

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 58, ISSUE 2

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

June, 2026

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Happy Father's Day
from the
Smoke Signal!

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Tucker Day 2026!

By Bob Espy, Chairman, Tucker Day

WOW! What an unbelievable Tucker Day. This was one for the record books. Rain may have threatened the day, but the sky parted, the sun came out and so did the people. Smoke Rise's own Virginia Rece led

us off at 9:00 a.m. with the National Anthem - and she did an outstanding job. This was the largest attended Tucker Day in more than 30 years. As one of our volunteers explained, this event is no longer a Main Street Event but a Downtown Tucker Event.

This year was the first time we could use the Tucker Town Green. We increased our booth numbers by using the park and Railroad Ave. We sold out of vendor space weeks in advance and had to add more booths for the festival. We were very pleased with the scenario and plan to add more space next year, as there was a waiting list for vendors.

We were very pleased to add Corks & Kegs to our list of offerings for attendees. We had 15 wine vendors with more than 90 wines for tasting. There were five breweries and four specialty drink vendors. Tucker Day was honored to have the Rombauer Winery release a new wine at Tucker Day! Wine & Whimsey, located on Main Street, stepped up to the plate and spear headed Corks & Kegs for us. Wait until next year, and see how we plan to grow this part of Tucker Day. You will not be disappointed.

The parade, which started at 10:00 a.m., was led by our Grand Marshal Mayor Anne Lerner. Many parade participants were local businesses, non-profits, and elected officials. During the last couple of years, cars have been added, elevating the parade. The KidZone was the best it has been in years. Brought to you by Rehoboth Baptist Church, this area was bustling. Multiple games, face painting, dart art, and an inflatable basketball goal were just some items that kids enjoyed. There was also a reading area where kids enjoyed books read by volunteers.

We stepped up the music this year, and it did not go unnoticed. Atlanta Vice and Neon Queen were our head liners. We moved one stage to the Tucker Green. People

...Continued on page 7



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Smoke Rise Community Association Annual Meeting Highlights

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

SRCA: Dedicated to promoting the Smoke Rise community and its quality of life.

On April 23 at Smoke Rise Baptist Church, SRCA president, Mike Huerkamp, called the meeting to order and shared with roughly 50 attendees updates about the non-profit organization, including the following:

- Since 2020, SRCA has operated with budget deficits. Mike warned that if the trend cannot be reversed, the association might be dissolved in three to five years. In CY2025, SRCA posted a surplus thanks to designated donations to replace aging medallions.
- For 2026, a \$10k deficit is forecast. Residents are reminded to support SRCA by sending their \$45 dues and/or donations to one of the options listed on smokerise.org. Or Zelle to smokerise-civic@gmail.com.
- More than 60% of the SRCA budget goes to landscaping at 11 intersections, besides the primary chimney at Hugh Howell and Rosser Roads. Other major 2026 expenses include replacing the 49 medallions, insurance, utilities, and property tax.
- The 49 Smoke Rise medallions were inventoried, and a vendor has been selected to fabricate replacements for the aging medallions.
- Shredding is no longer offered, as it has been expensive, and many people now have home office shredders. Also, so many documents are now in electronic form.


Eileen Stone gave an update on the Community Garden, and Darrin Gambino shared what he is doing to upgrade our website.

Past Chairman of the Smoke Rise Country Club, Geoff Weirich, spoke on behalf of the club, noting that the club is now back to being a private club and no longer allowing golf play through Golf Now. There are great membership offers available. Speaking on behalf of the Tucker-Northlake CID, Matthew Lee provided an update on the policing study of whether the city should form its own police department, as many other cities have done. Our Smoke Rise representatives to the City of Tucker, Virginia Rece and Roger Orlando, presented information on street racing, crime, and the evolving intersection improvements proposed for Hugh Howell Road and Rosser Road.

Their meeting wrapped with a general Q&A covering the iconic chimney stack at Hugh Howell and Rosser Roads, which was in some danger due to the consequences of exploring the addition of two lanes entering Hugh Howell Road from Rosser Road.



The Rosser Road Smoke Rise Stack




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Phone: 770-469-5856 SmokeRiseBaptist.org

SUNDAY
9:45 a.m. - Attend Sunday School through Zoom or In-Person
11:00 a.m. - Attend Worship via Live Stream or In-Person

WEDNESDAY
5:00 p.m. - Attend our Wednesday Dinner
6:00 p.m. - Followed by activities and Bible Study for all ages

Eastminster Presbyterian Church
5801 Hugh Howell Road
Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor
Phone: 770-469-4881 Website: Eastminster.us

SUNDAY
9:15 a.m. Adult & Children's Sunday School
10:30 a.m. In-Person and Live streaming of Worship service

First Moravian Church
Pastor: Reverend Elroy Christopher
(770) 491-7250
Website: Gamoravian.org

SUNDAY 10:00 a.m. Sunday School-Adults & Children
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12:00 p.m. Fellowship Time

Mountain West Church
4818 Hugh Howell Road
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770-491-0228 Mwchurch.com

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Metro Atlanta Chorus Celebrates 20 Years with Free Concert

The Metro Atlanta Chorus (M.A.C.) will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a free concert on Saturday, June 6, at 4:00 p.m. in the sanctuary of Smoke Rise Baptist Church.

Founded by retired Cross Keys High School choral director Dr. James T. McRaney, the chorus began as "Chorale II," made up largely of his former students. After his retirement, former student Peggy Ray became director, and the group adopted the name Metro Atlanta Chorus, or M.A.C.

To mark the occasion, chorus members selected favorite songs from the group's 20-year history. The program will feature spirituals, Broadway favorites, sacred music, and contemporary classics, including selections from Wicked and Rent, as well as beloved songs such as "Let There Be Peace on Earth" and "Seven Bridges Road."

Admission is free, and donations are welcome to support future performances and continue the legacy of the Metro Atlanta Chorus.

VFW Post Honors Veterans Through Community Service

By Gerry Hutchinson, Former Smoke Rise Resident

Perhaps you've seen volunteers handing out small red poppies near store entrances during Memorial Day or Veterans Day weekends? These volunteers are often members of a local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post. While Tucker does not have its own VFW post, VFW Post 4180 in Snellville proudly serves veterans and the surrounding community.

VFW Post 4180 supports veterans in need, promotes patriotism, and provides a variety of community services. Each year, the post sponsors patriotic essay contests for middle and high school students. Local winners receive cash prizes may advance to state and national competitions for additional scholarship opportunities.

Members of Post 4180 also organize special events for veterans at local senior care facilities, place American flags by the gravesites of veterans in nearby cemeteries, recognize and honor first responders, and provide fellowship and camaraderie for veterans through monthly meetings.

Membership is open to honorably discharged veterans who received a campaign or expeditionary medal for overseas service, served 30 consecutive or 60 nonconsecutive days in Korea, or received hostile fire or imminent danger pay.

VFW Post 4180 meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at 3163 Main Street W in Snellville.



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Tea Talk with Victoria Crosby

I recently spent a delightful afternoon event at The Red Pheasant, a home gift shop in Northport, New York, with delicious afternoon tea and prosecco served by the store owner, Kristen Jones.

I was visiting Long Island and had been asked to speak about the differences between the way the British and Americans serve tea. As someone born and raised in England, I spoke about high tea and afternoon tea, the pronunciation of scones, which goes on first on a scone, the cream or the jam, and whether milk is poured first or last in a cup of tea. I answered some questions, and then I read some of my British themed poetry.

The sold-out event served sandwiches and pastries from local bakeries and was so successful that Kristen asked me to return on my next visit in July.

Kristen Jones and Victoria Crosby

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Toastmasters Is Not What You Think

By Alex Helton, Smoke Rise Neighbor

On Tucker Day, the Gwinnett-Tucker Toastmasters, Club 833, hosted a table on Tucker Town Green hoping to spread the word about our club. Again and again, I met people who had either never heard of Toastmasters or had misconceptions about this 100-year-old organization.

When I asked what they knew about us, I heard something along the lines of, “Isn’t that where you give boring speeches and people point out every time you say ‘um,’ right?”



The Surprising Truth

I attended meetings for at least a month, before I gave my first planned speech. This lively, collaborative group gave inspirational, funny, and helpful speeches while letting me stay on the sidelines as long as I wanted. They told me they also had been terrified to speak. Some still got nervous, but I couldn’t tell.

Eventually, I was ready to tell a single joke as the Joke Master. The next week, I was the Grammarian, which meant I listened for interesting words and phrases and reported on them at the end of the meeting. Soon, I was willing to give my “Ice Breaker,” which is the first planned speech a member does.

What a Meeting Looks Like

A few days before the meeting, a coordinator chooses a theme and assigns roles. Themes can be anything from “The Hardest Thing I’ve Ever Done” to “Cake or Pie?” On meeting day, a joke, a philosophical thought, and other opening remarks related to the theme, kick us off.

We will have up to three planned speeches, and after each speech, there is time to write down feedback, which is given to an evaluator. Next, that week’s Table Topics Master asks some questions related to our theme, and members are invited to the lectern to answer. Then, the evaluators speak, followed by some reports from members who were tasked with listening for interesting language or filler words, like “um” or “ah.” We wrap up with the week’s awards. It’s fast paced, participatory, and a lot of fun.

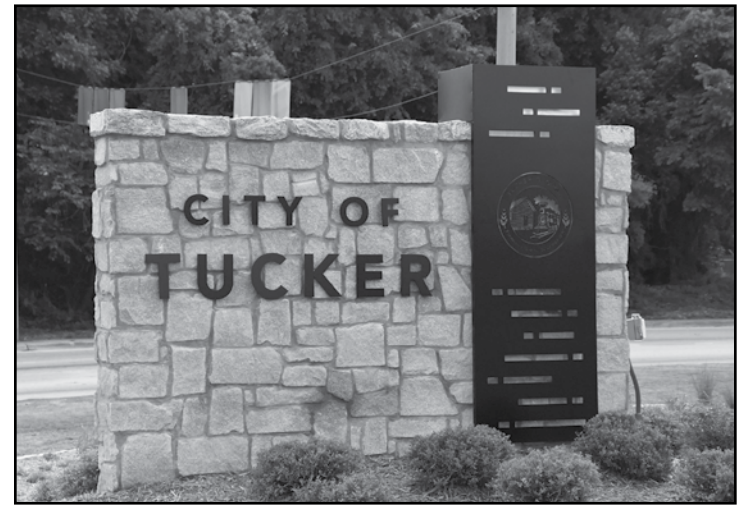
Want to Try It?

There are dozens of Toastmasters clubs all over town. Go to Toastmasters.org to find one that fits in with your schedule. Club 833 is one of the oldest, and it is welcoming and well run, with a lot of long-time members. We meet in the back room of Matthews Cafeteria on Fridays at 7:30 a.m.

The cost of a Toastmasters membership is \$60 every six months, but guests are welcome to visit different clubs before joining. There is no pressure to speak when you visit. In addition to regular meetings, Toastmasters offers many ways to get involved, including contests, leadership training, and district projects.

What drew me to my club was realizing that it wasn’t about becoming a perfect speaker. Instead, I met people from all walks of life who were looking to connect, laugh, improve, and support each other.

Toastmasters can be whatever a member wants it to be. For me, it won me over fast. I get to hear interesting speeches, and I’ve made friends, because we are all stretching a little when we are together. If you want to communicate better, build confidence, meet supportive people, and dare I say it, enjoy Friday mornings more than you thought possible, Toastmasters Club 833 is worth a visit.



What’s New in Tucker?

By Linda Karr, Staff Writer

Check all of these recent newcomers to Tucker:

Padel Highway - racquet sport courts
3766 Lawrenceville Highway

Dorothy Mae’s Soul Food Kitchen
Chicken, fish, soups and more
1927 Lakeside Parkway Ste K21

Mama Debbie’s Art Emporium
A multi-use local artist market, maker space and gallery
Downtown Tucker off Railroad Avenue

The City of Tucker celebrated the construction of the first gateway sign on May 8. The sign was constructed based on the City Standards Guidebook and the design includes the city seal with horizontal lines symbolizing rail lines honoring Tucker’s beginning as a railway stop. Corner of Lawrenceville Highway and Montreal Rd.



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Where We Lived, and What We Carried with Us

By Kathy Rhinehart, Former Millstone Run Resident

Moving out of a home we've lived in for nearly three decades isn't just a change of address, it's a quiet unraveling of a life deeply lived within four walls. For years, that house wasn't simply where we slept or stored our belongings. It was the backdrop of our children's lives. It held the echoes of laughter.

As hallways, the rhythm of footsteps racing up and down stairs, the soft hum of late-night conversations from behind closed bedroom doors. The morning wake up calls on the intercom, fixing their breakfast and taking it to their rooms. Yes, I absolutely did that.

Every corner carried moments we didn't realize were becoming memories until they already had.

You can almost see the ghost of birthday parties or Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners in the dining room, hear the faint slam of the front door as many teenagers came to stay at Hotel Rhinehart, and feel the weight of quiet mornings before the house woke up.

Leaving our home brought a kind of heartache that's hard to explain to anyone who hasn't done it. It is grief, in its own way. I still dream of moments in the house. I'm walking through the familiar rooms as if nothing has changed. The light falls just the same across the kitchen floor. I know exactly which stair creaks and which cabinet sticks. Sometimes our children are there, younger again, their voices filling the space the way they once did.

There's a brief pause where the heart catches up with reality and a quiet recognition that the house is no longer ours to walk through, that the back porch is no longer ours to relax on, that our neighbors of SO many years are not our neighbors anymore. And yet, the dreams feel like a gentle reminder that what was meaningful doesn't disappear. It simply settles deeper within you.

Twelve months since the boxes were packed, the door was closed, and a new set of keys found their way into our hands. A year of unfamiliar sounds slowly becoming our own kind of quiet.

The dreams still come sometimes. Our Millstone home still lives within us, but the memories no longer carry quite the same ache.

The idea of a new home doesn't replace the old one - it stands beside it. One represents where you've been; the other, where you're going. And, somewhere in between, a year later, you begin to understand: home was never just the house we left. It's the life our family built there and the life we are building now.

Sip and Stroll

By Beth Henson, Staff Writer

As a part of Garden Week in Georgia, the Mountain Mums Garden Club gathered on April 24 for a Sip and Stroll, hosted at the stunning Waterfall Home of Susan and Joel Gilbert in Smoke Rise. The evening invited guests for the sights and sounds of nature at its most refreshing.

This wasn't your typical garden tour, but a special time to spend with friends. Guests meandered along winding paths surrounded by lush greenery, with the steady sound of the cascading waterfall. Around every corner, there was something to admire.

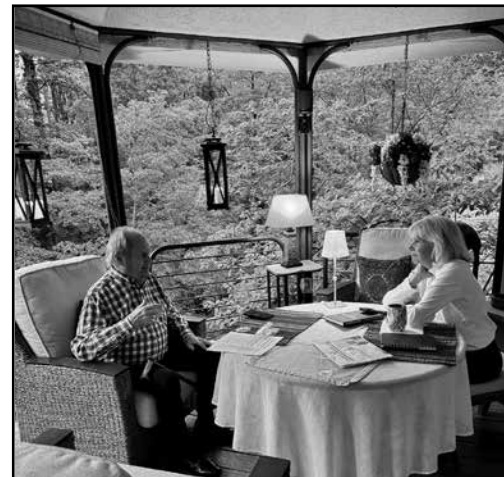
The food was just as memorable as the scenery. Joel delighted guests by cooking shrimp, andouille sausage, and onions on his Teppanyaki grill. Members contributed a spread of tantalizing appetizers, while Susan surprised everyone with gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches that quickly became a crowd favorite.

With drinks in hand, members and guests swapped gardening tips and enjoyed the simple pleasure of being outdoors together. The easy-going atmosphere made it effortless for everyone to connect, proving that garden clubs are just as much about friendships as they are about flowers.

The Gilbert home provided a breathtaking backdrop for the gathering. Its natural waterfall and thoughtfully designed landscape captured the spirit of Garden Week.

Garden Week in Georgia, sponsored by the Garden Club of Georgia, has a mission to promote a love of gardening and horticulture, encourage environmental stewardship and conservation, and support civic beautification and community pride.

By the end of the evening, it was clear the Sip and Stroll was more than an event - it was a highlight that brought people together and reminded us that sometimes the best way to grow is simply to slow down and step outside.



Susan Gilbert and Bill Rhinehart on the gazebo



GRADUATE



Class of 2026 Parkview High School Graduate, **Malachi Washington** is a resident of The Forest. The son of Mr. and Mrs. Jamie and Malaika Washington, Malachi, will continue his education at Louisiana State University in the fall where he will play collegiate baseball, or sign with a Major League Baseball club.

ATTENTION GRADUATES, NEWLYWEDS, and HONOREES:

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Email submissions to staff@smokesignalnews.com

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A Job Well Done!

*By Rashette Walker,
Director, Smoke Rise Baptist Weekday School*

May 14, 2026, marked the final day of teaching for Mrs. Glenda Giles at Smoke Rise Baptist Weekday School.



Mrs. Glenda is one of the top three most interesting people I have met during my time at Smoke Rise Baptist. She was born and raised in Kentucky, spent her childhood summers in Mississippi, and ended up in Georgia via college where she earned a degree in graphics design from UGA (Go Dawgs!). Glenda is also affectionately known as Shi-Shi - to her grandkids, Sissy - to Whoopsi and Ann, Ms. Gwenda - to all the preschool kids who can't yet say the gl-blend correctly, and Dr. Giles by her co-workers who have experienced her vast medical knowledge from folk remedies to the most complicated Supercalafragilisticexpialidocious diagnoses! She is our resident artist who still blends paint into any color you can imagine with such ease. There is no medium that she cannot work with. She created chalkboard art for the main church office quarterly, elaborate backdrops for Oktoberfest and Easter, and face paint art that was so wonderful that kids cried if it washed off. She knits, she sews, she cooks award winning chili, and the best chicken salad. She is a 70-blah blah year old fearless she-warrior who did not shy away when we switched to an all-digital platform for parent teacher communication and clocking in.

She was recently recognized by Smoke Rise for her service in the children's ministry, and we at the Weekday school recognized her at our preschool graduation on May 14. We are going to miss her daily presence on the halls of the Weekday School. But we wish her well as she moves north of Atlanta to be near her daughter and grandkids. To my sister from another mister, I say farewell until we meet again!



Art of Nature Garden Tour

By Barbara Luton, Staff Writer

Four owners of gardens in Smoke Rise opened their yards to visitors for the GFWC Stone Mountain Woman's Club garden tour. Visitors saw many varieties of plants and trees. Two of the gardens featured beautiful waterfalls. A tropical theme was a feature of the Rappaport garden in Spencer's Mountain with palms of many varieties. An outdoor kitchen and bar area were an interesting addition to that garden. The Biro garden had water, metal works, lots of plants, a butterfly garden and huge tropical plants inside the house. The Soltys garden is only three years old but was full of many different plant varieties. The Huskies were at camp, so no holes under the fence were seen! The Krupinski/Rogulski garden featured rocks in the front, pineapple plants that winter inside, and a restful deck overlooking hydrangeas and roses.

The Wells Brown house in Stone Mountain village was also part of the tour, and people not only saw the garden but also inside the antebellum house.

Thank you to all who bought tickets and visited the gardens. The proceeds help the many charities that the Woman's Club supports throughout the year. Mark your calendar for the Saturday after Mother's Day in 2027, May 15. Maybe more of our Smoke Rise gardens will be



Pat Soltys



Kellie and Jay Rappaport



Tucker, Robin, Logan Biro



Mike Rogulski and Liz Krupinski

on display that day.

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Smoke Rise Elementary School Hosts STEM Night at Publix

By Tonna Jones, Smoke Rise Elementary School Teacher

Smoke Rise Elementary School recently partnered with Publix to host an engaging STEM Night that gave students and families the opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences. Parents escorted their children through the store as students participated in hands-on activities focused on math, science, financial literacy, and cultural awareness.

Students weighed and compared fruits and vegetables, explored the origins of cultural foods, and created budgets for preparing healthy meals.



Throughout the evening, parents supported students by helping them strengthen problem-solving and critical-thinking skills in a real-life setting.

The event highlighted the importance of teaching for transfer across the curriculum by allowing students to apply academic skills in meaningful, everyday situations. Families enjoyed an evening of learning, collaboration, and fun while students gained valuable experiences beyond the classroom.

Summer at the Smoke Rise Academy of Arts

By Denise Burcham, Smoke Rise Academy of Arts, Director

Summer is a great time to try something new or hone your skills with extra lessons. The Smoke Rise Academy of Arts is ready for you! Beginning the first week of June, you may explore music lessons in piano, voice, violin, guitar, and percussion with one of our excellent teachers. Perhaps you would like to try your hand at writing poetry with Victoria Crosby? Maybe your children/teens would like to join our summer drama teams. The options are limitless.



Photo Courtesy of Marcus Woollen

Teens enjoy an intensive study in musical theater, and summer provides the time. Teens will meet for three weeks following Independence Day and then present four shows of a favorite musical. The titles to be decided upon range from Godspell, Newsies, 9 to 5, Hairspray, Mean Girls, and a few others. Make your voice heard! Check the website for details: www.SmokeRiseBaptist.org/Arts

The Academy is excited to announce the JR drama show, DreamWorks *How To Train Your Dragon, Jr* The musical. This works was premiered by our Junior Theater Festival team at their annual national JTF event this January and was a tremendous hit! Check the website for details regarding auditions, schedule, and tuition. Show dates will be September 18-20.



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“Pull those TABS” Support the Ronald McDonald House

By Mary Lou Still, Mountain Mums Garden Club

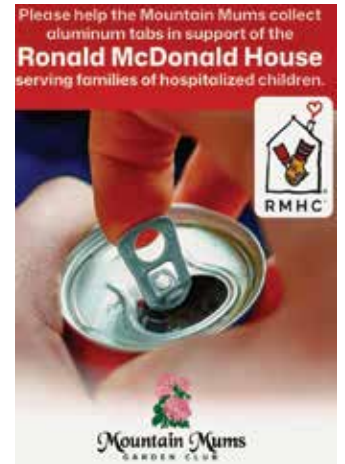
In 2003, the Mountain Mums Garden Club was formed as a spin-off Club of the Smoke Rise Morning Glories Garden Club. As long as I can remember, we have been collecting soft drink, beer, and seltzer tabs to support the Ronald McDonald House (RMH).

RMH is an incredibly special charity program started in 1974 with a Philadelphia Eagles player’s daughter being diagnosed with Leukemia. His name was Fred Hill, and he quickly saw a need to help families of critically ill children who were hospitalized nearby. RMH provides housing, furnishings, meals, etc. and has grown globally since those early days. Over the years, one of the very simple projects to help support RMH has been to collect aluminum can tabs! The tabs are made of a higher quality aluminum and much simpler to collect than the entire can. The Mountain Mums have consistently won the tabs pound collection competition in our district, with 28 lbs. collected this year. It takes 1,000-1,200 tabs to equal a pound! There is a District in Savannah that collected 313 lbs. this year with great support from Riverstreet bars - WOW!

Lately, we have been brainstorming some new ideas to collect these tabs – and maybe even beat our state rival garden clubs!

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- Smoke Rise Country Club
- Cofer Brothers
- Local Seven
- Nikki’s Undeafed
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- Wine and Whimseys
- Cherokee Rose
- Live Oak



You can start your own little collection jar at home and bring it to one of these collection places! THANK YOU!



One neighborhood donated enough tabs for someone to get creative and make a scarf!

Tucker Day 2026...continued from page 1

enjoyed sitting on the lawn, or they sat under the sunbrella area. The Main Stage was jammin’, starting at noon, and the acoustic stage was perfectly set at Corks & Kegs.

Main Street Tucker Alliance is the non-profit that hosts Tucker Day. Proceeds from the event go toward improvements to the downtown Tucker area. If you are interested in Tucker Day, please visit www.tuckerday.com.

The Tucker Day committee wants to thank all our vendors, parade participants, and volunteers for everything they do to make Tucker Day a success!

If you missed this year, mark the date May 1, 2027, for the next Tucker Day Celebration!

See You Next Year!



techtalk

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Conquering Cable Confusion

Do you have a jumbled, miscellaneous cable drawer at your house? I find most people do, and most are frustrated by how many different ones there are to sort through to find the correct one. Here are the most common connection devices and an outlook on their future evolution.

USB. Introduced in 1996, the Universal Serial Bus (USB) was created by a group of companies — including Intel, Microsoft, and IBM — to replace slower, proprietary connectors with a universal standard. The familiar rectangular USB connector is still widely used today. One common frustration is that it only fits one way, often appearing upside down and needing to be flipped. This is partly because the correct insertion goes unnoticed, while incorrect attempts — and the frustration with needing to flip it — are more memorable.

Micro-USB. Introduced in 2007, Micro-USB offered a smaller, more durable, and standardized alternative to other USBs. They were primarily used in older smartphones, tablets, Bluetooth speakers, digital cameras, and e-readers. I call them smiley or frown faces because they can be either one, depending on their orientation. Now, they are mostly replaced by USB Type-C in newer devices, which offer faster charging and data speeds, as well as a reversible connector.

USB-C. USBs have evolved from a slow-speed, low-power connector to the latest, universal, reversible USB-C, offering faster data transfer and higher power. It is the rising star of charging cables, featuring a reversible, oval-shaped interface and a sleek, slim design. It is oval and can be inserted in either orientation, which saves frustration with having to flip it. It can also be adapted to support legacy connectors. USB-C is becoming the standard for modern devices due to its versatility in supporting high-speed data transfer and fast charging.

Lightning Cables. This is a proprietary connector developed by Apple and used for iPhones, iPads, and iPods. If you use Apple devices, you are familiar with the Lightning cable. It's a small, reversible connector designed specifically for Apple products. Unlike the other connectors that have frames around their openings, the Lightning has none. While



Pictured left-to-right are the standard USB (large rectangle), Apple's Lightning cable (tiny oval), micro-USB (frowning), and USB Type-C (larger oval), the latest in the evolution.

Apple is transitioning some of its devices to USB-C, Lightning cables remain essential accessories for Apple device users.

Conclusions. If you ever feel unsure which cable to use, look closely at the cable projection and the device's insertion point. A large rectangle (USB), oval (USB-C), smiley shape (USB-Micro), or tiny oval (Lightning) should tell you all you need to know. And, about keeping them organized, the technique that has worked well for us is either putting rubber bands around each cable or putting each one in a zip-lock bag with a note indicating its type. Then we put all the similar ones in groupings, so it's easy to get what you need when you need it, and it is simple to put it back when finished. Another convenience tip, there are single cables with multiple connectors. Shown here is one with USB to the power supply and three of the most used connections: Lightning, micro-USB, and USB-C

NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

One Text Could Keep You Informed During Emergencies

We now have a new way to stay informed during emergencies and major public safety events! As of May 1, DeKalb County officially launched DeKalbAlert, the county's new emergency notification system designed to deliver real-time alerts directly to residents, businesses and visitors.

The system replaces the former CodeRED platform, which is no longer in service. County officials stress that previous CodeRED subscribers are not automatically enrolled in the new service and must sign up again to continue receiving alerts.



Managed by the DeKalb Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), DeKalbAlert provides notifications about severe weather, emergency situations, traffic issues, county service disruptions and other safety-related concerns. By signing up, you can receive alerts about tornado warnings, flash floods, severe thunderstorms, winter weather events, evacuation notices, shelter-in-place orders, AMBER Alerts and major public safety emergencies.

Enrollment is free and quick. (It's designed to be simple.) You can immediately begin receiving alerts by texting "DEKALBALERT" to 67283 from any mobile phone. Those who want additional customization can also create an online account through DeKalbAlert (scan the QR Code below, or go online: www.dekalbalert.com).

The online option allows you to personalize how and where you receive notifications. You can add multiple locations, such as home, work or a child's school, and choose whether to receive updates by text message, phone call, email or a combination of all three. You can also select preferred languages and customize which types of alerts you want to receive.

County leaders say the launch reflects a growing effort across the country to modernize emergency communications and ensure the public has fast, reliable access to critical information as soon as possible.

Officials encourage all DeKalb County residents - including those of us in the Smoke Rise community - to register for DeKalbAlert to stay informed, prepared and connected during emergencies, severe weather events, and other important county notifications.



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HEALTH NOTES: *By Patricia Baumann, M.D., Staff Writer*

Cataract Surgery Overview

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's natural lens, which causes blurry or dim vision. Cataracts are a natural part of aging. While the clouding of your eye's natural lens will progress over time, surgery is only required when vision loss begins to interfere with your daily activities. But don't wait too long, as early surgery often means fewer complications and better outcomes.

Cataract surgery can provide a welcome improvement in vision and minimize the need for glasses. It is a simple surgery with a very high success rate. During cataract surgery, the cloudy lens is removed and replaced with a clear artificial lens called an intraocular lens (IOL). The procedure usually takes 15-30 minutes. It is performed with local anesthesia and sedation. Do remember that you can request additional sedation if needed.

Most patients are highly satisfied after cataract surgery, regretting only that they waited too long. Some people do experience regret, usually due to unmet expectations regarding vision quality, unexpected glare/halos, or choosing the wrong lens type. Choosing the right lens involves knowing the differences between standard lens and multifocal lens replacement.

The choice between monofocal and multifocal intraocular lenses is about balancing 1) clarity and night vision, 2) dependence on glasses, 3) cost, and 4) tolerance for visual side effects.

MONOFOCAL LENSES: Monofocal lenses generally provide the sharpest, clearest vision. They provide the best contrast sensitivity and crisp distance vision. They are better for night driving - as they produce fewer halos and glare. This matters if you drive frequently at night, have very sensitive vision, or already struggle with glare. Monofocal lenses have lower cost, as they are covered by Medicare. They have fewer adaptation issues and most people adjust very quickly. Downsides include usually needing reading glasses afterward. You can address the issue of reading glasses by using a technique called monovision. This technique involves using a monofocal lens that corrects vision in one eye, and another monofocal lens that under corrects vision in the other eye. This technique changes your eyesight, so one of your eyes focuses on objects up close and the other focuses on objects far away. This does require adaptation. You can do a trial of contact lenses, to see if monovision is for you.

MULTIFOCAL LENSES: The biggest advantage of multifocal lenses is much less dependence on glasses. Modern multifocal lenses can provide distance, intermediate, and near vision. Possible side effects include halos around headlights, glare, reduced contrast sensitivity, and less crisp vision. Lens replacement with a multifocal lens is considered an elective procedure, and patients pay the price difference out-of-pocket, including increased lens cost and the surgical fee. Medicare generally covers the full cost of a standard monofocal lens, while a multifocal lens results in an additional \$1,500 to \$4,000 per eye.

There's also a middle ground category called EDOF (Extended Depth of Focus) lens that many surgeons now recommend because they provide more range than monofocal with fewer halos than traditional multifocals. Patients do pay the difference between the standard monofocal lens covered by Medicare Part B and the cost of the EDOF lens.

If you have astigmatism, a condition caused by an irregularly shaped cornea or lens, you can have it corrected with a special toric lens. Medicare also considers toric lenses a "premium" upgrade.



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The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. -

A Powerful Asset for our Communities

By Quill Duncan, 4th Vice President Membership

In 2028, The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. (GCG) will celebrate 100 years as the first garden club established in the United States. The first meeting was in Athens, GA and the first club, The Ladies Garden Club of Athens, is still thriving today. In 2026, there are more than 9200 members across our beautiful state, and there are three clubs right here in Smoke Rise: Smoke Rise Garden Club, Smoke Rise Morning Glories and the Mountain Mums.

During the last nearly 100 years, the organization has greatly influenced our state with many incredible beautification projects, conservation efforts and educational initiatives. Many of you may recall the proliferation of billboards on our highways and junk car dumps lining our roads in Georgia back in the 60's and 70's. Garden club ladies fought the lobbyists on the billboards and the junk cars and forced the state legislature to pass laws that controlled those eyesores. The GA Department of Transportation (DOT) is a partner with GCG for roadside beautification that you enjoy as you see the pollinator friendly cosmos, clover and other native plantings that now grace our interstates.

GCG is a champion for the Okefenokee Swamp to prevent the mining of the precious minerals that will destroy that sensitive ecosystem. Plastics in our water supplies is another environmental concern of garden club members. We also partner with the GA River Keepers, The State Botanical Garden in Athens and many botanical gardens across the state to support their missions. The organization offers grants for scholarships for students studying garden-related fields in Georgia colleges and universities, and last year, we donated \$95K in scholarships to 20 students. Grants are provided for garden therapy across the state, including the GA Regional Hospital in Decatur which has benefited from funds for many years. The organization sponsors training for flower show schools, landscape design, environmental schools and garden schools via Zoom or in-person classes. Historic landscape preservation matching grants are issued annually to a wide variety of gardens to support and maintain those special gardens. In total, there are 14 projects and programs that are supported by the GCG members ranging from Youth Garden Clubs to the Marshall Forest Land Trust in Floyd County and the LeConte-Woodsmanton Plantation in Liberty County.

And what about here in Smoke Rise? What do our three clubs do to benefit our community?

Smoke Rise Garden Club is the original club in our area, founded in 1969. Today's members are 35 strong with both a website and a Facebook page that chronicle their many activities. They maintain the plantings at the Tucker Fire Station and have monthly night meetings in members' homes, field trips and an annual May plant sale with plants from members' gardens. Each meeting features horticulture tips and expert speakers on a wide variety of horticulture topics.

The Smoke Rise Morning Glories were founded in 1970 as an offshoot of the Smoke Rise GC. This club with 29 members meets monthly at Park Springs where several of our members now live. Morning Glories sponsor and lead a Youth Garden Club for preschoolers at Mountain Park Methodist Church. The November meeting is devoted to Wellroot, the former United Methodist Children's Home. The club donates funds, toys and gifts to the foster children in the Wellroot organization based in Tucker, GA. The Wells Brown House in Stone Mountain is decorated each Christmas with period appropriate greenery for the Stone Mountain Historic Society and the Village of Stone Mountain's enjoyment.

The Mountain Mums were organized in 2003 and have 28 members and a Facebook page. They created a low maintenance garden at the Tucker Police Precinct and maintain it. They offer creative garden therapy sessions at the Atria Assisted Living location in Tucker. They sponsor the annual "Walk to Remember" honoring young lives tragically lost too soon and promote safe driving. As a part of this annual event, the club donates driving school lessons to selected, deserving students.

Every club has projects that benefit the community and support the objectives of the Garden Club of Georgia: Beautification, Conservation and Education. Sometimes behind the scenes, and at other times very visible, activities of the garden club volunteers enhance Smoke Rise and the State of Georgia. Please contact Quill Duncan for more information on joining a club at quillduncan@msn.com.



Bug Off!

By Victoria R. Crosby

There is no need for toxic chemical spray to keep the pesky bugs away. What you plant will help to deter and repel, because many insects hate the smell of lavender, thyme, rosemary and sage. If you plant these your garden will be all the rage.

When you plant citronella and lemongrass the pesky bugs will give you a pass. Basil, bay leaf and marigold will also work their magic I'm told.

Plant garlic, catnip, petunias, mint and chrysanthemum then those irritating little bugs won't come. Here is a helpful hint when planting mint. If you plant it in your garden instead of in pots before very long, you will have lots and lots. It will take over your garden bed. So, plant it in pretty planters instead.

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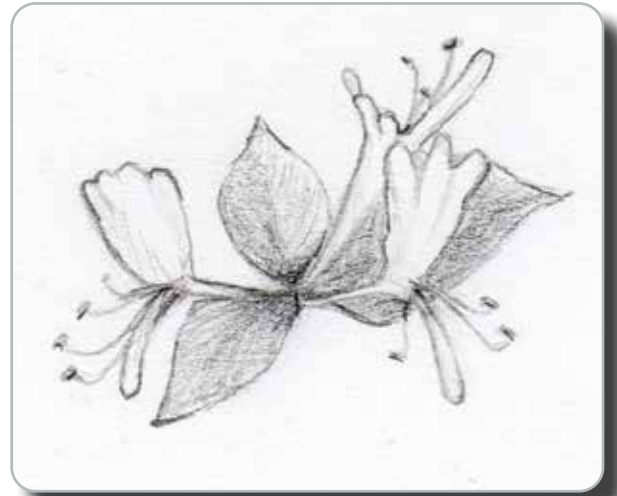
Out the Window *Article and illustration by Beth Henson, Staff Writer*

Honeysuckle

Looking out the den window, I couldn't help but notice that my large, oversized corner azalea was hardly recognizable, covered in pale yellow and white, small trumpet-shaped flowers. Only a month ago, it had been the glory of my yard with its showy, large, star-shaped purple blooms.

Obviously, I had not gotten all the woody honeysuckle vines clipped from underneath the bush earlier in the spring. The swiftly growing Japanese honeysuckle vine was imported from Eastern Asia in the early 1800s to help control erosion. Its aggressive nature soon landed it on the undesirable plant list. Surprisingly, this over-achieving vine can grow at an alarming rate of 10 to 20 feet in just one growing season. It is considered invasive, often covering the ground and engulfing entire bushes, which was certainly the case here. The redeeming characteristic of this plant, however, was the heavenly fragrance it produced.

I planned to go out and trim the strangling vines soon, but not until the blooms faded and the sweet smell was gone. For a little while longer, I chose to simply enjoy the fragrance and let nature have its way.



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Smoke Rise Garden Club Holds Successful Plant Sale

By Victoria Crosby SRGC President

The plant sale fundraiser held at the home of Alice Norton by members of the Smoke Rise Garden Club was our most successful ever!

Deb Halley and club members worked hard to make the plant sale a big success by naming each plant and separating them into sun or shade, house plants and veggies.



Some of the SRGC members who helped at the sale

Randy Chronic, Alice's next-door neighbor, provided the canopy and Dee Montgomery helped erect it.

The plants were donated by SRGC members and included a variety of hostas, which one customer said was a deer buffet. I find that human hair from my hairbrush or hairdresser works as a deterrent as well as organic deer repellent.

Other plants included Solomon's seal, angel trumpet flowers and a large variety of plants and trees. The sale also included statuary and other decorative accessories for the garden.

Alice generously provided coffee and sausage biscuits for the volunteers. Martha Wilson made brownies for SRGC members. Karen Dingler made brownies for the sale, I made banana bread, and Martha made Rice Krispie bars, all of which our customers loved.

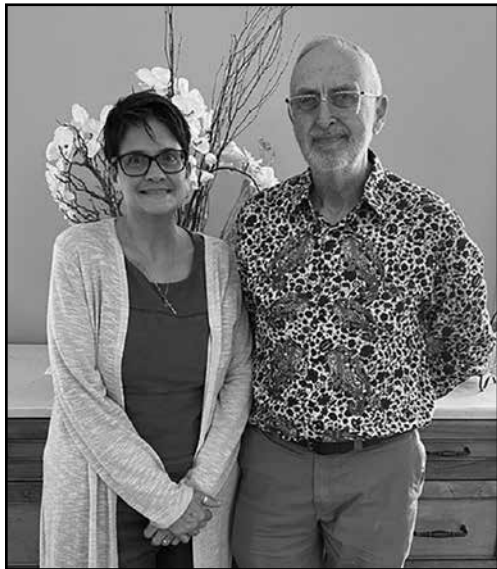
The remaining tomato plants and a few veggies, which had been grown by SRGC member Janice Gummingsall, were donated to the Smoke Rise Community Garden, which will grow them for the local food banks.

SRGC is a member of the Garden Clubs of Georgia. We meet on the first Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in each other's homes. For information contact Marisa Fernandez at marisa.fernandez0212@gmail.com.

Fascinating Frogs and Morning Glories!

By Quill Duncan, Smoke Rise Morning Glories Member

Frogs are considered the modern day "Canary in the Coal Mine" with environmentalists today. Their unique physiology is sensitive to changes in climate, chemicals and pollution, and they are being studied around the world. The Atlanta Botanical Garden has a special conditioned trailer on site housing endangered frogs. There are colorful poisonous frogs from Central and South America in aquarium tanks in the Fuqua Center for observation and guests' entertainment.



Erin Vaughn and Frank Mullins of the Avon Garden Club

Our speaker was Erin Vaughn, who is a Master Herpetologist and the President of the Avon Garden Club in Avondale Estates. Erin was assisted by Frank Mullins with Avon GC. Her program featured the introduction of the differences between frogs and toads. Surprisingly, all toads are frogs, but not all frogs are toads! Frogs have smooth, moist skin, slimmer bodies and long legs and need water. Toads have bumpy skin, walk and hop versus swimming, and a chunky body. Erin played recordings of frog sounds and noted that there is an app today that can identify the frogs by their voicing. At her home in Lilburn, she has identified 10 frog varieties by their voices. She showed photos of four common Georgia frogs: Green Tree Frog, Spring Peeper, Aquatic Green Frog and the American toad and played their voicings. The Bullfrog can weigh up to one pound and has a loud, distinctive lower range croaking.

Frogs and toads are wonderful at pest control with their diet and beneficial to our gardens. Frogs need water, shelter and food sources. She recommended that we avoid pesticides and herbicides, plant native plants and cautioned against using Bug Zappers. And, she emphasized that you should always wear gloves, if you handle a frog or toad, to protect it and protect yourself from possible salmonella contamination.

President Kim Fair thanked the club members for their activities over the club year and reminded everyone that our next meeting will be September 8. Happy Gardening this summer, all! Contact Kim for more information at (404) 384-7851.



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"Garden of the Month" winner Annette Vallecillo

Mountain Mums Garden Club

By Maureen Fraser, Publicity Chair and Co-Editor

The Mountain Mums Garden Club recently met at the home of Annette Vallecillo. The meeting opened with an inspirational reading, "Smiling," presented by Kate Graham, highlighting the many benefits of smiling each day.

Gardening tips for May were shared by Carol Wales, including advice on pruning crepe myrtles and azaleas, dividing irises after blooming, mulching tomato plants, planting herbs, and controlling fire ants. Members were reminded that plants need about one inch of water per week and that the best time to water is between 10:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m.

The club's "Garden of the Month" award winner for June is Annette Vallecillo for her beautiful landscape featuring multiple garden areas filled with colorful flowers and lush foliage. President Sally Young also shared the list of ten awards the Mountain Mums Garden Club received from the DeKalb Federation and the Garden Club of Georgia in recognition of the club's outstanding projects and activities.

Sally thanked the current board members and committee chairs with small tokens of appreciation, including creative "Hen & Chick in a Cork" gifts. She also honored incoming officers with flower-themed gifts symbolizing their service and contributions to the club.

The meeting concluded with guest speaker Sarah Brody, a Master Gardener, who shared information about services offered through the DeKalb County UGA Extension Service and a program on the types of plants to attract pollinators to your garden.

The club will be taking a summer break in June and July but will host a "Meet & Greet" in August for anyone interested in membership. Please contact Mary Jacobson at mjacob101@gmail.com for more information.



Outgoing President Sally Young installed the 2026-27 Incoming Officers. Pictured (L to R) are Sally Young; Co-Presidents Lynn Malone and Cheri Schneider; Kate Graham, Vice President; Ann Purr, Recording Secretary; Connie Henry, Corresponding Secretary; Lisa Armistead, Treasurer; and Pat Baumann, Parliamentarian (not shown).

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Food & Home Fixin's

by Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

Each of these recipes is delicious and quick to make on warm days that demand more time away from the kitchen. This month, I am featuring Shrimp Scampi as an entrée that can be served with angel hair pasta and roasted garden vegetables like zucchini, broccoli, Brussel sprouts and summer squash. 1 pound of shrimp equals about 2 dozen shrimp which will provide one pound of fresh or frozen shrimp for four servings.

I enjoy using avocado oil to lighten up salad dressings and in place of heavier oils for sautéing. And, it has a higher smoke point, so you can avoid overcooking fresh ingredients.

Shrimp Scampi

Ingredients:

2 Tbsp. olive oil
4 Tbsp. butter
½ whole medium onion, finely chopped
4 cloves garlic, pressed or chopped
1 lb large shrimp, peeled and de-veined,
Juice of 2 lemons
½ cup white wine
4 dashes hot sauce or to taste
salt and ground black pepper to taste
8 oz angel hair pasta
½ cup grated parmesan cheese
chopped fresh basil and parsley for garnish.

Boil water for pasta. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until the onion is translucent – 2-3 minutes, add shrimp, then stir and cook for approx. 2 minutes. Add lemon juice and wine, seasonings and hot sauce. Stir and reduce to low.

Add angel hair pasta into the boiling water. Cook until just done or al dente. Drain, reserving about 2 cups pasta water. Remove the skillet from heat. Add the pasta and toss, adding a splash of pasta water, if it is too dry. Top with grated parmesan and chopped parsley and basil. Serve immediately.

This Creamy Mango Coconut Pie will be an island escape for your taste buds!

1 box Graham Cracker Crumbs for pie crust. Follow directions on box to bake and freeze for 20 minutes.

INGREDIENTS:

1 ½ cups cold heavy cream
1 cup canned cream of coconut
1 (1/4 oz) packet unflavored gelatin powder
2 cups cubed fresh or thawed frozen mango
(about 3 fresh mangos chopped)
Juice of one lime

Combine the heavy cream and ¼ cup of the Cream of Coconut in a blender and blend on medium speed until stiff peaks form – 1-2 minutes. Transfer to medium bowl. Set aside (No need to wash the blender yet!)

To a small microwave-safe bowl, add ¼ cup of cold water. Sprinkle the gelatin over the water and let set for 1 minute. Microwave until the gelatin is dissolved – 15 - 25 seconds. Do not boil.

To the blender, add the mangos, lime juice and remaining ¾ cup cream of coconut. Blend on medium high speed until completely smooth – about 1 minute. Scrape down sides of blender and add the gelatin mixture. Blend until combined. Add 1 ½ cups of the Cream of Coconut mixture and blend until combined and airy.

Cover and refrigerate the remaining coconut whipped cream to use for garnish.

Pour mango mixture into the prepared crust. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 6 hours and up to 2 days. Loosely cover with plastic wrap.

To serve, whisk the reserved Coconut Whipped Cream back to stiff peaks. Dollop onto the pie and garnish with lime zest and slices of mango.

SRBC Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By Victoria Crosby, Staff Writer

For many years, the men of the Smoke Rise Baptist Church (SRBC) have been volunteering their time and talent to build ramps for members of the church who need wheelchair access for their homes.

This is known as the Joseph Project and is one of the many ways that SRBC reaches out to help people of the community. The most recent project was a handicap ramp, built by members of the Discovery and Pairs and Spares Sunday School classes for classmate Mike Holcomb.

Willim Henry drew the plans for the ramp, as he has a background in engineering, and the men who worked to build it with William included Wilson Echols, Charlie Scott, Michael Willis and Greg Everett, who was the supervisor.



Mike Holcomb's wife Janis wanted the ability to get Mike out into the open air and sunshine. She was overcome with emotion when she saw the completed project. "This is just a miracle that you guys did for us," she wrote as part of the note of gratitude she sent to the men.

Funds for the materials were donated by SRBC. FODAC (Friends of Disabled Adults and Children) also donated materials.