

# SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 58, ISSUE 11

*Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968*

March, 2026

www.smokesignalnews.com



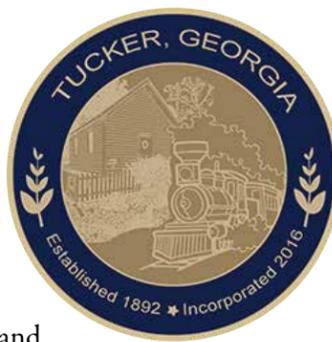
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## THE CITY OF TUCKER MARKS 10 YEARS WITH CELEBRATION AT THE STATE CAPITOL

The Georgia House passed a resolution announcing Tucker Day at the state capitol in celebration of the City of Tucker's 10-year anniversary. Current and former elected officials, staff and local stakeholders were invited to attend. The City then hosted a celebratory luncheon for the DeKalb Delegation.

Held on February 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the event was both a celebration and a moment of gratitude, thanking state lawmakers for their continued partnership and



Poet Victoria Crosby reads her poem titled "The City of Tucker" at a City of Tucker council meeting.



City officials, past leaders, and community partners at the Georgia State Capitol

reflecting on Tucker's progress since becoming a city in 2015.

During the visit, members of the Georgia House formally acknowledged Tucker's milestone anniversary, highlighting the city's growth, civic engagement, and commitment to responsive local government. The recognition served as a reminder of the collaborative effort that made cityhood possible and the ongoing cooperation between local and state leaders.

In attendance were members of the Tucker legislative delegation, former state officials who supported the cityhood movement, past and present city leaders, and representatives from Tucker's civic and business community. Together, they celebrated a decade marked

by strengthened public services, infrastructure improvements, expanded parks and green space, and thoughtful economic development.

Speakers reflected on how Tucker's community-driven spirit has shaped its first ten years and positioned the city for continued success. The Capitol gathering is one of several events planned throughout the year as Tucker commemorates this milestone and looks ahead to the next chapter.

As the city celebrates ten years, the message was clear: Tucker's progress has been powered by partnership, leadership, and a shared commitment to community.

## THE CITY OF TUCKER

*A poem by Victoria R. Crosby*

*The City of Tucker is only ten years old.  
There were no official buildings then I've been told.  
Starting from scratch the City Council and the Mayor  
had a difficult task, they had to prepare  
for restoring buildings, creating sidewalks and trails,  
parks and green spaces and all that it entails.*

*Now with new leadership as we begin a new year,  
we welcome Anne Lerner and City Council members here.  
They will continue the work of those who were there,  
adding their own creative flair.  
We are grateful to those who have worked in the past  
for they left a legacy that will last.*

*In our city of diversity  
people need our support and unity.  
As this leadership begins anew  
ask yourself what you can do.  
By working together to create a place of harmony  
we can be an exemplary community.*

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# WALK TO REMEMBER

**9:30 AM**  
**SATURDAY MARCH 14<sup>TH</sup>**  
**SMOKE RISE BAPTIST CHURCH**



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 P.O. Box 1038, Tucker, GA 30085  
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 5901 Hugh Howell Road  
 Senior Pastor: Dr. Chris George, cgeorge@smokerisebaptist.org  
 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**  
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 Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor  
 Phone: 770-469-4881 Website: Eastminster.us

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 10:30 a.m. In-Person and Live streaming of Worship service

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 Website: Gamoravian.org

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 12:00 p.m. Fellowship Time

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## SRCC Spring Open House March 7th

By Kourtney Nealy, SRCC General Manager

Nestled in the heart of the Smoke Rise community, Smoke Rise Country Club (SRCC) has proudly served as a gathering place for neighbors, families, and friends for the past 27 years. More than just a club, SRCC has become a cornerstone of the community—where traditions are built, milestones are celebrated, and lasting connections are made. See for yourself why people are taking a fresh look at SRCC during the Club's Open House on Saturday, March 7th.

Over the years, the Club has continued to evolve while staying true to its welcoming spirit. Most recently, SRCC completed an exciting renovation, highlighted by the grand reopening of our main dining room last summer. The refreshed space blends modern comfort with timeless charm, creating an inviting setting for casual meals, special occasions, and memorable evenings with friends and family. Beyond the clubhouse, our commitment to excellence extends to the course itself. A comprehensive resodding project has transformed our greens, delivering the best playing conditions we've ever had. Members and guests alike are already noticing the difference—lush turf, improved playability, and a course experience that truly reflects the quality of Smoke Rise Country Club.

As we look ahead to the summer months, use this opportunity to visit the Pool and Tennis Center. The vibrant tennis program has 8 well-lit courts, some hard and some clay. The pool complex features 5 pools, including a junior Olympic pool for swimming, a slide pool, a kiddie wading pool, a hot tub, and a cooling waterfall pool. It offers casual dining and a full-service beverage center.

Whether you're new to the area or have lived in Smoke Rise for years, there has never been a better time to discover everything SRCC has to offer. We invite you to enjoy one-on-one tours, savor delicious refreshments, and take advantage of discounted initiation fees available for a limited time.

Join us Saturday, March 7th, between 1 pm - 5 pm and see firsthand why Smoke Rise Country Club continues to be a place where community, hospitality, and exceptional experiences come together—right in the heart of Smoke Rise. For more information, contact Sydney Hurst, Membership Sales Director at 678-460-8243 or 770-908-2582 Ext. 4.

## 40th Annual Raising of the Green CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY AT ART STATION

ART Station, in Historic Stone Mountain Village, will hold its 40th Annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration and Fundraiser, "Raising of the Green" on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 from 6:00 – 10:00 p.m. The event features silent and live auctions, "A Taste of Stone Mountain," music and complimentary green beer. For more information or to purchase tickets call 770-469-1105 or visit [artstation.org](http://artstation.org).

The live and silent auctions offer artwork, theater tickets, meals at Atlanta restaurants and various goods and services. All items in the auction have been donated to ART Station by local theater companies, restaurants, businesses and ART Station's individual members. Proceeds benefit ART Station. "A Taste of Stone Mountain" highlights restaurants and caterers in the Stone Mountain area. Complimentary green beer, good music and lots of fun make "Raising of the Green," one of Atlanta's most unique St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

## Holy Week at Smoke Rise Baptist Church

By Ashley Litzell

Before Holy Week begins, we are excited to invite the entire community to our Easter Party on March 28 at 10:00 AM. This family-friendly celebration will feature four age-graded egg hunts, face painting, an inflatable slide, games, and the Mint Coffeehouse truck. It's a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and neighbors to join in the joy of the season as we celebrate together.

From the laughter of children and the joy of gathering, we prepare our hearts for a week of rich and meaningful worship as we commemorate the last week of Christ's ministry on earth.

Holy Week 2026 at Smoke Rise will begin March 29 with the jubilant hosannas of Palm Sunday which observes the event of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, described in all four gospels. Immediately following that event, Jesus begins His journey to the cross. The Palm Sunday service will include a children's palm processional and music from our Children Choristers, Handbell Choir, and Sanctuary Choir.

Our observance will move through the week to Maundy Thursday ("maundy" from the Latin for mandate or commandment), which will include a solemn observance of communion, commemorating the Last Supper, where Christ with His disciples laid out the model for Holy Communion. During that meal, Jesus predicted the events that would immediately follow, including His betrayal, Peter's denial, and His own death and resurrection.

Our own observance of Maundy Thursday on April 2, will be especially significant as our Sanctuary Choir presents a newly-written choral work entitled Still Reaching. This service weaves together scripture, hymns, and original music in a meditation on the final days of Jesus' life—exploring themes of love, service, grief, betrayal, and the quiet persistence of grace. The title evokes the posture of Jesus throughout Holy Week: reaching to wash feet, to share bread, to forgive, to surrender. Across time and silence, Christ is still reaching—toward us and toward the world God loves.

The celebration of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday marks the beginning of the three-day period, which includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

On April 3, Good Friday, you are invited to a non-directed time of personal meditation in our chapel, which will be open from 8:30AM to 8:00PM.

Our traditional Easter Sunday observance on April 5 will be a joyful celebration of the resurrection of Jesus as we join with churches all across Christendom. The church will ring out in song led by our brass instrumentalists and Sanctuary Choir.

## Support a Great Cause at the Tucker High School Foundation Golf Tournament

Mark your calendars for Friday, March 13, and consider supporting a wonderful local cause at the THSF Golf Tournament at Stone Mountain Golf Club (Stonemont Course). The 10:30 a.m. shotgun start promises a fun day of friendly competition, great prizes—including a chance to win a trip for two to Pebble Beach—and meaningful community impact.

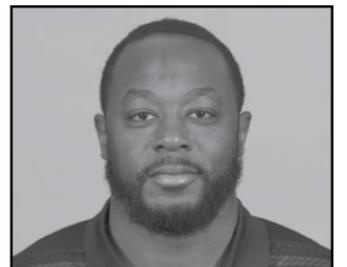
Whether you're an avid golfer or simply want to give back, your participation helps make a difference. Gather your friends, form a team, and come out to support this important fundraiser!

Register at [www.tuckerhighschoolfoundation.com](http://www.tuckerhighschoolfoundation.com)



## Did You Know?

The Seattle Seahawks' Neiko Thorpe (top) and New England Patriots' Thomas Brown (bottom) are both graduates of Tucker High School and are now coaches in the NFL.



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### Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts Shines at Junior Theater Festival Atlanta

Students from Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts recently returned from the 2026 Junior Theater Festival (JTF Atlanta) with top honors and glowing praise. The festival, held January 16–18 at the Cobb Convention Center, brought together 141 groups from 31 states and several countries for a joyful weekend dedicated to outstanding student-driven musical theater.

The Academy performed a 15-minute selection from *Shrek The Musical JR.* for a panel of distinguished adjudicators. The group earned the Excellence in Dance Award, highlighting the strength, creativity, and unity of their ensemble.

Individual students also received special recognition. William Bevins and Gracie Starling were named Junior Theater Festival All-Stars, placing them among the top performers of the weekend. Mackenzie Jolley, Mya Jackson, Aubrianna Lewis, and Gladys Winter were invited to a call-back for a special project promoting musical theater in schools. In addition, Gladys Winter and Devi Perry-Manning received an award for Student Direction & Choreography, a remarkable accomplishment that reflects the Academy’s commitment to student leadership and creativity.

Adjudicators praised the production’s high energy, imaginative staging, and polished ensemble work. One described the performance as a “fantastic display of hard work, discipline, and creativity,” while another highlighted the captivating movement and strong storytelling that brought the fantasy world of Shrek to life.

For more than 30 years, Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts has served families in the Stone Mountain area and beyond, offering professional instruction in music, dance, visual arts, and drama to students ages 3 through adult. Under the direction of Janet Chadwick and Greyson Chadwick, the drama department presents five musical productions each year and continues to build a tradition of excellence at JTF.

We are so proud of these talented young neighbors for representing Smoke Rise with professionalism, heart, and joy.

### The GFWC Stone Mountain Woman’s Club News

By Barbara Luton, Staff Writer

Members attended the annual “Stand with Survivors Day” meeting at the Georgia State Capitol. It is a day of advocacy for Georgians across the state to assess that Georgia’s elected officials pay attention to sexual violence-related legislative issues that keep survivors, their families and communities safe. Woman’s club members heard personal stories from survivors and were able to visit members of the legislature as well.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. That is the date of the Art of the Garden Tour. Several Smoke Rise gardens will be on display. Tickets will be available online, from members and at Wine and Whimsey’s on Main Street.

Have you recently retired? Are you looking for something to keep you busy? The GFWC Stone Mountain Woman’s Club is an international women’s service organization that helps the community, the state and the country through charitable projects. We would love to have you visit a meeting for information and fellowship. Please check our website at [www.stonemountainwomensclub.org](http://www.stonemountainwomensclub.org) or contact Barbara Luton at [barluton@aol.com](mailto:barluton@aol.com).



(Back) Randal Mangham, State Senator (Front: L to R) Jackie Cornett, Marty Bryan (SR residents), Jane Brown

### Development Project in Smoke Rise

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

In the coming months, prepare to see a major safety and congestion-relief project at the busy Hugh Howell and Mountain Industrial intersection. Known to many as the intersection in front of Publix and Wells Fargo, it sees heavy traffic and serves as a key connection point for businesses and commuters in our area.

The project will add new turn lanes in multiple directions, helping traffic move more efficiently through the intersection and reducing backups during peak travel times. It is expected to begin in the next few months and will continue through the rest of this year and into 2027. Construction will bring temporary impacts, but the completed improvements will make it safer and easier to navigate this active intersection. So, you might want to look for alternative routes to your destinations that don’t require passing through this intersection for the rest of this year. If you have the Waze app on your phone, it will suggest good routes to avoid it when traffic is congested.

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# Rotary

## Rotary Club of Tucker

Service, Fellowship,  
and Community in Action

By Johnathan M. Clark – President, Rotary Club of Tucker

For over fifty years, the Rotary Club of Tucker has been doing what Rotary does best: bringing people together to serve their community, to build meaningful relationships, and to create positive, lasting change. Rooted in the global mission of Rotary International yet deeply connected to Tucker’s unique character, the club continues to be a steady force for good at both the local and international levels. Throughout the year, the club supports a wide range of service initiatives that reflect Tucker’s values and priorities.

The Rotary Club of Tucker partners with the following by volunteering with daily operations and their special events:

- Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC)
- NETWorks Cooperative Ministries
- Local schools in the community
- Other civic organizations like the Tucker Business Association (TBA) and Main Street Tucker Alliance

We meet on the first Thursday for lunch at the Magnolia Room from 11:30 am to 1 pm. We have a social event on the third Thursday in partnership with the Tucker Business Association to network and promote local businesses.

At its core, the Rotary Club of Tucker is about people—neighbors who care deeply about where they live and are committed to making Tucker a stronger, more connected community. Members include local business leaders, professionals, retirees, and civic-minded residents who share a belief that “service above self” is not just a motto, but a way of life.

Whether someone is looking to give back, grow their professional network, or simply connect with others who care about the community, the Rotary Club of Tucker offers a meaningful place to belong. For more information about the Rotary Club of Tucker, please visit: [rotarytucker.org](http://rotarytucker.org) or [rotarycluboftucker.org](http://rotarycluboftucker.org).



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### Better Photos, Better Stories: Eight Simple Photography Principles Anyone Can Use

By Wayne Pelletier, [resonantpixel.co](http://resonantpixel.co)

The best camera to use is always the one you have with you. Fortunately, most modern cell phones are excellent cameras. You don’t need fancy gear or technical training to take strong photos. What matters far more is how you use what’s already in your pocket. A powerful photo comes from intention, not equipment.

Whether you’re covering a community event, profiling a local business, or attaching images to a story, strong photos help readers connect emotionally and help your message land. Weak photos, on the other hand, can undermine even the best writing.

Here are eight simple principles anyone can apply to improve their images.

#### 1. Light Is Everything

Natural light is your best friend. Stand near windows. Step outdoors. Avoid harsh overhead lighting and direct mid-day sun. Light should fall on the front of your subject, not from behind.

Tip: Turn your subject toward the brightest light source.

#### 2. A Clean Background

Before you tap the shutter, scan behind your subject. Avoid signs, poles, trash cans, or busy patterns. Simple is stronger.

Tip: Take two steps left or right.

#### 3. Get Closer Than Feels Comfortable

Most bad photos are taken from too far away. People want faces, details, and emotion. Frame tightly.

Tip: If your subject looks tiny on your screen, you’re too far back.

#### 4. Hold the Camera Steady

Blur usually comes from movement. Use both hands, tuck your elbows in, and breathe out as you shoot.

Tip: In low light, brace against a wall or railing.

#### 5. Follow the Rule of Thirds

Turn on your phone’s grid. Instead of centering your subject, place them slightly off to one side. It feels more natural.

Tip: Put eyes near the top third line.

#### 6. Shoot Horizontally (Unless There’s a Reason Not To)

Horizontal photos work better for articles and websites. Vertical images crop awkwardly.

Tip: Turn your phone sideways by default.

#### 7. Capture Real Moments

Posed photos have their place, but candid moments tell better stories. Look for laughter, gestures, and genuine expressions.

Tip: Shoot while setting up and wrapping up — those moments are often best.

#### 8. Take More Than One Photo

Don’t rely on a single image. Shoot multiple angles and expressions. I often take 25–50 photos. The weak ones can be deleted.

Tip: Choose the strongest later.

Photography doesn’t have to be complicated. Good light. Clean backgrounds. Closer framing. Steady hands. Thoughtful composition. That’s it!




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NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

LOVE OUR TREES? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO GROW THE CANOPY

Smoke Rise is known for its old, beautiful trees. They're more than landscaping features – they give our neighborhood its distinctive character and charm, framing our winding streets, shading our homes, and creating the peaceful, wooded setting that makes much of Smoke Rise feel like a retreat. Now, residents have an opportunity to help preserve and enhance that canopy.

If you're interested in submitting a request to the Trees Atlanta's Yard Tree Program, act now! This current tree planting season began in October 2025 and ends this month. Trees have a greater survival rate when planted during the cooler months, which is why the program operates on a fall-to-early-spring schedule. The program is open to homeowners throughout DeKalb County, including our Smoke Rise community within the City of Tucker.

Through the program, eligible homeowners in Tucker may request a tree to be planted in their front yard, helping sustain the leafy landscape that defines our neighborhood. There are nearly a dozen tree species to choose from. The Yard Tree Program is made possible through the support and partnership of several Metro Atlanta municipalities, allowing eligible property owners to receive trees planted in their yards at no cost to them. Trees Atlanta will deliver and plant the tree, making the process easy and accessible.

After submitting an online form, homeowners should receive an immediate confirmation email. A Trees Atlanta planting coordinator will then follow up with next steps and details specific to the local program. (If you don't see the confirmation email, be sure to check your spam folder.)

Adding new trees today helps ensure future generations will enjoy the same canopy that makes Smoke Rise so special. Trees improve air quality, reduce stormwater runoff, provide wildlife habitat, and help keep our community cooler in the summer months.

If you've been considering planting a tree, this is the time to act. Again, March marks the deadline to request a yard tree for the current planting season.

Learn more about the tree program, tree care, or submit a request at: [www.treesatlanta.org/yardtree](http://www.treesatlanta.org/yardtree)



Restaurant Review: Nagano Japanese Steakhouse

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

One of our favorite restaurants is only 3 miles from our neighborhood, and I bet few of our readers are aware of it. Located in the Mountain East Shopping Center off East Park Place, Nagano Japanese Steakhouse is right next to LA Fitness. My husband, Joel, and I found it more than 20 years ago because we both love Sushi and find theirs among the best we have ever had. The place is not big on ambiance, but their chefs can make any kind of sushi you want.

The restaurant is named after the Nagano city in Japan. It was the site of the 1998 Winter Olympics, the first ever held in Asia. The staff seem to be the same over the years and get to know you very quickly. Today, it seems many people are doing what we often do, phoning in an order to go. They recognize my voice when I call in to order and just ask if we want the usual items.

With so many people using delivery services now, the restaurant's business appears to have shifted from dining-in to takeout. Beginning at about 5:00 p.m., you will see piles of bagged Styrofoam containers stacked on a six-foot table, awaiting pickup. But that is all on the sushi side of the restaurant. The other half of Nagano bustles with excitement most evenings as people gather for communal teppanyaki dining and entertainment. It is not just the promise of perfectly seared steak or a sushi starter — it's the theatrical flair of the teppanyaki chef, whose skillful performance turns an ordinary meal into an evening to remember.

Teppanyaki, which literally means "iron plate cooking," places diners around a large, flat grill where chefs transform fresh ingredients into a sizzling spectacle. From the moment the chef approaches the table, the mood shifts from casual conversation to eager anticipation. Knives flash, spatulas clang, and a plume of steam rises as the chef conducts an edible symphony that engages all senses. Children watch with wide eyes while adults trade amused glances; suddenly, everyone is part of the show.

One of the greatest joys of celebrating at a teppanyaki restaurant is the communal aspect. You can reserve your own large table or join others to meet new people. Large circular or U-shaped tables foster conversation and connection, making it ideal for birthdays, anniversaries, retirement

...Continued on page 10

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### The Tucker Optimist Club

By Victoria Crosby, Staff Writer

I recently became aware of the Tucker Optimist Club that meets online or in-person about once a month. A friend of mine, Pam McNall, is now the president of the local club. "I've been a member for about a dozen years, and I was excited to bring back some projects we've done in the past," Pam told me.

The club recently partnered with Easy Going Sewing, a local organization founded by Kristin Gipson for adults and children to take sewing lessons. The two groups marketed a free sewing class to make zippered over-the-shoulder bags for those in need. Volunteers from all over Tucker came together one evening to make 20 hand-made colorful bags.

The next day, Tucker Optimist Club members gathered to stuff the bags with hats, socks, toiletries, and nonperishable food. All bags have been divided up between Optimist members and Pam said they're going fast. "Any time I've come across someone in need, they immediately say yes and are so very thankful for the solid bags filled with necessities. We hope to fill bags again in the spring!"

Since I am an optimist, I decided to do a little research on this group. Optimist International is a worldwide charitable organization founded in 1919 in Kentucky. Their motto is to "Bring out the best in youth, in our community and in ourselves." Their mission and purpose are to foster optimism as a philosophy of life.

The Tucker Optimist Club supports local high school and middle school food initiatives and writing contests – and are looking for new members. Visit [TuckerOptimistClub.org](http://TuckerOptimistClub.org) to fill out the Contact Us form to learn more.

One of the current members, a Smoke Rise resident Robin Biro who has been an Optimist for four years said, "Youth development is one of our primary goals, and as the parent of two teens in Tucker schools that really spoke to me." He went on to say, "If you're someone who is worried about the state of our world today and looking for a way to make an impactful difference



Tucker Optimist Club members Robin Biro and Pam McNall

and be a force for positive change, consider joining us for a service project. Doing so not only feeds the soul but helps those in direct need of services and support."



### Young Innovators Shine at Smoke Rise Elementary Science & Engineering Fair

Curiosity was on full display at Smoke Rise Elementary during the school's recent Science and Engineering Fair. Fifth-grade students impressed families, teachers, and judges alike with projects that reflected thoughtful investigation, hands-on learning, and a genuine passion for discovery.

Throughout the process, students engaged in authentic inquiry, asking meaningful questions, designing experiments, testing ideas, and analyzing results. By applying science and engineering practices to real-world problems, they demonstrated not only academic knowledge but also perseverance, creativity, and critical thinking. Each participant clearly communicated their findings through well-prepared presentations, showcasing both confidence and growth as young scientists and engineers.

The event highlighted the strong emphasis on problem-solving and experiential learning taking place across the fifth-grade classrooms. From carefully constructed models to data-driven experiments, the projects represented weeks of dedication and collaboration.

Special congratulations go to these award recipients:  
Third Place: Nigel Williams, Blake Dudley, and Destin Gough  
Second Place: Debora Tumebo and Saba Haile  
First Place: Jack Woodruff

While awards were presented, the true celebration was the collective effort and achievement of every fifth-grade student who participated. Smoke Rise Elementary extends heartfelt appreciation to the teachers who guided the process, the families who offered support at home, and the judges who generously shared their time and expertise.

We are incredibly proud of these young innovators and look forward to seeing where their curiosity leads next!



Metal Arts Guild of Georgia relocated recently to Tucker from Doraville. The company is now open at the corner of 2nd Street and Railroad Avenue.

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**HEALTH NOTES:**

By Patricia Baumann, M.D.

**Alternate Neural Pathways: How the Brain Finds New Routes**

The human brain has chains of connected neurons that provide pathways from one region to another. These chains of neurons can be thought of as roadways in the brain. Normally the traffic moves smoothly, but what happens if the road is blocked—by injury, disease, or developmental change. Remarkably, the brain often finds a detour. These detours are called alternate neural pathways, and they are central to the brain’s ability to adapt, recover and learn. This can be beneficial, as in recovery from stroke. Aberrant pathways are responsible for some mental health problems. Neural pathways are involved in conditions such as autism and Asperger’s syndrome.

Neural Pathways transmit electrical and chemical signals. The chemicals are called neurotransmitters, and there are many in the human body. Each neural pathway supports specific functions, such as movement, language, vision, memory, or emotion. Neuroscience used to believe that these pathways were permanent after early development. Modern research has shown that this is not necessarily true.

**Neuroplasticity: How This Forms Alternate Pathways**

The formation of alternate neural pathways is driven by neuroplasticity, the brain’s ability to reorganize itself by forming new connections. Neuroplasticity allows the brain to strengthen existing connections, weaken unused ones, or create entirely new pathways to compensate for lost or damaged ones. The purpose of doing puzzles or other activities is that it will strengthen existing cognitive connection, and prevent them from weakening.

**Alternate Neural Pathways: How the Brain Reroutes Itself**

**Brain Injury or Stroke:** When an area of the brain is damaged, other regions may take over lost functions. The formation of new neural pathways requires rehabilitation and practice for these pathways to develop. Rehabilitation leverages alternate pathways to restore abilities.

In individuals who are blind or deaf, the brain often reallocates this unused sensory region. Visual cortex area in blind persons may become involved in touch or sound processing, enhancing abilities like Braille reading or auditory localization.

**Learning and Skill Acquisition**

Learning a new language, instrument, or athletic skill creates alternate routes for information process. With repetition, the brain builds more efficient pathways, sometime bypassing slower or less reliable routes. New skills literally reshape brain wiring.

**Alternate Neural Pathways and Mental Health**

In mental health, alternate neural pathways are a big part of how people heal, cope, and change patterns of how people heal cope, and change patterns of thought and behavior. Many conditions are not about something being “broken, but about certain brain routes being overused while healthier ones are underdeveloped.

Conditions like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and addiction often involve strong, fast pathways tied to fear, obsessing, avoidance, or craving, while there are weaker pathways tied to emotional regulation, self-soothing, and flexible thinking. The brain uses the strong, fast pathways. The good news is that the brain can learn new routes. Practices like cognitive behavioral therapy help weaken old pathways (“I am unsafe”, “I’m not enough”) and strengthen new ones through repeated cognitive reframing. Each repetition reinforces a healthier route.

**Alternate Neural Pathways and the Spectrum**

When people talk about alternate neural pathways and the spectrum, they are talking about different—but not defective—ways the brain is wired and learned. People process information differently, and therefore respond differently than what might be thought of as “the norm”.

Most people develop the “main highways” for things like social communication, sensory processing, emotional regulation, and learning and problem-solving. In neurodivergent brains (including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.) brain traffic often takes different routes. Information is processed more visually, pattern-based, or logically rather than socially. There may be strong connections in some regions (detail, memory, systems thinking) and weaker connections in others (small talk, sensory filtering, rapid emotional interpretation). People on the spectrum often learn skills later, or in unconventional ways. The struggle for these individuals comes not from the wiring itself, but from being forced to navigate a world built for a different map.

**techtalk** By Joel Gilbert, Staff Writer

**Meeting Today’s Essential Needs**

As you may know, Maslow’s Hierarchy has been humorously reimaged to reflect modern society’s reliance on battery power and Wi-Fi - sometimes jokingly ranked above food, shelter, water, and comfort. When I first shared this updated version of Maslow’s Hierarchy with my son, he pushed back at first, then paused to think, and quickly agreed without hesitation. I’ll focus on Wi-Fi in an upcoming Tech Talk but this month I want to share what I’ve learned about portable personal battery power banks and how they provide reliable backup power for our essential electronics.

In a world where nearly everything we use depends on a battery, portable power banks have become as essential as a phone, wallet, or set of keys. From smartphones and tablets to wireless earbuds and even laptops, the devices we rely on daily require consistent charging. When outlets are unavailable, we’re constantly on the move, or unexpected power outages occur, a portable power bank can mean the difference between staying connected and being completely cut off.

For many people, the most immediate benefit is keeping a phone powered throughout a busy day. Whether you’re navigating with maps, running a personal hotspot, streaming music, or responding to emails and texts, battery drain happens faster than we expect. Modern smartphones deliver impressive performance but that capability often comes with shorter battery life.

A slim power bank tucked into a purse, backpack, or glove compartment can provide one or more full recharges, ensuring you’re never left with a dead device at a critical moment. They’re especially helpful when traveling. On airplanes, trains, in airports, or at outdoor events, finding an available outlet can be surprisingly difficult.

After researching options on Amazon and reading hundreds of reviews, I found an option that was the best fit for my needs and budget. About the size and weight of a smartphone, the option I went with includes a built-in wall plug and integrated charging cables, eliminating the need to carry separate cords or adapters. It’s also approved for carry-on luggage, an important consideration for frequent flyers. Many newer carry-on suitcases even include exterior compartments for power banks, allowing convenient access without opening the case.

This compact device offers five outputs and two inputs, including three built-in cables, one USB-A port, and one USB-C port. It can charge up to five devices simultaneously and delivers fast charging, about 25 minutes for a 50 percent iPhone charge. It cost around \$20. While cheaper models exist, some lack key safety protections against overheating, overcharging, or short circuits. Look for certified products and avoid extremely low-cost, off-brand options that may not meet safety standards.

In today’s connected community, backup power isn’t just convenient, It’s smart preparation for whatever the day brings. Next month, we’ll explore the other modern essential: Wi-Fi.



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## Meet Your Neighbors!

### The Moseri Family

By *Gia Anderson, Staff Writer*

On a quiet stretch of Spencer's Way in Smoke Rise, Dr. John and Deborah Moseri have found what feels like the right rhythm of life - close to family, grounded in purpose, and surrounded by the calm privacy they value.

They moved to Smoke Rise in June 2024 after more than 30 years in Smyrna. "We wanted to be closer to our daughter Joy and her family," shares Deborah. Dr. Joy Moseri-Cooper, who lives just ten minutes away, was instrumental in finding the perfect home for the Moseris.

The Moseris' story stretches far beyond Smoke Rise. Dr. John Moseri first arrived in the United States in 1990. Two years later, he and Deborah were married, beginning a partnership rooted in faith, personal development, and service to others. Before coming to America, Dr. Moseri practiced as a General Surgeon in Nigeria. After relocating, he transitioned into Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine. He completed his medical training in the U.S. and went on to pursue fellowship training in addiction medicine at UPenn, ultimately dedicating his career to helping individuals battling substance use and mental health challenges.

In 2000, he founded Newport Integrated Behavioral Healthcare (NIBH), a medical treatment facility providing detoxification, addiction recovery, and mental health services for adults, children, and families. The center works closely with state and federal agencies and serves both insured and uninsured patients, including individuals struggling with opioid addiction. Today, the organization employs more than 22 staff members and continues to respond to the growing need for compassionate, structured behavioral healthcare.

Mrs. Deborah Moseri has been a steady force behind the scenes since the beginning. Though now retired from a career in education, she serves on the NIBH board and still steps in whenever needed. Whether helping oversee operations or supporting the practical day-to-day details that keep the facility running, "When we first acquired the property, it was just the two of us going in to fix it up," she recalls. Building the center, which sits on Moseri Rd in Decatur, was truly a family labor of love.

That commitment to excellence shaped their children's paths. Their eldest, Tex Moseri, now lives in Boston and works as a textile engineer. Their only daughter, Dr. Joy Moseri-Cooper, blends medicine and business and is actively involved in the family's healthcare operations. Steven Moseri is an engineer based in Atlanta, and Gabriel Moseri, the youngest, works in computer science and is based in Smyrna. Together, their children have given them seven grandchildren - a number that still makes Dr. John and Deborah smile when they say it aloud.

Education, accomplishment, and service to others are threads that run through every branch of the Moseri family tree. After decades of hard work, what they treasure most about life in Smoke Rise is the calm, a perfect setting for an empty nest. "It is clean, safe, and respectful of privacy," says Dr. Moseri.

And in their Spencer's Way home, that legacy is evident in the art on their walls to the mementos from their years of leisure travel. The Moseris love travelling and have been doing so for over 33 years. Their favorite destinations being Greece, the Caribbean and Italy. They also enjoy gardening and walking, supporting their community and are members of the Chattanooga Aquarium.

From Nigeria to Georgia, from general surgery to addiction medicine, from young parents to grandparents of seven, the Moseris' story is one of resilience, reinvention, and devotion to family, to community, and to healing.



*Dr. John and Deborah Moseri at the Dunrobin Castle in Scotland*

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

**Bluebird House**

Gazing out the bedroom window, I proudly admired the recently relocated bluebird house, now perched on a sturdy black pole with a baffle. A few months earlier, I had decided to move it from our wooded backyard to a more open location on the far side of our home. The freestanding house would be more attractive to the bluebirds because they prefer open areas, where it's harder for predators to approach unnoticed.

I knew nesting time was already upon us, and bluebirds begin their search in late February. I had seen several males pecking into the small entrance hole. They establish a territory that can be as large as five acres and begin their soft melodies to attract a mate. The new family will lay three to four eggs, slightly bluer than robin eggs. Just nineteen days after the eggs are laid, the fledglings leave the nest. Surprisingly, the first brood often helps feed their siblings from future broods. Bluebird families are unexpectedly close-knit.

Now the house stands ready, waiting quietly for its new occupants. Soon, hopefully, it will hold a nest of bright blue eggs and later be filled with the soft peeps of new life, a small but welcome sign that spring has truly arrived.



**Georgia Iris Society Meeting**

Saturday, March 14, 2026

The Georgia Iris Society will meet at St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church, 1790 Lavista Road, NE, Atlanta, GA. 30329.

Georgia Iris Society member and former President, Henry Everett, will present the program on "Japanese Iris".

Our meetings are free to the public and all are welcome. Join us for education, beautification and recreation.

For more information, contact Henry Everett, 678 684 3729.

**Nagano Japanese Steakhouse...continued from page 6**

parties or small wedding gatherings. Instead of being separated by different tables, guests share a common experience — the same sizzling plate, the same bursts of flame when a dose of alcohol hits the grill, the same perfectly caramelized onions passed around. That shared energy helps turn any milestone into a memory.

Beyond taste and spectacle, the chef's personal touch elevates the evening. Many teppanyaki chefs greet guests with jokes, playfully challenge diners to catch onion rings tossed in the air, or craft flaming shrimp tails into temporary art. You may also see butter fly and watch an onion volcano eruption. These small interactions create rapport that makes guests feel welcome in someone's kitchen rather than merely being served. For first-time teppanyaki diners, these moments are often the highlight — sparks of joy that punctuate the meal and create photo-worthy memories.

While we enjoy Nagano, if you are going the other direction, you might also enjoy Lucky Key & Fuji Ya on Lavista Road next to Best Buy. It has the same layout as Nagano, with a sushi restaurant on one side and teppanyaki tables on the other. Both places also serve excellent fried rice and a dizzying array of Asian dishes.

If you are planning a celebration and want something a bit livelier than a quiet dinner, consider reserving a teppanyaki table. It offers an irresistible mix of theater, flavor, and togetherness — a setting where the sizzle of the grill becomes part of your special night. Whether you're marking a major life event or just gathering friends for a good time, a Japanese steakhouse teppanyaki dinner promises an evening that's memorable, communal, and undeniably fun.

**Sun Mapping:  
A Garden Project That Pays Off**

*By Alex Helton*

Before I make any plans on planting this spring, I'll be referring to my sun map. In fact, I plan to update it as well.

Sun mapping is how you determine which spots get the most sunlight in your yard. It's done by tracking the sun's progress across your outdoor space at regular intervals over the course of one day. My sun map helped me with botanical confidence because I'm more strategic with my plant choices.

Our one-acre lot is covered with mature trees, so I decided to map areas where I plan to make changes and improvements rather than doing the entirety of my property. We recently had two huge damaged trees removed, so I wanted to know if I need to move any of my shade-loving plants to keep them alive.

My first attempt at sketching the yard was disastrous. I thought I needed to draw to scale and represent every angle. In the end, I realized that amorphous blobs work fine. However, it is helpful to track landmarks like walkways, fences, bushes and boulders because these become guideposts.

When I finally had a drawing that I could live with, I made 10 photocopies. I only needed six, but I wanted to have a few extra handy.

On a clear, sunny day I went outside at 8 am to make my first drawing. I focused on where the full sun transitioned to full or partial shade. It was hard to discern sun dappled light from shade, but I tried my best to indicate things on my map.

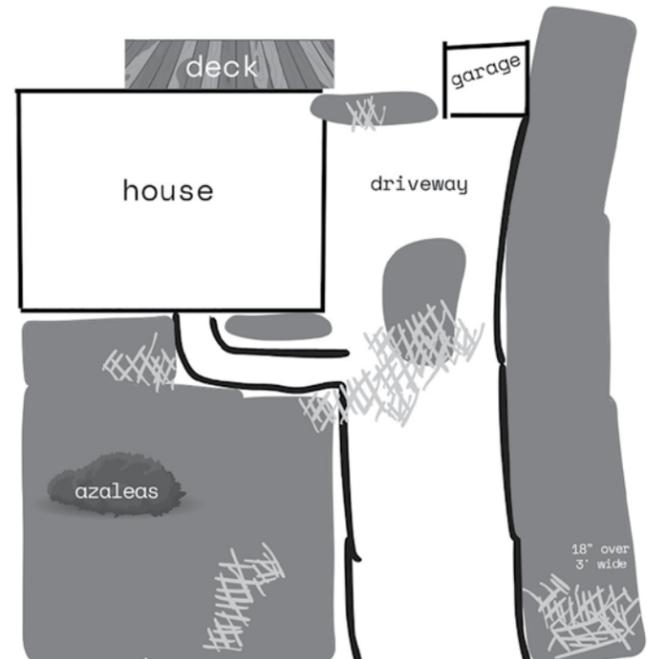
I found that writing the measurement from the edge of the sunny area to a nearby landmark helped since two hours later I couldn't tell if the edge had moved and how far. For instance, at 8 am there was a 2' sunny spot next to my driveway. At noon, that area had shifted and now fell primarily on my driveway. I documented the movement on two of the maps.

I drew new maps at 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., and 5 p.m. At the end of the day, I examined the maps to track the sun's movement across my yard and planting spaces. This was the hardest part because I had very few spots that got full sun which is defined as 6+ hours of sun exposure. Partial sun is 3-6 hours and full shade is less than 3 hours of sun.

After finishing my maps, I know that a veggie garden is not viable unless I want to put raised beds directly on top of my cement driveway. Since sun patterns shift by season and the sun's angle changes too, I will repeat the process to track those seasonal differences.

The beauty of sun mapping is that it costs almost nothing but for me, it's been a confidence builder. I like knowing more about what will happily grow in my yard. If you have been making spring planting plans, consider creating your own map and then watch your garden grow.

MY YARD AT 8 AM



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*Preschoolers learn about owlets*

## Smoke Rise Morning Glories Master Gardeners Enrich the Community

*By Quill Duncan, Recording Secretary*

Our February meeting featured presentations by six Master Gardeners on a wide variety of topics. Our club has eight Master Gardeners one of whom is now a resident in Hoover, AL. Beth Woodward went through the program in 1995 and recalled volunteering in Decatur in preparation for the Olympics! Beth shared her love of seed propagation and in particular her appreciation for our beloved native annual, the Yellow Daisy. She shared saved seeds with club members and urged us to plant them as soon as the soil warms. Joy Abrams explained the process of becoming a Master Gardener through the UGA Extension Service and the sequence of applying in September for classes the following winter quarter.

Bonnie Pennington loves garden literature, and she focused her talk on two famous garden writers: Louise Wilder and Elizabeth Lawrence who wrote a charming book on small bulbs. Their gardening books are still available today. Kim Fair loves citrus and she entertained us with many historical references to the citrus industry in America beginning with Thomas Jefferson. Some of you may grow Meyer Lemons and Kim's challenge with the Ponderosa Lemon was an amusing tale. Quill Duncan gave the surprising history and propagation process of our native fruit, cranberries. The petite flower resembles a crane and the early English settlers referred to it as the "crane berry" eventually becoming the cranberry we know today. Dolly Moy wrapped up the conversation with a series of questions to our club members regarding their gardening love and memories of who influenced them to garden from an early age. Master Gardeners are a great asset to the community with their training and their willingness to help homeowners, organizations and public institutions with best garden practices supported by research and documentation from UGA's many resources.

In other club news, the "Grow with us Little Gardeners" Youth Garden Club continues to be a fun activity for the preschoolers and club volunteers. In early February President Amie Walsh and Beth Woodward taught the children all about owlets, much to their delight.

Our March meeting will be the installation of new officers. For information on our club, please contact Amie Walsh at (404) 729-4871.

## Mountain Mums Learn about Mushrooms

*By Cheri Schneider, Staff Writer*

The Mountain Mums Garden Club February meeting met at the home of Joy Moseri-Cooper of Brentwood. It was followed by lunch.

Dr. Cornelia Cho, President of the Mushroom Club of Georgia, and a pediatrician gave our February program for the Mountain Mums Garden Club. It was a fascinating topic and accompanied by great photographs. Several interesting points she made that might interest you: Mushrooms are very relational. Their mycelium can be extensive and are helpful for many specific trees to thrive and resist disease. Humans and fungi share more DNA than humans and plants do. You should ALWAYS cook mushrooms. Some are more toxic raw and humans do not readily digest chitin in them. NEVER eat a wild mushroom without a positive identification: this means checking the cap, stem, gills, pores/ and possibly cutting mushroom in half to see color and if solid. You can die from eating toxic mushrooms. Mushrooms are also used as dyes. Additionally, they are being studied as treatment options for cancer and depression/ mental illness and dementia. We already have penicillin and cyclosporin which is used to prevent transplant loss.



*Mountain Mums visit the Atria in Lilburn*

We had a February garden craft even at Atria in Lilburn. Many participated in the backyard bird count February 13-15. New officers include: Co-Presidents: Lynne Malone and Cheri Schneider and Vice President Kate Graham.

Our garden club is almost full. If you would like to join or be on the waiting list let us know! Contact Mary Jacobson at [mjacob1010@gmail.com](mailto:mjacob1010@gmail.com). We meet every second Wednesday of the month.

## The Smoke Rise Garden Club Spring Insights

*By Robin Biro*

The Smoke Rise Garden Club had a wonderful February meeting at the beautiful home of gracious hosts, Liam O'Marah and his husband Timothy Miller. Smoke Rise Garden club meets on the first Monday of each month, at 7pm at member homes. Join our Smoke Rise Garden Club Facebook group to stay informed.

Our guest presenters were master gardeners Kimbra Wiseman and CD Bartlett who are dedicated to the restoration of native plants within Henderson Park Native Plant and Wildlife Walk of Tucker. Applications for the master gardener program are currently closed but you are encouraged to email Sarah Brodd at [smiths@uga.edu](mailto:smiths@uga.edu) to inquire about 2027 course.

Club resident horticultural expert Robin Biro has the following helpful notes to get you ready for spring:

1. Remember that our last frost date in our USDA zone is April 15th. Do not plant tender annuals or veggies until that time.
2. Now is still a great time to be planting shrubbery and trees, so they can root in before we get blasted by our Georgia heat. Be careful when purchasing shrubbery at big box stores though to not buy stock that has lots of fresh new green growth, which usually indicates that those just left a greenhouse and might not stand up to our cold nights in March – select plants with darker green foliage to be on the safe side.
3. This month is your last month to transplant many plants without worry, once it gets too warm outside, they will struggle for the remainder of the growing season.
4. This is the time to do your annual fertilizing of trees and shrubs. Do not fertilize your lawns until after the average first frost date, you don't want to wake it up too early.
5. Mulch is important right now to prevent spring weeds from becoming summer nightmares.
6. The best time to prune Buddleia (butterfly bush) in our zone is between late February and early March, when new growth is visible. Now is also the perfect time to prune back knockout roses – just remember to do that each year here at about Valentine's Day, to encourage vibrant growth.
7. Now is a good time to plant cool season veggies like lettuce and spinach. Lastly, if you plan on starting annuals or veggies from seed indoors, you need to do that between 4-6 weeks before the average last spring frost date (April 15).



*(L-R) SRGC President Victoria Crosby, host Liam O'Marah, guest Brad Bartlett, speakers Dale Bartlett and Kimbra Wiseman, host Timothy Miller, co-host Karen Dingler*

Join our March 2nd meeting for camaraderie among fellow plant, garden, and nature enthusiasts. We begin our meetings with a 30-minute social hour with light refreshments, and then we usually have a speaker and a horticultural report, among other things that you will find quite helpful and interesting.

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## Food & Home Fixin's

by Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

March 4th - "The only day that is a sentence!"

March often brings lingering cold, sometimes with major snow or ice. Hearty meals like Monterey Chicken remain ideal, and Dried Cranberry Biscotti is an easy, delicious treat to accompany your morning coffee.

### Monterey Chicken

Total Prep Time: Approx 1 ½ hours  
 4 (5-6 oz) skinless, boneless chicken breast halves  
 1 cup teriyaki marinade sauce  
 ½ pound bacon  
 2 T butter  
 1 small onion, cut into long slices  
 1 small green bell pepper cut into thin strips  
 1 (8 Oz) pkg fresh, coarsely chopped mushrooms  
 4 slices of mozzarella cheese

Place chicken in a glass dish or bowl and pour teriyaki marinade over top. Toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 1-2 hours.

Preheat oven to 350°. Remove chicken from marinade and place it in a 9x13 baking pan. Reserve 1/3 cup of marinade and discard the rest. Bake chicken until it is cooked through, and juices run clear, 20-30 minutes.

Place bacon in a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven. Cook over medium-high heat until evenly brown. Drain and set aside. Melt butter in the same skillet over medium high heat. Sauté onion, bell pepper, and mushrooms for about 3-5 minutes. Add reserved 1/3 cup of marinade and simmer until soft. Drain and set onion mixture aside. When chicken is done, top with bacon strips. Add onion mixture and top each chicken breast with a slice of cheese. Bake until cheese is melted and bubbly - approx. 10-15 minutes. Serve alone with salad and crispy bread or serve with rice if desired.

### Dried Cranberry Biscotti

This crispy, "dunkable" snack stores well in your pantry. Substitute any dried fruit, like apricots, or add chopped nuts if desired.

2 ½ cups flour  
 1 tsp baking powder  
 ½ tsp salt  
 1 cup sugar  
 ½ cup butter at room temperature  
 2 large eggs  
 ½ tsp almond extract  
 1 ½ cups dried cranberries (craisins)  
 1 egg white

Preheat oven to 350°. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Combine flour, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl: whisk to blend. Using an electric mixer, beat sugar, eggs, butter, and extract together. Mix in flour and then dried cranberries.

Divide the dough in half. Using floured hands, shape each piece into a log that measures 4 inches across and 8 inches long. Lightly press the log to flatten it. Whisk egg white and brush top and sides of each log. Bake 30-35 minutes until golden. Cool completely. With a serrated knife, slice logs at an angle about ¾ inches wide and bake pieces for 10 minutes on baking sheet without parchment. Turn biscotti over and bake an additional 5 minutes.

Allow to cool completely before storing in an airtight container.



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