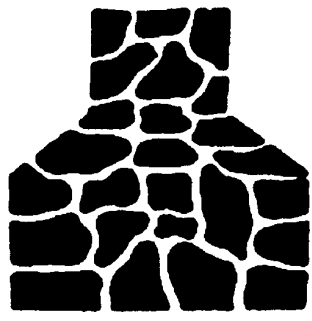


SMOKE SIGNAL



VOLUME 57, ISSUE 10

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

January, 2025

www.smokesignalnews.com



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Welcoming 2025

By Amber Seale

By the time you read this, 2024 will have faded in the rearview mirror, and you, dear reader, will be standing at the threshold of 2025. For many, 2024 was a difficult year. Personally, it was my hardest, yet here I am, reflecting on the past while looking ahead to what 2025 may hold for me and for us, collectively.

In 2024, military conflicts continued to rage across the globe. The climate crisis, along with extreme weather events, impacted people both here at home and across the world. As residents of planet Earth, you or someone you love has likely felt the effects of climate change firsthand.

We also witnessed history being made with the first Black and Asian American woman becoming the Democratic presidential nominee. U.S. politics took center stage with the presidential election and the impending inauguration of the 47th President of the United States. Other countries experienced their own political changes and challenges as well.

For many of us, the year was marked by extraordinary moments. Some had the chance to witness the solar eclipse in April, while others were fortunate enough to attend The Eras Tour — both events that felt once in a lifetime. The Paris Olympics lit up the summer, featuring breakdancing's debut (and farewell) as an Olympic sport. And for astrology lovers, Pluto transitioned into Aquarius after a 15-year journey through Capricorn — a significant shift towards progress and evolution for the greater good of humanity.

Like me, you likely have your own personal 2024 timeline—a series of events and moments that shaped your year. There's value in pausing to reflect on the past: to learn from our experiences so we can move forward with intention. Reflection allows us to grow, evolve, and approach the future with renewed perspective.

What does your 2024 rearview mirror show? And as you stand at the beginning of 2025, what do you hope to discover? No matter what your intentions or resolutions may be, I hope we all strive to be kinder in the year ahead. I hope we learn to listen—truly listen—rather than simply waiting for our turn to respond. I hope we remember to help one another, to extend a hand when someone is down. The gestures need not be grand to make a difference; a smile, a nod, or a wave can carry more kindness than words alone.

As you reflect on 2024 and look forward to 2025, ask yourself: How do you want the new year to feel? I'll go first. I want to feel joyful. I will sprinkle kindness on myself and share it with others. I want to invite peace, prosperity, and health into my life and the lives of those around me.

Now it's your turn, neighbor. Plant your intentions for 2025 and watch them bloom over the next twelve months. Happy New Year, y'all! May love, joy, and wonder follow us all as we step into the year ahead.

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THANK YOU, Dr. Pat Baumann, MD, COLOR PATRON for December 2024
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The Mountain Mums Garden Club presented their "Garden of the Month" award to Victor and Theo Economy for their annual holiday wonderland!



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PLEASE NOTE THE SMOKE SIGNAL'S NEW FLYER POLICY ON PAGE 2

JANUARY 20

MLK DAY

Join us in honoring
 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 with a Day of Service
 at Johns Homestead

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

MAKE IT A DAY ON, NOT A DAY OFF



Smoke Signal
 P.O. Box 1038, Tucker, GA 30085
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Smoke Signal Deadlines

JANUARY 13
 Please e-mail articles to:
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Articles and photos should be sent in .doc or .docx format. Articles sent in .pdf format cannot be edited. Photos and graphics should be submitted in .jpg or .pdf format.

Deadline for classified ads is JANUARY 10

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About Wisdom
 She was formed before humans,
 Designed to hear us pray,
 Wisdom stepped out on earth,
 Before there was night and day.

As she watched God's creation,
 Wisdom rejoiced with glee.
 And resounding
 shouts of gladness,
 As God separated sky from sea.

Wisdom never grows weary,
 Nor seems to be out of touch.
 Her embrace is undoubtedly,
 What this world needs so much,

Now, Wisdom calls!
 Hello, is anyone there?
 Often, she is ignored,
 Do you have a minute to spare?

She asks, she knocks,
 She listens, she waits.
 Wisdom is patient,
 She'll never say it's too late.

To answer her invitation,
 To learn a more excellent way.
 To live, to love, to serve, to be,
 To hear what she has to say.

Like the host of a party,
 Wisdom welcomes friends.
 Her advice is like no other's,
 Here from beginning
 there beyond end.

*Written by Jeanine Fulton,
 Pastor, Eastminster
 Presbyterian Church
 Inspired by Proverbs 8,9*

ATTENTION GRADUATES, NEWLYWEDS, AND HONOREES
 Please send in your picture and a brief article for publication in the *Smoke Signal*.
 Email submissions to staff@smokesignalnews.com

Smoke Rise Baptist Church
 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, 678-481-4052
 Phone: 770-469-4881
 Website: Eastminster.us

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

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

SUNDAY 10:00 a.m. Sunday School-Adults & Children
 11:00 a.m. Worship
 12:00 p.m. Fellowship Time

Incarnate Word Lutheran Church
 4950 Hugh Howell Road
 pastor@incword.org
 Phone: 404-936-0628
 Website: Incword.org/

SUNDAY 8:45 a.m. Worship

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

Digital copies of the *Smoke Signal* Digital copies can be requested at Staff@smokesignalnews.com.

You can also visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SmokeSignalNews to view postings of newsletter pictures and stories throughout the month.

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Tucker Recreation Center has been a staple in the Tucker community for more than three decades. Originally built as an elementary school, this building is now home to a variety of sports, classes, community events and other activities that cultivate a spirit of togetherness for people of all ages living in and around Tucker. The Rec Center is home to Tucker Parks & Rec Summer Camp program. It is also available to rent for private parties or special events.

BE ACTIVE IN THE NEW YEAR:

- Richard Simmons) Silver Foxes -- Tuesdays
- Tuckercise -- Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
- Capoeria Karkara -- Mondays and Thursdays
- Cardio amd Core -- Tuesdays, Thursdays/Saturdays
- Chair Yoga -- Tuesdays and Thursdays
- Evolve fitness -- Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays
- Jacki Sorensen's Aerobics -- Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays
- Pop Pilates -- Mondays and Wednesdays
- Tai Chi -- Mondays
- Tucker Ballroom Class -- Wednesdays
- Zumba -- Saturdays

CHECK OUT THESE SPORTS:

- Pickle Ball open play -- many times and categories
- Basketball open play -- many times
- Pickle Ball events and leagues -- Starting new leagues for 2025
- Under 12 baseball, Lacrosse, and winter basketball

FIND A NEW HOBBY:

- Atlanta Woodcarvers -- Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays
- Women's West African Drumming -- Wednesdays
- Ceramics and pottery -- both wheel and hand building classes. Also- open studio.
- Painting: watercolor/oil classes

FIND A NEW GAMING PARTNER:

- Mah Jong -- Thursdays
- Bridge -- various

The Rec Center staff is always happy to help and can be reached by phone at (470) 481-0205 or by email at parks@tuckerga.gov



Winter Concert Series

Tucker Recreation Center
4898 Lavista Road, Tucker, GA 30084

Enjoy the season with an evening of live music at the Tucker Recreation Center! Bring a picnic style dinner and enjoy great tunes with family and friends. Adult beverages will be available for purchase. Don't miss this fun and festive community event!

Date: Friday, January 10
Time: 6:00–9:00 p.m.
(Live music by BFG: 7:00–8:30 p.m.)

Date: Friday, January 24
Time: 6:00-9:00 p.m.
(Live music by Stephen Lee: 7:00–8:30 p.m.)

City of Tucker JANUARY TUCKER CITY HALL EVENTS

- January 1 - Happy New Year, Tucker!
City Buildings Closed in Observance of New Years
- January 6 – 6:30 p.m.
Downtown Development Authority
- January 7 – 7 p.m.
Zoning Board of Appeals
- January 10 – 7 p.m. - Pre-Registration Required
Winter Concert at Tucker Recreation Center - - BFG Band
- January 13 – 7 p.m.
City Council Meeting
- January 20
City Buildings Closed in Observance of
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 20, 9 a.m. - Noon
MLK Day of Service at Johns Homestead Park
- January 20 – 9 a.m.
Teen Day of Service & Fun at Tucker Rec. Center
- January 24 - 7 p.m. - Pre-Registration Required
Winter Concert at Tucker Recreation Center - Stephen Lee
- January 27 – 7 p.m.
City Council Meeting

Unless otherwise notes, all meetings are held at 7 p.m. at City Hall, 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Tucker GA.



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STONE MOUNTAIN PARK
Lunar New Year Festival
JAN 25-26 | FEB 1-2 | FEB 8-9

Stone Mountain Park is proud to host the third annual Lunar New Year Festival. The 2025 festival will celebrate the Year of the Snake.

This Asian-inspired festival pays tribute to the culture and New Year traditions of Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other countries that follow the lunar calendar. It features a special Lunar New Year Drone and Light Show on the largest screen in the world, a lighted parade, cultural craft activities, live entertainment, and other cultural elements.

Lunar New Year Festival Hours: 4 PM – 9 PM
Summit Skyride Hours: 10 AM – 6 PM

A Season of Neighboring

What does it truly mean to love your neighbor? How can we live out Jesus' command to love others in our daily lives? At Eastminster Presbyterian Church, we warmly welcome everyone—whether you're a seasoned churchgoer, new to faith, or just curious. You don't need to be a believer or meet any specific criteria to join us for worship or our community events. Our goal is to make everyone feel loved and valued, just as God calls us to do.

In 2025 we're excited to offer new opportunities for our upcoming sermon series, The Art of Neighboring, running from January 12 to February 23, where we'll explore practical ways to love and serve those around us. Join us for Growing in Faith with Sunday programs designed for children, youth, and families.

Join us for these special events:

- Heritage Sunday is on February 9, celebrating our community's diverse cultures with music, food, and heritage displays.
- Friends & Neighbors Day is on Sunday, February 23, a morning filled with food, faith, and fellowship.
- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5, with dinner at 5:15 PM and followed by a service with the imposition of ashes at 6 PM.

Come discover who we are at Eastminster. Together, let's build a stronger, more compassionate community.

Appreciation Dinner for "Tour" Volunteers



ART Station in Stone Mountain held a thank you dinner for volunteers who helped with The Tour of Southern Ghosts. Members of the GFWC Stone Mountain Woman's Club worked before the event and during the event to make the Tour a successful fundraiser for the Art Center. Several Smoke Rise neighbors were volunteers--Jackie Cornett, Marty Bryan, Kathy Gallo, and Barbara Luton. Nelda Lunsford, another neighbor, was a leader for the volunteers and for the gift shop at the Tour.



FODAC Breakfast with Santa: A Morning of Joy and Giving Back

By Amy Lamitina, SRCC Director Member Engagement and Events

The holiday spirit was in full swing on Saturday, December 7th, as the Friends of Disabled Adults & Children (FODAC) hosted their annual Breakfast with Santa at Rehobeth Baptist Church on Lawrenceville Highway. This special event, a long-standing tradition for the organization, brought the community together to support a cause while enjoying festive fun for the whole family.

For many families, this event has become a beloved holiday tradition, with some attending every year to celebrate the season and give back. The morning featured a delightful breakfast provided by Chick fil-A, accompanied by cheerful musical entertainment, creating a magical atmosphere for all who attended. Kids had the exciting opportunity to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus, pose for photos, and receive a special toy to take home. Their bright smiles lit up the room, capturing the true essence of the season.

Special guests included Glenn Burns, retired chief meteorologist from WSB, and Mayor of Tucker, Frank Aumann, who added a touch of local pride to the festivities. Familiar faces from the Smoke Rise Country Club staff and member community also joined in, lending their time and holiday spirit as Santa's helpers—elves with a Smoke Rise flair!

All proceeds from this memorable morning benefitted FODAC's Pediatric Home Medical Equipment Program, which provides mobility aids and other medical equipment to over 300 children each year. The program's impact on local families is immeasurable, and the Breakfast with Santa event plays a significant role in supporting this vital mission.

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this event a success. Your support and generosity bring joy and mobility to children in need, ensuring the season's spirit of giving truly shines. We look forward to seeing you again next year for more holiday cheer!

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SRBC Class “Discovers” Christmas Fellowship

Smoke Rise residents Colin Harris and Tanya Briggs joined 40 classmates for the Smoke Rise Baptist Church’s Discovery Class Christmas party in December at Joel and Susan Gilbert’s Mountain Shadow home. The Discovery Class has the distinction of being one of the Church’s largest and most active classes. To name a few, their projects range from helping families in Appalachia, building ramps for wheelchair access to local homes, and fundraising for Developmental Disabilities Ministry.



Smoke Rise residents Colin Harris and Tanya Briggs



Ben and Kathleen Leathers who live on McCurdy enjoyed the gathering with their parents, Fran and Jon Cone.

SRBC Honored by Developmental Disabilities Ministry (DDM)...Where Hope Lives
By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Smoke Rise Baptist Church hosted 175 DDM staff and residents at their Annual Christmas Dinner held every year on the first Friday in December. DDM is a nonprofit charitable organization serving adults with developmental disabilities and their families. DDM owns/operates 18 group homes in the State of Georgia, serving approximately 70 residents.

Founded more than 40 years ago by parents who asked, “Who will care for my disabled child when I am no longer able?” DDM’s tagline summarizes their mission: Where Hope Lives.

DDM has over 100 employees who operate these homes in residential communities where they blend in and create loving family settings as opposed to anything institutional. Each house is home to 3 or 4 residents and a couple of caregivers who make sure residents get to work if they have jobs, get dressed appropriately, help them prepare their meals, provide entertainment and outings, and make sure they have a loving, nurturing, family environment.

This year, along with our Church, Joel and I were honored for work done raising money for renovating kitchens and bathrooms at 10 of our older homes. Our campaign continues fundraising until we have made the much-needed retrofits of the remaining houses.



Pictured here are Joel and Susan Gilbert who helped with the 2024 HomeRevive 10 Project; SRBC Senior Pastor, Chris George; Associate Pastor Bart McNeil; Mission Committee Leader (Kitchen Staff Volunteer), Bill Blanton.

Scouting News

By Jeremy Pullen

Boy Scout Troop 876 is Smoke Rise’s scout troop. Founded in 1973 out of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, this January the troop celebrates 52 years of developing Smoke Rise youth into strong community leaders. 2024 was no exception, with four scouts achieving the highest rank in scouting. Jackson Lee, Robert Neumann, Steven Smith, and Emerson Adcock all completed meaningful Eagle projects for the community with the help of volunteers from the troop, parents, friends, and family.



The troop also embarked on some great outdoor adventures, starting with a canoe trip to Okefenokee Swamp and followed by a repeat win at the Bert Adams Camporee, Woodruff Summer Camp, tubing on Lake Mitchell, backpacking at Cloudland Canyon and Blood Mountain, and an all night lock-in at a rock climbing gym. Through these adventures the boys learned self discipline, planning, physical fitness, outdoor survival skills, and most importantly, leadership and teamwork skills.

The troop is entering a new season as the crew of senior scouts graduates, and we have an influx of new scouts starting their journey through scouting, but what hasn’t



changed is Troop 876’s commitment to a strong outdoor program where youth learn independence, leadership, and teamwork. We’re proud to be Smoke Rise’s troop, and we’re deeply involved in the community through events such as Walk to Remember, Tucker Day, Taste of Tucker, the *Smoke Signal*, and numerous community service projects throughout the year. We even organize a few local events like hikes up Stone Mountain. Come on an adventure with us! You won’t regret it!



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We are proud to announce that the Friends of Tucker Parks has been awarded the State Volunteer Award from the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association.

The mission of Friends of Tucker Parks is to preserve, protect, and improve all of the parks located within the city of Tucker, GA. We assist with planning, coordinate volunteers, generate funding, and aid in the formation of "Friends" groups for each park.

FOTP, Inc is a registered 501c3 nonprofit organization which is lead by a team of volunteers passionate about making Tucker parks and greenspaces great. FOTP was founded in 2010 through a collaboration of Tucker Civic Association, Tucker Historical Society, Tucker Business Association, Smoke Rise Community Association, Tucker Arts Guild and Mainstreet Tucker Alliance.

The Friends of Tucker Parks (FOTP) have been instrumental in the development and sustainability of our city parks. In 2018 the City of Tucker acquired 12 parks in Dekalb County that fell within the City limits. Along with the acquisition came the relationship with the Friends of Tucker Parks. While under the county management they as a group had to fund and do most of the upkeep of the parks. After the City formed the Parks and Recreation Department in 2018 the FOTP worked closely with the department and Barg to create the first master plan for the parks system. This has been the road map ever since. The relationship with the FOTP has grown into a flourishing collaboration between the department and the volunteer network. They hold monthly meeting to discuss the big picture along with bimonthly park clean ups, plantings, educational opportunities and volunteer in park planned events. The contributions are numerous and encompass many years of sweat, tears and possibly a bit of blood at times. They truly are the ambassadors to our now 14 parks. As community members they walk the trails, listen to their neighbors and are the voices to the flora and fauna.

The Friends of Tucker Parks is worthy of this award for many reasons but the biggest is their dedication to the parks in the city they live and love. Without this invaluable resource our city would be missing a vital piece that advocates for outdoor stewardship and promotes well-being through nature and play.

DID YOU KNOW? GDOT PLANS I-285 EASTSIDE EXPRESSWAYS

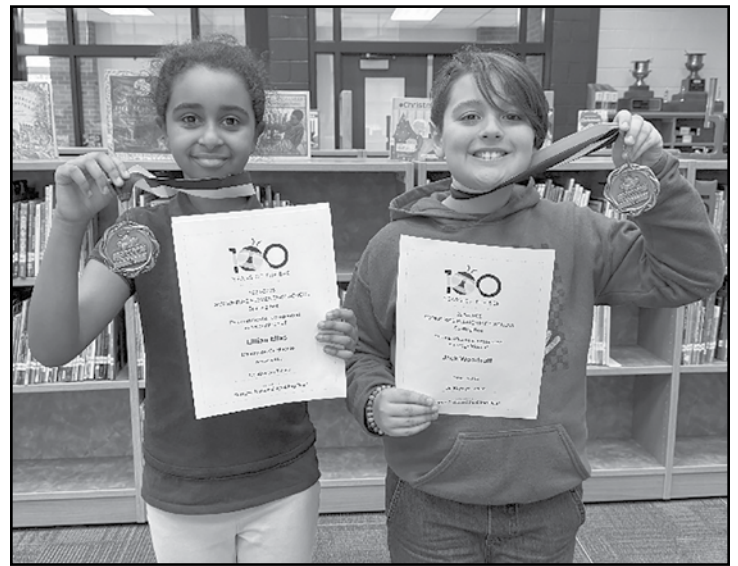
The Georgia Department of Transportation has proposed an I-285 Eastside Express Lane(s) project that is expected to improve mobility and provide reliable trip times on the eastern portion of I-285 in metro Atlanta. It will connect to the greater Georgia Express Lanes network. Almost 200,000 vehicles travel this section of I-285 each weekday.

This proposed project focuses on adding two new, optional express lanes that are barrier-separated in both directions of I-285 from Henderson Road to just south of I-20. This is a distance of about 13 miles. Community Conversations are ongoing. You can view a virtual presentation of the project at <https://i285eastsideexpresslanes-gdot.hub.arcgis.com/>.

SRES Names Spelling Bee Champion

In December, Smoke Rise Elementary School proudly hosted its annual Spelling Bee Competition, celebrating the remarkable talents and dedication of our students. Participants demonstrated outstanding spelling skills, determination, and confidence as they competed for the prestigious title of Spelling Bee Champion. This eagerly anticipated event brought together students, staff, and families to honor academic excellence and foster a spirit of friendly competition.

A special congratulations to our Spelling Bee Champion, Lillian Elias, and runner-up, Jack Woodruff, both exceptional fourth-grade students. Lillian Elias will proudly represent Smoke Rise Elementary School in the District Spelling Bee this January. This memorable occasion emphasized the value of literacy and learning within our school community, inspiring students to strive for academic success.



Pictured above is the 2024-2025 Smoke Rise Elementary's School Spelling Bee Champion Lillian Elias and Runner-up Jack Woodruff

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Twins; Elvis Aron and Jessie Garon

By Victoria R. Crosby

In January they were born
under the sign of Capricorn.
One would live and one would die,
and no one knows the reason why.
Although one reason seems to be
that they were born in poverty.

No money to pay for a hospital stay
or prenatal care along the way.
No sonograms in 1935
announced that two babies would arrive.

So, in a little shack in Tupelo
covered by the winter snow,
the twins lay by their mother's side,
the boy who lived and the boy who died.

Matching names their parents gave
as one was buried in his grave.
The boy who lived achieved such fame
that the whole wide world still knows his name.
But the riches that he made on earth
could not bring back what he'd lost at birth.

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Your General Contractor's Liability Insurance: Is It a Liability?

By Amber Seale, Staff Writer

If you've ever hired a general contractor or another company for major home repairs, you probably asked whether they were licensed and insured. Last year, I wrote articles comparing general contractors to handymen, along with a checklist for vetting them and identifying potential red flags.

Recently, I learned more about general liability insurance and why you need to go a step further than simply requesting the certificate of insurance and the declarations page. Once you obtain these documents, it's crucial to call the insurance company to verify that the policy is legitimate and that the contractor's company is indeed insured.

Here's why: Earlier this year, I hired a contractor in 2024 for extensive home repairs. When I attempted to file a claim against his policy, I quickly discovered that the certificate of insurance was fraudulent. Upon contacting the insurance company, the representative informed me that the policy number contained too many letters, which didn't align with their numbering system. To verify further, the representative offered to search for the contractor's company by name—and found no record of them in the system. I even asked him to double-check, but the results were the same.

To be honest, I wasn't entirely shocked by this discovery. The contractor turned out to be unscrupulous: he wasn't licensed to begin with, and his business license wasn't current. Unfortunately, I only learned this halfway through the project—after encountering repeated workmanship errors. As a reminder, you can check the Secretary of State's website to verify business licenses and general contractor licensing before hiring anyone.

So, what's next? I consulted a friend who has worked in the insurance industry for his entire career. He advised me to start with the Department of Insurance to report the broker and the named insured for fraud. I am currently researching how to file a claim with the department, and I'm awaiting updates from my attorney regarding the legal implications of this situation.

Unfortunately, I've learned that fraudulent insurance certificates are more common than many people realize. I hope sharing my experience helps you take extra precautions to protect your home, your finances, and yourself in the future. Always verify policies directly with the insurance company and thoroughly vet contractors before you hire them.

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Sadie's Ladies Celebrate Christmas at Smoke Rise Baptist Church

By Connie Henry



The Sadie's Ladies Circle of Smoke Rise Baptist Church held their annual Christmas luncheon on Monday, December 9. Everyone brought a dish to share, and the food was plentiful and delicious.

Brenda Dugger introduced the speakers. Victoria Crosby spoke about her newest book and read a few of her poems from her poetry books. Karen Nash Bates, the church Librarian, spoke of the many books available to borrow from the church library.

A gift exchange followed, which led to lots of fun and some interesting escapades, as the ladies could "steal" a gift from one another.

The group is open to all women and meets on the second Monday afternoon of each month. If you are interested in joining the Circle, please contact the church at 770-469-5856.

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HEALTH NOTES:

New Developments in Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia

By Patricia Baumann, M.D.

Dementia is a serious health concern for the elderly. A diagnosis of dementia should be suspected when an individual's thinking, remembering, and social abilities have changed to the point where daily function is impaired. Dementia has many causes. Medical evaluation is essential to determine cause and effective treatment. Your primary care doctor can start the process of evaluation and do the initial screening and assessment. A neurologist who specializes in dementia, known as a cognitive neurologist, can and should assist with further evaluation and treatment.

Alzheimer's Disease is one of leading causes of dementia, and fortunately, this is where the most exciting new developments in diagnosis and treatment have occurred.

The physical changes that are seen in the brain of the Alzheimer patient have been known since 1906. It was first described by the German physician and neuroanatomist Dr. Alois Alzheimer, who observed microscopic plaques and tangles in the brain of a 50-year-old woman who had died from dementia. This discovery led to decades of research and progress in understanding this disease and developing treatments.

The two main findings in the brain tissue of Alzheimer's patients are: 1) the presence of plaques made of clumps of beta-amyloid peptides, and 2) the presence of intracellular tangled filaments of a protein called tau protein.

In the beginning, the only way to diagnose this terrible disease was to examine the brain after death. More recently, diagnosis of Alzheimer's has been made by a combination of physical and cognitive tests. Further testing has included brain imaging (CT, MRI, or PET scan), and analysis of spinal fluid collected by spinal tap. The spinal fluid is analyzed for the presence of beta-amyloid peptides and the tau proteins.

The very recent good news is that diagnosis of Alzheimer's can now be made with a blood test. Hopefully this will lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment. The new blood test is about 90% accurate in diagnosing Alzheimer's. The blood test analyzes blood serum for the presence of tau protein. Researchers have found that this test can be used in patients with mild cognitive impairment to detect the presence of Alzheimer's and predict development of dementia. I was able to determine that this blood test is currently available for Emory patients and can be ordered by Emory providers. It is also available through Quest and Lab Corp when ordered by your primary care physician. The test is named Phospho-Tau 217, and results are given as negative, intermediate, or positive. This test is recommended for evaluation of individuals, aged 50 years and older, presenting with cognitive impairment who are being assessed for Alzheimer's disease and other causes of cognitive decline. This test is NOT a screening test for Alzheimer's in asymptomatic individuals.

Treating Alzheimer's has been a challenge, largely because there is lack of clarity on the underlying cause of the disease. Early treatments focused on supportive and nonspecific care. Physical exercise can reduce the likelihood of dementia and Alzheimer's. Drinking less alcohol reduces your risk. Smoking puts you at a higher risk for developing dementia. Staying mentally well and socially active is important. Treatment of depression is an important way to reduce risk of dementia. Anti-inflammatory foods may prevent or help slow the process. These foods include leafy greens, nuts, berries, whole grains, beans, and olive oil.

The search for specific drugs to combat Alzheimer's has also been challenging and has been hampered by the steep costs of developing a new drug. The fight to get the drugs approved by healthcare insurance is also part of the struggle. Researchers have persisted, and new drugs are now available.

A newly FDA approved medication brand named Kinsula was shown to be effective in clinical trials when used by people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, reducing the rate of cognitive and functional decline. Kinsula is given by IV infusion once a month. It helps remove the amyloid protein from the brain. Kinsula joins a similar drug Leqembi, which is given IV twice a month. Kinsula is priced at \$32,000 a year, higher than Leqembi's \$25,500 annual list price.

Medicare will cover FDA approved Alzheimer's treatments for some patients who work with a health care provider who participates in a registry to collect information on the medication.

Prevent Diabetes with DeKalb's Free PreventT2 Program

By AvivA Hoffmann, Staff Writer

Prediabetes can feel like a ticking clock, but DeKalb Public Health has a solution to turn back time and take control of your health. The PreventT2 program is a FREE, CDC-recognized lifestyle change initiative designed to help DeKalb County residents prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.

Launched in 2018, PreventT2 is not your typical health program. It's a year-long journey led by trained lifestyle coaches who guide participants through a supportive and collaborative approach to healthy living.

The program is built on six key pillars:

- Adopting a healthy diet
- Increasing physical activity
- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight
- Managing stress
- Staying motivated
- Overcoming challenges as a group

For the first six months, participants meet weekly, forming a tight-knit community that cheers each other on. In the second half of the year, monthly sessions help reinforce the habits participants have built and sustain lasting change.

Who's Eligible?

This program is open to adults aged 18 and older living in DeKalb County who are:

- Overweight (BMI > 24)
- At risk for developing type 2 diabetes or have been diagnosed with prediabetes or gestational diabetes within the past year
- Not currently diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes

Why Join?

Diabetes is a serious health challenge in DeKalb County and across the U.S. Did you know:

- More than 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. has prediabetes.
- In DeKalb, diabetes ranks as the 4th leading cause of death for individuals aged 55-64.
- Medical expenses for people with diabetes are 2.6 times higher than for those without.

The PreventT2 program is an opportunity to reverse the risk, save money, and improve your quality of life.

If you're ready to take the first step toward a healthier future, contact DeKalb Public Health to learn more about joining this free, life-changing program.

If you're interested in this program, go online to: dekalbpublichealth.com, or call (404) 297-7234.

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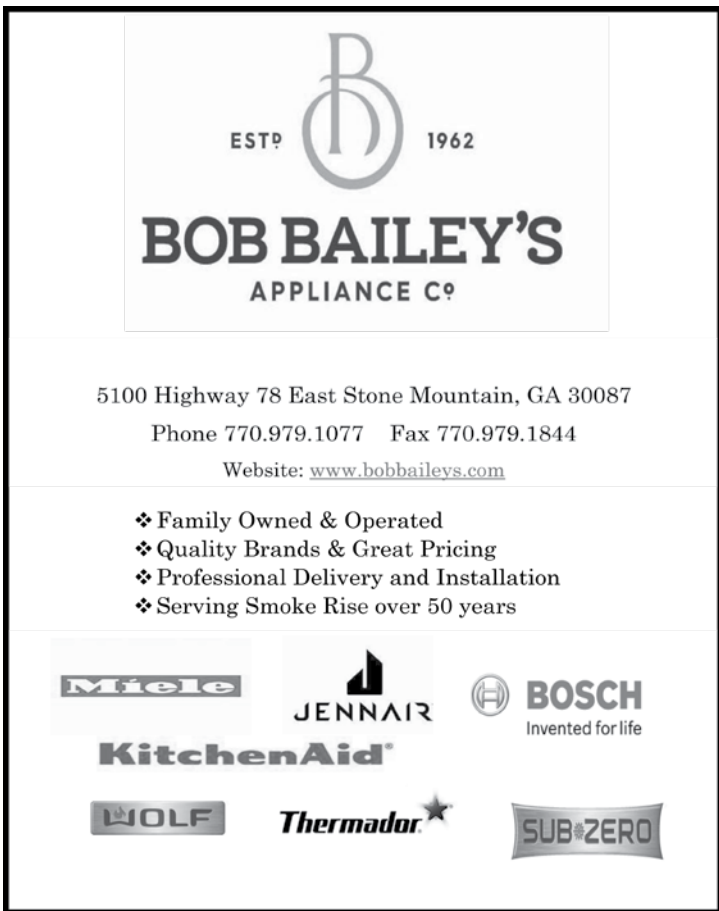
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New Year's Resolutions? Or maybe just something to think about...

Linda Karr, Staff Writer

Life has certainly changed over the years, and we do many things differently than we used to. Progress, right? However, is it all for the better? Are emails really better than picking up the phone and actually having a conversation with someone? Is an ecard better than a card received through the mail? Yes, I am fully aware that postage has gone crazy expensive but aren't some people worth it? Does actually getting something personal in the mail (not bills) make your day?

So, you can make your 2025 resolutions to lose more weight, get more exercise... Why not think about the personal touches that you can share and touch someone's life. It could really make a difference and make their day. Try it on!

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

Squirrel Nest

Looking out the dining room window, I gazed at the soft, gray winter day. The few dangling leaves suspended on the branches of the nearby oak trembled, as if chilled by the stirring, icy breeze. High in the crook of the majestic tree, Squeaky, (our resident squirrel) had built his ragtag nest, expertly perched on a sturdy fork in the limbs, nearly twenty feet high. The nearly 2-foot-wide leafy mishmash was his spring and summer home and he would not be currently in residence. As the temperatures had turned colder Squeaky had retreated to a more protected hole in a nearby tree (most likely carved out by Mr. Woodpecker) and made a smaller bungalow. Both homes would be near trees with an abundance of nuts or acorns (many he had already buried) that would help to sustain him throughout the winter. The homes would be a single squirrel dwelling and only occasionally shared by siblings when they were young. In the spring and summer, the warm weather nest would make a cozy nursery to the one or two litters produced every year. Two to four kits would be born and not leave the nest until they were almost adult size. That is why baby squirrels are never spotted! Squeaky most likely will have a long life span (for a rodent) of around 6 years. Thank you for being my friend and entertainment for the present and many years to come!



HOPE *By Cheri Schneider, Staff Writer*

Years ago I made up an acronym for the word 'HOPE'.

- It was :
- Heavens
 - Outpouring of
 - Peaceful
 - Expectancy.



The more I have pondered it, the more I find it is a beautiful picture of the word HOPE. In our world, hope is not connected to the times that our lives are pleasant and good. We do not really need hope if life is going right. Hope is something that we cling to in difficult times, in times when we do not have all the answers and in times when we do not know reasons and whys—the uncertain times.

Hope is not something we can drum up on our own. That is where Heaven came for me. It is something God gives us He poured it out on us (outpouring).

And the peaceful expectancy is a perfect description of real hope. You cannot strive for it, create it, build it or find it in circumstances. It is something found in resting in the middle of chaos.

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techtalk By Joel Gilbert

My wife Susan can almost never be warm enough in winter, so our thermostat is set pretty high ... usually around 72-73 F. If I were alone, I would set it down to 68 F. During the summer, Susan likes it around 76 and wears leggings. I am wearing almost nothing and want it down to 75 if the humidity is reasonable.

Most couples have this challenge ... there is no perfect temperature setting, and it often erupts into a battle about where to set the thermostat. I call this a thermostat war. But, unlike most couples, Susan and I have spent our careers in the energy industry. We both know precisely what the impact will be on our energy bills. Countless accurate studies indicate a one-degree change in the temperature results in an energy impact of around 8% on heating or cooling bills.



I recently read an article on setting your home temperatures in USA TODAY (Check out the USA TODAY article at: <https://tinyurl.com/thermostatwars>). Doing what the article suggested-- setting your heat to 75 would be about a 40% increase in your heating costs! While this is obviously a mistake in the article, and likely applied to the cooling setting, the article does a pretty good job of explaining some misconceptions and offering general guidelines of temperature control. It fails miserably at educating the consumer about how important a thermostat is in controlling energy costs.

Anyone familiar with energy efficiency will first note that the article shows an antiquated thermostat. The one pictured is ancient, inaccurate, and 'thick as a brick' they say. The temperature reading can be off plus or minus 2 F. The control setpoints between on and off can also be off plus or minus 2 F. So, the temperature may vary in the space quite a bit between when it turns off at the high end of the heating band setpoint and then turns back on when the space temperature falls a few degrees. It sounds complicated, but modern thermostats cut that "deadband" in half or better. Plus, the thermostat shown in the article is analog, not digital. Today's thermostats can talk to your phone or computer and permit digital setpoints. They make programming your daily schedule easy. Some thermostats also automatically detect your activities in the house and will attempt to optimize your energy use.

Another key area the article ignored is air leakage, or "drafts" in the winter. These usually come in from under your outside doors, around windows that do not seal well and even electrical outlets and plumbing penetrations under your sinks and around vents. As the outside air gets colder, the amount of air seeping into your home increases and can make you uncomfortable. So, sealing windows and doors with weatherstripping is always your priority. It is not hard, and today's DIY kits are everywhere. Detecting leaks is easy using a tissue and watching for it to flutter-- but most people can feel an air leak with their bare hands.

Next, consider window covers to prevent your home from heating the great outdoors. Single pane glass has a resistance to heat flow (R-value) of R-1 while double pane can achieve R-3. Insulated ceilings are typically R-30, 10 to 30 times more resistant to heat flow. The cold air by windows creates downdrafts as it sinks rapidly to the floor where you are probably sitting with bare feet! So, how about putting on warm socks and slippers as well.

We in the western world are creatures of comfort, and I am not criticizing that. However, this predisposition to be comfortable can make us lazy and irresponsible. The first choice should not be to crank that thermostat. Think about what is making you uncomfortable and do what you can easily do to correct that.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

TIDY UP FOR THE NEW YEAR: FREE CHRISTMAS TREE PICKUP!



Happy new year! If your holiday decorations are still up, it may be time to pack them away and start looking ahead to 2025. This includes your Christmas tree. DeKalb County is once again offering FREE Christmas tree curbside collection service for county residents.

If you're currently serviced by the DeKalb County Sanitation Division, you can have your tree picked up during your regularly scheduled curbside collection service through January 9. Simply place your tree at the curb alongside your garbage and recycling roll carts during your regularly scheduled sanitation pickup days. Make sure your tree doesn't exceed seven feet in length (you can cut it if necessary).

Trees that cannot be trimmed to the required size may be dropped off at the county-owned Seminole Road Landfill or collected by the Sanitation Division's Special Collection unit (fees may apply). And, of course, whether you place your tree at the curb or take it to the landfill, be sure to remove all decorations and lights before disposal.

This service provides a sustainable, free way for residents to dispose of their Christmas trees. Collected trees will be recycled and converted to mulch. Much of the recycled mulch benefits playgrounds, local government beautification projects, and individual yards.

For more information about free Christmas tree curbside collection, or to arrange for a special collection for larger trees, contact the Sanitation Division's Customer Care team at (404) 294-2900 or sanitation@dekalbcountyga.gov, or www.dekalbsanitation.com.

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Smoke Rise Morning Glories Once Again Deck the Wells-Brown House in Festive Finery

For over ten years, the Smoke Rise Morning Glories have decorated the historic Wells-Brown House in Stone Mountain Village for Christmas. The headquarters of the Stone Mountain Historic Society was built in 1870 and is located on Ridge Avenue. The construction was unique for the time. In fact, only a few homes in Georgia of that period were built of fireproof concrete cut to look like stone. The house sports a new roof now and is also the location of a DeKalb County Master Gardener project on the grounds of the property.

This year the Morning Glories added period appropriate greenery, fruit and festive red ribbons to the Wells-Brown sign, lamp post, Juliet balcony and front door. On the inside of the home, the club decorated the three mantles and added a be-ribboned evergreen swag to the stair banister. A few years ago we started the tradition of clove studded oranges for the mantles for a lovely holiday fragrance. That job is assigned to Marsha Pittard who always adds creative flair to the task.

Our December meeting was held at the home of Glendolyn Hallman. President Amie Walsh informed the club that materials have been purchased using grant funds from Garden Club of Georgia and DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs for the school STEM program. The lumber and footings were delivered to the Smoke Rise Elementary School by Amie and her husband. The STEM teacher has requested that six additional raised beds be added to the school grounds for each grade to have their own garden space. Other local school partners are contributing soil and gravel once the beds are constructed. Volunteers from the garden club will be helping with this project this winter and spring.

Our next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2025 and the speaker is Joy Carter -an avid birder and director of the "Wild Nest Bird Rehabilitation Center". If you are interested in attending the meeting at Park Springs or interested in the club's activities, please contact Amie Walsh at 404 729-4871.

Mountain Mums Spread Holiday Joy with Annual Celebration and Community Connection

Submitted by Maureen Fraser, Publicity Chair & Newsletter Co-Editor

To wrap up the year, the Mountain Mums Garden Club celebrated their annual Holiday Luncheon and Gift Exchange at Smoke Rise Country Club in December. Much fun was had by all as the "stealing" ensued!! Co-hostesses Connie Henry, Beth Henson, Rita Maloof, Mary Lou Still and Carol Wales provided beautiful centerpieces, table and mantel decor as well as scrumptious desserts, including Mary Lou's famous rum cake, following the meal.



Mountain Mums members enjoy the beautiful table settings, decor and desserts provided by the Co-hostesses (Carol Wales, Connie Henry, Rita Maloof, Mary Lou Still and Beth Henson) seated in front at the 2024 Holiday Celebration Luncheon.

Kate Graham provided a love-themed inspiration to kick off the meeting as it is central to the Christmas season. Holiday traditions often evoke feelings of joy, comfort, belonging and an opportunity to strengthen bonds with loved ones.

Club members continued to provide horticultural therapy for residents of Atria Park of Tucker Senior Living Center for the holiday. Kelley Samaras spray painted "very large" pinecones, which came all the way from South Carolina. Residents then decorated them with bulbs, candy canes and a star on top to make nature-inspired Christmas trees!



Mountain Mums members helped Atria Park of Tucker Senior Living Center residents create pinecone Christmas trees.

The "Garden of the Month" Award was presented to Victor and Theo Economy who offer children an opportunity to take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus in their beautiful yard annually with donations going to the Make A Wish Foundation of America.

The Mountain Mums accept new members year-round, but the start of a new year is the perfect time to learn more about the club. Contact Mary Jacobson, Membership Chair, at mjacob1010@gmail.com if you are interested in learning more about the Mountain Mums Garden Club activities.

The Dirt on the Smoke Rise Garden Club

By Alex Helton, a new member of the Smoke Rise Garden Club

I wouldn't have admitted it, but I half expected the Smoke Rise Garden Club members to all be wearing floppy wide-brimmed hats and chatting about soil pH or some other cryptic garden topic.

Instead, I was mingling with folks at every level of gardening experience who also had wide-ranging interests as we gathered for a holiday luncheon on Sunday December 8 at The Commons in Stone Mountain Park. It was a comforting realization.

The "the more, the merrier" spirit meant spouses and garden-club-curious people were invited. I was in the latter group, encouraged to come by Club President Victoria Crosby. Yet I still kept waiting for someone to ask about the green-ness of my thumb.

For the next couple hours, 23 people caught up, laughed and got to know each other better. Victoria entertained us with her poem, "A Charles Dickens Christmas," and put out traditional English Christmas crackers, which added to the fun.

It ends up that the "Garden Club" is actually a convenient cover for social folks who want to grow roots in the community.

The club members participate in the DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs, and are plugged into the community many ways, including sending holiday cards to service members, hanging wreaths at Smoke Rise's neighborhood entrances, and planting pansies at the firehouse. Their website, smokerisegardenclub.com, describes more of the club activities.

So yes, I'll be attending as a member the evening of Monday, January 6. The plan is to discuss Camellias, which I think might be something that grows in my yard. I'll get tips on keeping them alive while socializing with this vibrant group of people.

If you have an interest in joining, go for it. Email Gina Dilley at ginadilley@gmail.com and she'll set you up. I can't wait to meet you soon.



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Food & Home Fixin'

By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

Chili can be enjoyed at any time of the year and I do make it every season, however, I relish it most in the winter. There is nothing like a spicy bowl of chili with grated cheese and sour cream on top to help you enjoy a blustery, cold, sit-by-the-fire-and-read day.

While I can't claim that my recipe is the best you have ever eaten, I am proud of a few blue ribbons from chili cook-offs in the past. It is also easy to make but here's my secret. You MUST make it the day BEFORE you serve it and let it rest overnight in the fridge to blend all the flavors. Resist the urge to enjoy it right away. Just think of how nice it will be to know you have dinner in the fridge for tomorrow night!

Chili by Joyce

- 1 lb ground beef (80/20% fat content) or ground turkey
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 T olive or vegetable oil
- 1 cup beef broth
- Large can crushed tomatoes
- 2 pkgs McCormick original or medium chili spice mix
- 2 cans red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 T. Apple Cidar Vinegar
- 2 T brown sugar

In a deep Dutch oven or heavy pan, sauté onion in oil. Remove onion and set aside. Brown meat in Dutch oven and return sauteed onion to pan. Add beef broth and tomatoes. Stir in the McCormick seasoning packets. Add drained beans and cook on high until mixture boils, then turn to medium heat. Mix brown sugar with vinegar and add to the chili. Cook on low heat until the liquid is reduced – about 30-45 minutes. Remember to stir it frequently. Remove from heat. Cover and let cool before placing in refrigerator overnight. When ready to serve, heat slowly to allow liquid to heat up. If chili is too thick, slowly add beef broth ½ cup at a time until desired thickness is reached.

Leftover chili freezes very well and comes in handy when you need a quick meal. Determine how much you need to freeze and store it while it is fresh.

I often use leftovers such as roast beef or finely chopped smoked sausage or a bit of crisp bacon to enhance the flavor. To add heat, add one small can of extra spicy Rotell. Serve chili with your favorite toppings and corn chips or corn muffins (made with the recipe on the bag of White Lily Corn Meal Mix).

My recent "find" in Kroger is Angel Hair Cabbage. It is located in the packaged section against the wall in the produce aisle. It is finely chopped cabbage. For coleslaw, mix about 2 cups with shredded carrots and sweet pickle relish. Add salt and pepper. For dressing use one heaping tablespoon of Mayonnaise, 1 Tablespoon of apple cider vinegar and 1 teaspoon sugar. Shake in a jar to blend and pour over cabbage. Mix well and refrigerate. It's a favorite side dish for chili and takes about 5 minutes to make.

Apples are still readily available and this is one of my all-time favorite desserts. Use refrigerated pastry to save time. Save this delicious Caramel sauce recipe to use with desserts or a special treat over ice cream. Add 1 cup chopped pecans if desired.

French Crème Apple Tort

- Line a 9- inch spring form pan with pastry.
 Mix the following and spread on unbaked pastry:
- 1 (8 oz) pkg Cream Cheese ¼ cup sugar
 - 1 egg ½ tsp vanilla

Apple Layer:
 Thinly slice three peeled golden delicious apples and arrange on top of cheese layer. Sprinkle with mixture of 1/3 cup sugar and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Top with ¼ cup sliced almonds.

Bake at 450° for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 400°, continue baking for 25 minutes. Cool before removing rim of pan.

- Glaze:**
- ½ cup apple jelly 1 T. brandy

Melt the jelly on low heat and add the brandy. Mix well and use pastry brush to apply glaze to top of hot torte. Cool before serving.

Optional: Drizzle Caramel Sauce over tort while still warm or serve as topping when tort is plated.

- Caramel Sauce:**
- ½ cup butter 2 cups brown sugar
 - 1 cup light corn syrup 1 can sweetened condensed milk
 - 2 T. Water 1 T vanilla

Melt butter, add sugar and other ingredients. Heat over med. Heat stirring constantly until melted and smooth. Keep leftover in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Mountain Mums Take a Field Trip

Several Mountain Mums members and invited friends recently visited the historic Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, a hidden gem nestled within the urban landscape of Atlanta. The members were captivated by the stunning architecture of the Tudor Revival mansion and the expansive gardens that surround it.



They explored the various decorated rooms and learned about the rich history of the estate, which once belonged to Charles Callan, a prominent Atlanta businessman. The visit provided a delightful opportunity for the club members to appreciate the beauty of art and architecture while connecting with fellow members in a unique cultural setting.

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