

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 58, ISSUE 1

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

May, 2026

www.smokesignalnews.com



Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary

By Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

The Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary originally opened in Stone Mountain Park in 1962 and housed and cared for injured and orphaned wildlife. It was relocated to the current location nearby, on the banks of the Yellow River in Lilburn in 1983. It provided popular attractions where visitors could interact with a variety of rescued animals. The most famous was the South's rival ground hog, General Beauregard Lee, who was sought after for his predictions each year on Ground Hog Day to determine the arrival of Spring.



After suffering damage from the 2009 flood in the area, the "ranch" struggled for several years until local residents, Jonathon and Kathy Ordway purchased the property and renamed it "The Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary" - (YRWS). The Makeover began but was not without challenges. Most of the infrastructure was in disrepair and had to be replaced, and the proper local and state licenses needed to be obtained. The Covid years were another hurdle that created a loss of time and money.

Jonathon stated his vision and passion is to supply wildlife with life-long homes in an environment that successfully meets their needs and to provide education to our community on the importance of caring for animals in their natural habitat.

Fast Forward to today: Jonathon and Kathy's vision for what they could achieve has become a reality and continues to expand. They have acquired many more animals, all of which are well cared for in large sturdy cages that fit right into the landscape. The animals are healthy, and their environments are maintained by approximately 30 full-time workers and dozens of volunteer staff.



Jonathon Ordway

The 24-acre animal preserve is home to numerous species and provides a natural habitat for each one, including the original game ranch Bison herd which is still a popular attraction.

On a beautiful fall day we took our family, including our 3-year-old great grandson, Henry, to experience this delightful outing. We were impressed with the experience that has been a 10-minute drive from our home for many years. The facility is easy to find and navigate - right off HWY 78 near Lake Lucerne Drive. There is plenty of parking. Entrance fee was reasonable and there was no time requirement for how long we could stay. At a slow pace with a 3-year-old, we were there for almost 2 hours. The trails are shady and easy to navigate - even with a stroller, and there are plenty of benches providing a place to stop, relax, and observe the animals.

We saw species caged in a natural setting and other free-range animals, like the peacocks, and other barnyard animals roamed about freely inside the gates. There is a monitored petting area which proved to be a top attraction for Henry and other children. The 2-acre secure bear enclosure with pond and waterfall is home to the black bears year-round.

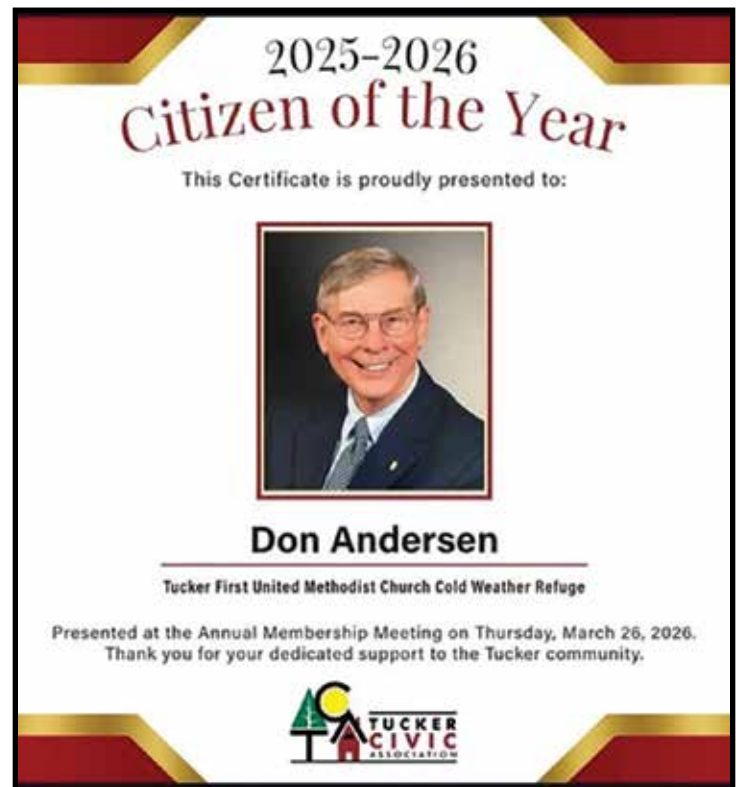
For safety, the park does not allow outside food to be brought into the animal areas; however, visitors are given an option to feed the animals by purchasing the pre-prepared diet-approved feed cups that are available for them.

Convenient picnic tables are available for your use outside the sanctuary. The gift shop

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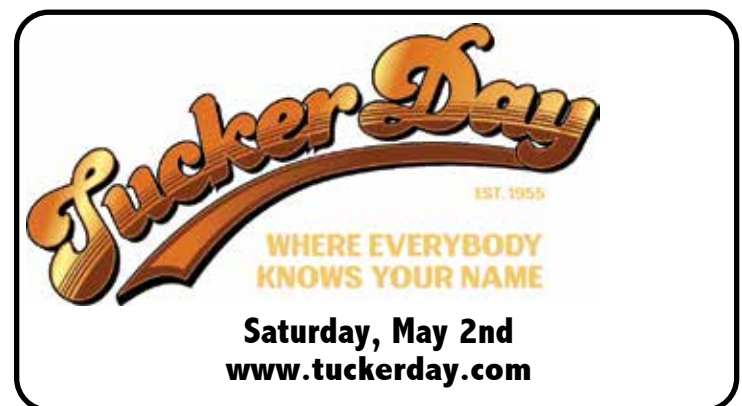


Tucker Civic Association's Citizen of the Year

Don Anderson, a resident of The Forest neighborhood, was named the Citizen of the Year by the Tucker Civic Association. Don with a group of 25 or more volunteers from the Tucker United Methodist Church were awarded the recognition for their efforts to help the homeless in Tucker during the cold months of the year in their warming center.


The church has offered this ongoing ministry for 10 years. The church, in cooperation with DeKalb County, provides shelter, food, clothes and showers for the homeless in the area. Off-duty police provide security at the shelter, ensuring a safe environment for the volunteers and the participants. The Magnolia Cafeteria supplies much of the food for the meals. The church even provides for families with children at a local motel.

Matt Robinson presented the award with 14 volunteers from the program in attendance.



SMOKE SIGNAL
has a new address:
4500 Hugh Howell Road Suite 490
Tucker, GA 30084






Smoke Signal
4500 Hugh Howell Rd., Suite 490, Tucker, GA 30084
A non-profit service organization devoted to furthering neighborhood cooperation with the aid of good neighborhood communication.

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Phone: 770-469-5856 SmokeRiseBaptist.org

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

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5:00 p.m. - Attend our Wednesday Dinner
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Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor
Phone: 770-469-4881 Website: Eastminster.us

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

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


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 12:00 p.m. Worship
MONDAY 7:00 p.m.
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Looking for a way to give back to your community? The SMOKE SIGNAL is looking for a few more writers or people with a passion for storytelling. SEND YOUR INQUIRY TO:
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Reservations Required:
Email Noelle Joy at Staff@smokesignalnews.com by 15th of the month

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Send Flyer Ready Artwork (8 1/2 x 11 size) to Staff@SmokeSignalNews.com and bobby@georgiaprinters.com will contact you directly.

Smoke Signal Deadlines

MAY 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 MAY 10

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2026 POOL SCHEDULES:

MAY 16–17 Opening Preview Weekend

- Saturday: 12 – 8 p.m.
- Sunday: 12 – 6 p.m.

May 23–25 Memorial Day Weekend

- Saturday: 12 – 8 p.m.
- Sunday & Monday 12 – 6 p.m.

May 18–22 & 26–28

- Closed

May 29

- Friday: 4-8 p.m.

May 30–August 2

- Monday–Saturday 12 – 8 p.m.
- Sunday 12 – 6 p.m.
- Juneteenth & July 4: 12 – 6 p.m.

August 3–7

- Closed

August 8–September 7 (Weekends only)

- Saturday 12 – 8 p.m.
- Sunday 12 – 6 p.m.
- Labor Day (Monday): 12 – 6 p.m.

May purchase: Daily Entry or Summer Passes

- Passes available for sale starting Wednesday, April 1

POOL RENTAL INFORMATION

Applications available starting Wednesday, April 1.
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Contact:

Madeleine Leavitt
Aquatics Coordinator
mleavitt@tuckerga.gov



Coach Kelly's 2026 Welcome Letter

Welcome to the 2026 summer swim season! I am thrilled to be returning as the head coach of the Smoke Rise Sharks and can't wait to dive into another exciting season with all of you. Whether you're a returning Shark or joining us for the first time, we're so glad to have you as part of our team!

At Smoke Rise, we believe that swimming is about more than just races and times—it's about bringing our community together, building confidence in and out of the pool, and developing strong sportsmanship. Our goal is to help each swimmer learn the fundamentals of competitive swimming while having a fantastic time, making friends, and creating lasting summer memories.


This season, we'll be working hard in the water, cheering each other on at meets, and most importantly, having fun as a team. I encourage every swimmer to set personal goals, support their teammates, and embrace the excitement of the sport. Whether you're here to sharpen your strokes or just to enjoy the thrill of being in the water, there's a place for you on this team.

I'm looking forward to an amazing season filled with growth, teamwork, and Shark spirit. Let's make this summer one to remember!

See you at the pool!

Coach Kelly


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Visit Smoke Rise and Stone Mountain Gardens

The “Art of Nature” Garden Tour organized by the GFWC Stone Mountain Woman’s Club is coming Saturday, May 16. The hours for the self-guided tour are 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., rain or shine.

Four gardens in Smoke Rise are on the tour this year. One garden, the historic Wells Brown house and garden is in Stone Mountain village on Ridge Avenue.

Tickets can be purchased on-line at StoneMountainWC.org, at Wine and Whimsey’s on Main Street in Tucker, or from GFWC members.

Steve Henson elected to represent Congressional District 4 on State Transportation Board of Georgia

Steve Henson, a former member of the Georgia State Senate, and Smoke Rise resident has been elected to represent Georgia’s Congressional District 4 (CD 4) on the State Transportation Board of Georgia. He will serve a full five-year term. He was elected by a caucus of state representatives and senators from CD 4, which includes DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties.

Henson is a graduate of the University of Georgia, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in economics. He spent over 40 years with the Laborers’ Southeast Training Fund, which focuses on environmental, construction, and safety training, before retiring in 2023. Henson served multiple terms in the Georgia State Senate, representing the 55th District from 1991 to 1999 and the 41st District from 2003 to 2021 Minority Leader for more than nine years.



In addition to his legislative service, Henson has been actively involved in numerous community organizations and boards, including the Stone Mountain Exchange Club, DeKalb JCs, American Association of Adapted Sports, and Youth Build DeKalb County. He was appointed by Governor Joe Frank Harris to the Asbestos Licensing Board in 1986 and served as Chair from 1988 to 1990. After leaving the senate, he chaired the DeKalb County Charter Review Commission until 2024.

The 14-member State Transportation Board determines policy and governs the Georgia Department of Transportation. Each member is elected by a caucus of Georgia General Assembly members from their specific congressional district. Board members serve staggered, five-year terms.



Ribbon cutting for Padelhwy in Tucker on April 15: Padel ball is where tennis meets squash. It is like tennis, but easier — It is always played as doubles— It is addictive and fun! See Padelhwy.com for more information 3766 Lawrenceville Hwy, Tucker Ga.



Sherry’s Produce Resolves Parking Problem

By Victoria Crosby

Sherry’s Produce has been an icon in Tucker for almost three decades. Recently there was a dispute with the new owners of the Brockett Square Strip Mall over parking. The new owners put up a ‘no parking sign’ stating parking was not allowed for customers shopping at Sherry’s Produce and that their cars would be towed if they parked there. This would have put Sherry’s out of business; however, public outcry and a social media awareness convinced the landlord of the property to rescind the decision, remove the no parking sign, and Sherry’s was able to open as they have done every year in March.

ATTENTION GRADUATES, NEWLYWEDS, AND HONOREES

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Email submissions to staff@smokesignalnews.com

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Gail By the Pond

By Victoria Crosby, staff writer

For twenty-five years Gail Ray, known locally as Gail by the Pond, has been decorating the front of her property on Oxbow Road every holiday, and brightening the mood of everyone who drives or walks by her house.

You will see decorations for major holidays such as Christmas and Easter, but also Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Chinese New Year, Memorial Day, July 4th, Veteran's Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Labor Day. On the patriotic holidays her property is covered with American flags and on Halloween with many pumpkins. Gail even puts out decorations in support of sports teams, the Falcons, the Braves and the Bulldogs.

"It brings me a lot of joy and pleasure to put these decorations out and hopefully they bring a smile to those who pass by. Especially on Valentine's Day, it's a good reminder to the guys." Gail told me. "Years ago, I had many more decorations, but it's not as many as I get older."

At one time the pond on her property had white Peking ducks which people would stop by to admire. They swam on the pond by day and were kept inside at night. At that time Gail said she was known as "The Duck Lady."

Over the years she told me the ducks laid hundreds of eggs. Her male duck, Pierre,

lived to be twelve years old and when he died, she put out a plastic duck with a RIP sign, and people would leave notes of condolence in her mailbox or flowers next to the sign.

As an animal lover, and a big fan of singer Barry Manilow, her dachshund was called Barry, and a kitten she recently rescued has been named Lola after the character in the Barry Manilow song Copacabana.

I've only lived in Smoke Rise for five years, but driving past Gail's house every day and seeing her decorations on various holidays always makes me smile and appreciative of such a thoughtful neighbor.



Salute to Advertiser

Meet Scott Ellington of Scott's Pressure Wash

by Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Scott Ellington started pressure washing and stump grinding as a part-time job in his off-hours to make extra money while working a full-time job. In 2008, he committed to picking one thing and being the best in the world at it. He chose pressure washing. But being the best required an investment in an expensive, high-pressure machine that he hauls to job sites on a trailer hitched to his truck. He had found that using push or hand-held devices took much longer to complete the jobs and left unsightly spray marks or circular patterns on the treated areas. But paying off the more effective equipment meant he had to get busy, and about 15 years ago, a friend suggested he advertise in the Smoke Signal. He has been advertising with us ever since.

Scott works with residential customers in our area, cleaning sidewalks, driveways, and home exteriors, making the surfaces look new or freshly

painted. He also works for businesses, which requires him to work in the wee hours of the morning when there are no cars in their parking lots. His dog, Grady, has been his steady companion on jobs since August of 2022 when he was adopted at 1 1/2 years old. As he describes it, "Having Grady with me gives me peace of mind, because my equipment is loud, and when I am working in the middle of the night when businesses are closed, he watches out for me, and makes me aware when people approach me in the dark."

Grady joined the Ellington family after their family dog of 14 years died. Scott couldn't bring himself to go to a shelter and pick out a rescue. It was too heartbreaking. But one day, his dog-trainer friend asked if we would adopt another dog if he found a good fit, and he found Grady. At first, Grady was uncontrollable and had been labeled "a runner." The trainer kept him for 6 weeks, and even though Scott bought a GPS tracker in case he ran away, thankfully, he has adjusted to his new family and now doesn't even need a leash. Grady attends weddings, funerals, visits nursing homes, and goes to work with Scott every day. Scott and his wife, Cathy, have two adult children. Lucas and his wife Anna have been married for 10 years and adopted a baby girl when she was 2 weeks old. He is relishing his new role as "Grizz," a grandfather, and spoiling their only grandchild. Daughter Maggie is getting married in July, and he is hopeful for many more grandchildren.

When he isn't pressure washing, Scott can be seen riding his Harley motorcycle, or tinkering in his workshop, spending time with his new granddaughter, listening to podcasts, and watching documentaries.

As a customer, I must admit, he has accomplished his goal of being the best in the world at pressure washing, and he and Grady are a pleasure to work with.



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BY JESSIE JONES, NICHOLAS HOPE & JAMIE WOOTEN

Four best friends, Libby Ruth, Deedra, Monette and Charlie, own 'Occasionally Yours,' a stuffy rental business in their beloved Laurelton Oaks plantation house - hosting harmless events like bridal showers. Together, they re-imagine their rental business as a lively hotspot for gatherings of all kinds, and joyfully begin hosting raucous retirement parties, birthday parties with a male stripper - even memorial services. What could possibly go wrong? Everything.



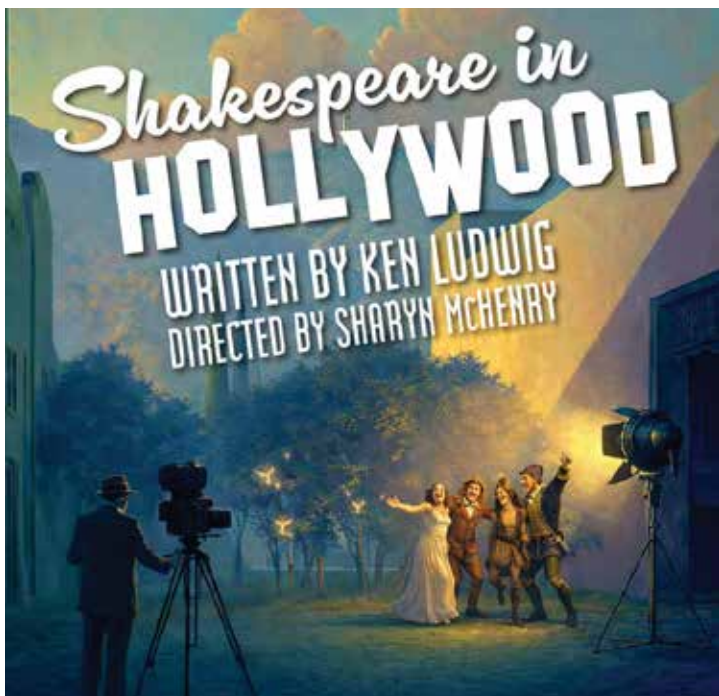
Their new ventures quickly turn chaotic, leading to unexpected and comedic mishaps which will bring endless joy and tears of laughter.

June 4 - 14

Thursdays & Fridays at 8:00 pm
Saturdays & Sundays at 3:00 pm
Wednesday, June 10th at 10:30 am

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Shakespeare in Hollywood

April 24 - May 3

Written by Ken Ludwig | Directed by Sharyn McHenry

www.tuckertheatre.com

Oberon and his mischievous servant Puck flee the fairy world and land in 1930s Hollywood, where they become entangled in a Warner Bros. film adaptation of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Their magic interferes with actors, studio executives, and romantic relationships, creating comic chaos as fantasy collides with the realities of show business. As love, ambition, and art clash, the fairies discover the power of imagination—and Hollywood is forever touched by Shakespearean magic.



PLEASE NOTE: This show contains adult material, infrequent strong language, and is intended for mature audiences.

Eastminster Presbyterian Church Offers Exciting Summer Programs for Kids and Teens

Rainforest Falls: Exploring the Nature of God • June 22 - 25

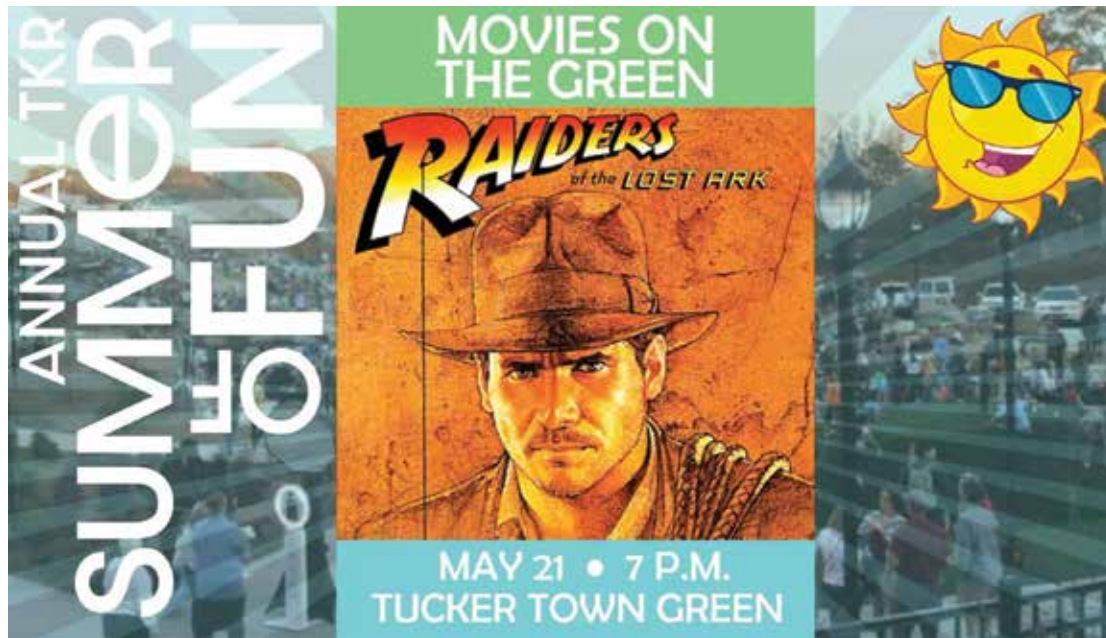
Children ages 3 to 12 are invited to embark on an exciting adventure at Rainforest Falls VBS, a free program running from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM daily. Themed "Exploring the Nature of God," the event is packed with engaging Bible lessons, uplifting music, fun team-building games, hands-on science experiments, and immersive storytelling.

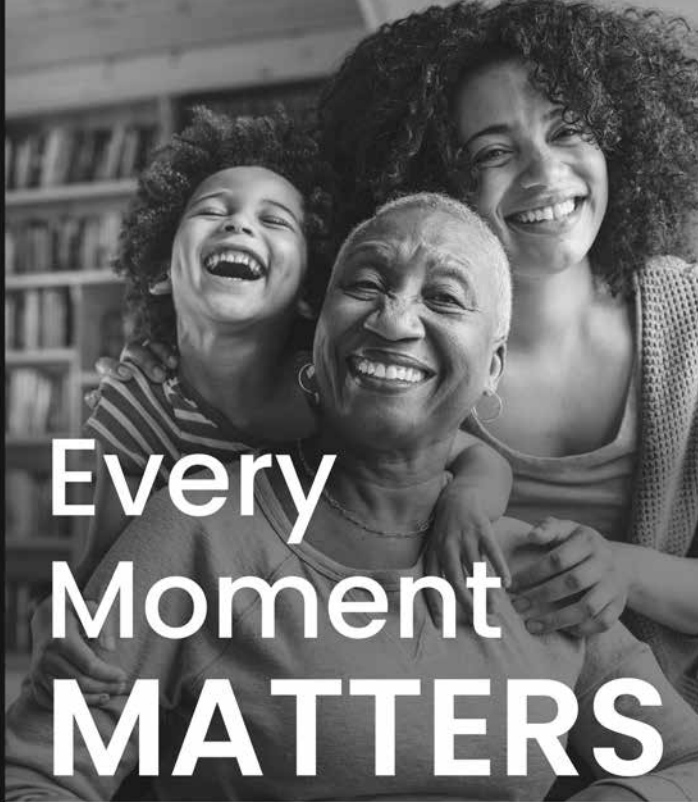
Teens aged 13 to 18 can get involved as Teen Crew Leaders, offering them a meaningful way to contribute while building leadership skills.


Eastminster Summer Camp 2026: "Faith Like Ferdinand"

Learn what it means to trust that God made each of us just the way we are. Inspired by the story of Ferdinand, the camp will encourage kids to grow in faith, confidence, and kindness as they learn that true strength comes from being the person God created them to be. With the uplifting message, "God made me just the way I am," this year's camp promises a fun, faith-filled, and encouraging summer experience.

Register online for any of the above events at www.eastminster.us/afterschool or visit the website for more information.









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Looking for Your New Favorite Summer Spot?

By Liam O' Marah, Summit resident

If you've lived in Smoke Rise for any amount of time, you've probably driven past it (Silver Hill Rd) — but if you haven't checked it out lately, now's the time. The Summit Swim & Tennis at Smoke Rise is gearing up for another great season, and memberships for the year are open.



The Summit Swim & Tennis is one of those places that just feels like summer. Think laidback afternoons by the pool, kids making new friends, neighbors catching up, and a few friendly tennis matches tossed into the mix. The pool has plenty of room for laps, lounging, and play, plus a diving board that's always a hit. On the tennis side, the courts are well-maintained and ready for both casual games and competitive rallies.

What really makes The Summit special, though, is the community vibe. It's relaxed, familyfriendly, and never feels overcrowded — more like a shared backyard than a public facility. Whether you're brand new to the area or have been here for years, it's an easy way to plug into the neighborhood and make the most of the warmer months.

If you're looking for a simple way to upgrade your summer routine, now's a great time to learn more about membership options (swim & tennis, or just tennis, or just swim) and what the club has to offer this year.

Visit thesummitatmokerise.com to check out details and see how to join. Hope to see you poolside soon!

PS: Did we mention that we have some of the **LOWEST** rates in Tucker for membership?

Pool Season & Summer Camps at Smoke Rise Country Club

By Sydney Hurst, Membership Sales Director

Pool season is almost here, and summer fun is heating up at Smoke Rise Country Club. Our junior Olympic-size saltwater pool is the heart of warmweather activities, offering the perfect mix of relaxation and family fun. Members can unwind poolside with refreshing drinks, enjoy attentive service, and relax to the soothing sound of our cascading waterfall.



Kids will love the water slide and kiddie pool, while families can spend the day making memories together. Just steps away, the Tennis Café provides convenient poolside dining with tasty options for all ages. Whether you're seeking peaceful afternoons or lively social gatherings, the Smoke Rise pool is where summer comes to life.

For more information, email or call Sydney Hurst at Shurst@smokerisecc.com or 770-908-2582, ext. 4.

Smoke Rise Country Club Summer Camps

Smoke Rise Country Club is excited to offer Summer Sports Camps led by UTA tennis and pickleball pros, with golf instruction provided by our Smoke Rise staff. Camps run from 9:00 AM–4:00 PM and include tennis & pickleball, golf, and pool time on select weeks.

Summer Sports Camp Dates:

- June 1-5: Tennis & Pool ONLY
- June 8-12: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)
- June 15-19: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)
- June 22-26: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)
- July 6-10: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)
- July 13-17: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)
- July 20-24: Sports Camp (Tennis, Golf, Pool)

Campers should bring water, snacks, lunch, and swim attire. Camps are Monday – Friday, rain or shine.

To register your child for summer camp, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/4t85734z>. You can also email smokerisesummercamp@utatennis.com or call (404) 497-0680 and choose option 4.

Mountain Creek Swim Club is a vibrant community hub that offers something for everyone

By Katharine Hernandez

Location: 2092 Mountain Creek Court, Smoke Rise, Ga. 30087

Throughout the summer season, the club hosts a wide variety of events designed to bring members together and create lasting memories. One of the most anticipated activities is “Tunes on the Deck,” featuring live music, delicious barbecue, and exciting raffles with prizes from local businesses. And for the Annual Cardboard Regatta, participants design and build their own cardboard boats to see if they can successfully float and make it across the pool! (It's harder than you might think, haha!) It's a creative, laughter-filled event that draws a crowd every year.

For younger members, Mountain Creek offers Family Fun Days with games, activities, and kid-friendly entertainment. Teen Nights give older kids a chance to socialize in a safe environment with swimming and themed activities. Adults aren't left out either—Grown-Up Hangouts provide a more relaxed atmosphere for parents and friends to unwind and connect. The club also hosts classic summer cookouts, bringing everyone together over great food and good company.

In addition to events, Mountain Creek Swim Club offers swim lessons for all skill levels, helping children and adults build confidence and improve their abilities in the water. Membership options are affordable and rates can be found at: MountainCreekSwimClub@gmail.com.

- Our swim season dates are May 23 - September 14
- Monday through Thursday: 10 am-8 pm*
- Friday: 10 am-9 pm*
- Saturday and Sunday: 8 am-9 pm

Mountain Creek Swim Club is more than just a place to swim—it's a welcoming and warm community centered around fun, connection, and summertime traditions.



Join us for a fun summer at Smoke Rise Baptist Weekday School!

Camp is open to ages 1 – rising sixth graders.
 Dates and Themes
 June 8-12: Silverstien (poetry)
 June 15-19: Dog Man (graphic novels/comics)
 July 6-10: Narnia (fantasy/adventure)
 July 13-17: Disney Fairy Tales

Special Needs

We are delighted to open our camp to children of all abilities, even those who are medically fragile. Our playground and facilities are wheelchair accessible. We would love the opportunity to serve your family. Please contact us to discuss your child's needs and to see if we might be a good fit for a summer of fun and friendship!

<https://smokerisebaptist.org/family/weekday-school-summer-camp/>

Smoke Rise Baptist Church's



Experience Creativity at Music & Arts Summer Camp!

Join us for an exciting adventure in music, theater, and visual arts at Smoke Rise Academy of Arts' Music & Arts Summer Camp! From June 22-25, 12:30 – 4:30 PM, young artists (rising grades K-7) will explore their creativity through engaging classes, hands-on projects, and fun performances.

Our talented instructors will guide campers in singing, dancing, acting, and creating art, fostering confidence and imagination in a supportive environment. Whether your child loves to paint, perform, or play, this camp is the perfect place to grow their artistic skills while making new friends.

Registration is due by June 1. Spots are limited—register today and let the creativity begin!

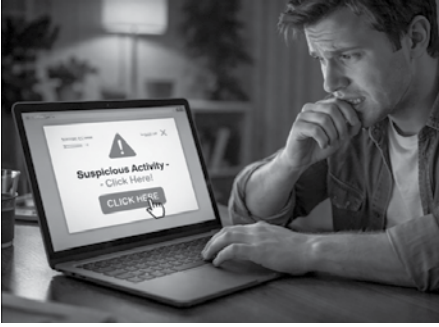


techtalk By Joel Gilbert, Staff Writer

Tempted to Click that Link?

Don't! Want to know what Artificial Intelligence (AI) means to most of us? Scams and traps!

The article in last month's Smoke Signal on telephone scams was excellent, and I hope you read it carefully. This one is about the online versions of the same evil intent: getting you to click a link. Beware especially of DocuSign requests you never expected. Be suspicious of any requests for help from distant friends or relatives and never open an email if you doubt its authenticity.



I assume you all have online security software to protect your computer and your identity, but today's predators have learned how to make their emails look like they came from your bank, phone provider, online merchants, and even the government. They disguise their intent by implying you are going to get money, free gifts, or vacations, or by suggesting you will be prosecuted for unpaid fines. Their goal is for you to click a link, after which they immediately download a virus that tracks your clicks, allowing them to steal money from your bank accounts and use your credit cards.

Even if you think you know who the suspicious email is from, phone them and alert them that you received a suspicious email. The Internet and our email boxes have become inundated with scams that are getting so clever that it's hard to know whether to open them or click a link from someone you thought was your friend.

When in doubt, check the validity of what you are reading by googling the request or demand. You probably don't owe those tolls or are going to face criminal charges for things you know you haven't done.

If you clicked a link and your computer froze, get your kids or grandkids to help. If you don't have this resource, one of our classified advertisers, Mike Markas of The PC Link, is wonderful to help.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

Don't Let a Text Lead You Down the Wrong Road

As we near the end of spring and look ahead to summer, many of us may be planning a road trip or two. Unfortunately, scammers are counting on that seasonal uptick in travel (and traffic) to make their latest scheme seem more believable.

Watch out for a text message scam that's rapidly spreading, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). It begins with a text that appears to be an official notice about a traffic violation. The message often includes a QR code and may feature what looks like a government seal, a case number, and even a scheduled court date and time. The message typically presents two options: appear at a hearing or pay a fine immediately.

While it may look convincing at first glance, the message is entirely fraudulent. Scammers are counting on urgency and fear to prompt quick action. The text often warns of serious consequences for failing to respond right away, including default judgments, additional fines, or enforcement actions. The goal is to pressure recipients into scanning the QR code without taking time to verify the information. But, doing so can put your personal and financial information at risk.

Once scanned, the QR code may direct users to a fake website designed to collect sensitive data such as Social Security numbers, credit card details, or other personal information. In some cases, it may even install malicious software on your phone. The FTC advises against engaging with these messages altogether. Do not respond, and do not scan any QR codes from unsolicited texts.

If you're concerned that a notice could be legitimate, it's a good idea to take a moment to verify it independently. Look up the appropriate court's official website or phone number, and be sure not to rely on any contact information provided in the suspicious message itself. Officials emphasize that legitimate government agencies typically do not request payments or sensitive information through unsolicited text messages, especially those involving QR codes.

Anyone who believes they may have already interacted with one of these scams, whether by scanning the code, entering personal information, or making a payment, should act quickly. Contact your financial institutions, monitor your accounts for unusual activity, and consider placing fraud alerts on your credit reports. You are also encouraged to report these incidents to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. Reporting helps authorities track scam trends and protect others in the community.

As summer travel ramps up, stay cautious with unexpected messages, and help ensure your plans stay on track (and scam-free).

Springtime

*Beautiful blossoms fill the air
with perfumed fragrance everywhere.
Pink and white petals dance in the breeze
as they float down from the trees.
Winter wardrobes stored away,
April has now turned to May.
Birds are nesting, flowers are blooming,
cold days are over, summer is looming.
What perfect Springtime days are these.
Unless, of course, you have allergies!*

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

Skin Cancer

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. This month focuses on prevention and early detection of skin cancer by reminding you to check your skin for new, changing, or unusual spots. Skin cancer occurs when skin cells grow abnormally, usually because of damage from ultraviolet radiation from the sun or tanning beds. It is the most common cancer in the United States, but it is also one of the most treatable when found early.

Main Types of Skin Cancer

1. Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)- This is the most common type of skin cancer. It usually appears as a pearly or waxy bump, or flat flesh-colored or brown lesion. It rarely spreads but it can damage surrounding tissue if untreated.
2. Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)- This is the second most common type of skin cancer. It often appears as a firm red nodule, or a flat lesion with a scaly or crusted surface. It can spread if not treated early.
3. Melanoma- This is the most dangerous type of skin cancer. It begins with melanocytes (pigment cells) and can spread to other organs if untreated. It often appears as a new mole or a change in an existing mole. Doctors often use the ABCDE Rule to identify melanoma: A) Asymmetry- one half unlike the other, B) Border- irregular or blurred edges, C) Color-multiple colors or uneven shade, D) Diameter-larger than ~6mm (pencil eraser), and E) Evolving- changing in size shape or color

Prevention Tips

1. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30+) daily
2. Wear hats, sunglasses, and protective clothing
3. Avoid sun between 10 am -4 pm
4. Do monthly skin self-exams
5. Get annual dermatology skin checks

Treatment Options

Treatment depends on the type and stage, but may include:

1. Surgical removal
2. Mohs surgery (precise removal of cancer layers)
3. Cryotherapy (freezing)
4. Topical medications
5. Radiation therapy
6. Immunotherapy or targeted therapy (advanced melanoma)

Good news: When detected early, most skin cancers are highly curable!



Pre-Skin Cancers (Precancerous Skin Lesions)

Pre-skin cancers are skin changes that are not yet cancer, but have the potential to turn into skin cancer if left untreated. The most common type is actinic keratosis, which can develop into squamous cell carcinoma. Dermatologists consider them an early warning sign if significant sun damage. The typical appearance is a rough, dry scaly patch. They are often pink red, or flesh-colored. They may feel like sandpaper and are sometimes easier to feel than see. Common locations include face, scalp (especially in thinning hair), ears, neck forearms, backs of hands, and lower legs. People who get them include adults over 40, people with fair skin, individuals with significant lifetime sun exposure, and those who have used tanning beds. Only a small percentage turn into cancer, but doctors treat them because it is impossible to know which will progress.

Remember that those unattractive age spots can be examined and treated for free. Medicare pays for it, and other insurance will pay for it! Call a dermatologist and make an appointment. The doctor's PA or advanced practice nurse can usually see you before the doctor. **MAKE THE APPOINTMENT!**

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Rooted in Peace, Blooming with Purpose: A Garden That Tells a Life Story

Mountain Mum Garden of the Month for May 2026

1629 Barrington View, Stone Mountain, Georgia

Wayne and Elizabeth Millington

By Joy Moseri-Cooper, Mountain Mums Member

There are homes you pass by, and then there are homes that invite you to slow down. The residence of Elizabeth and Wayne Millington is the latter, a living, breathing landscape that reflects patience, purpose, and pride. This May, their garden has been selected as Mountain Mum’s Garden of the Month, and it is easy to see why. From the moment you approach their home, the curb appeal speaks for itself. Carefully layered greenery, vibrant seasonal color, and thoughtful design create a welcoming presence that feels both curated and organic. But beyond its beauty, this garden tells a deeper story, one rooted in culture, resilience, and a genuine love for nature.

For Wayne, gardening is more than a hobby; it is a source of peace and connection. A retired public health advisor who served both domestically and internationally, including on rapid response teams during critical global health events. Wayne brings the same intentionality to his garden as he did to his career. He describes the process as grounding: watching plants bloom, fade, and returns; mirrors life’s own cycles. In tending to the soil, he has found both reflection and renewal. His Caribbean roots also play a quiet but meaningful role in the landscape. While Georgia’s seasons differ from the year-round vibrancy of the islands, Wayne thoughtfully incorporates elements that remind him of home, banana trees, bold colors, and layered textures that echo tropical abundance. These touches create a unique blend of Southern structure and island spirit, resulting in a garden that feels both local and deeply personal.

What makes this space especially remarkable is its evolution. When the Millingtons moved into their home in 2013, the yard was minimal, with little existing landscaping. Over time, through experimentation, learning, and collaboration, it has transformed into a cohesive outdoor sanctuary. Elizabeth, while quick to credit Wayne’s hands-on work, has played an essential role in shaping the vision, offering ideas, refining placement, and helping guide the aesthetic direction. Together, they have built not just a garden, but a shared expression of creativity. The result is a layered landscape that offers something new at every glance. Limelight hydrangeas provide structure and drama during bloom season, while peonies introduce softness and elegance. Azaleas stretch their color display well into late summer, defying expectations. Petunias, roses, and seasonal plantings ensure that color is never absent, while the thoughtful use of spacing and elevation creates natural flow throughout the yard.

Beyond ornamentals, the Millington’s have embraced functionality with purpose. Their vegetable gardens carefully maintained and rotated; produce collards, carrots, broccoli, and more. It is a true farm-to-table extension of their home, where what is grown is shared, prepared, and enjoyed. As Wayne tends the garden, Elizabeth brings it to life in the kitchen, completing a cycle of care that is both practical and deeply fulfilling. Equally striking is how the landscape defines the space. The garden acts as a natural boundary, creating privacy and structure while maintaining openness. Mature trees provide shade and attract birds, adding sound and movement to the environment. It is not just a yard; it is an ecosystem.

The Millington’s also speak highly of their community in Smoke Rise, citing its intimate feel, accessibility, and the shared commitment among neighbors to maintain a beautiful environment. Their home is a reflection of that collective pride, yet it stands out as a benchmark of what is possible with time, intention, and passion. As Mountain Mum honors this garden for May 2026, it is not just recognizing aesthetic excellence, it is celebrating a philosophy. The Millington’s’ garden reminds us that beauty is cultivated, that patience yields transformation, and that our outdoor spaces can become extensions of who we are. In every bloom, every pathway, and every carefully placed plant, there is a story. And at 1629 Barrington View, that story is still growing.

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

Nesting Cardinal

Passing by the dining room window, I once again spotted a flurry of brown and red feathers darting toward the nearby nandina bush beneath the house’s wide eaves.

Last night, while enjoying a peaceful evening on my cozy courtyard patio, I watched Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal making repeated trips to the tall, leafy bush. Upon closer observation, I noticed a lovely, cup-shaped nest tucked expertly into the upper branches. I knew it had been constructed by Mrs. Cardinal, woven from small twigs and leaves, and lined with soft grasses and even bits of hair.

Before long, there would be several off-white eggs, hatching in just 11 to 13 days. Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal would share the task of feeding their babies from dawn to dusk, tirelessly bringing them nourishment. Later, the little ones would test their wings, attempting their first flights just 9 to 11 days after hatching.

The now peaceful nest would soon be bustling with tiny chirps, hungry beaks, and a bit of delightful feathered commotion. And just as quickly as it begins, the flutter and fuss will fade, the young birds taking to the sky, leaving the patio still and peaceful once more, holding only the memory of their brief, lively stay.



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Michele and Tim Spears with the carnivorous plant display

Smoke Rise Morning Glories on: Carnivorous Plants...Another of Nature's Surprises

By Quill Duncan, Smoke Rise Resident and Club Member

The Venus Flytrap is a very beautiful bog plant native to the wetlands of North and South Carolina and Eastern United States. The jaws of the plant contain sensitive hairs and if several of the hairs are tripped by an insect, the jaws close and the insect is trapped and absorbed by the plant for food. Interestingly, the fly trap has a form of fire protection. A forest fire causes the jaw mechanism to snap shut and thus protects the plant from summer fires.

There are several species of carnivorous plants native to our region including pitcher plants and sundews. Often found in bogs, they share the same diet of insects which are absorbed by enzymes in the plant's trap. All species of sundew can move their sticky tentacles to trap prey and draw them in. And all the carnivorous plants have blooms on a long stem above the leaves of the plant to attract pollinators such as bees and not disturb the insect trap well below the flower.

Michele Spears of the Avon Garden Club cultivates these plants in her garden and greenhouse. For the April Smoke Rise Morning Glories meeting Michele and her husband brought several types of the plants for her demonstration and included some "lunch" for the plants to enjoy.

It is fascinating how nature adopts and adapts in so many ways in our world. Several of these species are considered as possible candidates for the Endangered Species Act listing.

In club news, President Kim Fair congratulated the club on the awards that were won for our club and our fellow DeKalb Federation and Redbud District affiliations at The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. April convention in Peachtree City, GA. Five members attended the three-day event which featured speakers, floral design workshops and educational activities. If you would like to attend a Smoke Rise Morning Glories meeting, please contact Kim Fair at 404 384-7851.

Trap Music & Trowels: Notes From the Smoke Rise Garden Club

By Alex Helton, Smoke Rise Neighbor & Burgeoning Gardener

What do weeding and trap music have in common? They were both discussed at last month's Smoke Rise Garden Club meeting.

We met at Gucci Mane's former residence so it was mandatory that we gossip about the self-proclaimed trap god and kidnapping victim. Robin Biro, the home's current owner is a fellow member and club horticulturist and he delivered the dirt, so to speak.

Our lecturer was Dottie Myers, whose company offers landscape design services and consultations. She presented helpful ideas for gardening as we age and made the point that as our capabilities change, our landscape is evolving too. Here are some of her specific tips:

See What Others See: Dottie suggested a visual survey of your yard from the street. If you have limited time and energy, you might focus on the observable areas and let the behind-the-scenes patches get a bit messy.



Dottie Myers

Don't Ignore Size & Scale: Knowing how tall or wide a plant will eventually become is vital. You thought you chose a dainty shrub, but four years later, the root system has damaged a walkway and a nearby flowerbed is dying in the dark. Plan carefully so you don't end up fighting nature.

Know Your Enemies: Don't waste energy trying to get every weed. Focus on eradicating the worst invaders. She suggests reading up on weeds so you can identify and tackle the perennials first. Use the right tools to protect your knees and back. She's a fan of the cobra headed weeder and a sharp hoe to minimize stooping. Dottie's favorite weeding position is flat out on the ground on top of an old army blanket, with two armpit pillows to prop herself up. Let's try it out!

In Other News:

The End of an Era - We learned last month that Walter Reeves, the longtime host of "The Lawn and Garden Show with Walter Reeves" died after battling Parkinson's for a decade. Even non-gardeners like me listened to his WSB show.

May Garden Tips - Focus on watering your new plantings deeply so that their roots are well established before the heat of summer is upon us. Also, inspect plants regularly to spot fungal or pest infestations early.

Annual Plant Sale - The SRGC sale will be held on Saturday, May 2 from 9am to 3pm at the home of Alice Norton, 5308 Antelope Lane. This sale is a great way to acquire inexpensive plants and get to know us too. Monies are used to fund the club's charitable activities.

The Mountain Mums

By Cheri Schneider, Club Member

Our April schedule was full! Our club does have fun— all 34 of us! And we love to learn about plants. Our April meeting featured Speaker Rachel Smith with the Georgia State Botanical Gardens. She is the Georgia Native Seed Network Project Manager and spoke on native seeds and grasses. Two takeaways from her program you might find interesting:

1. Tree growth is 71% above ground and only 29% root growth. Whereas grasses have 19% of their growth above ground and 81% below ground. This is why we need grasses in Georgia! They help maintain fire barriers and many species that are beneficial.

2. It takes the equivalent of 5,000 caterpillars for one bird to rear a chick from one egg. Plant flowers for more caterpillars and more birds.

The Mums also had fun while they served in April. We had two workdays at the Smoke Rise Community Garden where we weeded the front of the garden. Sally Young's husband did the hard work of cutting 'weed' trees. On April 21, our 'horticultural therapy' crew created a craft project at Atria with our friends (See picture of Garden Gnome we made in March). For fun, the Mums had an evening 'sip and stroll' through Susan Gilbert's garden with their husbands. And they took a fieldtrip to Wyldewood, followed by lunch. Oh, and did I mention, we harvested lettuce and fresh produce at NETWorks? And just in case you think our service projects are all work and no play--- most of our service projects and field trip are followed by lunch nearby.

If you would like to visit our club, please email Mary Jacobson for more information: mjacob1010@gmail.com. We MAY have one spot left!



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Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary...continued from page 1

offers lots of educational information about animals and their habitats as well as unique souvenir gifts.

Henry enjoyed all the animals, but the 2-toed sloth was first on his list of favorites.

I encourage the Smoke Rise community to support this local attraction. You can find answers to all your questions by visiting YRWS website where you can pull up the map and get other info when planning your visit. Go to www.yellowriverwildlife-sanctuary.com to learn more about the Sanctuary's expansion and comprehensive photos and descriptions of all the animals.

Marisa Fernandez's photo of her daughter Harper Fernandez with animals during Christmas. (Used by permission)



the great outdoors



Carolina Wren chicks. [Photo submitted by Laura Smith]



Midland water snake seen eating fish at Stone Mountain Park [Photo by Cheri Schneider]

Food & Home Fixin's

by Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

Easy to make quick meals are a welcome answer for that daily question of "What's for Dinner?" This month I am featuring two restaurant-inspired favorites that your family will enjoy.

Easy Philly Cheese-Steak Sandwiches

This recipe makes four hoagie sized sandwiches but can be altered for any number of servings.

- 2 cups of beef broth
- 1 pkg. onion-soup mix
- 1 pound thinly sliced rare roast beef
- 1 sliced green bell pepper
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 8 oz cream cheese
- 8 slices Provolone cheese
- 4 Hoagie rolls

Bring beef broth and onion- soup mix to a boil. Add Roast Beef, reduce heat and simmer for about 5 minutes. Sauté onion and green pepper in large skillet. Drain juice from beef and save the juice for dipping. Add roast beef to skillet along with half of cream cheese. Spread remaining cream cheese on each hoagie roll. When the cream cheese in the skillet is melted, generously portion beef mixture onto each hoagie roll. Add 2 slices of Provolone cheese – one on each side of roll and place sandwiches, open faced, on a large baking sheet. Broil on high for about one minute or until cheese becomes bubbly and bread is slightly toasty. Optional additions: mushrooms, hot peppers, tomatoes, pickles. These sandwiches will stay warm if wrapped in foil and placed in an insulated bag or cooler.

Pulled Pork Quesadillas

This recipe can stretch that last cup of pulled pork, or you can make it in a large batch for a party for an entrée or appetizer:

- 1 cup pulled pork
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 2 (8 inch) flour tortillas
- 2/3 cup sliced Pepperjack or other favorite cheese
- Chopped fresh cilantro

Reheat pulled pork in a microwave until it is warm enough to spread. Heat large skillet or griddle, then melt and spread butter over it. Place 2 tortillas, side by side and fold in center. Inside one half of each tortilla place one slice of cheese, add half of pulled pork, fresh cilantro and top with 2nd slice of cheese. Fold tortilla and cook for about 2 minutes, or until the bottom of the tortilla is golden brown and crispy. Flip, and cook for another minute or two or until crispy. Cut into triangles. Serve warm with salsa, guacamole or sour cream.

Fruit Pizza

This dessert gives you the chance to use your creativity when cutting the fruit and arrange it in your own chosen design.

Crust:
1 package (8 oz) cut and bake sugar cookie dough. Press dough onto a 12 inch generously greased pizza pan or cookie sheet. Bake as directed until the dough is golden brown. If you desire a thicker crust, use 1½ pkgs of dough. Cool after baking.

Fruit: Use fresh strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, fresh pineapple, peaches, mango, kiwi or any other favorite fruit other than melon.

Filling:
One (8 oz) pkg cream cheese
¼ cup granulated sugar
½ tsp vanilla

Mix all ingredients in electric mixer until smooth. Spread on cooled cookie crust.

Arrange fruit in your own design on top of filling.

Glaze:
1 cup granulated sugar
3 T. Corn Starch
3 T. flavored gelatin

Mix together and add one cup of water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture thickens and becomes clear. Pour over sliced fruit. Chill. Serve with whipped cream.

*Note: Any fruit flavor of gelatin can be used for the pizza glaze.