

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 57, ISSUE 6

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

October, 2025

www.smokesignalnews.com



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Taste of Tucker Returns October 4!

Get ready for a foodie's paradise as Main Street comes alive on Saturday, October 4, from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Now in its 16th year, Taste of Tucker showcases the best local restaurants, breweries, arts & crafts, live music, and a free kids' zone. Admission is free, with food and beverage tickets available for purchase at the event.

Founded in 2010 by Art and Karen Wood alongside Tucker First United Methodist Church,

Taste of Tucker has grown from a church parking lot gathering of 500 people into one of Georgia's top food festivals, drawing more than 7,000 visitors each year. The Woods envisioned a family-friendly, community-centered celebration - and it's become just that.

The best part? Every dollar raised goes back into the community. This year's proceeds support **Camp Kudzu**, empowering children with type 1 diabetes, and **NETWorks Cooperative Ministry**, serving neighbors in need across Northlake, Embury Hills, and Tucker.

Join in for an afternoon of food, fun, and community spirit on Main Street. For updates and a full list of participating restaurants, visit tasteoftucker.com or follow facebook.com/tasteoftucker.

You Can Make A Difference

You can make a difference in the world in which we live by the way you share your talents, and the time that you give to others less fortunate, and those who are in need, when you clothe the naked, and the hungry you feed.

You can make a difference, although your contribution may be small, it's much better than doing nothing at all. Extent your hand to a stranger, offer a friendly smile. Your kindness will have a ripple effect, that is certainly worthwhile.

You can ignore the world around you, or react with empathy, You can look with disdain upon the needy, or with sympathy. You're the one who gets to choose to look the other way or imagine a day walking in another's shoes

You can make a difference by the words that you say and the way that you treat others every single day. You could run a marathon to make people aware of a serious disease, which shows that you care. You could be volunteer or donate to a charity. You can be part of the solution to peace and unity.

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Written for UN Day Celebration in NY 2006

Feasibility Study Backs a Tucker Police Department

Submitted by the Tucker-Northlake CID

A newly released feasibility study conducted by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP) concludes that the City of Tucker could establish its own police department, providing faster response times and more community-focused service at a lower cost than the current arrangement with DeKalb County Police Department (DKPD).

Commissioned by the Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District (TNCID) in January, with additional funding from the Tucker Summit CID, Tucker Civic Association, Tucker Business Association, Northlake Condominiums, Smoke Rise Civic Association, and Tucker Main Street Alliance, the report analyzed two years of 911 dispatch data, interviewed business and civic leaders, and compared Tucker's current policing structure with those of neighboring cities.

- **911 Dispatch Delays:** The study found that DeKalb 911 dispatch times for Tucker were 4.9 times longer than Brookhaven and 4.3 times longer than Dunwoody, based on analysis of approximately 65,000 calls for service.
- **Response Times:** DKPD response to high-priority calls in Tucker was 3.2 times longer than Brookhaven and 1.5 times longer than Dunwoody. Southeast Tucker, particularly the Juliette Road area, experienced the longest delays.



Victoria Crosby reading her poem *A Tribute to Heroes* at the DeKalb 9/11 ceremony, with Susan Turner.

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...Continued on page 4



Smoke Signal

P.O. Box 1038, Tucker, GA 30085

A non-profit service organization devoted to furthering neighborhood cooperation with the aid of good neighborhood communication.

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OCTOBER 13

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Look for the wooden box labeled *Smoke Signal*.

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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

5801 Hugh Howell Road
Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor
Phone: 770-469-4881 [Website: Eastminster.us](http://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](http://Website:Gamoravian.org)

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11:00 a.m. Worship
12:00 p.m. Fellowship Time

Mountain West Church

4818 Hugh Howell Road
Pastor: Mo Huggins
770-491-0228 Mwchurch.com

SUNDAY 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 11:55 a.m. Worship
MONDAY 7:00 p.m.

In-person and streaming online on Facebook and mwchurch.com

Is your neighbor known for being an avid cyclist, a holiday decorations fanatic, an author, or the fastest dog-walker on the block? The *Smoke Signal* encourages folks in Smoke Rise to submit stories about how neighbors became friends. Submissions should be 300-500 words.

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Do You Own a “Boo Box”?

For 40 years, The Tour of Southern Ghosts sponsored by the Art Station has been selling Boo Boxes at the schoolhouse. The event has been held annually at Stone Mountain Park in the plantation area of the park.

The Tour features story tellers dressed in old fashioned costumes who tell ghost stories. Each night for two weekends in October, master story tellers entertain groups of people on a route through the plantation making stops at the houses and ending at the schoolhouse. Unfortunately, last year a fire destroyed one of the main houses with its antique furnishings.

The schoolhouse through the years has had items for sale - the main item being a “Boo Box.” The popular item contains a “ghost” as well as “ghost food” for one year. Cider, cookies and cupcakes, books of ghost stories, taped ghost stories and fall and Halloween décor is for sale also.

The GFWC Stone Mountain Woman’s Club has been a sponsor and provided workers since the inception 40 years ago. Members were also instrumental in bringing the Art Station to Stone Mountain village.

Each August, club members meet at Art Station to assemble more than 150 “Boo Boxes” to be sold at the park. They curl miles of ribbon to be attached as decoration. Members insert the ghost and his/her food into the box, add instructions as to how to care for the ghost and attach a special bow.



Boo Boxes



Left to Right-Nelda Lunsford (SR resident), Andrea Redmond, Jackie Cornett (SR resident)

Volunteers from the village, from the Stone Mountain Rotary Club and other organizations have helped with this fund raiser by selling tickets, working at the concession stand and as guides. The Woman’s Club has staffed the schoolhouse for many years. In the early years, paper bag luminaries lit the paths and had to be constantly attended by volunteers to keep the candles lit.

If you have never attended the Tour of Southern Ghosts, this might be the year to do it. You need a pass for the park or to pay the daily fee to enter.

Tickets for the story telling tour are available at Art Station and on-line at artstation.org or at atourofsouthernghosts.com.

The tour this year runs Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights Oct. 16-18 and October 23-25 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

For more information call (770) 469-1105. Boo Y’all!

Eastminster Church welcomes fall with a season of celebration and community

On Saturday, October 25, families can enjoy Trunk-or-Treat from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., featuring decorated trunks, games, a bouncy house, and candy, with costumes encouraged!

On Sunday, October 26, at 10:30 a.m., the church will hold its annual Kirking of the Tartans during Reformation Sunday, celebrating Eastminster’s Scottish heritage with bagpipes, tartans, and a reception with shortbread cookies.

With a blend of worship, heritage, outreach, and family-friendly fun, Eastminster Church invites everyone to take part in this season of fellowship and spiritual reflection.

Free Paper Shredding Event

The DeKalb County Sanitation Division will host a free paper shredding event **Saturday, Oct. 18**, from 8:00 a.m. - noon, at the DeKalb County Sanitation Division’s Central Transfer Station, 3720 Leroy Scott Drive, Decatur, GA 30032.

You’ll have an opportunity to responsibly dispose of all types of documents, including sensitive personal documents such as old tax records and legal documents. All documents will be shredded on-site, and each participant will be limited to 10 standard-size boxes of paper. Shredding services will be provided by A1 Shredding & Recycling.

The event is **FREE** and open only to DeKalb County residents. Proof of residency may be requested.

For more information, contact the Sanitation Division’s Customer Care team at (404) 294-2900 or sanitation@dekalbcountyga.gov, visit www.dekalb-sanitation.com, or follow @DKalbSanitation on X (formerly Twitter).



Students Gear Up for Success at Back-to-School Carnival

By Tonya Jones, SRES Teacher

To kick off the new school year, DeKalb County Parent and Family Engagement hosted a Back-to-School Carnival at Smoke Rise Elementary School. The event brought together families, students, community partners, stakeholders, and the Smoke Rise community uniting both Idlewood and Smoke Rise families for a day of celebration and connection. The carnival was a huge success! Families enjoyed fun activities including a game truck, an inflatable jumper, a visit from Bluey, and a variety of food trucks. Students received backpacks filled with school supplies, and everyone had access to valuable information from local organizations and community partners.



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Feasibility Survey...continued from page 1

- **Staffing Model:** The study recommends 53 sworn officers and 10 civilian staff in the first year in a dedicated Tucker Police Department, with 12-hour shifts to maximize coverage and continuity.
- **Cost Comparison:** Tucker property owners paid approximately \$15.9 million in taxes in 2024 for county police services — more than Brookhaven (\$15.0 million) and Dunwoody (\$14.3 million) spend on their own police departments, despite both of those cities having larger populations. A city-run department in Tucker could be launched at cost of approximately \$10.7 million in the first year, including salaries, vehicles, technology, and equipment.
- **Economic Impact:** Local businesses reported crime-related challenges that affect revenue, customer experience, and community perception. Some businesses indicated that these challenges have led to lost customers and reduced opportunity.

What is the Impact on DeKalb County?

The study shows DeKalb is not financially dependent on Tucker for police funding. Creating a Tucker Police Department would reduce the county police budget by approximately 10%, while shrinking its service area by 9.7% and the population served by 7%.

Next Steps

The feasibility study does not recommend a course of action but provides Tucker residents and leaders with the basic data needed to weigh options. Under the City Charter, Tucker has the authority to form a police department, which requires City Council approval and a city-wide referendum.

The study does not include recommendations on building costs, or additional services such as a K-9 unit, drones, or a citywide camera network. Those decisions and others would need



Residents Survey

to be made at a future date and, based on the revenues collected, the funds exist to consider a variety of options.

“This is the right data to have an informed discussion about public safety. We respect the diligent work of the DeKalb County Police Department and particularly the officers who respond to back-to-back calls in difficult situations every day,” said Matthew Lee, Executive Director of the Tucker-Northlake CID. “We want to work with DeKalb County on the best outcome for Tucker and county residents. We are taking a proactive and inclusive approach to find solutions, and we appreciate all that



Business Survey

DeKalb County is doing simultaneously to improve service countywide.”

The Tucker-Northlake CID is also conducting a public safety survey, <https://protect-tucker.org/#survey>, to better understand community perceptions and experiences with 911, police response, and crime in and around Tucker. Your responses will help inform the our conversations with city and county leaders as they consider priorities for safety, service delivery and resource allocation.

The survey takes about 10 to 12 minutes to complete, responses are anonymous, and there is space for open-ended feedback. The survey can be found at protecttucker.org.

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How to Help Injured or Orphaned Wildlife

By Larisa Epshteyn, Board Member
AWARE Wildlife Center



Living in Smoke Rise means sharing our community with the owls, deer, foxes, and other wildlife that make this place so special. But sometimes these animals need help - and that's where AWARE Wildlife Center steps in. As metro Atlanta's only all-species wildlife rehabilitation hospital, AWARE treats about 1,400 injured and orphaned animals every year, from tiny wrens to bob-



cats, turtles, and foxes. The goal is always to return each patient to the wild, but for those who can't, A W A R E provides a permanent home where they become "Wildlife

Ambassadors," teaching people across metro Atlanta how to coexist peacefully with our native species.

AWARE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supported entirely by public donations, volunteers, and community partners. One of the best ways to get involved is by attending the organization's annual fundraiser on **October 23** at the historic Trolley Barn in Inman Park. The evening will feature food, drinks, music, and even wildlife encounters, with proceeds supporting AWARE's life-saving work. An online auction - featuring art, experiences, and local gift cards - will also help raise funds. To learn more about AWARE's programs, volunteer opportunities, or the upcoming event, visit www.awarewildlife.org.



Meet Your Neighbor!

Taking Stock: Mark Stock Former NFL Player- Your Neighbor

By Cheri Schneider, staff writer

Mark and Andrea Stock live in Kanawha. They have a multi-racial family of four children that, while out for a family dinner, an observing restaurant owner coined the term, their own little "United Nations." Three are adopted - a son from the states with African heritage and, two daughters from Russia. They have four continents represented in their family. Two of their four children have boomeranged back and are living with them now. Mark met his wife Andrea in 1993 in Atlanta. Nine days later they were engaged and four months later, they married. Their "U.N." enrollment started in 1996 with the adoption of their oldest, Jackson.

Mark Stock grew up in Smoke Rise when his parents moved here from Florida. They settled here, because the family funds weren't sufficient to make it to the desired destination of Denver Colorado. He attended Stone Mountain Elementary School in second grade and then Smoke Rise Elementary in 3rd through 6th grades. He loved sports! He was in the Stone Mountain Youth League, Tucker Youth Football league, their traveling team - the Tucker Lions and then at Marist in 7th grade through High school. He played Receiver in a run-centric, Wishbone offense during his High School career which culminated in a close loss in the State Championship football game his senior year.

If Mark Stock had listened to the experts, he would have never played football in college. You see, Mark was told he was "not good enough, not big enough and not fast enough to play college football." He recalled that he did get one call from a college football program, Presbyterian College...As it turned out, they were actually trying to reach the other receiver on his high school team who also was named Mark.

Mark pursued the Naval Academy but was not accepted and chose The Virginia Military Institute over The Citadel. Undaunted by the naysayers, Mark burned his own football Highlight tape by hooking up two VHS machines (some of you know this drill) and drove it up to VMI to hand it directly to the Football staff. They invited him to walk on the football team.

Mark determined to work hard to earn a starting position by his senior year. Even though he knew he was not the fastest or biggest, he knew he could work and try to be one percent better every day. This compounded effort paid off and made him bigger, faster and stronger. He earned a starting position in his sophomore year and, by the end of his career, left as VMI's first All-American holding nearly every career and season receiving record. The once too small and slow-to-play college football person, ended up setting an NCAA yards per catch receiving record (1986 season-24.96 yds/catch), the most receiving yards of any Division 1 receiver in the country with 263 yards (1986) and was number 2 in the country in all-purpose yards, number 2 in the country in receptions and a finalist for the Walter Payton Award (the Heisman for Division 1AA) in his senior season (1988).

At VMI, they practiced something called "mandatory commissioning." This means if the ROTC program you were in offered you a commission, you are obligated to accept it or you forfeit your diploma. Well—the Navy "wanted him." In his Junior year, Mark was able to defer the decision for four months, until he could see if the NFL would be interested in him. (Scouts were already looking at him).

He decided to abandon his dream to fly for the Navy and switched to the Army program which would allow him to accept a Reserve Officer Commission, so he could instead pursue another dream, an NFL Career.

Mark was drafted to the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1989, a notable draft year with the likes of Dion Sanders and Barry Sanders and quite a few more Hall of Famers. He earned a starting

position as the third receiver his rookie season and had two playoff game receptions that year. He was released the following year after a coaching staff change and became an NFL journeyman. He spent time with the Green Bay Packers in 1991 and played in the World League of American Football in the spring of 1992 in Sacramento, California and they won the World Championship. In 1992-1994, he played for the Washington Redskins, enduring three coaching changes and a torn rotator cuff. In 1995, he played in the Canadian Football League (in San Antonio, Texas of all places) and was the leading receiver with 1200 "yards receiving." His last year in the NFL was with the Indianapolis Colts in 1996. In that year, he suffered a major concussion and neck injury. He was able to finish the rest of the season and was re-signed for 1997 but released when they noted a significant bulging disc in his neck. "You cannot play again," they simply said. He was "one hit away from paralysis."

The next years, the Stock's raised their family in Virginia, and he continued to be a role model to youth as a coach of youth leagues, and high school football. His life motto sounds much like his hero Zig Ziglar. It is "go for it." And, I think "work for it" also fits.

In 2021, Mark and his family returned to Smoke Rise to care for his aging parents. Now he calls Smoke Rise his home, and his life has come full circle.



Meet Dietre Ffrench

YOUR SMOKERISE NEIGHBOR & REALTOR®

As a resident of the Smoke Rise community, I'm deeply connected to the people and businesses that make this neighborhood unique. With over 20 years of experience, I help my clients realize the full potential of their homes. Thinking of selling? Let's connect and turn your real estate dreams into reality, together.

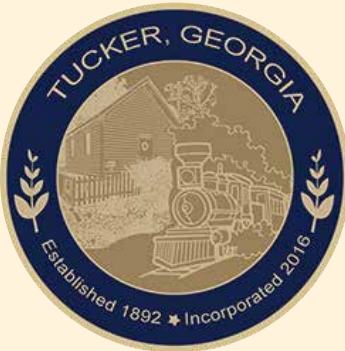
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The City of Tucker Mayoral/ City Council Election Candidate Forum

is **Thursday, October 9** from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Northlake Church of Christ, 1625 Cooledge Road, Tucker, sponsored by the Tucker Civic Association and the Tucker Business Association.

Come hear all the candidates express why they are running for office, their visions for the City of Tucker, and respond to questions about Tucker’s future.

Karen Peters Rivers for Tucker City Council, Dist. 1 - Post 1

Karen Peters Rivers is a lifelong resident of Tucker, Georgia, whose deep family roots shape her passion for community service. She is a descendant of William McKinley Peters, a founding figure in Tucker’s historic Peters Park neighborhood, the city’s first established African-American community. The family’s legacy is honored with a street named after them, and Karen proudly carries that heritage forward.

For years, Karen has worked alongside residents of Peters Park to preserve and revitalize this historic area. She has helped bring in street toppers and community markers, ensuring that the neighborhood’s rich history is both visible and celebrated. Her efforts have focused on updating infrastructure, improving public spaces, and strengthening community pride - work that reflects her commitment to honoring the past while investing in Tucker’s future.

Karen is now running for Tucker City Council, District 1 Post 1, to continue her service on a broader scale. Her priorities include transparent and accountable leadership, responsible growth that protects the city’s character, and active engagement with residents so every voice is heard. She believes good government starts with listening and making sure that promises become action.

Having previously run for the same seat in 2021, Karen remains dedicated to ensuring that Tucker’s future is built on respect for its history and inclusion of all its people. Her lifelong connection to Tucker and her proven record of grassroots work make her a strong advocate for preserving the city’s heritage while guiding it toward thoughtful, inclusive progress.

karenpeters21@gmail.com
1955 Peters Road, Tucker, GA 30084 | 404-437-5093



Alexis Weaver for Tucker City Council, District 3, Post 1

I’m Tucker City Councilmember Alexis Weaver (District 3, Post 1). I’m a working mom to three children and have 20-plus years of experience and expertise as a nonprofit leader and urban planner focused on economic and community development.

Our family is no stranger to Smoke Rise! We are longtime active members of Smoke Rise Baptist Church, played junior tennis at Smoke Rise Country Club, and our oldest learned to swim at Smoke Rise Bath & Racket Club.

I’ve devoted my professional career to working with businesses, churches and community organizations, foundations, municipalities and government agencies at the local, state and federal levels to address complex challenges including hunger, homelessness, and poverty. I’m also a dedicated lifelong volunteer, serving for eight years as a board member of NETWorks Cooperative Ministry.

Tucker neighbors elected me in 2021 to be a voice for inclusion, listen carefully and take action. I’ve worked hard to fulfill these commitments to our community.

I’ve prioritized making it easier for everyday people to live, work and stay in Tucker by supporting accessible housing options and smart zoning. From championing community input to strengthening public safety to investing in our parks and infrastructure (streets, sidewalks and stormwater!) to urging the protection of our tree canopy, I’ve worked to ensure that the city delivers for everyone - even when that has meant casting a dissenting vote.

I’m running for re-election to build on those efforts, providing the energized and experienced leadership needed so Tucker can continue to flourish and thrive. I am the only candidate with the knowledge, commitment, qualifications and proven track record to continue providing thoughtful, community-centered solutions and transparent governance that Tucker residents deserve. While I’m elected by District 3 residents, I am a public servant to all of Tucker. Learn more and support my campaign at

www.alexis4tucker.com. | https://secure.anedot.com/alexisfortucker
4045 Lake Erin Court, Tucker, GA 30084 | 470-701-5607



From Mayor to Council: Tucker Ballot Packed with Challengers

Tucker voters are gearing up for a historic election this fall, as the city prepares to choose its first new mayor since city incorporation in 2016. Mayor Frank Auman, who has led Tucker since day one, is stepping down due to term limits.

Three candidates are competing for the open seat: former councilmembers Anne Lerner and Noelle Monferdini, along with Beverly Williams, a newcomer to city politics.

The competition extends beyond the mayor’s race. Three incumbent councilmembers are facing a challenger, setting the stage for one of Tucker’s most contested election cycles to date. In District 1, Councilman Roger Orlando is being challenged by Karen Peters. In District 2, Councilwoman Cara Schroeder faces Patrice Cosby. And in District 3, Councilwoman Alexis Weaver is up against Sam Ulrich.

Key election dates include the voter registration deadline on Oct. 6, the absentee ballot request deadline on Oct. 24, and Election Day on Nov. 4. Early voting will run Oct. 14 - 31, with weekday hours from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Saturday voting from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Sunday voting from noon to 5:00 p.m.

With competitive races across the ballot, Tucker residents will have significant choices to make this November. Voters can check their registration status through the Georgia Secretary of State’s website: <https://mvp.sos.ga.gov>.

Patrice Cosby for Tucker City Council

My name is Patrice Cosby, and I am honored to run for Tucker City Council, District 2, Post 1. I entered this race because I believe every resident on every street, in every neighborhood deserves leadership that listens, responds, and represents with integrity.

Tucker is more than a city on the map. It is a vibrant and resilient community made up of families, seniors, small business owners, essential workers, and dreamers. I believe our city government should serve all of us, not just a select few.

My journey into public service began with something simple but powerful: listening. Over the past two years, I’ve spoken with countless neighbors who’ve shared their hopes, frustrations, and ideas. I’ve heard concerns about rising costs, traffic congestion, zoning decisions, and safety. But I’ve also heard pride in our schools, neighborhoods, and community spirit. What’s clear is that Tucker’s greatest strength is its people and it’s their voices that inspire me to lead.

I bring to this campaign a clear purpose and a commitment to putting people first. My priorities include keeping Tucker affordable through real property tax relief, ensuring City Hall is transparent and accessible, protecting green spaces while managing growth responsibly, and making our streets safer for drivers, walkers, and children. I also believe in supporting local businesses and the workers who keep our city thriving.

City Council should be about solving real problems, not playing politics. My promise is simple: People First, Always. I will serve with empathy, transparency, and a willingness to work with the entire community to make sure Tucker remains strong, inclusive, and uniquely ours.

I look forward to earning your support and working together for the future of Tucker.

Patrice Cosby. <https://votepatrice.wixsite.com/d2p1> | (404) 300-9191
1830 Cameo Court, Tucker, GA 30084



Councilman Roger W. Orlando City of Tucker, Dist. 1 - Post 1

I always remember hearing politicians seeking re-election stating that they desired four more years to “finish the job.” This is a complete fallacy. In reality, the job never is complete and maturing into such a realization requires the somewhat selfless act of admitting that decisions made in the present have lasting and long-term consequences. The proverbial willingness to “plant a seed now even though you’ll not be around to see the tree grow.”

In four years, I’ve made decisions concerning designs to the upcoming Town Green, City Standards Guide Book, Parks and Trails Master Plans, four consecutive balanced budgets, Public Works technical specifications, downtown density, countless special land use permitting [SLUPs], speed tables, litigation and property decisions, legislative and code decisions and so much else! In short, I like to think I have made a difference in my first four years.

My nearly 40 years as a licensed Georgia lawyer [Emory University, 1987] provides the perfect background in terms of issue spotting, collaborative consideration and uncovering real world solutions. By unanimous appointment of the Council, I serve on the Downtown Development Authority [DDA] and have been asked to consider tax abatements and developer incentives in both municipal roles. My attendance records have been stellar (if I may brag) in terms of both City Council meetings and DDA.

My experience during my last four years of service will serve Tucker quite well moving forward.

Priorities into the next term include Public Safety [I’ve attended more than 95% of the DKPD crime briefings] and the continued examination of the feasibility for a referendum as to whether Tucker should develop its own police force, and continuation of the homeless outreach program hand-in-hand with DeKalb County’s efforts in this regard.

roger@OrlandoFirm.com | <https://orlandofortucker.com/> | 404-373-1800
2185 Ivey Creek Way, Stone Mountain, GA 30087

Anne Lerner for Mayor:
Steady, Thoughtful Leadership for Tucker

Smoke Rise holds a special place in Tucker’s story. You reflect the best of what makes Tucker so special: people who care deeply about their neighbors, their community and the future of our city. I’ve had the honor of working alongside so many of you well before we became a city, volunteering with organizations that helped lay the foundation for Tucker’s success.



Your city council members, Virginia Rece and Roger Orlando, serve you very well. During my time on council, I worked closely with them, collaborating on issues that matter to all of Tucker. We learned from one another, listened and found common ground - because that’s how real progress happens.

For 28 years, Tucker has been my home and my priority. Whether as a community volunteer, leader in Tucker’s cityhood movement, city council member, mayor pro tem or development authority appointee, I’ve always put our people, our neighborhoods and our shared future first.

I am the only candidate for mayor with deep experience, broad trusted relationships and a proven track record of delivering results to keep Tucker moving forward. No matter my title or role, I’ve built a record of bringing people together with common-sense solutions.

- Looking ahead, we have opportunities to:
- Strengthen Public Safety – It’s the foundation for everything else we hope to achieve.
 - Expand Housing Options – Support smart growth and affordability while keeping neighborhood character.
 - Grow Our Local Economy – Encourage small businesses, vibrant commercial corridors and strong industry.
 - Invest in Parks & Rec – Invest in green spaces, places and programs that bring people together.

I love Tucker, and I’d be honored to earn your vote for Mayor on November 4. Visit www.annelerner.com to learn more about my experience and accomplishments plus Tucker’s opportunities. Let’s continue moving Tucker forward, together.

anne@annelerner.com | 770-492-0986
3582 Castleridge Drive, Tucker, GA 30084

Beverly Williams for Mayor of Tucker
Direct. Focused. For All of Tucker.



Tuckers deserve a mayor who puts people before politics. I’m Beverly Williams, and I’m running to be your next mayor, because I believe in Community First Leadership where residents and local businesses have a seat at the table and a voice in every decision.

We must protect what makes Tucker special. That means supporting single-family neighborhoods, limiting overdevelopment, and demanding smart, balanced growth that reflects our community’s values not outside interests.

Transparency and accountability matter. As mayor, I’ll host regular town halls and business roundtables, so you’re heard and involved not left in the dark.

Our future depends on our youth. I will invest in partnerships that strengthen our schools, sports, Scouts, and youth programs, ensuring every child in Tucker has the tools to succeed.

Tucker’s heart is its people. I’ll work to preserve our small businesses, community traditions, and the spirit that’s built this city over the past 30 years.

It’s time to update our comprehensive plan with your input to reflect the real needs of Tucker families, not just developers or special interests.

This campaign is about serving all of Tucker, not just part of it. With your support, we can protect our neighborhoods, honor our history, and shape a stronger future together. Tucker deserves a mayor who values: communication, unity and action.

I’m Beverly Williams, and I’m ready to lead Tucker forward with you.

1896 Cameo Court, Tucker, GA 30084 | 404-626-7944



Noelle Monferdini

I am running for Mayor of Tucker, because I believe our city deserves leadership that listens, serves, and delivers results. For eight years, I had the honor of serving on Tucker’s City Council, where I worked side by side with residents to strengthen our community. I was proud to be part of the first Council after incorporation, helping to

establish the systems and services that gave Tucker a strong foundation.

Throughout my time in office, I made it a priority to meet people where they are, in their homes, neighborhoods, and community forums, to make sure their voices shaped the decisions we made.

Professionally, I bring a unique skillset as a Senior Project Manager, where I am trusted to oversee more than \$80 million in projects each year. I am a PMP, ScrumMaster, and a Six Sigma Black Belt. These credentials and experiences have taught me how to build complex teams, solve complex problems, and deliver measurable results. I will bring that same discipline, accountability, and servant leadership to the office of mayor.

My vision for Tucker’s future is rooted in three priorities. First, transparency and ethics. Residents should not only know what is happening, they should be completely included in shaping how decisions are made and how their tax dollars are spent. Second, public safety. I support exploring a Tucker police department, if it improves response times and accountability because every second counts in an emergency. Third, smart growth and recreation. Development should protect neighborhood character while adding amenities, and we must expand recreation programs and facilities that serve residents of all ages in ways that are thoughtful and not disruptive to our neighborhoods.

Tucker’s greatest strength is its people. Together, we have built a strong foundation. Now it is time to shape our future with openness, respect, and a commitment to serving every voice in our community.

noellemonferdini.com | 770-837-5500
<https://noellemonferdini.com/meet-noelle>
2129 Shady Lane, Tucker, GA 30084

Councilwoman
Cara Schroeder: Proven
Results, Future Focused



Councilwoman Cara Schroeder represents District 2, Post 1 on the Tucker City Council, but her work extends well beyond her district to benefit residents across the entire city. Currently serving as Mayor Pro Tem, Schroeder has focused her first term on responsible growth, safer neighborhoods, and preserving Tucker’s community values.

She co-led the Public Works Referendum that established Tucker’s own Public Works Department, giving the city greater control over road repairs, stormwater management, and safety improvements. Schroeder also chaired the committees that updated the city’s Comprehensive Master Plan and Parks and Recreation Plan, ensuring Tucker’s future development is thoughtful and sustainable. Working with residents and business owners, she played a leading role in rezoning parts of Lawrenceville Highway to support reinvestment and strengthen one of Tucker’s busiest corridors.

Public safety and greenspace preservation have also been central to her service. Schroeder has championed new sidewalks, traffic-calming measures, and Safe Routes to School projects, improving safety for both drivers and pedestrians. A founding member of Friends of Tucker Parks, she has long been recognized for her commitment to protecting parks and expanding recreation opportunities for families throughout the city.

Looking ahead, Schroeder plans to continue focusing on safer neighborhoods, stronger infrastructure, and smart economic growth. With an updated transportation plan underway, she sees an opportunity to address major mobility and safety needs across Tucker. Revitalization of the Northlake area remains a high priority for redevelopment and beautification. And with a new mayor set to take office, Schroeder is committed to ensuring good governance and well-informed decision-making that benefits all residents.

She considers it an honor to serve the people of Tucker and looks forward to building on this progress in the years ahead.

cschroeder@tuckerga.gov | <https://carafortuckerga.com/> | 770-364-0733
4009 Allenwood Way, Tucker, GA 30084



Sam Ulrich
for Tucker Dist. 3 – Post 1

Having lived in Metro Atlanta my entire life, my family chose to make Tucker our home eight years ago. We wanted to be part of a growing community and to be close to family. We’ve since put down roots, made close friends, and are raising our daughter here. My interest in this community isn’t new; I’ve volunteered in our parks and participated in first the University of Government Affairs (now Tucker 101). I want to help foster an ever-improving city for my daughter, and for future generations.

With more than 10 years of experience in corporate finance, I bring a meticulous and collaborative approach to managing budgets and reconciling accounts. I’m a natural compromiser who will work to find common ground and champion a collaborative culture in our city government. My priority is to create an environment where all voices are heard, and decisions are made thoughtfully with ample community input. I believe a vibrant city is an inclusive one and will work with advocacy groups and other municipalities to ensure resources are accessible to all residents.

I want to invest in Tucker’s future by focusing on a vibrant downtown, accessible parks, and diverse transportation options. My vision is to complete the Tucker Path project, expand our Parks and Rec programs, continue to revitalize Main Street and Northlake, and support smart residential projects. A budget is more than just numbers; it’s a statement of our priorities. With my experience, I’ll ensure every taxpayer dollar provides a strong return on investment for our community, in a way that is more than just financial.

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Tucker, GA 30084
770-883-9065

HEALTH NOTES:

Domestic Abuse and Violence

By Cheri Schneider, M.D., staff writer

The *Smoke Signal* received a deeply personal article from a Smoke Rise resident detailing her survival from an abusive life with a narcissist. While we chose not to publish the article due to its sensitive nature, it led me to veer a little from my usual topics to cover the topic of Domestic Abuse and Violence (DA/V). Domestic Violence and Domestic Abuse are clinical and legal terms. The meanings may vary somewhat from state to state - depending on the laws of the state.

While each abuse situation may be unique, all involve an attempt to gain power and control. These red flags may help you identify if your intimate or family relationships are abusive:

1. Does your friend/partner/family member control you, your friendships and where you go or who you call or text?
2. Do they get jealous when you have friends or accuse you of cheating?
3. Do they demean, degrade or embarrass you in front of others?
4. Do they isolate you, keep you from going out or take away the car keys?
5. Do they threaten to harm you, your pets or children?
6. Do they lose their temper and make you feel afraid?
7. Do they require you to check in all the time or check your phone or internet usage?
8. Do they make you afraid to say no to their demands?
9. Do they control all the finances so that you have to ask for money - even for little things, or keep you from having a job?

Between 2020 and 2025, the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) reported domestic violence fatalities increased 4%. The GCFV fact sheet for 2024 showed 159 fatalities in Ga and 84 murder-suicide fatalities. More than one third of reported DA/V incidents resulted in arrest and two-thirds of these aggressors were male. Four out of five of these incidents were committed with a firearm. Seventy percent of victims in 2024 were women. One third of family violence incidents happened in the presence of a child. Please re-read these statistics!

Domestic Abuse/ Violence (DA/V) has been termed the “equal opportunity epidemic,” because it is found in men, women, teens, seniors, children, across all races, socioeconomic status and neighborhoods.

Domestic Violence/Abuse is often divided into six categories: verbal, emotional, financial, technical, sexual and physical abuse. Many people will not recognize the cycle of abuse until it becomes violent or is too late.

Verbal abuse: threatening or demeaning speech, name calling, labeling and intimidation. Humiliation, putdowns, and embarrassment in public.

Emotional abuse may include: Coercion, mind games and gas-lighting. Control: “I am the head of the house, you are my servant.” “You are crazy, imagining things.” Using children to divide you or relay messages. Threatening to take children away. Everything may be “your fault” while they deny responsibility and blame you for problems of the world.

Financial abuse: isolation. Preventing you from getting or keeping a job. Making you ask for money or taking money that you earned or is yours.

Technical abuse: Stalking on the internet, phone or following with location trackers. Repetitively checking who you call or text and limiting this. Calling, texting or leaving messages continuously.

Sexual abuse: Demonstrating unwanted sexual touching, comments or harassment. Committing non-consensual sexual acts, rape or coercion to do these acts, or trafficking to others.

Physical abuse: destroying your personal property, smashing things, hurting pets or children. Grabbing, pushing or hitting you. Threatening you with weapons. Intimidating looks, actions or gestures.

The Cycle of Abuse is common in DA/V: First, TENSION begins and builds -- usually around daily life stresses and pressures. This leads to ABUSE or an incident that includes threats, anger, intimidation or violence. Then the HONEYMOON phase occurs and the abuser is repentant, begging forgiveness or showering the victim with gifts and “love” to demonstrate their remorse. They often promise to “never do it again.” Finally, the CALM phase occurs and may even be prolonged. Until, as tension and usual life stresses occur -- the cycle repeats itself. In many cases, the cycle ratchets up in intensity and the abuse phase may get worse. This is very important to recognize as violence may accompany it.

If you recognize any of these red flag symptoms in your relationships, you are not helpless. Act now! Contact one of these two hotlines:

Georgia 1-800-33-HAVEN (+1 800-334-2836)
V/TTY (se habla español)

National 1-800-799-SAFE (+1 800-799-7233)

Or go to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence:
gcfv@gcfv.ga.gov. It may save your life!

techtalk

By Susan & Joel Gilbert, P.E.

How Did AI Get So Smart?

It seems like everyone is now talking about Artificial Intelligence (AI). Many are trying it out; Yet few understand how it works. Most people believe that reasoning is somehow pre-programmed, providing it with specific instructions on what to say and do in a given situation. While that might make intuitive sense, it is not how AI works today. Instead of believing the computer is “thinking,” consider the fact that the computer is spitting back whatever it was taught was the answer to the question you asked.

Perhaps the easiest way to see how this works is to start at the beginning, when AI was first introduced. One of the first applications was OCR: optical character recognition. The idea was to take a printed sheet of paper and produce a text file of the characters by scanning it.

This is a relatively well-defined training experience: there are only a limited number of characters in our language and context can give the computer hints as to whether it is the letter “I” or the number “1.” These systems are now reliable and in everyday use. Speech recognition was next, with enormous business implications for the legal and medical professions. While speech recognition today is pretty good and used in many phone and computer systems, it too depends upon a “training set” to learn. If the software was trained on British voices, it would have trouble understanding Americans. An easy-to-perform example of the accent issue is asking Alexa something, then trying the same question with a strong southern accent.

This is why modern speech recognition software may first ask you to repeat some phrases to sense your accent and style of speaking. That is how it learns “truth” and is therefore able to be more reliable.

Facial recognition was next, and China uses it to keep track of its citizens. In this country, MIT researchers discovered that it did not work reliably on people of color. Once again, the problem was that the training set included a disproportionate number of whites.

However, AI has its challenges when a new situation does not “map” to some part of the training set or when those designing the training algorithms never anticipated the use case. In these cases, AI produces general nonsense and probably can’t be trusted. My wife, Susan, who also writes for the paper, was working on an article about what local pools readers might consider joining for the summer. She asked ChatGPT for help with their names and quickly got a list of private pools at local hotels including Evergreen. Not exactly what she was looking for.

Modern prognosticators seem obsessed with the prediction that AI will develop a sense of itself and result in some level of revenge against its creators. Movies have long suggested this theme. Those of you who care about how AI learns should watch the movie *Ex Machina*, where the AI is presented as a beautiful lady robot named Ava. A young programmer is testing her to see if she can pass for being human, also known as the Turing Test. However, she learns that failing the test might have dire consequences, including her being taken out of existence.

So, back to the practical perspectives for us today. Using online AI tools to answer questions like where to eat or buy things is likely to result in useful information. If, however, you ask whether something is true, you are going to get the consensus from its training set. That may be good enough, but if you are a critical thinker, you want to hear both sides of an argument. Therefore, ask the AI system for multiple points of view.

A good system will then provide different perspectives for you to consider. However, keep in mind that, unlike peer-reviewed scientific publications, much of what is written on the internet is biased in terms of what information is selected for presentation, and is not reviewed by experts for accuracy.

As Abraham Lincoln reportedly said, “Don’t believe everything you read on the internet.”

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

DeKalb County Fire Rescue: True Heroes

When most of us think of firefighters, we think of flashing lights, rushing trucks, and the urgent call of sirens. What we don't often think about is that these men and women step into our lives during some of our hardest moments. As the saying goes, you often meet a firefighter on your worst day - but we are profoundly grateful they show up, take risks, and carry out their duty with courage and skill.

This summer, our family saw firsthand the impact of DeKalb County Fire Rescue when they helped save our youngest son. It was a moment of fear for us, but one that ended with gratitude, thanks to their professionalism and quick action. For us, these firefighters are not just responders - they are true heroes.

The department's commitment extends far beyond individual calls. DeKalb County Fire Rescue is a modern, all-hazards organization that provides fire suppression, emergency medical services, and hazard response throughout the county. With 26 fire stations strategically located throughout DeKalb and recognized by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) as being an ISO Class 2 fire department, DeKalb's Fire Rescue is among the top three percent of departments in the nation. Residents can take comfort knowing they are protected by one of the country's best. The department also serves the incorporated cities of Avondale Estates, Brookhaven, Chamblee, Clarkston, Doraville, Dunwoody, Lithonia, Pine Lake, Stone Mountain, Stonecrest, and Tucker, and provides fire safety education, investigations, and prevention programs to help keep our communities safe.

Yet even the bravest face great risks. Just last month, DeKalb County mourned the loss of Master Firefighter Preston Fant, who died in the line of duty September 8, while battling a structure fire. On September 18, more than two thousand family members, friends, fellow firefighters, and community members gathered at Truist Park to honor his life and service. Firefighters from across metro Atlanta, the state, and even the nation stood in solidarity, reflecting the deep respect held for Fant's more than 21 years of dedicated service with DeKalb Fire Rescue.

Fire Rescue Chief Darnell Fullum described Fant as a man of "courage, commitment, and skill" - a firefighter who answered the call each day with unwavering devotion. Chief Fullum also remembered Fant as an exceptional firefighter and family man whose kindness and humility touched everyone who knew him. Firefighter Fant is the first DeKalb County firefighter to die in the line of duty while battling a fire. He leaves behind his beloved wife and five children.

The mission of DeKalb County Fire Rescue is clear: to protect lives and property with the highest level of service, professionalism, and compassion. The department's vision speaks to the future - "...positively impacting our community at every interaction now and for future generations."

As neighbors, friends, and family, we give not only our thanks but also our respect, our support, and our remembrance of the sacrifices made in service to our community.



Master Firefighter Preston Fant
(1/18/1972 – 09/08/2025)
Photo Courtesy DeKalb County Government



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

Looking out the bedroom window, I gazed at the changing of the seasons in my sprawling backyard. The deep yellow blooms of the black-eyed Susans were only a distant memory, their spiky seed heads now bent but graciously offering the hungry birds a tasty pre-winter meal. The cool-weather grass was at its greenest, standing in stark contrast to the scarlets, golds, and bronzes of the changing leaves. A few pink impatiens were still bravely blooming, waiting for the end of the month's first frost.



As I was admiring their cheerful faces, something quickly took flight from within the leaves. Silhouetted against the bright fall sky, a dazzling yellow butterfly began performing a soft aerial dance, taking advantage of the last warm days of fall. I knew from its large size and buttery color that it was an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, the official state butterfly of Georgia.

These butterflies are among the largest in North America, with wingspans stretching up to six inches. Males are a brilliant yellow with bold black tiger stripes, while females can be either yellow or a striking deep blue-black. Eastern Tiger Swallowtails are strong fliers, often seen gliding gracefully high in the treetops or swooping low to sip nectar from bright flowers. The caterpillars are just as fascinating, starting off looking like little bird droppings for camouflage, then transforming into a bright green color with large false eye spots to scare away predators.

As I watched, the butterfly drifted from flower to flower, sipping delicately as though it were gathering every last drop of sunshine before the cold set in. When it finally soared high above the trees, it left behind a quiet reminder that beauty doesn't need to last forever to be unforgettable.



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Submitted by: Maureen Fraser, Publicity Chair and Newsletter Co-Editor

This theme resonated with the featured speaker, Susanne Swing Thompson, a local nature photographer and owner of Wren Photography. Her presentation, “A Closer Look: Simple Practices for Observing Nature,” encouraged members to find beauty in their everyday surroundings. Two of her photographs have received honorable mention in the National Wildlife Federation’s “Garden for Life” competition.

Susanne Swing Thompson

By Alex Helton, Garden Club Member

Victoria feeds the Erdman's horses

By Quill Duncan, Morning Glories Recording Secretary

(L to R) Bonnie Pennington and Joyce Ray

The club has two new projects for the year: Mountain Park UMC Preschool Garden to work with children ages 3-4 years old and the American Legion Post #207 for container gardening at the post site in Tucker. We will feature these projects in upcoming articles. If you want more information on our club or wish to attend our October 14 meeting at Park Springs, please contact President Amie Walsh at (404) 729-4871.

The logo features a large, stylized monogram of the letter 'B'. To the left of the monogram, the word 'ESTD' is written in a serif font. To the right, the year '1962' is written in the same font.

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Food & Home Fixin’s

By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

Whether you are tail gaiting at a special game or preparing to invite friends in to watch your favorite team (Go Dawgs!), choosing a menu will take some time and thought. How about cooking up some delicious pork ribs? This method will let your oven do all the work, so you don’t miss a play.



A good rule of thumb for purchasing ribs is 1/3 rack of ribs for women or light eaters and ½ rack for men. If you are having a party of six, (three couples), you should cook about four racks, assuming that you have plenty of side dishes. Also, a good plan for the budget is to offer another meat, such as chicken tenders, to help stretch the meat.

Prepare the meat by cutting or peeling the silver skin from the inside cavity. Leaving it on could prevent the moisture from permeating the meat as it cooks. Dry the meat well with paper towels. Rub each side generously with Liquid Smoke – about 1 to 1 ½ Tablespoons per slab. Place it on a large piece of aluminum foil that is big enough to wrap around the meat. Line the foil with parchment paper which will also help hold in the moisture. Wrap each slab separately. Using your favorite dry rub, generously rub each side. The liquid smoke will help the dry rub adhere to the meat. Fold the foil around the ribs and place slabs on a baking sheet. Put them in a 250° oven - remember “low and slow” for pork. Cook for approximately two and ½ hours. Remove from oven, pour off liquid, and, using sauce brush, lightly “paint” your favorite bar-be-cue sauce over the uncut slab. Return to oven for about 10-15 minutes, or you can move to a hot charcoal grill to get a good sear on the outside. Divide ribs and paint with more sauce or serve with sauce as desired.

We don’t prefer a thick sweet sauce, so we use Williams Bros Original Sauce.

This Cheesy grits/egg souffle was obtained from a cookbook given to me by a former church hostess and it was sized for 100 servings! I pared it down for reasonable family proportions and tried it out last night. It is a keeper, so I wanted to share it with you. It is perfect for brunch or even as a side dish instead of rice or potatoes. I baked it in a mid-size Dutch oven or you can make it in an 8x10 casserole dish. Leftovers were just as good for breakfast this morning!

Cheesy Egg and Grits Souffle

- 2 cups of water
- 2 cups whole or 2% milk
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup regular grits, (not quick grits)
- 2-4 T. butter
- 2 cups grated cheddar cheese
- 1/8 t. cayenne pepper
- 1/8 t. black pepper
- 2 T chives (optional)
- 3 large eggs, separated
- 1 cup sour cream

Separate eggs and set aside. Bring water and milk to boil in medium saucepan, gradually whisk in grits. Add salt. Cook over medium heat and whisk until creamy and thick. This takes about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat and add butter and cheese and other spices. Stir until cheese melts. Beat egg yolks and add sour cream. Gradually add small amounts of grits mixture to eggs and mix in until the egg mixture is luke-warm, then add all grits to egg mixture. This will temper the eggs, so they won’t cook in the hot mixture and get lumpy.

Whip egg whites until stiff peaks form then fold them into the grit’s mixture. Pour into well buttered baking dish. Sprinkle with more cheddar cheese and bake in 350° for approximated 30-45 minutes – depending on how deep your dish is. It is ready when top is brown and the casserole is “set.” Allow it to cool for about five minutes before serving.

CONGRATULATIONS to Bruce and Tammy Lucia, who were named “Garden of the Month” winners by the Mountain Mums Garden Club. Many of the plants in their Smoke Rise community yard were gifts from loved ones, making their garden truly special. Pictured here are Bruce and Tammy Lucia with their dogs Siena, Roma, and grand-dog Audi.



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