASKETBALL



### TUCKER REC CENTER

**REGISTRATION OPEN NOW**

[tuckerga.gov/parks](http://tuckerga.gov/parks)  
Contact Ray Rollins - [rollins@tuckerga.gov](mailto:rollins@tuckerga.gov)



We invite you to stop by our Recreation Center and get to know our new Outdoor Education Specialist, as well as all our staff. We have had several new team members join the team this year and we would like you to get to know them all. We continue to add new programs and the parks as a great opportunity for us to grow. Come learn all the new and exciting programs being added.

As summer camp has ended, we welcome back all of our existing programs for the fall but more exciting is we are adding several new ones as well. New to the Rec Center is Capoeira Karakara (Brazilian dance that incorporates martial arts movements), 3D Printing, Theatre FUNdamentals, and bringing back a new schedule of senior Lunch and Learns and outings.

The Rec Center will be extremely busy this fall, so come by, check us out online or give us a call. There is something for everyone and we look forward to seeing you soon.

**FREE MOVIE @ CHURCH STREET GREENSPACE**

# SEPT 21



**ANNUAL TKR SUMMER OF FUN**



**TUCKERGA.GOV/SUMMER**

# Upcoming Events

## ADULT FIELD DAY IS BACK!

SEPTEMBER 23, 2023  
5-8 P.M.

JOIN US FOR FOOD, DRINKS  
& BACKYARD GAMES

**\$25 PER PERSON**  
2 DRINK TICKETS, DINNER, AND  
CHILDCARE INCLUDED (25 MAX)



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

**TUESDAY, OCT. 3**  
**5-7 P.M.**



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**CHURCH STREET GREENSPACE**  
**4316 CHURCH STREET**

**FRIDAY, OCT. 27**  
**4-7 P.M.**



**HAUNTED  
TRAIL HIKE**

**HENDERSON PARK EAST**  
**4000 HENDERSON PARK ROAD**

# TUCKERGA.GOV

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



# TUCKER *Community Corner*



## **9/9 – DeKalb Police Department’s Community Outreach & Safety Fair**

10 a.m.-12 p.m.

3358 Chamblee Tucker Road  
Atlanta, GA 30341

Learn how to keep yourself and your neighbors safe. Get a free health screening, a Kia steering wheel lock, and more! Stay until 11:30 a.m. for a free furniture raffle.

## **9/9 – First Christian Church of Atlanta Care Fair**

10 a.m.-1 p.m.

4532 Lavista Road  
Tucker, GA 30084

A panel presentation by the National Aging in Place Council addresses concerns about housing, health and more. Sponsored by AARP.

## **9/23 – Free Community Rummage Event**

10 a.m.-12 p.m.

1901 Montreal Rd, #134  
Tucker, GA 30084

Joy of Faith Christian Ministries will give away clothes, household items, and more at no cost. If you can carry it, you can take it!