

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 57, ISSUE 11

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

February, 2025

www.smokesignalnews.com



The Smoke Signal Staff wishes you a very **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!**

The Origins of Valentine's Day

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Valentine's Day is often traced to the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, which took place in mid-February. Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to the Roman gods Faunus (god of agriculture) and Lupercus (god of shepherds). During the festival, people made sacrifices to ensure the fertility of crops, and young men and women were paired together in a lottery. Often, the couples stayed paired until the next festival. It was a celebration of fertility, love, and the coming of spring.

The day is also associated with Saint Valentine, a Christian martyr. Although there were several saints named Valentine, the most popular legend involves a priest named Valentine, who lived during the reign of Emperor Claudius II in Rome. The story goes that Claudius had banned marriages for young soldiers, believing that unmarried men made better warriors. Valentine defied the emperor and secretly married young couples. When his actions were discovered, Valentine was arrested, and he was executed on February 14th, around 269 AD. Valentine's selfless actions led him to be regarded as a symbol of love and compassion.

The modern celebration of Valentine's Day began to take shape in the 18th and 19th centuries in England and the United States. By the 19th century, people began exchanging elaborate cards, often adorned with flowers, lace, and symbols of love. The first mass-produced Valentine's Day cards appeared in the United States in the 1840s, thanks to Esther Howland, an American artist and entrepreneur.

With the rise of industrialization, the tradition of exchanging valentines grew further, and in the 20th century, the holiday became more commercialized. The focus shifted to gifts, such as chocolates, flowers (especially roses), jewelry, and greeting cards, which are now widely exchanged.

Today, Valentine's Day is celebrated around the world as a day to express love and affection, primarily through gifts and gestures. In many countries, it has expanded beyond romantic love to include expressions of affection between friends, family members, and even coworkers. It has become a major consumer holiday, with billions of dollars spent annually on gifts, cards, flowers, and experiences.

The holiday's original roots in fertility and religious devotion, have blended over the centuries, making Valentine's Day a complex and multifaceted celebration of love.

Learn more at www.history.com and www.americanstationery.com.

Valentine's Day ... Hallmark Style

By Cheri Schneider, Staff Writer

I admit to watching a few Hallmark movies over the Christmas holiday. Stick with me here for a moment. While watching these shows I noticed several commonalities, and perhaps if you are a Hallmark fan, you did, too. You may know where I am going with this. Well, I thought it could be fun to imagine what my Valentine's Day date could look like if I were a Hallmark woman.

The Hallmark woman always plays a prominent role. She is usually the successful one among her friends, with a career as a journalist, doctor, writer, lawyer, executive or realtor. (Yes, hubby.... I got this down!)

Also, these women always seem to have no children! (Well, my kids HAVE flown the coop. That should count!) They typically run into their future true love in a place like the hardware store, or they hire them to help with a renovation. (Fat Chance! In our house, this Hallmark woman still needs contracted help to replace our carpet and refurbish the floors).

Additionally, ALL the characters in these movies are gorgeous, spokesmodel types of human beings. (Well, I may need some work on that, but luckily my husband has "gorgeous" covered for the two of us).

The common locations for scenes are bakeries, catering companies and coffee shops. I have noticed that in the movies, the whipped cream in the hot chocolate is three inches high, and the characters never have to eat just half of a cookie or piece of pie. I am lucky if I get any

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

Find this month's story on Page 5.

The *Smoke Signal* is enhancing our publication with color! Find out how to become a Patron or sponsor a color edition at Staff@smokesignalnews.com

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.
Contact: staff@smokesignalnews.com



Smoke Signal

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

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Smoke Signal Deadlines

FEBRUARY 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.

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DeKalb Police Receives Grant to Tackle Dangerous Driving

By Angela Ahn

DeKalb County’s police force just got a boost in their fight against reckless driving. The department received a \$150K Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (HEAT) grant to crack down on aggressive drivers and make local roads safer.

The money will help police target speeders and impaired drivers, while also pushing for more seatbelt use. It comes at a crucial time, as Georgia has seen a concerning spike in traffic deaths over the past year.

The grant lets DeKalb join other high-risk counties in running special enforcement campaigns. Expect to see more police checkpoints and patrols throughout the year, especially during major safety initiatives like Operation Zero Tolerance and Click It or Ticket.

“Most deadly crashes can be prevented,” says Allen Poole from the Governor’s Highway Safety Office. “This program is part of Georgia’s push toward zero traffic deaths.”

Read more from the source: Decaturish.com

Smoke Rise Baptist Church

5901 Hugh Howell Road
Senior Pastor: Dr. Chris George, cgeorge@smokerisebaptist.org
Phone: 770-469-5856
SmokeRiseBaptist.org

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

WEDNESDAY
5:00 p.m. - Attend our Wednesday Dinner
6:00 p.m. - Followed by activities and Bible Study for all ages

Eastminster Presbyterian Church

5801 Hugh Howell Road
Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor, 678-481-4052
Phone: 770-469-4881
Website: Eastminster.us

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

First Moravian Church

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

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

Incarnate Word Lutheran Church

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

SUNDAY 8:45 a.m. Worship

Mountain West Church

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

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

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

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

You can also visit our Facebook page at
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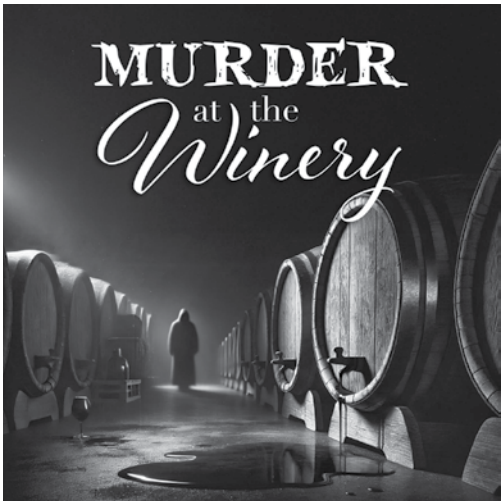
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Date: Friday, February 7th
Time: 6:00-9:00 p.m.
(Live music by The Cazanovas)

Date: Friday, February 21st
Time: 6:00-9:00 p.m.
(Live music by Emerald Empire Band)

MURDER at the Winery
MAIN STREET THEATRE

Six months ago, Georgio Tortellini, owner of the Tortellini Brothers Winery (est. 1909) passed away. As executor of Georgio's will, his driver/bodyguard, Carmine, must face off with Georgio's daughters, Olive and Toni, to decide the winery's future. Selling it off to the highest bidder is clearly the most lucrative option. With dollar signs in their eyes and empty wine glasses raised, scam artists, love interests, and more come together for one last wine auction at Tortellini Winery. In the course of the evening, as tensions rise and the world-famous Tortellini wines flow, we learn that each prospective bidder has a motive for murder. One or more of the evening's guests will be toast! Who in the room will be revealed as the murderer?



Murder Mystery Dinner Performances:
Thursdays and Sundays - February 23, 26, 30, March 2
Questions? info@tuckertheatre.com
Written by James Nelson
Directed by Christa Sfameni



City of Tucker FEBRUARY TUCKER
CITY HALL EVENTS

Downtown Development Authority
February 03 | 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Zoning Board of Appeals
February 04 | 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Mayor & City Council Meeting
February 10 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Seniors Valentine's Day Lunch
Tucker Recreation Center
Friday, February 14 | 12:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Planning Commission
February 20 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Mayor and City Council
February 24 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

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



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Generous Donations Help Grant Wishes

By Victor Economy

The 2024 Christmas season was as merry and bright as ever! We continued the tradition of decorating our home with thousands of lights, and this year we welcomed the addition of a Christmas clock that counted down to Christmas Day. Santa and Mrs. Claus were able to stop by again to hear requests and pose for pictures in their sleigh. We were happy to have had them back and are hoping that they will have time to come by again in December 2025!

On average it costs \$10,000.00 for Make-A-Wish Georgia to grant a wish. With the help of neighbors, friends, Make-A-Wish volunteers, and a matching donation from Cy Hume of A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home, this year we collected \$27,765.38. On Monday, January 13th, my wife Theo and I presented 100% of the collected donations to organization representative Sarah Lantis.

We are so grateful to everyone for their donations and for the generosity they have shown to this wonderful organization. The 2024 amount surpasses our 2023 total, and brings the grand total for all collections, beginning with the original donation drive in 2015, to \$115,187.35. We are so excited to be able fully grant two wishes to local children this year!

We also want to thank all our wonderful Summit neighbors who tolerate the constant traffic on our street. We hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Unlike Santa, who gets to rest for a few months, we are already working hard on our new addition to the Christmas decorations for 2025!

Golf Tournament Celebrates Twenty Years

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

In December 2024, the Arthur Wood Memorial Golf Tournament celebrated its 20th year of honoring Arthur Wood Senior, who initiated this Salvation Army fundraiser. The event raised \$19,000 and contributed more than 300 toys to “Toys for Tots.”

Art Wood Junior has been carrying on the tradition undaunted through some great weather and plenty of cold, dreary days. An avid tennis player himself, he expanded the audience to include a tennis tournament each December which generates additional funds. Watch your Fall 2025 *Smoke Signal* for announcements of dates and times to get involved!



Art Wood with his family, mom Diane, wife Karen and two kids.

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Eastminster Church News - Neighborly Love

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Who is our neighbor? Jesus asked this question some two thousand years ago, and we still ask it. How can we live out His command to love others in our daily lives? At Eastminster Presbyterian Church, we warmly welcome everyone—whether you’re a seasoned churchgoer, new to faith, or just curious. You don’t need to be a believer or meet any specific criteria to join us for worship or community events. Our goal is to make everyone feel loved and valued, just as God calls us to do.

The Art of Neighboring, a book by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, teaches churches how to explore practical ways to love and serve those around us. Join us in exploring this exciting book, sermon series, and Bible study. Sunday programs are designed for children, youth, families and adults.

Upcoming special events in 2025:

- Friends & Neighbors Day is on Sunday, February 23, a morning filled with food, faith, and fellowship.
- Heritage Sunday is on March 23, celebrating our community’s diverse cultures with music, food, and heritage displays.
- Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 5, with a drive-thru imposition of ashes, dinner at 5:15 p.m. and followed by a service with the imposition of ashes at 6:00 p.m.
- For the World Day of Prayer on March 7, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., we offer an unstructured contemplative space to drop in and pray in the Sanctuary.

Join us for any of these special events or just stop by on Sunday!

Questions? Phone: (770) 469-4881

Web: Eastminster.us



Meet Your Neighbor!

Meet Emily, my best friend and fellow Smoke Rise resident!

By Allison Clarke

We met in college, via Craigslist of all places, while attending Georgia State. Emily was looking to downsize after having her own apartment and instead rent a room to save some money. I was living in a dump of a house I bought as a foreclosure and fixed up with band aids. I also had a dog and two dude roommates. At first, I thought we were probably less than ideal candidates for roommates. It seemed like we were a bit opposite, and I wasn’t sure she would like transitioning from her own private, nicer place to sharing with another girl, a 100 lb. dog, and two guys in a rundown house off Moreland Avenue. She even had a cat, and my dog didn’t like cats. She came to meet with us, and I don’t know how we all decided it would be a good idea, but my roommates and I liked that she seemed so genuine, upfront, and “no-nonsense.” Or maybe I’m the one who liked that, while the boys just liked that she was really cute, hot, and had a cool bartending job at a club in Midtown. Anyways, next thing you know - BAM! - we became best friends!

Eventually Emily and I both got married and bought other places to live but we weren’t too far from each other. Then a few years ago, I started looking around for a house with some more land. I had dreams of kids and a go-cart/dirt bike trail through the backyard, but I didn’t want to be too far from the city. I had always known of Smoke Rise because years ago my dad taught tennis to a family with a court in their backyard here. I started casually looking around, and even though prices were going up at the time, I was very surprised at the amount of house and land you could get in such a nice area this close to the city.

After exploring the neighborhood a bit, I was set on Smoke Rise being the place I wanted to live. Of course, Emily came with me to tour a few houses, and the tours along with some good timing/life circumstances of her own got her pretty interested in the area too. I wasn’t going to get my hopes up, but I started really trying to sell her on the many pros of living here: convenient golf, tennis, pools, trees, lots of space, hiking, diversity, and my list went on and on.

Next thing I knew, a couple months later she bought a house here in Smoke Rise - before



me! Literally just like that! Then she began asking me each week when the heck I was going to get here. It took my husband and I another year and a half to get our ducks in a row and find the right place, but we are finally here as well.

Fast forward another year or so, and now Emily and I both have little boys and have met some amazing people in our neighbors. We love living here, and we love reading the Smoke Rise Smoke Signal. When we were roommates, we used to get Reader’s Digest, and Em would fold down the pages for the best parts and then come read me all her highlights. Today, the Smoke Signal has been a great replacement for the good ole Reader’s Digest!

I am excited to tell our whole new neighborhood about my friend Emily and give her a little shock at seeing herself as she flips through the February edition. Her birthday is February 3rd, so if you happen to see her around, please wish her a happy birthday! Hopefully she doesn’t kill me for this!

Happy Birthday Em! You are seriously the best and it means the world to me that we are able to live so close and raise our boys together! Thank you for moving here. Love you, Ali.



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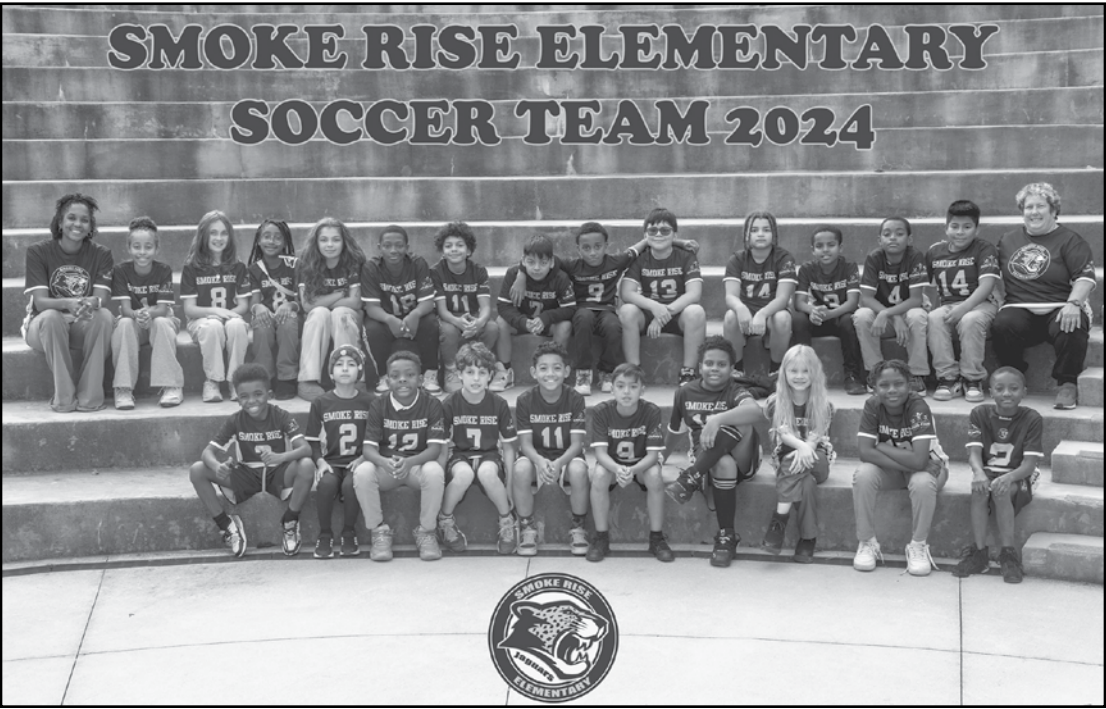
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Pictured are students in grades 4th and 5th along with their coaches Ms. Krista Drescher and Mrs. Roechelle Levermore

Smoke Rise Elementary School Soccer Team Clinches Area 2 Championship

Dr. Krystye Tatum, together with the faculty, staff and community, proudly congratulates congratulate the 2024-2025 4th and 5th Grade Soccer Team on their outstanding performance at the Elementary County Championship Soccer Meet. The team clinched the Area 2 Championship title and achieved an impressive 3rd place overall. We couldn't be prouder of their hard work and dedication! A heartfelt thank you goes to our incredible coaches, Ms. Krista Drescher and Mrs. Roechelle Levermore, for guiding the team to an exceptional season of success.

Hallmark Valentine...continued from page 1

marshmallows at all, and whipped cream is nowhere to be found. Also, I frequently worry about the calories in that entire piece of pie.

These shop owners are typically one of the main characters or the best friend of a character. So, the Hallmark woman gets to try the new recipes, each with calorie counts hovering near zero! (By the way, I am looking for a new bestie right now! Preferably one who owns a catering company.) And to continue with this "sweet" subject, cookies are often a main part of the romance, and both the Hallmark woman and her love interest both have accurate aim when it comes to throwing flour at each other as a secondary plot. (We could do that I think!)

Finally, the setting of the movie is a small town that is super into Christmas. There are more trees packed onto the fairy lighted streets than you see in the Festival of Trees Atlanta each year. Someone always has a special outdoor venue or a barn where a Christmas or New Year's ball will take place. Miraculously, the venue is packed (oddly enough) with thousands of people who suddenly appear to celebrate along with the original 600 resident townsfolk.

Our Hallmark woman finds a beautiful red dress in the window the town's only dress shop, and miraculously, the dress fits! She wears it to the ball, and the lovers dance the night away while the whole town (and assorted party crashers) watch. Hallmark woman and her beau know how to waltz and many other dances that I don't know. And together, the two execute magical dips and twirls and nose to nose encounters. And they never step on each other's toes.

So, I have identified my plot for Valentine's Day Hallmark style. I will need a makeover, dance lessons and a red dress. (Thankfully I look good in red!) I will need my kitchen renovated so I can bake cookies and throw flour at my husband. Then we can go to a warm and cozy dessert shop late at night when the town is lit by fairy lights. We will have pie and hot chocolate and eat every bite. And we will dance the night away (because we now know how to dance) ... and we will not care if the whole town is watching!

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A Tribute to President James Earl Carter Jr.
By Victoria R. Crosby

Georgia's own from the small town of Plains President Jimmy Carter's legacy remains one of service, compassion and humility, by building homes for Habitat for Humanity.

The important things, he said, are justice, truth and love, and by putting these above politics, was how he lived his life with the First Lady, his lovely wife.

A naval officer and governor of this state. His wife Rosalynn helped to create butterfly trails, wildflower gardens along highways, which added beauty and brightened our days.

He worked tirelessly, even after he was no longer president, for those less fortunate than he, and for the environment. The only president to live for a century, one hundred years, what a legacy!

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DO YOU KNOW ABOUT DEKALB’S CSAS?

The DeKalb County Police Department (DKPD) has a unique team that’s making a big difference in our community! You may have seen their specially marked vehicles... with bright yellow wording on the logo. Since 2021, Community Service Aides (CSAs) have been responding to non-violent calls, freeing up sworn officers to focus on more urgent matters. It’s an innovative approach that’s improving public safety and response times across the county.

As specially trained civilians, CSAs play a vital role in enhancing DeKalb’s public safety efforts. They provide efficient customer service while fostering strong community relationships. CSAs manage various incidents, including theft, traffic hazards, car break-ins, vandalism, harassment, and even directing traffic. By taking on these responsibilities, CSAs enable DKPD to deliver higher-quality service to residents without overextending its resources.

“We’re not sworn officers, but we’re trusted aides, and we mean just as much as they do,” said one CSA. “We hope we can help as much as you want us to help.” Another CSA added, “With our unit being added to the police enforcement, it allows us to provide better quality service to the citizens.”

In 2023 alone, these dedicated aides responded to more than 10,000 calls for service. That’s 10,000 times they stepped up to help while giving sworn officers the chance to focus on critical emergencies. And they’re not just winging it — CSAs go through 280 hours of intense training that covers everything from report writing and defensive tactics to fingerprinting and mental health awareness.

One CSA shared how rewarding the job can be: “With my community—my interaction with them has been great. I approach them, we talk, and I give them advice on how not to be a victim and how to reduce being a victim.”

DKPD plans to grow this incredible team, aiming for at least four CSAs at each precinct. While they wear different uniforms and drive different vehicles than sworn officers, their mission is the same: to serve and protect.

This program is just one of the many ways DKPD is making DeKalb a safer place to live. So, the next time you see a CSA in action, give them a wave and a “thank you” for all they do!

Remember, for non-emergency situations, call DKPD at (404) 294-2911. And for life-threatening emergencies, always dial 911.





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Breaking Up with Social Media: A Real-Life Experiment

By Amber Seale, Staff Writer

Recently, I decided to delete Instagram and Facebook apps from my phone. I wanted to see if I could break up with social media. Even with time limits set on each app, I often found myself ignoring the reminders and adding another minute or fifteen, which happened more days than not. I was losing hours each day doom-scrolling or sending memes to friends through Instagram.

The first few days without the apps were incredibly challenging. I caught myself mindlessly picking up my phone to scroll, only to remember the apps were no longer there. Surprisingly, I saw a 48% decline in my screen time within the first week. That’s wild! If you haven’t already, I highly recommend using your phone’s screen time tracking feature to identify where you’re spending your

time. It’s a valuable tool that can help you figure out how to better use those hours—whether it’s reading, knitting, walking, or simply giving your eyes a much-needed rest.

I’ve read articles recently about others who have successfully reduced or completely stopped using social media. Knowing that I’m not alone in this experiment inspired me to write this article. Many people reported that it took them several attempts to truly break free from the grip of social media. Both social media and phone usage had become addictions for me, and I suspect the same is true for many of us.

So far, I haven’t returned to Instagram. My account remains deactivated, and the app is still deleted from my phone. Facebook, however, has been a bit more complicated. I reactivated my account during the Los Angeles wildfires to check on acquaintances and friends in the area. I also used it during a snowstorm to stay updated on closures and announcements from the City of Tucker and other local service providers. While I did scroll briefly after finding the information I needed, I managed to disengage without resuming endless scrolling. It wasn’t easy, but I resisted falling back into old habits.

It’s no surprise that the Surgeon General, health organizations, and health professionals have called for warning labels on social media platforms. These platforms are highly addictive. Social media use has been linked to depression, cyberbullying, addiction, harassment, sleep deprivation, cognitive health declines, and more. It’s likely we still don’t fully understand the long-term consequences of excessive phone and social media use.

I’m grateful that I broke up with social media. My attention has shifted to activities that bring me joy instead of mindless doom-scrolling. For instance, I’m now reading several books a week instead of just one. I’m writing more, moving more, and feeling less mentally cluttered since I’m not constantly reaching for my phone. The impact on my well-being has been profound.

If you’re considering breaking up with social media or reducing your phone usage, know that you’re not alone. It may take multiple attempts to cut back, and that’s okay. Give it a try and reconnect with the hobbies and activities you loved before smartphones and social media took over. I promise, it’s worth it.





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HEALTH NOTES:

Did You Get In A Pickle Playing Pickle Ball?

By Cheri Schneider, M.D., Staff Writer

Pickle ball has suddenly taken off as a very popular sport. In fact, it was reported to be the fastest growing sport in 2019 and has continued to grow since then. There is now a whole world of professional Pickleball players (think the United Pickleball Association). On tour these players make an average of \$260,000! This was reported by “the Dink” (www.thedinkpickleball.com) to be more than **double** the average salary of the National Women’s Soccer League and more than the highest paid Women’s NBA player.

Pickle ball is a hybrid sport that is played like tennis, but on a smaller court (think badminton size court with a tennis style net). It can be played indoors or outdoors, and is played with a paddle, not a racket. The ball is hard plastic like a wiffle ball with over 36 holes drilled in it. Because the court is smaller, the player does not need to run as far to return the ball. Due to the sport's popularity, many parks are adding or converting tennis courts into pickle ball courts and adding both recreational and competitive play times.

Because the sport is not as rigorous as tennis, it has become very popular among middle age and senior players. The popularity of the sport has led to a proliferation of emergency room visits for pickle ball injuries, with 90 percent of injuries occurring in the over 50 age group. Advancing age creates the potential for more injuries. The most common injuries from pickleball are strains and sprains, followed by falls and fractures. Injuries are more common in patients who have been more sedentary. Overuse, poor conditioning and improper techniques are the most common cause of injuries.

Are there ways to prevent injuries from pickleball? Yes! These tips can apply to almost any sport but are especially helpful for those weekend warriors who are sedentary all week and only emerge on weekends to fight.

Types of Exercises

Motion Exercises - For those of us who are more sedentary, prepare for matches by using a variety of motion exercises. Try shoulder raises and reaching movements, elbow and wrist bends, and wrist rotations and finger bends. You do not need to go to a gym to do these exercises. The internet is full of videos of exercises that you can do at home!

Balance Exercises – These types of exercise can help reduce falls. Tightrope walking, high knee marches and lateral side-stepping exercises are among the most common.

Strength Training – Once you no longer experience “pull” in your motion exercises, adding weights to your motion exercises will increase strength. Additionally, dumbbell chest presses, lawnmower rows and squats can help build strength.

Muscle Strains – Most strains occur in the shoulder, wrist and back. Start with range of motion and then strength building in these muscle groups. For example, upper and lower back stretches and toning can help reduce strains in the back.

Warm Up and Cool Down - Warm up your muscles before play by taking a short walk or jog and don't forget to stretch gently after a game.

Common Injuries

Ankle sprains are common in any sport that causes you to plant your foot and change directions quickly. Strengthen foot muscles by trying to pick up a towel with your bare toes. Keep your calf muscles stretched (gently) and strengthened by doing heel lifts off a stairstep. Lastly, strengthen the ankle on a rocker board. I like the rocker boards on a ball because they challenge you to move in all directions.

Tennis elbow is another common overuse injury caused by golf, tennis and pickle ball. Treatment usually involves resting, using anti-inflammatories and sometimes a compression sleeve at the elbow. Wrist extension stretches (gentle please!), towel twists, grip squeezes and elbow bends will strengthen your arm and are often used in physical therapy.

General Advice

- Learning correct pickle ball technique may also help reduce injuries.
- Stopping when you are tired will prevent overuse injuries.

Most importantly, if you think you have pulled, popped, strained or sprained something, **do not keep playing**. Have the injury checked out and give yourself a rest. This is a great sport! I hope you can incorporate some of the advice above.

Check out these sites for information:

- 1) www.paddletek.com, which includes descriptions of different types of strength training as well as a blog specifically for Pickleball, and
- 2) www.healthline.com, which has details on strains.


What to Know About Weight Loss Medications

By Patricia Baumann MD



You may have noticed commercials promoting a relatively new class of weight loss drugs. These drugs are known as GLP-1 drugs, or glucagon like peptide-1 receptor agonists. These drugs are used to treat both type 2 diabetes and obesity. They work by mimicking the hormone GLP-1, which helps regulate blood sugar and insulin levels.

FDA Approved Medications

A black and white photograph showing a person's foot standing on a scale. The scale's dial is visible, showing a weight of approximately 150 pounds. The dial has markings for pounds (100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150) and kilograms (45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, 95, 100).

GLP-1 drugs approved by the FDA include dulaglutide (Trulicity), exenatide (Bydureon BCise and Byetta), liraglutide (Saxenda and Victoza), and semaglutide (Ozempic, Rybelsus, and Wegovy). There are others.

Each GLP-1 drug features unique formulations that have different benefits and contraindications. When it comes to semaglutide, Ozempic is FDA approved for type 2 diabetes and Wegovy is approved for weight management, overweight with associated obesity related cardiovascular condition, and type 2 diabetes. Some doctors prescribe Ozempic off label for weight loss.

There is another GLP-1 drug which is a combination of GLP-1 drug and another drug known as gastric inhibitory polypeptide (GIP). This drug is known as tirzepatide (Monjaro and Zepbound). The Monjaro brand of tirzepatide is FDA approved for diabetes while the Zepbound brand of tirzepatide is FDA approved for obstructive sleep apnea and treatment of obesity.

Which medication your doctor recommends will depend on its proven effectiveness, safety profile, and potential benefits for other health concerns.

Currently, Wegovy and Zepbound are the only GLP-1 drugs FDA approved for the treatment of obesity. This doesn't mean that the others aren't safe or effective in weight loss, and your doctor may prescribe another GLP-1 drug as what is referred to as "off label use."

Almost all GLP-1 drugs are taken as an injection once or twice a week. Victoza is a daily injectable, and Rybelsus (semaglutide) is currently the only FDA approved GLP-1 that can be taken once daily by mouth.

Which type of GLP-1 is more effective for weight loss? Review data from 2021 support semaglutide as the top performer. 2024 reviews showed that a drug brand named CagriSema (semaglutide/cagrilintide) to be the most effective for weight loss, but it is not yet FDA approved for use in the United States. Stay tuned!

...Continued on page 9



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Weight Loss Meds...continued from page 8

Side Effects

The most common side effects of GLP-1 drugs are gastrointestinal side effects like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and constipation. Other effects include allergic reactions, low blood sugar, headaches, increased infections and rapid heart rate. Exenatide has been shown to have the lowest rate of GI side effects compared to semaglutide, which has the highest rate of GI side effects.

It is important to note that, despite all the hype, GLP1 drugs are not universally effective for all patients.

You don't have to wait for your doctor to suggest a GLP-1 drug before asking about it. If you feel you may be a candidate and would benefit, talk with your doctor and be honest and upfront about why you want to add it. Be your own advocate!

Costs of GLP-1 Drugs

Another factor affecting the use of GLP-1 drugs is cost. The drugs are expensive, and experts say the recent spike in popularity has led to shortages and increased hesitancy among insurance providers to cover these drugs. Getting GLP-1 drugs paid for is tricky. Coverage of GLP-1 drugs by commercial insurers is highly variable and unpredictable. Insurance providers currently covering GLP-1 drugs often require high copayments and/or have imposed coverage limits based on total spending or duration of use. A number of insurers have eliminated coverage, citing skyrocketing costs.

To see if your insurance covers GLP-1 drugs, review your plan's drug formulary or call your insurance to ask. For example, Mounjaro (tirzepatide) isn't usually covered as a weight loss treatment. However, it depends on your insurance provider, plan, and health circumstances. It is covered by some Medicare and insurance plans, but some pharmacy coupons or cash prices may be lower. Mounjaro offers \$25 savings cards through the manufacturer, but you still need health insurance to get it. Without insurance, the average monthly cost of Mounjaro is between \$1,000 to \$1,200, depending on the pharmacy.



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

Snow Day

Softly padding into the living room after a good night's slumber, I could hardly believe my eyes as I looked out the tall window. The yard was already blanketed with a soft covering of pristine white snow; a rare occurrence and treat this far south. Large fat flakes were quietly falling, adding to the peaceful, serene landscape. Fortunately, my small garden fountain was still bubbling away, adding a much-needed water source for my outdoor friends. A sturdy water heater had been dropped in the ceramic bowl a few days earlier to protect it from the upcoming freezing temperatures. Mr. Cardinal was in a nearby bush, chipping away before he braved the fountain to take a drink. Close by in a small dogwood, a tasty suet block was being frequented by every other bird in the yard. The nuthatches and woodpeckers went first followed by the more reserved bluebirds. The songbirds were hardly recognizable in their current larger, round state. By puffing out their feathers, air was trapped and warmed by their body heat to make an instant insulated jacket. Birds also have a much higher metabolism and special circulatory system where warm blood flowing from the heart warms the cooler blood returning from extremities like their feet. These traits allow them to stay comfortable during our short, but sometimes cold southern winters.

Stay warm my little friends. I'm sure the snow will be gone soon and you can hang up your coat for winter.



Creativity: Use It To Boost It

By Alex Helton

Last week, I read about having a daily 10-minute drawing routine. No fancy paper or pens needed. You can even toss the sketches in the trash afterwards because the goal isn't to make art. The point of this practice is to boost memory, sharpen thinking skills, and reduce stress through creative time.

If you deem yourself "uncreative," it's time to re-frame that idea. Living is inherently creative. All forms of expression rely on the creative part of your brain.

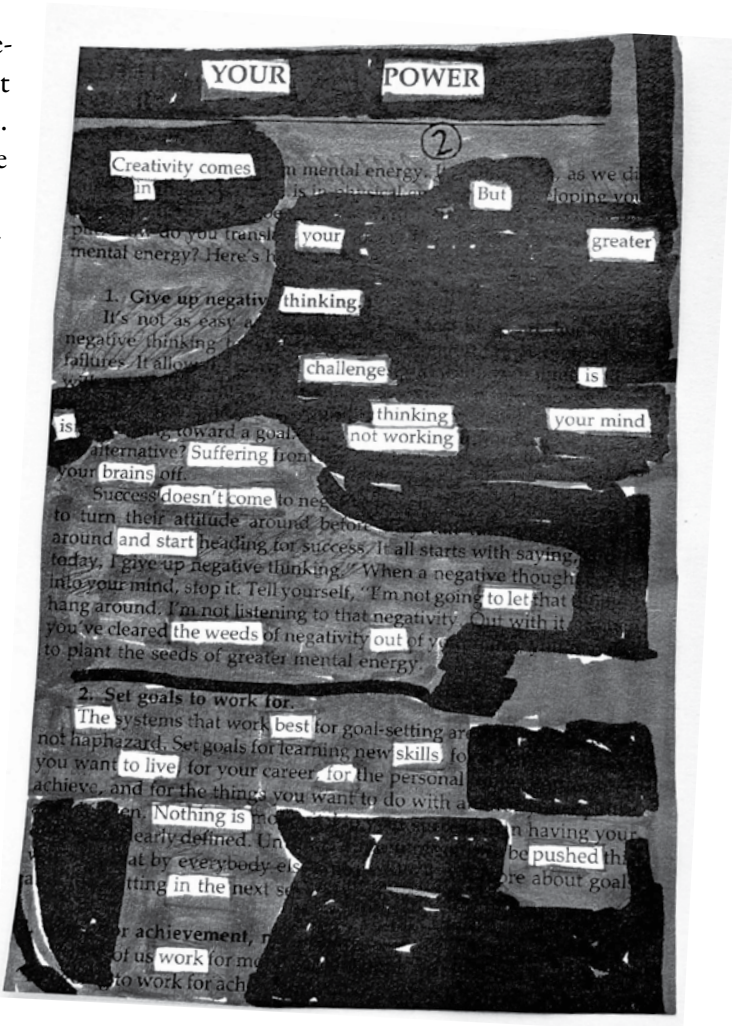
Creativity isn't an all-or-nothing proposition. Saying "I'm not creative" would be like claiming, "I'm not an athlete, so I don't bother with exercise." Everyone needs creative stretching. Putting 10 minutes towards creativity is a great start. These are my favorites:

Doodling: Paper and pen are all you need. Play around and find your groove. I like making geometric patterns during phone calls. Time passes more quickly and my brain gets a boost.

Blackout Poetry: I stumbled on this idea on a creativity blog by Austin Kleon. I transform a printed page into a poem by circling meaningful, interesting words in order, then blacking out the rest. Not every poem works out, but the process is rewarding.

Collage: Remember how much fun cutting and pasting was in kindergarten? I began with an ancient yearbook, but now all printed material is fair game. Even the Smoke Signal. Grab scissors, a glue stick, and you're set.

If you have a creative outlet, you know about the benefits. Still, why not mix it up or add something new? Whatever you choose to do, I'd love to hear about your experience. Send responses to staff@smokesignalnews.com.



Kickstart Your Year with Wellness

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

As the new year begins, there’s no better time to establish a routine for a healthier, more active lifestyle. We are so fortunate in Smoke Rise to have so much available to us so close by. To refresh your memories or share new ideas, here are some opportunities to get moving that are just minutes from your home.

Scenic Walks

Hiking is a fantastic way to enjoy the natural beauty of our Smoke Rise community while improving your health. Hiking is low impact and can be both rejuvenating and invigorating. Hiking builds cardiovascular strength, improves endurance, and enhances mental clarity. Plus, it’s a great family-friendly activity for all ages.

Walking trails in our area’s many parks offer a peaceful escape from daily stress and a chance to connect with nature. Take advantage of Stone Mountain’s nature trails and or sidewalks, or some of the numerous walking trails right here in Smoke Rise. An easy one is Probst Park that has a parking lot along Hugh Howell. Some of our local churches have walking groups and inside areas for keeping moving even when the weather doesn’t cooperate.

Health Clubs

During the first several months of the year, memberships in health clubs spike as community members make their New Year’s health resolutions. Joining one gives the added motivation of knowing you are paying monthly fees to have access. Having a regular day and time is a great way of solidifying your routine, and having a buddy to work out with increases the likelihood that you will stick to your plan.

Smoke Rise Country Club

Right in the heart of Smoke Rise, the Club sits on almost 200 acres of green space offering golf, tennis, swimming, pickleball, exercise facility, personal trainers, and group classes like Pilates. If you haven’t heard of Pilates, it’s a low-impact exercise that focuses on core strength, flexibility, and balance. It’s ideal for people of all fitness levels and can help improve posture, alleviate back pain, and enhance overall body awareness. Plus, it’s a great stress reliever!

Golf isn’t just a game; it’s a full-body, low-impact cardio workout with mental benefits. Walking the course, swinging a club, and focusing on your game engages both your body and mind. Golf promotes heart health, improves coordination, and provides a chance to enjoy the great outdoors—perfect for reducing stress and boosting mood.

Tennis and Pickleball are fast-paced sports that improve cardiovascular health, agility, and hand-eye coordination. They are high-energy activities that build endurance, burn calories, and strengthen muscles. Playing also fosters social connections, which are important for mental wellness.

Embrace Wellness in 2025

This year, prioritize your health and well-being by exploring these activities. Pilates, golf, tennis, and hiking each offer unique benefits that contribute to a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Let’s make 2025 a year of wellness for the entire Smoke Rise community!



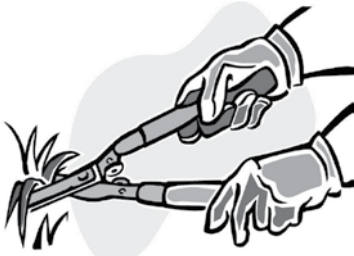
In the February Garden

By Linda Karr, Staff Writer

Groundhog Day is February 2nd. Will General Beauregard see his shadow this year meaning six more weeks of winter, or will he predict an early spring?

Opportunities in the garden for February:

- Prune your roses, dormant trees, ornamental grasses and deciduous shrubs. Wait until the blooms have faded to prune your spring flowering shrubs.
- If you haven’t prepared your garden, do it now.
- Start your indoor seeds. Tomatoes take 6 to 8 weeks to grow from seed to transplant size and peppers take 8 weeks.
- Toward the end of the month plant Irish potatoes (3” deep), asparagus, sweet peas, mustard, turnips, spinach, and collards.
- The leaves should all be down so take time to clean up your flower beds and mulch them, as necessary. Spring will be here before we know it – and you’ll be ahead of the game.
- Cut back your butterfly bushes by two-thirds to one half to encourage new growth and bigger blossoms – and more butterflies!
- Crowded perennials? You can divide and replant them as they come up. You can also do this with your perennial herbs.
- Fertilize your spring blooming bulbs.
- Apply crabgrass preventer to your lawn this month.
- Enjoy your garden!





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Georgia Iris Society to host Photographer Suzanne Thompson

Photographer, naturalist and author Suzanne Thompson will present “A Closer Look – Observing Our Fascinating Natural World” on Saturday, February 8, 2025. Join us for education, beautification and recreation!

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

February 8, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.
St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church
1790 LaVista Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30319

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

Smoke Rise Garden Club Presents
“All Things Camellia”

By Victoria Crosby, Staff Writer

The Smoke Rise Garden Club held its first meeting of 2025 on Monday, January 6th at President Victoria Crosby’s home along with co-hosts Ann Weisz and Pat Mitchell.

Speaker John Scarpucci provided an engaging and informative take on caring for camellias. During the presentation, John and his wife Penny displayed images of camellias, shared camellia blooms from their yard and provided time-lines for gardening activities.

Important take-aways for attendees included these February/March gardening tasks related to pruning and soil amendment: 1) Prune plants and put spent blooms in the trash, not your garden bin, and 2) Amend your soil using Perlite and Hollytone.

John also shared that the Atlanta Botanical Garden needs volunteers at the upcoming Camellia Show at in February. Volunteers can help with setting up the show and running a sale featuring special and rare Camellias, along with other tasks.

In 2016, Penny and John certified as American Camellia Society Flower show Judges. In 2019, John became President of the North Georgia Camellia Society and was appointed State Director of North Georgia by the ACS in 2020.

The couple now cultivate over 75 varieties at their home in Atlanta’s Chastain Park area.

- Information and contacts:
- Atlanta Botanical Garden: 76th Anniversary Camellia Show Saturday February 8, and Sunday February 9, 2025 <https://atlantabg.org/calendar/annual-camellia-show/>
 - North GA Camellia Society on Facebook: www.facebook.com/NorthGeorgiaCamelliaSociety/
 - Smoke Rise Garden Club: www.smokerisegardenclub.com/

If you are interested in coming to a meeting or considering membership, please contact Gina Dilley at ginadilley@gmail.com. The Smoke Rise Garden Club is a member of the Red Bud District of the Dekalb Federation of Garden Clubs.

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Do Wild Birds Have a Rehab Facility?

By Quill Duncan

And the answer to that is yes! The January 2025 Smoke Rise Morning Glories meeting featured an expert on our local bird population. In Decatur’s Legacy Park is a non-profit entitled Wild Nest Bird Rehabilitation Center. Board member Joy Carter presented a fascinating lecture on what this organization does for abandoned birds. She noted that there are three key reasons why the bird population is declining: Loss of Habitat, Outdoor Cats and Windows.

Loss of Habitat - New urban development and suburban landscaping practices often result in less opportunities for wild birds to roost and feed.

Outdoor Cats - These cats are natural predators of birds. Birds can react to colors and sound. A brightly colored collar or a bell on the cat’s collar can help with this problem.

Windows - Windows on large office buildings or even in our homes can be confusing to birds. Especially during spring and fall migrations, birds can be injured when they see into the space beyond and attempt to fly through the glass to reach areas like plant filled atriums. More communities and cities are becoming aware of the problem and are using the “Lights Out” program seasonally to help deter the birds from striking windows.

Wild Nest Bird Rehab Center primarily cares for baby birds who have been abandoned. Once these birds are raised to fledgling stage, they are released into the wild. The facility has two aviaries on site for birds to learn to fly in a protected environment. Wild Nest needs lots of volunteers to help feed and care for the birds, to field phone calls from the public and to keep the flow of grant funds coming.

During her presentation, Joy’s lifelong love of birds was very evident as she shared her passion with us. To learn more about this non-profit, visit their website at www.wildnest-birdrehab.org. The site is very informative and provides practical advice to help determine whether to take steps to help the bird or perhaps to just monitor the bird as it recovers. And if you find yourself in a position to try to help a downed or injured bird, you can go to the link on the bottom of the organization’s home page for “Help! I found a baby bird!”

We will be recognizing our Life Members at Callanwolde on February 27, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. Garden club members from the seventeen DeKalb Federation clubs submit names of members to be recognized for their contributions to our community and garden club. A luncheon provided by the board follows the program. For more information or if you would like to hear more lectures on these types of topics, contact Smoke Rise Morning Glories President Amie Walsh at amiehinton@yahoo.com.



l to r: Amie Walsh and Joy Carter

Mountain Mums Think Inside the Box!

By Cheri Schneider

The new motto for our Mountain Mums is “A garden pleases all Five Senses throughout all Four Seasons.” January guest speaker Moe Hemmings helped us consider how our motto relates to container gardens. Moe is the Community Outreach Manager at Atlanta Botanical Gardens, and she has a lot of personal experience with container gardening. She especially

enjoys tucking a few edibles into ornamental containers, both at work and in her own home.

I picked four tips for container gardening from the presentation that may be of interest to you, our readers, as we come into planting season.

Climate: The Atlanta area has typically been zoned 7B. Now it may fit more in planting Zone 8, which reflects warmer temperatures. Our first frost typically begins around mid-November, and our last frost finishes by April 15. With few exceptions, annuals should not be planted during those months. Perennials can be planted year-round. Edibles planted in the ground in March - May are harvested in June and July. August plantings are harvested between October and December. You can get a head start on your plantings by starting seeds indoors about six weeks before warm weather or by buying transplants. A good weather resource to check out is www.georgiaweather.net from the University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences.

Container Tricks: Container gardens can be planted with a mix of flowers and edibles. A

Trellis in a container or fence behind a container can expand the “plant real estate” and give visual interest. The containers will need six or more hours of sun, good drainage and good air circulation.

Buying Plants: Check all transplants for insects or diseases. Always take the plant out of the pot to check roots. Make sure the pot is least 2/3 full of roots. A smaller root ball may not be established well and could be kept in the pot until the ball is bigger. Easy summer vegetables include lettuce, Swiss chard, beans, and tomatoes. Easy fall vegetables to grow are broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and onion. Direct sowing plants include beets, carrots, dill and parsley. Remember to group plants with similar water needs.



Moe Hemmings, Community Outreach Manager at Atlanta Botanical Gardens

...Continued on page 12

All classified ads are limited to 20 words, with the *Smoke Signal* reserving the right to edit any copy. Ads are \$240 per year. Please submit a copy of ad to staff@smokesignalnews.com with your full name, address and phone number. Make checks out to *Smoke Signal* and mail to P.O. Box 1038, Tucker, GA 30085. We require full payment prior to ad placement.

For information on display (box) advertisements or flyer inserts, see contact information on page 2.

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The Smoke Signal currently has space available for more Classified Ads!
Contact staff@smokesignalnews.com to get your ad in next month's paper!

The purpose of the Smoke Signal classifieds is to advertise goods and services to the community.


Establishing Plants: Keep new plants moist for the first few weeks. Fertilize with slow-release fertilizer AND liquid fertilizer every two weeks. You can also add compost to potting soil to make it more substantial. Place taller plants in the back and shorter ones in front in a wedge pattern.

The Mountain Mums have a busy schedule this spring! We are planning a Hugh Howell Triangle refresh day and will join with community volunteers for the event. We are also working on a cookbook, holding plant swaps at each meeting and collecting treasures for several Dekalb Federation projects, including book and purse sales.

On January 23 we will bring a bit of garden therapy to the residents of Atria Park of Tucker by making “snowwomen.” Also, plans are in the making for visiting Decatur’s Woodlands Garden for this year’s field trip. If you would like to join our club, reach out to Mary Jacobson at 770-316-3225.

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While it is February one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch -- Patience Strong

We are fortunate, indeed, that our Southeast weather graces us in February with some strong evidence that Spring is well on its way. Daffodils spring up, pansies take on a renewed growth and camellia blooms still linger to give us brilliant color in our gardens.

The produce isles of our grocery stores are laden with the fruits and leafy greens of the season. The official fruit of the month of February is cherries, even though ours are imported from the Pacific Northwest. Shoppers can find citrus, sweet potatoes, spinach, asparagus, carrots and avocados in abundance.

This month I have chosen two recipes that will feature our seasonal veggies. First is the classic **Greek Spanakopita** (spinach and cheese pie), which is cooked in a casserole with Phyllo Dough sheets to make upper and lower crusts. The second recipe not only celebrates the month of February but also provides a delicious temptation to serve on Valentine's Day: **Cherry Cheesecake Brownies**.

- ¾ C olive oil
- 1 stick unsalted melted butter
- 3 sliced large green onions
- One large leek, chopped
- 1/3 C fresh dill or 2 T dried dill
- 1 T minced garlic
- 1 lb coarsely chopped baby spinach
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/8 tsp lemon juice
- 15 oz whole milk ricotta cheese, drained
- 16 oz feta cheese
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 28 sheets frozen (Athens) Phyllo Dough Sheets, thawed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

NOTE: Clean leeks by trimming off the root end and dark green tops, then slice the leek lengthwise. Separate layers of leaves. Rinse thoroughly under cold running water. Place in bowl and cover with water to let any remaining dirt settle to the bottom. Drain.

In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil and melted butter. Heat ¼ cup of the oil mixture in a large sauté pan. Add green onions, leeks and dill, cooking over medium-high heat until soft. Add spinach a bit at a time as you cook it down, approximately 3 minutes. Mix in garlic and cook one more minute. Remove from heat and drain off excess liquid. Set aside to cool.

In large bowl, mix together eggs, lemon juice, ricotta cheese, feta cheese, salt and pepper. Stir in spinach mixture.

Unroll and cover phyllo sheets with a slightly damp towel to prevent drying out. Place 2 sheets of phyllo on work surface. Lightly brush with the olive oil mixture and cover with 2 more sheets of phyllo. Continue this procedure for a stack of 14 phyllo sheets total. Make a second stack of 14 sheets by the same process.

Place the first stack in a 9x13" oiled baking dish. Spread spinach mixture on top. Gently place the second stack of phyllo on top of spinach mixture, tucking phyllo down around the edges of the dish. Brush the top with remaining olive oil mixture. Score into squares.

Bake one hour or until phyllo is golden brown. Let sit for 20 minutes before serving.

Brownie layer:

½ C salted butter	½ C cocoa powder
1 C brown sugar	1 tsp Vanilla
2 large eggs	1 tsp salt
1 C all-purpose flour	

In a medium bowl combine hot melted butter and cocoa powder. Let sit for 5 minutes, then add brown sugar and vanilla to the butter/cocoa and mix well with a wire whisk.

Add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each. Add salt and flour and mix until combined.

Take out ¾ cup of batter and set aside for topping. Prepare 9x9 inch baking pan with cooking spray or parchment paper and spread remaining batter in pan.

Cheesecake Cherry Layer:

8 oz cream cheese at room temperature	½ C sour cream
1/3 C sugar	1 large egg
1 tsp vanilla extract	1 (21 oz can) cherry pie filling

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and sour cream together until smooth. Add sugar, egg and vanilla and mix on medium speed for approximately 2 minutes.

Pour cheesecake mixture on top of brownie batter. Add cherry pie filling in small spoonfuls about 1 inch apart evenly on top of cheesecake layer. Dollop remaining brownie batter between cherries and lightly swirl with toothpick. Bake for 40-45 minutes until edges are set and middle is slightly jiggly. Cool for 2-3 hours before slicing into squares. Optional: serve with whipped cream topping.