

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 57, ISSUE 12

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

March, 2025

www.smokesignalnews.com

*The Smoke Signal staff
wishes you the Luck o' the Irish
on St. Patrick's Day!*



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Mountain Mums' Tucker Walk to Remember Set for March 8

The next Tucker Walk to Remember (TWTR), organized by Mountain Mums, will take place on Saturday, March 8, at 9:30 a.m. Participants will gather in the center parking lot of Smoke Rise Baptist Church before beginning the walk.

This three-mile loop through two Tucker parks is dedicated to honoring seven lives lost too soon in the community due to driving accidents. The event is free to attend, and leashed dogs are welcome.

Donations are accepted to support driving lesson scholarships in the area. Checks can be made payable to Walk to Remember and either dropped off at the event tent or mailed to:

Walk to Remember, 4184 1st Ave, Tucker, GA 30084.



Hollywood Comes to Smoke Rise: Will Trent Season 3 Filmed at SRCC!

By Amy Lamitina, SSRC Director, Member Engagement and Events

Smoke Rise Country Club has officially hit the big time! The hit ABC crime drama Will Trent selected the club as a key filming location for three episodes of its highly anticipated Season 3. Episodes 1, 2, and 3 featured several iconic areas of SRCC, blending their scenic surroundings with the show's gripping storyline.

At the end of Season 2, Will Trent left fans on edge when Special Agent Will Trent, portrayed by Ramón Rodríguez, arrested the "love of his life," Detective Angie Polaski, played by Erika Christensen. Their relationship fell apart, and she lost her job. As Season 3 opens, we find Angie in a new role—working as a private security guard—and her office? It's set in Smoke Rise Country Club's very own guard house on Chedworth Drive!

The Will Trent crew transformed familiar locations into TV magic, using SRCC's grounds to create immersive and thrilling scenes. Some of the key filming locations included:

- The Driving Range – Reimagined as part of an exciting investigation.
- The Guard House – Serving as Angie Polaski's new security office.
- The Water Feature – A dramatic setting for pivotal moments.
- The 11th Hole – Providing a scenic backdrop.
- The Maintenance Facility – Transformed into an unexpected piece of the storyline.

One of the most entertaining scenes to watch come to life took place in Episode 2, where Angie Polaski and another investigator are driving a golf cart around the community's golf course—actually Smoke Rise Country Club's driving range—when they suddenly lose control. The cart begins spinning, unintentionally doing "donuts" down a hill. Watching this scene being filmed was a highlight for those on site, as it showcased the impressive work of professional stunt actors. As a matter of fact, the amazing Mark Norby came to town from Los Angeles to supervise the stunt sequences. The precision and skill they brought to this moment made it all the more thrilling to see on screen!

Come see the magic for yourself! Now that the episodes have aired, we invite you to walk the grounds and see if you can spot the filming locations. You may find yourself standing right where a major scene unfolded!

If you haven't tuned in yet, catch up on Will Trent Season 3 and keep an eye out for SRCC's big moment. It's not every day that you get to see your neighborhood country club on TV! Let us know if you recognized any familiar sights—we'd love to hear what you think!



Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day

by Victoria R. Crosby

Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day.
You don't have to come from Dublin, County Cork
or Galway Bay.

It is a special celebration in anticipation of the Spring,
with parades of happy people who love to dance and sing.

Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day,
from the coast of California to New York and Hudson Bay.
It's a time for eating cabbage, corned beef and soda bread,
where everyone wears shades of green, not yellow, blue or red.

Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

You don't need to have kissed the Blarney stone
to be eloquent today.

At the end of an Irish rainbow there is a pot of gold, and
endless pints of Guinness, at least that's what I've been told.

Everybody's Irish on St. Patrick's Day –
people from all backgrounds who love a party, anyway.
Folks are sporting shamrocks, and I just want to say,
no matter where you come from,
God bless you, each and every day.

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The Origins of March Symbols

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

As March approaches, many of us look forward to celebrating St. Patrick's Day with festive parades, shamrocks, and, of course, tales of leprechauns. But where do these symbols come from, and why are they tied to this month?

Leprechauns: Myth and Mischief

The leprechaun, a mischievous fairy in Irish folklore, is often depicted as a small, bearded man in a green coat, known for hiding his pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. The origins of this creature date back to the 8th century, when Irish mythology spoke of "luchorpán," meaning "small body." These creatures were believed to be solitary cobblers who spent their time crafting shoes. Over time, the leprechaun became associated with luck, with legends about catching them to gain access to their hidden treasures. Though they became a symbol of Ireland, it wasn't until the 19th century that they became widely associated with St. Patrick's Day festivities.

The 4-Leaf Clover: A Symbol of Good Fortune

The 4-leaf clover, often seen as a symbol of luck, is a rare variation of the common 3-leaf clover, or shamrock. In Irish tradition, the shamrock is a symbol of St. Patrick, who used it to explain the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—to the Irish people. The 4-leaf clover, however, is believed to bring even greater luck, with each leaf symbolizing something unique: faith, hope, love, and luck. While the

...Continued on page 8



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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The *Smoke Signal* has reached its ad-space limit and we are now keeping a waiting list for future advertisements. Please send your ad requests to staff@smokesignalnews.com and you will be contacted as space becomes available, in the order requests are received.

Classified ads and flyers are still available!



Smoke Signal Deadlines

MARCH 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 MARCH 10

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MARCH TUCKER CITY HALL EVENTS

MARCH 3, 6:30 p.m.
Downtown
Development Authority

MARCH 10, 6:00 p.m.
City Council Meeting

MARCH 14, 6:00 p.m.
Pi Day, Pi K Run/Walk

MARCH 20, 7:00 p.m.
Planning Commission

MARCH 24, 7:00 p.m.
City Council Meeting

MARCH 27, 10:00 a.m.
Senior Outing -
Booth Western
Art Museum
Cartersville, GA

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1975 Lakeside Parkway, Tucker GA.

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
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
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up on March 2!

Participating 2025 restaurants and specials are available
at the link <https://tuckerrestaurantweek.com/menus/>



The City of Tucker Welcomes its newest eatery, Baraka Shawarma. Located at 2247 Idlewood Rd., this restaurant serves Middle Eastern delights in a warm and welcoming spot in the heart of downtown Tucker. This restaurant is also participating in Tucker Restaurant Week Feb. 25 - Mar. 2!

Tucker Chili Cook-Off is Back

The tasty event returns for its 9th
annual celebration on March 15, 2025,
from 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. on Main
Street!

For just \$10.00, you'll get to sam-
ple all the chili you can handle and
cast your vote for the People's Choice
Award. Plus, stay refreshed with soft
drinks, water, and a selection of adult
beverages from The Local No. 7 and
Ford's BBQ (available for purchase).
Don't miss out on the heat, the flavor,
and the fun—see you on Main Street!



Smoke Rise Elementary Dance Team

This year, the Smoke Rise Elementary Dance Team, led by the dedicated Ms. Nakeba Bell, a first-grade teacher, demonstrated remarkable talent and commitment. Ms. Bell coached a talented group of 4th and 5th-grade students (pictured here), leading them to an impressive showing at the Area 2 Finale Six Advanced 2 District Competition, where they delivered a remarkable performance. Their routine showcased their skill, creativity, and dedication. Principal Dr. Krystye Tatum, along with the faculty and staff, proudly congratulates Ms. Bell, the students, and their supportive parents for their hard work and incredible achievement.



**Journey Through Lent – Worship, Reflection,
and Community at Eastminster**

*By Christina Wetzel Sizemore,
Office Coordinator, Eastminster Presbyterian Church*

At Eastminster Presbyterian Church, we invite you to join us in the meaningful journey through Lent. Lent is a sacred season of reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal that represents the time Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness, enduring temptation, and preparing for His ministry (Matthew 4:1-11).

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5. This year we will have ASHES ON THE GO. Drive-thru, walk up, or pause longer to receive ashes and experience outdoor prayer reflection stations and neighborly conversation in our parking lot 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. If you have a busy schedule, this is a quick and meaningful way to observe Ash Wednesday. We will also have dinner at 5:30 p.m. (reservations are required). An Ash Wednesday service in the Sanctuary will begin at 6:30 p.m. with inspirational music, imposition of ashes, and a meaningful message.

Save the Dates:

- World Day of Prayer, March 7, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
We will have an open contemplative space to drop in and pray in the Sanctuary.
- Palm Sunday, April 13
Sunday school 9:15 a.m., Worship at 10:30 a.m.
- Maundy Thursday, April 17
Evening service with Communion at 6:30 p.m.
- Easter Sunday, April 20
Fellowship at 9:15 a.m., Worship at 10:30 a.m.
- End of Life Issues with Rev. Dr. Trisha Senterfitt,
Preparing Well for Elder Years: A Seminar on Thoughtful
Aging and Family Communication, Saturday, March 29.
For more information and to reserve, email
tsenterfitt@gmail.com.
- Registration is open for Vacation Bible School
June 23 – June 26, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
TRUE NORTH: Trusting Jesus in the Wild World.

Check out our website www.eastminster.us/vbs for more information. May this Lenten season be a time of renewal and spiritual growth for all.

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GO RED

Raising Awareness of Women’s Heart Health

By Barbara Luton, Staff Writer

February was American Heart Month, a time to focus on cardiovascular health and the risks of heart disease. Cardiovascular disease is the #1 killer of women. The GO RED FOR WOMEN initiative helps increase awareness about this disease and close clinical care gaps, ensuring women recognize and address this serious health threat.

In 2025, the American Heart Association urges every woman to be armed with the knowledge, skills and confidence to save a life. This includes learning CPR, because chances are the life that needs to be saved will be someone you know and love.

In support of heart health awareness, the GFWC Stone Mountain Woman’s Club members wore red to their meeting in February. Attendees received healthy living guides, and the guest speaker for the meeting emphasized the importance of movement and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. Additionally, Smoke Rise resident, Kathy Gallo, read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, a beloved children’s book that highlights healthy eating.

Awareness of heart health is an important reason for wearing red in February. Mark your calendars and join the movement next year – in February - for women’s health!

Rotary Club of Stone Mountain Celebrates District Governor’s Visit

By Cynthia Dorsey Edwards, Assistant District Governor

Recently, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain had the honor of welcoming District Governor Gordon Owens for his official visit. The day began with an insightful board meeting presided over by President Darlene Daly at Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC), where members viewed the District’s disaster relief trailer and engaged in meaningful discussions and updates.

Following the board meeting, District Governor Owens delivered an inspiring presentation to the club, highlighting the importance of service and leadership, before assisting in pinning and welcoming new members, Dr. Maxine Cain, Founder and President of STEM Atlanta Women, Leah Johnson-Englad, Executive Director, Brookside Senior Living, Synthia Padala, Co-Founder & President, SERA Smart Villages, and Teresa Punzi, Executive Director, The Smart Place Adult and Children Services, Inc., during the induction ceremony.

After the induction, members enjoyed a brief tour of FODAC, further connecting with the mission of this valuable partner.

Another highlight of the day was the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Clarkston Friendship Forest StoryWalk, a project that reflects our commitment to literacy and community service. Beverly Burks, Mayor of the City of Clarkston, led the dignitaries in cutting the ribbon. District Governor Owens participated in reading *My Voice is a Trumpet*, the month’s featured book, alongside Rotary members, CDF Action, and other community partners.

During the event, the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain presented a \$600.00 check to Roberta Malavenda, Executive Director of CDF Action, to support the 2025 funding needed to purchase books from the Cox Campus, Liberty, and Justice for All curriculum.

The day concluded with a delightful lunch at Darbar Afghan Restaurant in Clarkston, providing members, DG Owens, and community partners an opportunity to continue building connections and celebrating the achievements of our club.

A special thank you to District Governor Gordon Owens for visiting and witnessing the impactful work of the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain. We also thank Assistant Governor Ardy Villiard, Mayor Beverly Burks, City of Clarkston staff, and community partners, including CDF Action and FODAC, for participating in the events.

We extend our thanks to Darlene Daly, President; Cynthia Dorsey Edwards, District Governor Nominee; Marlene Randall, President-Elect; and our Satellite Passport Club members, including Alan P. Janssen, Chair-Elect, and his wife, Jeanette, Chris Brand, President/CEO of FODAC, and all other RCSM members for their contributions in making District Governor Gordon Owens’s visit to the Rotary Club of Stone Mountain a success!

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The Silent Destroyer

By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

Spring is upon us! Homeowners are getting their homes ready to enjoy the warmer weather and beginning to get gardens cleaned and ready for spring flowers, but deep down in our soil lies a silent destroyer. TERMITES take advantage of the same beautiful weather we enjoy and are hard at work causing havoc in our own backyards and home. Termites often go undetected and can cause major damage to your home. This destruction can cost thousands of dollars to fix, in addition to the treatment needed to eliminate them.

Termites usually swarm once a year, but some species swarm more than once. Swarming occurs when a colony reaches maximum capacity and is ready to expand. Subterranean termites, which are the most common in Georgia, swarm when the weather is warm and humid, often after a rainstorm. When they swarm, winged male and female termites emerge from the colony. They pair off, mate, and shed their wings before finding a new place to nest.

This is the time of the year to protect your home before they set up housekeeping at your address. Danny Sequeira, Inspection Specialist with Northwest Exterminating, says there are some definite signs that you are more likely to notice in the spring than any other time of the year. They include swarms, mud tunnels, and wings on window frames and doors. Main locations would be crawl-spaces, garages, foundation and entry points around the home and any outbuildings. Signs of termite infestation inside your home might be discolored or swollen drywall, blistering or peeling paint, tiny holes in drywall, wood that sounds hollow when tapped, and, in the most severe cases, sagging floors. So, while you are doing that once-a-year cleanup, pay attention to any signs of these unwanted pests and make sure your home is protected. Don't let the common saying about termites apply to you: "In the South, it's not a matter of IF you will have termites, the question to ask yourself is WHEN?"

Reconstructed Boardwalk on Hugh Howell Road Completed!

In October 2024, the Public Works Department responded to reports of a failing boardwalk on Hugh Howell Road. Upon inspection, workers discovered extensive rot in the floor joists, boards, handrails, and several support posts, requiring significant repairs. Crews salvaged usable materials and replaced the rest with high-quality lumber sourced from Cofer Brothers, a local supplier in Tucker.

The reconstruction was completed in January 2025. Moving forward, the Public Works Department plans to monitor the boardwalk's condition and apply weatherproofing treatments as needed to extend its lifespan.



Article and photo by Frank Luton

New Attendance Boundary for Smoke Rise Elementary

By Lyle Collins, Smoke Rise Resident, Parent, & Local Businessman

On February 10, the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) Board approved a new attendance boundary for Smoke Rise Elementary (SRES) to include a portion of Idlewood Elementary's current zone. The change, taking effect at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year, will increase enrollment at Smoke Rise Elementary by approximately 418 students, bringing total enrollment to an estimated 955.

SRES is one of the newer school buildings in DeKalb County, having opened in 2021, with a listed capacity of 984 students. SRES is operating at a little more than 50% capacity with a current enrollment of ~535 students. Idlewood is operating at around 115% capacity, requiring 12 trailers on their school grounds. Idlewood will begin a major building modernization this summer, which is estimated to take one and a half to two years. In order for the construction and renovations to be completed in a timely and efficient manner, the Idlewood attendance requires a reduction. The shifting of students also allows the new SRES building to be better utilized with its intended capacity. The Idlewood area being rezoned to SRES is a small area with a high density of residents located north of E. Ponce de Leon, west of Brockett, and east of Montreal. Bus transportation will bring these students a few miles further to SRES, their new zoned school.

There were three public meetings held at Idlewood and two virtual meetings held for the Smoke Rise community where DCSD presented the original options, gathered feedback, presented the final proposal, and addressed concerns from all involved stakeholders. Smoke Rise families raised concerns regarding traffic, parking limitations, carpool congestion, staffing increases, and Pre-k class availability. The DCSD officials stated that their operations department would be working on traffic and parking issues, especially regarding backing up onto Hugh Howell. DSCD officials also explained how staffing and funding will increase in parallel with enrollment. Throughout the meetings, DCSD guaranteed their involvement to make sure this increase in enrollment will be as smooth as possible and that they will work to

make it a great environment for every student and family that walks through the doors of Smoke Rise Elementary.

Although the Idlewood building modernization is expected to take less than two years, DCSD Superintendent Dr. Devon Horton and DCSD Chief Operating Officer Erick Hofstetter both shared that this new boundary for SRES and Idlewood will remain in place until a new boundary is voted on by the board at some future unknown time. It was estimated this new boundary will remain in place for four to five years, so students are not relocated twice during a period of just a few years. Also of note is that DCSD is currently working on a new Student Assignment Project (SAP) that will be looking at boundaries for all DeKalb schools and suggesting changes to better match school capacities and enrollment balanced with projected community growth/decline.

As SRES moves toward next fall, it will be important for the entire school, staff, and the Smoke Rise Community to continue working together to support Smoke Rise Elementary.

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The Smoke Rise Academy of Arts Brings Home the Trophies
By Denise Burcham, Academy Director

The Smoke Rise Academy of Arts was proud to take a team of 35 drama students to the annual Junior Theater Festival in January. The festival is the world’s largest theater festival for students and is hosted in Atlanta at the Cobb Galleria. The festival is sponsored by Playbill, Disney Musicals, and Music Theater International.

The first Junior Theater Festival in 2003 was designed to see if educators and students would enjoy three days of a non-stop musical theatre celebration – and, after the first JTF Atlanta, the answer was an enthusiastic “yes!” This year, JTF Atlanta brought in more than 7,000 students from all over the world to perform, watch, meet Broadway stars, and learn from some of the best in the business.

Greyson Chadwick, one of our theater and dance instructors, auditions students and puts together a team of dedicated, hardworking students who love musical theatre. They prepare 15 minutes from a Broadway Junior musical for adjudication by professional actors, directors, choreographers, and educators. This year, our team presented a clip from Roald Dahl’s Matilda, Jr. We were thrilled to learn that one of our judges, Lotte Wakeham had been Associate Director for the Royal Shakespear’s production of Matilda at the West End for a decade! The 160+ teams were divided into pods where they perform for each other and receive scoring and feedback from three judges. The judges select the team they felt was the best in their pod. This team is awarded “All Festival Performance Group” and “Excellence in Pod” and is invited to perform one song from their selection on the big stage before the entire 7,000+ festival attendees.

Smoke Rise Academy is proud to announce that our team was selected BEST IN POD! This is our third year earning this distinction along with the honor of being asked to perform a new work in 2023, Finding Nemo, Jr. by Disney and earning “Excellence in Music” and “Excellence in Dance” trophies! Our trophy collection needs a case, so all the church can see our accomplishments and awards! Visit our website to view the 15-minute adjudication performance and the four-minute selection presented on the BIG STAGE! We look forward to presenting the musical, Once Upon a Mattress based on Hans Christian Andersen’s story of the Princess and the Pea on March 20-22. Our talented teens are beginning work on this fairytale musical comedy. Our Junior Drama will present Frozen, Jr on May 2-4. This is guaranteed to be a fun show for the entire family.

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Smoke Rise Community Garden Now Taking New Renters!
By Eileen Stone, Smoke Rise Community Garden Chairperson

The SR Community Garden is opening up memberships to new (and returning) plot renters. We have a variety of different sized garden beds ranging in cost from \$60.00 to \$120.00 per year with a \$100.00 deposit. We are an organic/no pesticide garden located across the street from Mountain West Church and Smoke Rise Elementary School. If you want to grow your own food and are new to gardening, we have several seasoned gardeners that are happy to help you find your way. For more information, please email Eileen Stone at srcommunitygarden@gmail.com or stop by for a visit on Saturday, March 8 from 10:00 a.m. to noon.



Photo courtesy Lynn Malone



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GRADUATE

Madelyn E. Huerkamp graduated from Kennesaw State University on December 10, 2024, with a B.A. in Philosophy. She is the daughter of SRCA president Dr. Michael Huerkamp and currently resides in Tucker.



Good Samaritans

By Bob Espy, Board President, The Smoke Signal

We all know the story of the Good Samaritan which is told by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. The parable is about a Samaritan who helps a traveler who has been beaten and left for dead.

In the month of January, our son had a medical issue while riding his bike on Silver Hill between Gunstock and Musket Lane. Our son had gotten over heated and passed out falling off his bike scraping his face, busting his lip and four brackets in his braces. (Not a pretty sight).

Two neighbors stopped to make sure he was ok. One individual was in a Red Mustang and the other was in a Silver/Grey Ford F150. The gentlemen in the F150 picked up Bob, put his bike in the truck, and drove him to our house. Something he certainly did not have to do. Bob told him at that time he was fine. Unfortunately, Bob did not get their names. Both these men went out of their way to help someone in need.



Photo courtesy Google Images

We got a panicked call and got to Bob as soon as possible. Lucky there was no need for an ER visit, and the braces were repaired that afternoon. Thank you Clinebell/Anderson Orthodontists for fitting us in. Bob healed quickly, and we count our blessings it was not more serious.

I have lived in Smoke Rise all my life. I know the type of neighbors that make up our community. That is one reason why Bonnie and I decided to make Smoke Rise our home. We truly have awesome neighbors that look out for each other.

Bonnie and I want to thank both of these Good Samaritans for everything they did for Bob!!

Tucker’s Town Green to Get a ‘TKR’-ific Artistic Touch!

As part of its \$5.6 million Town Green project, Tucker is commissioning a weather-resistant steel sculpture spelling out “TKR” to add an artistic focal point to the new community space.

Planned for the former Cofer storage lot on Railroad Avenue, the sculpture will celebrate Tucker’s industrial heritage while serving as a striking, Instagram-worthy landmark. The city is currently accepting artist proposals, welcoming submissions from creatives familiar with the area’s history and community spirit—residency in Tucker is not required.

Construction on the 1.88-acre Town Green is well underway, with major progress visible along Railroad Avenue. Once completed in Fall 2025, the space will feature event areas, parking, water features, play zones, a shaded visitor plaza, and a pavilion for performances.

Salute to Advertiser

John Porter

By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

John Porter was first influenced to become a realtor as a child during his visits with his favorite aunt and uncle in Florida. His realtor aunt drove a big baby blue Cadillac and allowed him to go along on real estate appointments. This was impressive to a 10-year-old boy!

While attending the University of Georgia in in the mid 1980’s, John obtained his real estate license and embraced the opportunity to make a living doing what he loved to do. Today, as a full-time realtor with Home Smart, aka, Palmer House Properties, he still loves the thrill of putting together his buyers with the perfect home for them. He believes that his best assets are asking questions and listening. The payoff is seeing the joy on the faces of his clients when they find the right home. John gives his sellers the truth, backed up with facts of what the overall market picture is for them. He is willing to put in the long hours and drive many miles to help his clients buy or sell, and along the way, he has made lifelong friendships with clients and other real estate professionals.



John Porter with his two best buddies, Mickey and Minnie, brother and sister.

John and his partner, Jim Terry, are deeply invested in Smoke Rise. They have owned and occupied six homes in this community, renovating each one before selling, moving and restoring again. Both of them are skilled craftsmen at designing and decorating their lovely homes with exquisite art and historic furniture found at antique auctions.

John’s favorite vacations include water and snow skiing and boating to various Caribbean islands. He is very thankful for his friends and the many opportunities that he has had to meet people, entertain old friends and make new ones. The *Smoke Signal* appreciates John for the many years he has supported the paper with his ads and flyers.

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HEALTH NOTES:

Macular Degeneration

By Cheri Schneider, M.D., Staff Writer

Age related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a condition of the eye that is one of the most common causes of central vision loss. Central vision loss means that you may see wavy lines, experience blurry vision or even lack of vision, when you look straight ahead as you would do driving or reading a book. Some people see this a “hole” in their vision and must slightly turn their head to see out of the side of that eye. In some, the first signs are difficulty seeing in low light situations or noticing that color looks faded.

This condition is most often seen in individuals older than the age of 50. In fact, after 50, AMD risk increases four-fold each decade! Risk factors for AMD include, being female, Caucasian and having a family history of Macular Degeneration. Smoking, hypertension, hardening of the arteries, obesity and eating a high fat diet are also risk factors.

Scientist have identified five genes on three separate chromosomes that seem to be the cause of macular degeneration or at least associated with it. So far, gene testing has not been used to identify or predict MD.

Scientists also don’t know what triggers the process of Macular degeneration although some inflammatory factors seem to be related. There are two types of AMD: Dry AMD and Wet AMD. Dry AMD makes up about 80% of all cases of AMD. Within this category is a progression from early to late or severe dry AMD. Sometimes severe dry AMD is known as “geographic” MD because of the pattern of debris. A very simplistic description of the process of dry AMD is that debris (called Drusen) collect under the central vision area of the retina called the macula. The retina thins and then atrophies causing death of photoreceptors. This results in loss of vision, which is irreversible. It can take years for MD to progress from early to the serious phase. About 20% of people move more quickly over a two-year period from early to late stage.

How can you prevent Dry AMD from progressing? Eating a healthy fat, low processed diet like the Mediterranean diet and avoiding smoking can help. Also, there may be some evidence that sunglasses can prevent damage. A specific vitamin that has zinc, lutein, copper, Vitamin C and E and zeaxanthin (AREDS-2) can slow progression in those who already have Dry AMD. It is not helpful if you do not already have the condition. Treatment involves anti-inflammatory injections of the eye.

The second type of Macular degeneration known as Wet AMD starts with a proliferation of blood vessels under the top layer of the retina. These vessels “leak” blood and fluid, and the retina scars. Some people may term this “exudative” MD. Untreated Wet AMD results in legal blindness in 80-90% of patients. Unfortunately, this is a big reason many older patients can no longer drive.

Once you have a diagnosis of Age-related Macular Degeneration, it is extremely important to follow up REGULARLY with the retina specialist. These are visits you do not want to miss, as permanent vision loss can result if you skip.

Is there anything you can do now to prevent this diagnosis? Yes. DO NOT SMOKE—Ever! This includes marijuana, cigars, cigarettes and hookah. Wear sunglasses. Maintain a healthy weight and eat a healthy, non-processed diet that includes healthy fats. Be checked regularly if you have a family history of MD. Macular degeneration should be identified EARLY before vision loss occurs. So, in my opinion, all adults over the age of 50 should have regular eye checks. Many eye diseases are very subtle.

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

Early Spring Chipmunk

Looking out the living room window, I could hardly believe the change the recent warmer days had brought! Only a short month ago we had experienced a big snow-fall, blanketing the yard in a dazzling, icy white. Now a light breeze was tickling a few lemon, yellow daffodils under a cloudless blue sky.

Suddenly, a quick movement on the uneven, gray stone wall that supported the upper yard caught my eye. Chipper, (our resident chipmunk), was scurrying from rock to rock in more than a hurry. I usually didn’t see any sign of him and his buddies until later in May!

Although he was missing in the winter months, he was not considered a true hibernator. In the fall he stores lots of seeds and nuts into his burrow, curls into a tight ball and enters a state of torpor, which is similar to hibernation, but not as deep. In this state he occasionally wakes up to eat his store of food and will actually leave his burrow during a period of unseasonably warm weather.

I’m glad you decided to join me on this beautiful day, Chipper, but I am afraid old man winter is not done yet!



Origin of March Symbols...continued from page 1

3-leaf clover is common, finding a 4-leaf variety is a rare and special occurrence, which is why it is considered so fortunate.

As we celebrate St. Patrick’s Day in March, these two iconic symbols—the leprechaun and the 4-leaf clover—remind us of the rich cultural heritage of Ireland and the timeless charm of its folklore. So, whether you’re on the lookout for a pot of gold or simply hoping for a little extra luck, these symbols are sure to add a bit of magic to your March!

In Contrast...The Ides of March: A Day with a Warning

The Ides of March, celebrated on March 15, carries with it a heavy historical legacy. Most famously, it marks the day in 44 BCE when Julius Caesar, the Roman general and dictator, was assassinated by a group of senators. The event is one of the most pivotal moments in Roman history and has become synonymous with betrayal and political intrigue.

In Roman times, the “Ides” referred to the middle of the month, and the Ides of March was simply a day on the calendar. However, the assassination of Caesar has forever connected this day with tragedy and forewarning. According to legend, a soothsayer famously warned Caesar to “Beware the Ides of March,” a warning he famously ignored, leading to his death and the subsequent downfall of the Roman Republic.

Shakespeare’s portrayal of the Ides of March in his play Julius Caesar immortalized the phrase, and it has since become a symbol of impending doom or betrayal in popular culture. Today, while the Ides no longer hold the same political weight, they serve as a reminder of the fragility of power and the consequences of disregarding warnings.

So, as we mark the Ides of March this year, take a moment to reflect on the lessons of history, the importance of heeding caution, and the events that shaped our world.



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NEWS YOU CAN USE
BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

ADDRESSING DEKALB’S WATER
AND SEWER CHALLENGES

If you’ve been following local news, you’ve likely heard that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners is currently debating a proposed water rate increase of 10% each year for the next 10 years. This “10 x 10” plan is designed to meet the long-term financial needs of our water and sewer systems, ensuring DeKalb’s infrastructure is reliable and can serve residents for generations to come.

Supplying a growing population, the county’s systems are under increasing strain. Since 2017, DeKalb has invested more than \$1.25 billion to rehabilitate its aging infrastructure, but more work remains. Essential repairs and improvements are necessary to sustain services for the future.

One of the most vital components of DeKalb County’s water system is the Scott Candler Water Treatment Plant, which has been in operation since the 1940s and remains the county’s sole water treatment facility. While it has reliably served the community for decades, much of its infrastructure has not been updated, with some sections dating back to its original construction. Temporary shutdowns due to power outages and control failures have exposed the plant’s vulnerabilities. These risks underscore the urgent need to address this critical infrastructure challenge.

DeKalb’s water is delivered through large transmission mains, many of which have been in place for more than 70 years. These lines serve critical locations such as hospitals, Emory University, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Alarminglly, no new transmission mains have been installed since 1974, further underscoring the need for system upgrades. Additionally, smaller water lines in our neighborhoods are also showing their age, with approximately nine miles of them older than a century and nearly 200 miles exceeding 75 years of service. This aging infrastructure contributes to a growing number of water main breaks, with the county averaging around 950 breaks per year—roughly three a day.

The county’s sewer system faces its own set of challenges. Stretching across more than 2,500 miles, some of DeKalb’s sewer lines date back to 1910, and 10% need significant rehabilitation. When it rains, stormwater infiltrates these cracked, deteriorating pipes, overwhelming the system and leading to spills that negatively impact our communities and environment. Without continued investment, these problems will only worsen.

Rising construction costs, including an 80% increase in the price of ductile iron pipes, have made critical repairs even more expensive. Unlike many utilities that adjust rates regularly to keep pace with inflation, DeKalb has raised rates only once in the past decade – a modest 6% increase. By contrast, other comparable jurisdictions have made annual rate adjustments of about 4.2%, leading to a 50% increase during the same period. Had DeKalb made similar adjustments, future rate increases would be much more manageable.

To ease the burden, the county has developed assistance programs to support those in need. These include customer discounts and assistance programs for those who qualify to extended payment plans and hiring an independent advocate to help navigate the process.

Addressing these infrastructure challenges is essential for DeKalb’s future. While the proposed rate increases are currently under consideration, we are quickly running out of alternatives to ensure access to the clean, safe water that our community depends on. These systems are fundamental to our daily lives, and without continued investment, maintaining their reliability could become increasingly difficult. Together, we must find a way to support the long-term sustainability of these vital services.

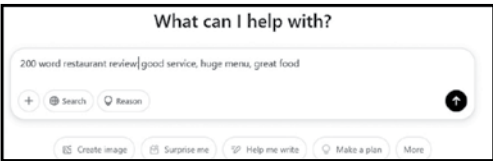
techtalk By Susan Gilbert

Diving into AI

In the December paper, I shared my Rip van Winkle experience of getting a new car after driving mine for 15 years. I remain amazed at how advanced vehicles have become and am still learning how to use the staggering number of available features. Maybe if I hadn’t waited so long it would have been a more gradual transition?

That experience led me to prepare this article on using the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) earlier rather than later. Learning with it as it evolves should make it easier to understand and use its capabilities. So, let’s dive in.

AI is becoming an increasingly common part of our daily lives. From virtual assistants to chat-bots to automated customer service, AI tools help streamline tasks and enhance productivity. But for many, the idea of engaging with AI can feel intimidating. If you’re curious about how to start using AI tools, here’s a guide to help you get started.



Understanding AI: What It Can and Can’t Do

AI tools are designed to assist, not replace, human effort. They can help with answering questions, generating text, summarizing information, creating images, and even analyzing data. However, they are not infallible. AI works best as a collaborator, not as a final authority. It’s always a good idea to verify AI-generated information, especially when making important decisions.

Simple Ways to Engage with AI Today

1. Explore AI-Powered Search and Chat Tools – Many search engines now incorporate AI to help refine searches and provide concise answers. Chatbots, like OpenAI’s ChatGPT, can help brainstorm ideas, draft emails, or provide explanations on various topics.

A friend told me he saved time by using ChatGPT to write a restaurant review that he was going to labor over writing.

In seconds, he had a perfectly written review that used all the key words he had entered into the “Message ChatGPT box.”

Try it! It’s FREE. Just open a browser and go to the ChatGPT website where you will see “What can I help with?” and a Message box. Enter something you are curious about and in about two seconds you will have an answer. It may not be 100% correct, but I have found it to be excellent at creating a starting point. You may have to tweak a word or two, but it’s much easier than starting from scratch.

2. Use AI for Productivity – AI tools can assist with scheduling, setting reminders, and even automating repetitive tasks. Apps like Grammarly improve writing, while AI-driven transcription services like Otter.ai can turn meetings into readable text. If you use Zoom, you may have already seen its AI capabilities where it will create minutes for you. My experience with them has not been positive, because it doesn’t accurately report who is speaking and does not capture the nuances of the issues being discussed, so be careful with using that.

3. Enhance Creativity with AI – AI-generated art, music, and storytelling are making creative expression more accessible. Platforms like DALL-E for image generation and ChatGPT for writing assistance help inspire new ideas.

For \$100.00, I bought a one-year subscription to DALL-E to see how it works. This is the picture and text it provided from this request: *picture of an 1800s whaling ship at sea*

A detailed image representing an 1800s whaling ship navigating through the vast open sea. The mast of the ship is tall and magnificent, standing strong against the gusts of wind. The hull is sturdy, made of dark, polished wood, and the sails are a bleached white, billowing in the waves of the ocean air. Specks of seamen can be seen on the deck, busily performing their tasks. The sky is a ominous blend of dark and light hues, forecasting an approaching storm, amplifying the sense of adventure and danger associated with whaling in that era.



4. Be Mindful of AI Ethics – AI tools learn from large datasets, which means they can sometimes produce biased or inaccurate information. Always consider AI outputs critically, to be certain you are comfortable with what they produce.

Getting Comfortable with AI

If you’re new to AI, start small. Try using ChatGPT to answer a question that is on your mind or to write something for you. Experiment with AI-driven tools that match your interests—whether that’s photography, music, writing, or organization. Most importantly, stay curious!

Spoiler Alert: I added some personalization, but most of this article was produced by ChatGPT from this request: Short article for community newspaper about how to get started using AI.

Are you already using AI? We’d love to hear how it has helped you! Just email your experiences to the Smoke Signal Box (staff@smokesignalnews.com) using Subject: TechTalk and we will share as we learn together.

The Artistry of Olivia Thomason’s Flowerpots

By Doc Lawrence, “Sentimental Gentleman from Georgia”

Spring’s arrival is eagerly awaited, and nothing heralds its approach quite like the vibrant beauty of a flowerpot adorned with original folk art. These delightful creations are not only functional but also serve as stunning decorative pieces that bring joy and warmth to any space.

Retail garden stores, in contrast, tend to have ones almost exclusively made and decorated by machine.

The acclaimed folk artist, Olivia Thomason, has made a name for herself through her exceptional ability to transform ordinary Terra Cotta pots into extraordinary works of art. Her unique style, characterized by bold colors and intricate patterns, reflects both the charm and whimsy of traditional folk art. “These pots are amazing and so original,” said Atlanta historian Dr. Richard Funderburke, who praises Ms. Thomason as “Georgia’s folk art queen.”



Terra Cotta, a material known for its earthy tones and rustic appeal, serves as the perfect “canvas” for Thomason’s artistic endeavors. The natural warmth of these pots enhances the vibrant colors she uses, allowing each piece to stand out in gardens or indoor spaces.

Thomason’s painted flowerpots, observed Sally Sandford, an Atlanta folk art collector who owns several paintings by Thomason, “are more than just containers for plants; they are expressions of creativity and a celebration of nature.” Each pot, she added, is a “riot of colors, with cats, chickens, chefs, songbirds, sunbursts, and all manner of things reminiscent of the lively blooms of spring.” The intricate subjects - all painted by the artist - often feature motifs inspired by the natural world, such as flowers, birds, pets and other wildlife, bringing a touch of whimsy and joy.

Every folk art pot created by Thomason is a one-of-a-kind piece, that embodies cultural traditions and storytelling, making each not just a decorative item but a piece of cultural heritage. Thomason said that these pots are “protectively glazed and can be used both indoors and outdoors.”

A native of Hendersonville, North Carolina, Thomason has a distinguished career as a self-taught artist. Her paintings are in major collections throughout the country and include Carl Sandburg’s home, “Connemara,” in Flat Rock, NC, The Atlanta Braves, The Fabulous Fox, Elvis Presley, the Old Dekalb Courthouse, Decatur Arts Festival, Stone Mountain Historic Village, Art Station, “Johnny Comes Marching Home,” at The Atlanta History Center and the North Carolina Apple Festival. Her renowned gallery in Decatur, was awarded Gallery of the Year on multiple occasions.

Thomason lives with her family in Stone Mountain Village where she maintains her studio.



Gardening, etc.

By Linda Karr, Staff Writer

Opportunities in the garden for March:

- Fertilize pansies.
- Cut back your liriopse.
- Plant your bare root roses.
- Plant beets, cauliflower, cabbage, eggplant, lettuce, snap peas, mustard, spring onions, broccoli, kale, leeks, radishes, and turnips in your garden. Direct sow leaf lettuce and spinach weekly this month to assure a continual harvest. Use mulch between the rows and around the plants to keep the weeds under control.
- Clean up the spent blossoms from your camellias to prevent disease.
- Divide hosta as they start to emerge.
- Clean up your rose beds and refresh the mulch. Make sure you get up all the leaves that fell from last year to help prevent disease.
- It’s a good time to plant trees and shrubs before it gets hot.
- Use some Water Gloves (‘cause that water is still cold!) to clean the debris from your water gardens. Add the debris to your compost bin. Fertilize your water plants.
- March is a great time to plant berries such as blueberries and strawberries.
- Apply horticultural oil (Neem) on your fruit trees now before they leaf out. The oil will kill overwintering insects and disease.
- Apply a pre-emergent to your lawn, if you didn’t do it in February, but don’t do it if you’re planting fescue. You’ll need to wait six weeks.
- Spread lime across your lawn at a rate of 40#/1000sf.
- It will soon be time (but not yet!) to move your indoor plants to the outside. It’s a great time to repot them as you do it.

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Hydrangeas- Blooms and Blooms
of all Colors and Sizes!

By Quill Duncan, Morning Glories Member

The Smoke Rise Morning Glories were thrilled to have Dr. Sandy Reed educate the club on all the many varieties of hydrangeas available today for our home gardens. Sandy is a plant geneticist and her specialty is hydrangeas. Sandy spent much of her career at the National Arboretum in McMinville, TN where she developed many cultivars of hydrangeas including ‘Ruby Slippers,’ ‘Munchkin,’ and ‘Queen of Hearts.’ There are seven types of hydrangeas and most of us are familiar with the mopheads or Hydrangea macrophylla. The colors of these typically large blooms can range from pink to blue based on the soil ph. The best time to prune these plants is right after bloom or the 4th of July as they bloom on old wood. Reblooming hydrangeas like ‘Endless Summer’ or ‘Penny Mac’ bloom on both old and new wood. Prune them, if necessary, after the first bloom cycle. Hydrangea paniculata or the ‘Pee Gee’ variety was the base for the cultivars ‘Limelight’ and ‘Little Lime’ which are very popular plants with large creamy blooms you can see growing and blooming along roadsides and parking lots in full sun every summer! The several native hydrangeas are equally beautiful including the large Oak Leaf hydrangeas, Hydrangea quercifolia, that thrive here in Smoke Rise with little or no care.

The most frequently asked question about these plants is “Why did my hydrangea not bloom this year?” And, there are several common answers: pruned at the wrong time, late spring freeze after a mild spell and not enough sun for those cultivars that need more sun to thrive. The panicle cultivars like ‘Limelight’ need the most sun to properly bloom.

Our next club meeting will feature a workshop on making pressed flower notecards led by Beth Gabbett who is the owner of Bouquet Y’All! Our club meets at Park Springs, and if you are interested in visiting our club or want to learn more about our many activities, please contact our President Amie Walsh at (404) 729-4871.



Dr. Sandy Reed, featured speaker, shared her vast knowledge about growing and caring for hydrangeas with both the Morning Glories and Mountain Mums Garden Clubs in February.

Mountain Mums Bloom with Garden Club Activities

By Maureen Fraser, Publicity Chair and Newsletter Co-Editor

The February meeting was hosted by Pat Bauman with Lisa Armistead, Gaye Auman, Angie Ballard and Kathy Rhineheart serving as co-hostesses. President Sally Young called on Kate Graham to share an inspiration, which was a reading of *To A Wee Bird* about birds migrating in the spring. This coincided with the Great Backyard Bird Count, a collaboration between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society to help scientists better understand global bird populations before the start of spring migrations. Many club members planned to participate in it this year.

Environmental and Garden Tips

Pamela Schuyler shared the following helpful tips:

- Now is the time to plant landscape roses, bare root fruit trees/berries and winter vegetables.
- Don’t forget to cut back ornamental grasses.

Members are looking forward to these upcoming events:

- Visiting Atria Park Senior Living Center to help residents make spring floral door hangers.
- Participating in the Tucker Walk to Remember on Saturday, March 8.
- Joining the triangle clean-up workday at the corner of Hugh Howell and Lilburn-Stone Mountain Roads.
- Contributing to the Tucker Police Precinct planting/beautification project.
- Enjoying a tour of Woodlands Garden in Decatur followed by lunch.
- Celebrating Lisa Armistead at the DeKalb Federation Garden Club luncheon at Callanwolde Fine Arts Center where she will be honored as our club’s Lifetime Member.

Pamela Schuyler was elected as Vice President for the 2025-26 fiscal year. All other officers are returning for a second year.

Dr. Sandy Reed was the featured speaker. She received a B.S. degree in Agronomy and her Ph.D. in Plant Breeding and Genetics from the University of Kentucky. Employed as a Research Geneticist for the US National Arboretum at its worksite in McMinville, TN, she developed several new cultivars of hydrangeas, including ‘Ruby Slippers’ and ‘Munchkin’ oakleaf hydrangeas. Dr. Reed retired in 2011 and moved to Atlanta to be near family. She joined Shenandoah Rose Garden Club in 2013. Dr. Reed currently serves as President of the Shenandoah Rose Garden Club; Parliamentarian for DeKalb Federation and Newsletter Editor for the Redbud District of the Garden Club of Georgia.

Her topic was Hydrangeas: How and What to Grow. Dr. Reed provided a comprehensive overview of the five most common types of hydrangeas in the United States -Bigleaf/Macrophylla, Mountain/Serrata, Panicle/Paniculata, Oakleaf/Quercifolia and Smooth/Arborescens. She also shared expert tips on growing and caring for these beautiful shrubs.

Some interesting points we learned:

- Sun and shade affect the flowering.
 - Adjusting the soil pH can change the color of Bigleaf Hydrangeas
 - Leaf spots are usually a result of too much sun and heat
 - If you do not get blooms, the plant was most likely pruned at the wrong time
- For more information and tips, you can go to hydrangea.com.

Don’t miss our next meeting on Wednesday, March 12 at the home of Marian Fetzek where members will be sharing plant cuttings with each other. New members are welcome. Contact Membership Chair, Mary Jacobson at mjacob1010@gmail.com for more information.

Smoke Rise Garden Club Discuss Native and Invasive Plants

The Smoke Rise Garden Club met at the home of Margo Collin in February with 25 members in attendance. Nikki Bridges and Paula Adeoba McEvoy provided the delicious refreshments.

The speaker was Matty Garret, the Greenspace Director at the Wylde Center in Decatur. Matty is also a board member of Henderson Park Community Garden. Matty discussed native plants and invasive species. Another topic covered was American Chestnut crossing with Asian Chestnut trees to address the blight issue. The native Franklinia or Franklin tree, a fragrant shrub or small tree, which is native to the south, but has become extinct in the wild. She brought many books to pass around and peruse.



Margo Collin, Matty Garrett, Nikki Bridges, Paula McEvoy

The Wylde Center is a nonprofit with five urban green spaces that connect the community to nature in an urban environment. The gardens provide adults and children with environmental education and demonstrate practices in sustainability through engaging programs and events. Plants are grown in their nursery which are sold to the public and offered to underserved communities.

Smoke Rise Garden Club, President Victoria Crosby, announced the slate of officers for the 2025-2027 term, who were unanimously elected.

If you are interested in joining SRGC at a meeting or membership, please contact Gina Dilley at ginadilley@gmail.com. SRGC is a member of the Red Bid District of the DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs. www.smokerisegardenclub.com

Georgia Iris Society Meeting

“Let’s Look at Historic Iris with a Judge’s Eye,” will be presented by Ms. Donita McDonald, GIS Treasurer, Historic Iris grower and lover.

This meeting is sure to focus on beautification, education and recreation.

Georgia Iris Society meetings are free to the public and all are welcome.

Saturday, March 8, at 2:00 p.m.
St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church
1790 LaVista Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30329

For more information, contact Quill Duncan (770) 414-4766.

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Food & Home Fixin’s
By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

“Where did the word ‘casserole’ originate,” I asked myself as I headed to Google to get my answer. This is what I found:

The word “casserole” originates from the French language, with “casse” meaning “case” and “role” meaning “roll.” This refers to the traditional method of cooking meat and vegetables in a case or roll of pastry. The concept of layering ingredients in a dish dates back to the Middle Ages, where cooks would layer meat, vegetables, and grains in a pot to create a hearty and filling meal.

Casserole can also refer to the vessel that the entrée is cooked in. Our grandparents were more likely to use the more British definition and call the casserole a “pie,” however, that disappointed those who were looking forward to pie for dessert. This month, I am offering two recipes to increase the perplexity. The first is a Shepherd’s Pie, and to add a wee bit more mischief for St. Patrick’s Day, the dessert is Apple Crisp.

Shepherd’s Pie

- 1 ½ pounds ground beef
- 1 finely chopped onion
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 dash pepper
- 1 cup of beef broth
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 T. butter
- 2 T plain flour
- 1 ½ cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 4-5 Russett Potatoes, boiled
- 2 T. butter (for potatoes)
- Milk (as needed for whipping potatoes)

Brown meat and onion in a frying pan, seasoning with salt and pepper. Drain off excess grease. Add beef broth and Worcestershire sauce. Cook for 5 minutes. Stir in butter and let it melt. Gradually add flour and stir to thicken the broth into gravy. Add frozen vegetables and cook for 5 minutes. For the topping, mash the potatoes, using butter, milk, and salt and pepper to taste. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Pour meat and vegetable mixture into Casserole dish. Cover with the potatoes. Bake for ½ hour until the top is brown and the pie is heated thoroughly.

Variation: Bake the potatoes, cut in half lengthwise and scoop out the center. Set aside. Fill the potato skins with beef and vegetable mixture. Lay potato halves on baking sheet. Mash the potatoes as above and add them to top of filled potato skins. Sprinkle with shredded cheese if preferred. Return to oven and cook as directed above for the pie. Serve with green salad or green vegetables such as spinach, broccoli or asparagus and crusty bread.

Apple Crisp

- 5 cups peeled and sliced apples
- ¾ cup white sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 2/3 cup melted butter
- 1 cup old-fashioned oatmeal
- 2/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg

Combine apples, white sugar, spices, lemon juice and water. Mix well. Spoon into a lightly greased Casserole dish. Combine butter, oats, brown sugar, flour and pecans. Mix well. Spoon evenly over apple mixture. Bake, uncovered at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until apples are fork tender and liquid has become like syrup. Serve warm or cool with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream. Makes 10-12 servings.

Smoke Rise Civic Association
By Michael J. Huerkamp, SRCA President

Please be on the lookout for the annual membership campaign mailing this spring. We are always appreciative of our supporters and have identified the new cost of refurbishing more than 50 of our iconic medallions that are showing the effects of wear and age. This may require up to \$15,000 above annual SRCA operating expenses. Your generosity in helping us maintain, preserve and promote Smoke Rise is much appreciated. The board is planning a meeting for our members in April, so please stay tuned to the Smoke Signal and social media for specifics. In addition to finances, a recap of 2024, and presentations by invited elected officials, we are likely to have information to share with respect to the emerging interest from Tucker businesses to have a distinct Tucker police force. Lastly, we bid a fond farewell to Lisa Khemani after her resignation from the board and many years of invaluable service.



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