

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 58, ISSUE 3

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

July, 2026

www.smokesignalnews.com



United States of America **250th** **ANNIVERSARY**

★ **1776 - 2026** ★

250 Years of America: A Veteran's Perspective

By Al Lipphardt

To understand and appreciate the perspective of those who have borne the battle you need to understand the DNA of our citizen soldier.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

These words are the principles upon which our nation chose to embark a future unlike any other since the beginning of time. To ensure those principles survived, patriotic, courageous, selfless men and women stepped forward understanding the weight of the burdens of what statesman Thomas Jefferson said, “the Price of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance”, and “the Tree of Liberty must be watered from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants”. What was true then is true 250 years later. We are a country that does not shirk from the dangers of those who seek to destroy our way of life.

Every war since 1776 when our citizen soldiers were called to arms, they came from every segment of society and from every state. From 36 major wars and 469 total military interventions since our founding, only 5 of those were formally declared by Congress. The



US has been at war for 229 of its 249 years — roughly 92% of its existence. Total American deaths: 1,339,813. The deadliest war remains our very own Civil War with an estimated toll of 750,000 killed in action. Veterans of the Armed Services of the United States of America stand on the shoulders of those who came before them. A veteran is someone you can call on and count on.

Many call our veterans “heroes” while others label us “warriors”. Heroes are those who accept fear as an emotion that is overcome by the decision to embrace courage. “Warriors” are those brave men and women who know sacrifice up to and including no greater love than to lay down one’s own life for his friends.

Al Lipphardt served in the United States Army from 1965 to 1979. He served in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968, and from 1970 to 1971. In recognition of his service, he received the Combat Infantryman Badge, Bronze Star with Valor device, Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service, Purple Heart Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Silver Star and two Bronze Stars, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Medal, and the Vietnam Staff Service Medal First Class.

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Main Street, Tucker ★ Friday, July 3

Come celebrate with live music, a DJ, kids’ zone, food trucks and the best fireworks this side of Railroad Avenue!

- 5:30 pm Main Street & Food Trucks open
- 6-9 pm Kids Zone opens with free bounce houses, face painting, balloon artist, carnival games
- 6 pm DJ Fernando
- 6:30-8:30 pm Run Katie Run
- 8:30 pm DJ Fernando
- 9:15 pm Fireworks



A Fourth of July Message to the Community

By Mayor Anne Lerner, Councilmember Roger Orlando and Councilmember Virginia Rece

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the United States of America, a historic celebration honoring the bold vision of self-governance born in 1776. At the same time, the City of Tucker is celebrating its 10th anniversary, a milestone that reminds us how local communities can accomplish great things when residents work together toward a common goal.

While ten years may seem brief compared to 250, these anniversaries share a common thread: self-determination. America’s founding was built on the belief that communities should have a voice in their own future. That same spirit inspired the Tucker cityhood movement and is a testament to engaged residents, dedicated volunteers, local businesses, community organizations and city leaders working together to build a brighter future.

As part of our focus on engaging Tucker’s youth, families can learn more about the Georgia Reads for America 250 program, which offers book recommendations and activities designed to inspire the next generation of civic leaders at <https://america250.georgiareads.org/> and explore the educational resources available through the Georgia Historical Society at www.georgiahistory.com/georgia-commemorates-america-at-250/

We’ll see you on July 3 on Main Street for Tucker’s Celebration of Independence starting at 5:30 p.m. with fireworks at 9:15 p.m.

We wish you and your family a safe and joyful celebration!

The *Smoke Signal* is enhancing some of our issues with **COLOR!**


Find out how to become a Patron or Sponsor a color edition at Staff@smokesignalnews.com

Special Thanks to Cheri and Michael Schneider for sponsoring this full-color issue!

SMOKE SIGNAL has a new address:

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Ms. Fritillary in the Tucker Butterfly Garden is ready for the World Cup!



DID YOUR PAPER GET WET?

EXTRA COPIES OF THE SMOKE SIGNAL ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT THE COMMUNITY GARDEN
Look for the wooden box labeled *Smoke Signal*.

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Phone: 770-469-5856 SmokeRiseBaptist.org

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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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Eastminster Presbyterian Church
5801 Hugh Howell Road
Rev. Jeanine Fulton, Pastor
Phone: 770-469-4881 Website: Eastminster.us

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First Moravian Church
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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


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MONDAY 7:00 p.m.

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What's New in Tucker and What's Leaving?

By Linda Karr, Staff Writer

Here's the most recent newcomer to Tucker:

- Mamush Barber Shop at 4004 Lawrenceville Hwy
Check them out!



Farewell to:

- Enzo's Pizza on Cowan Road
- The Purple Moose on Lavista Road

Rumor has it:

- Taqueria Los Hermanos will be relocating to the larger Enzo's space
- Costco will open by late summer at 78 and East Park Place



Other news:

- Henderson Park Master Plan

The City of Tucker hosted a two-day open house to receive feedback and view live plan drawings based on the survey responses from last month. For updates on the process and the plan visit tuckerga.gov/plans-studies

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Sip & Stroll – You're Invited!

By Liam O'Marab

Join the Smoke Rise Garden Club (SRGC) on July 11 from 10 AM–2 PM for a delightful Sip & Stroll in the heart of Smoke Rise. No tickets required—just stop by and enjoy. Donations are appreciated, with proceeds supporting SRGC charities.

This year's event takes place at 1800 Trotters Lane, where you can wander through 2.6 acres of stunning woodland and curated garden "zones." Stroll past autumn ferns and a striking 50-year-old Japanese maple, then make your way to the poolside gardens filled with asters, coneflowers, Black-Eyed Susans, gardenia, and more. Head to the deck to see towering banana trees (over 30 feet tall!) and vibrant summer planters, or explore the shaded lower garden featuring hydrangeas, leopard plants, and other lush greenery—plus a cozy firepit area perfect for a quick rest. There's also plenty of native plants on view from Goldenrod to Joe Pye Weeds.

Along the way, enjoy live music, refreshments, and a special poetry reading by SRGC President and resident poet, Victoria Crosby. Club members will also be on hand to share gardening tips and inspiration.

Come sip, stroll, and soak in the beauty—we can't wait to see you there!



Eastminster's Back-to-School Blessings & School Supply Drive for Local Families

Eastminster Presbyterian Church is excited to announce its annual Back-to-School Blessings & School Supply Drive, a community effort to support students and families in need as a new school year begins. During the summer, Eastminster will be collecting school supplies and monetary donations to help fill backpacks with essential items for children at nearby schools. This initiative ensures every student starts the year equipped, encouraged, and surrounded by God's love.

As part of church's outreach and care for the community, Eastminster will host a Blessings and Backpacks Service on Sunday, July 19 at 10:30 AM, dedicated to lifting up students, teachers, and school support staff in prayer as they return for the fall semester. Everyone is encouraged to bring their backpacks, briefcases, or school bags and they will receive a prayer of dedication and blessing, asking for God's guidance, protection, and wisdom in the coming school year. The worship service will be led by the Eastminster children, who will share in songs, their faith stories from VBS and Summer Camp experiences and the proclamation of the word.

Following worship, all are invited to stay for a Back-to-School Celebration on the church grounds. The festivities will include food, games, and a bouncy house—a joyful time of fellowship and fun for all ages.

Eastminster welcomes the entire community to be part of this special day of faith, encouragement, and service. Come worship, celebrate, and help us support local students as they head into a new school year with God's blessings.

Location: Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Worship Time: Sunday, July 19, 10:30 AM
Back-to-School Party: Immediately following the service
Donation Collection: Now through mid-August

For more information or to donate, please contact the church office or visit our website: www.eastminster.us/backpacks





Dietre Efrench

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New Costco Opening in August

By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

Excitement is growing in Stone Mountain as construction continues on one of the area’s most anticipated retail additions: a new 150,000-square-foot Costco warehouse set to open in August 2026.

Built on 31 acres, the store will anchor the Mountain Marketplace development at 1915 West Park Place Boulevard, turning the former Stone Mountain Tennis Center site into a new hub for shopping, dining, and community activity.



For many residents, the opening means much more than another place to shop. Costco’s arrival will provide a convenient option for families looking to purchase groceries, household goods, electronics, clothing, and seasonal merchandise in bulk at competitive prices. The warehouse will also include Costco’s popular member fuel station.

The development itself represents a significant investment in the Stone Mountain area. In addition to Costco, Mountain Marketplace plans include nationally recognized restaurants such as Chick-fil-A and Whataburger, along with a bank, a community park, and a nearby residential component that will bring a new 248-unit apartment complex to the area.

Local officials and developers hope the project will serve as a catalyst for continued economic growth by creating new jobs, increasing tax revenues, and encouraging additional investment in surrounding businesses. During both construction and ongoing operations, the project is expected to generate employment opportunities for area residents while bringing increased customer traffic to neighboring retailers and restaurants.

The site also carries a unique piece of local history. Longtime residents will remember it as the Stone Mountain Tennis Center, which was built 30 years ago to host the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Shoppers who have previously driven to Costco locations in Brookhaven, Perimeter, or Pleasant Hill Road will soon have a much closer option. The new warehouse is expected to help ease congestion at existing stores while providing added convenience for thousands of families living in and around Stone Mountain.

As the August opening approaches, anticipation continues to grow. For bargain hunters, small business owners, and families alike, the arrival of Costco promises not only another shopping destination but also a major milestone in the ongoing growth and revitalization of the Stone Mountain area.

Watch the *Smoke Signal* for announcements about opening-day festivities, membership promotions, and hiring opportunities as the grand opening approaches.



A Community Gem in the Heart of Smoke Rise

*By Sydney Hurst, Membership Director
Smoke Rise Country Club*

Since going private last year, conditions on the 18-hole golf course in the heart of our Smoke Rise community have never been better. If you haven’t seen it in a while or ever, make a point of coming to visit. This 163-acre campus accommodates the 18-hole golf course, designed by noted golf architect Joe Lee. It delivers something new every round, with scenic hills, strategic challenges, majestic views of Stone Mountain, and a layout that keeps golfers coming back for more.

With tee times available throughout the week and a full calendar of tournaments designed to engage membership, there’s always an opportunity to get involved and enjoy the game.

At Smoke Rise Country Club, we combine exceptional golf with a warm, family-focused community. Not a golfer? We have fabulous racquet facilities: eight lighted clay and hard tennis courts, an Aquatics & Fitness Center featuring a junior Olympic-size swimming pool, 4 other specialty pools, and a weight room. No need for a gym membership when you have an exercise room in your backyard. In addition, there are kids’ summer camps and social activities where your family can meet and socialize with neighbors.

We invite you to visit, tour the facilities, and experience all the amenities that make this club so special. Contact me to arrange a good day and time. SHurst@smokerisec.com.

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

BY AVIVA HOFFMANN, STAFF WRITER

Healthy Pets, Stronger Community

DeKalb County officials and LifeLine Animal Project are expanding efforts to promote responsible pet ownership by increasing access to free veterinary services for residents in need.

LifeLine Animal Project now offers eight mobile clinic days each month throughout DeKalb County, providing free pet vaccinations and free spay/neuter services for qualifying residents. The initiative is designed to help families care for their pets while also addressing the growing number of unwanted animals in the community. According to program organizers, the number of homeless and unwanted pets in DeKalb County remains at an extremely high level. Spaying and neutering pets can help reduce overcrowding in shelters, decrease euthanasia rates, and improve the overall health and behavior of animals.

The program is available for both cats and dogs belonging to DeKalb County residents who are truly unable to afford veterinary care on their own. Because funding is limited, organizers are asking residents who can pay for low-cost services at a LifeLine clinic to do so, allowing the free program to remain available for families facing financial hardship. Eligible pets include dogs as young as eight weeks old and cats as young as 10 weeks old. Senior pets may require additional pre-operative testing to determine whether they are healthy enough for surgery.

In addition to helping reduce pet overpopulation, free vaccination services help protect animals and the broader community from preventable diseases. Vaccinations are considered one of the most important steps in maintaining long-term pet health.

Residents interested in applying for the free services can scan the QR code below. Applicants will then complete an online form and receive additional instructions through a confirmation email.

LifeLine officials say assistance is also available for residents who may need help completing the application or scheduling an appointment. Community Support staff can be reached by email at pethelp@dekalbanimalservices.com.

By expanding mobile clinic availability and removing financial barriers to care, DeKalb County and LifeLine Animal Project hope to improve animal welfare, reduce shelter overcrowding, and ensure more pets remain healthy, safe, and in loving homes.

Responsible pet ownership benefits not only individual families, but the entire community! You are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity, if you qualify.

Additional pet help and resources can be found online at: <https://dekalbanimalservices.com/resources/>.

**WEDDING
EVANS ~ HOLT**



Leah Evans, daughter of Smoke Rise residents Beth and Steve Henson, married Grayson Holt, son of Christine Jasien and Robert Holt of Decatur, on April 11. The wedding ceremony and reception were held at the historic Beauregard-Keyes House in New Orleans. Following the ceremony, guests joyfully joined a traditional second-line parade through the surrounding streets. Leah and Grayson, both designers, will make their home in New York City. We wish the happy couple a lifetime of love, laughter, and adventure together.

Who Says Block Parties are a Thing of the Past?

By Tabira Piraino

A few months ago, I read an article about ten things that used to be popular in the U.S. but had slowly grown to be a thing of the past. Block parties were listed. The article shared that it was a time for neighbors to get to know each other and stay in contact, but in recent years neighbors have become more



secluded from each other. Not so in the Mountclaire neighborhood. Mountclaire Court and Mountclaire Road have revived the almost obsolete block party thanks to Kathy and Bill Rhinehart. Kathy and Bill arranged the first block party in November last year and were instrumental in starting the ball rolling for our most recent one in May. Although the weather didn't cooperate, the party was moved indoors, and the bad weather didn't dampen the spirits of the attendees. About 30 neighbors and guests brought food and drinks. Although I knew the Court neighbors, I only knew the Road neighbors by a wave

or a brief chat when walking my dog. It has been great getting to know all the neighbors and being able to meet and welcome new ones. For now, I am calling the neighborhood the Mountclaire Gang until I receive other suggested names before our next party. You may want to consider having a block party. Knowing your neighbors makes a big difference.



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Targeted Grazing Offers Eco-Friendly Alternative in Smoke Rise

By Aviva Hoffmann, Staff Writer

Renting sheep or goats for vegetation control - often called "targeted grazing" or "prescriptive grazing" - is becoming an increasingly popular alternative to chemical herbicides and mechanical clearing methods. The approach is being used to manage overgrown lots, invasive plants, storm-water areas, solar farms and steep terrain.

Goats are typically the preferred choice for heavy weed and brush removal, while sheep are often better suited for grass-heavy areas. Grazing companies generally provide everything needed for the project, including the animals, portable electric fencing, water systems, monitoring staff and, in some cases, livestock guardian dogs.

Depending on the size of the property and the density of the vegetation, animals may remain on-site anywhere from a few days to several weeks. Factors such as acreage, terrain and the type of plants being targeted all play a role in determining the timeline.

Supporters of targeted grazing point to several environmental benefits. The method reduces the need for herbicides, lowers fuel consumption and produces fewer emissions than traditional clearing equipment. It can also be especially effective in hard-to-reach areas such as steep slopes, wetlands, rocky terrain and fenced spaces where

machinery may struggle to operate safely.

Another benefit is that the animals naturally fertilize the soil as they graze. In addition, many residents simply enjoy seeing sheep or goats working in suburban and urban settings. Some communities have even incorporated targeted grazing into educational and sustainability initiatives.

However, there are limitations to consider. Animals do not provide the same neat, uniform appearance as traditional mowing or landscaping. Certain plants can also be toxic to livestock, making careful planning essential. Fencing and supervision are necessary - particularly in suburban neighborhoods - and extreme heat or drought conditions can complicate projects. In many cases, invasive vegetation may require repeated grazing

cycles to control regrowth.

Costs can vary widely depending on acreage, accessibility, vegetation density and travel distance, so homeowners and property managers are encouraged to research providers carefully before hiring a company.

Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Grazing Service:

- Are the animals and operators insured?
- Who monitors the animals while they are on-site?
- Are any local permits required?
- What plants can and cannot be safely grazed?
- How long is the project expected to take?
- What happens if vegetation grows back?
- Will fencing and water be provided?
- Has the company worked in suburban neighborhoods before?



Rosser Rd: Traffic Improvements or Landmark Loss?

Tucker is considering changes to Rosser Rd and Hugh Howell, including a new 4-way intersection aligned with Stoneleigh Dr. A possible road-widening could require removing the iconic, landmark Smoke Rise chimney. Community input is needed. More information provided by the SRCA board can be found at www.smokerise.org. Share your views with our elected city council members, Virginia Rece (vrece@tuckerga.gov) and Roger Orlando (rorlando@tuckerga.gov).

Trivia about the United States

1. Which President first occupied the White House?
2. What is the address of the White House?
3. How many versions of the American Flag have there been?
4. Which President invented the Swivel Chair?
5. Where was the first Capitol of the United States?
6. Which Founding Father was a Founding Gardener?
7. Which country gifted the Statue of Liberty to the United States?
8. Name three famous people to enter Ellis Island and immigrate to the U.S.

Answers on page 12



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**The Art of Jazz:
Empowering Youth Through Music**

By Victoria R. Crosby

I recently attended The Art of Jazz: Community Learning and Concert Experience at the First Christian Church of Atlanta. It was a free performance with donations accepted for Agape National Academy of Music, (ANAM Georgia,) a nonprofit organization with a mission to help underserved youth through music. ANAM GA was founded by Samson Tarpeh, who is the musical minister at the church. Mr. Tarpeh opened the program by welcoming guests. The performance began by showcasing four of the young students on piano. A video showed some of the students who are benefiting from the ANAM GA programs and the opportunities to get involved.

The concert was well attended and featured the All-Star Atlanta Players, Louis Heriveaux on piano, Tommy Sauter on bass, Jonathan Mills on drums and Fareed Mahluli on saxophone and vocals. A surprise performance by vocalist Myna Clayton closed the successful evening.

The evening was sponsored by South Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and the GA council for the Arts, with special thanks to the First Christian Church of Atlanta, Sprouts Farmers Market and Kroger. I donated through the Chris Crosby Foundation, which has a similar mission to ANAM GA, and is in memory of my son Christopher, who was a musician.

ANAM GA helps to build confident focused, and successful young people through music, with free community-based programs for children and families in our community. Numerous studies have shown a positive correlation between studying music and improved academic achievement and IQ scores. For further information visit www.anamgeorgia.org

One of the Greatest Honors of My Life

By Victor Economy

After retiring from Economy Auto Sales in Decatur, a business I owned and operated for 33 years, I never imagined that one day I would personally transport a retired United States Army Colonel to Arlington National Cemetery for burial with full military honors. Yet on June 1 and 2, 2026, that is exactly what I was privileged to do, participating in what was undoubtedly one of the greatest honors of my life.

In 2023, I joined A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home, wanting to continue serving people in a meaningful way after decades in business. That decision ultimately led to an experience I will never forget.

As a funeral assistant, I was entrusted with transporting a retired United States Army Colonel on his final journey to Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The Colonel had dedicated his life to serving our nation, rising to the rank of full Colonel — one of the highest achievements in a military career. Over two days, I transported him from Georgia to Arlington, ensuring he arrived at his final resting place with the dignity, honor, and respect he had earned through a lifetime of service.

The retired Colonel received full military honors, including a horse-drawn caisson procession, a military band, the playing of Taps, a 21-gun salute, and the presentation of the American flag to his family. Every detail was carried out with remarkable precision and respect. Watching the honor guard perform their duties and hearing Taps played across the cemetery was both moving and unforgettable.



For me, the caisson procession was especially memorable. Seeing the Colonel's casket carried with such dignity by the horse-drawn caisson, a tradition dating back generations in the United States Army, was a powerful reminder of the respect our nation shows those who have devoted their lives to military service.

One of the things that made this experience even more special was that my wife, Theo,

accompanied me on the trip. Standing side by side at Arlington National Cemetery, watching a retired Army Colonel receive the honors of a grateful nation, we both felt a deep sense of pride, gratitude, and respect. As the caisson rolled past, the band played, and Taps echoed across the cemetery grounds, we were reminded of the sacrifices made by the men and women who serve our country and by the families who stand beside them.

Arlington National Cemetery is more than a cemetery. It is a sacred place where American history lives on through the men and women who served our nation, and witnessing this ceremony gave me an even deeper appreciation for the sacrifices made by our military members and their families.

Years from now, I may not remember every mile of the drive from Georgia to Virginia, but I will always remember standing with Theo at Arlington National Cemetery, witnessing

one of our nation's heroes being laid to rest with the dignity and honor he had earned through a lifetime of service.

I will always be grateful to A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home for entrusting me with this responsibility. Being selected to transport this distinguished veteran on his final journey to Arlington National Cemetery is an honor I will cherish for the rest of my life.

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By Susan Gilbert, Staff Writer

AI Photo Magic

Have you ever wondered what you might look like with a different hairstyle, fewer wrinkles, or dressed in a suit? Thanks to today's easy-to-use artificial intelligence (AI) image tools, you can explore these ideas in minutes—and often with remarkable results.

An easy way to get started is to use the free version of ChatGPT at ChatGPT.com. I used it for a while but grew tired of it telling me I had reached my daily imaging limit, so I upgraded to the Pro version for \$20/month, which I consider a good investment in entertainment and productivity improvements.

One of the most popular uses of AI imaging is enhancing family photographs. Many people enjoy creating a younger-looking version of themselves, experimenting with different hairstyles or hair colors, or retouching old photos to remove scratches or extraneous objects in the background. AI can restore faded black-and-white pictures, colorize them, and sharpen blurry images. I couldn't be there when my sister, Maggie, was in the hospital recently, so my niece sent me a picture of her that I uploaded to ChatGPT, instructing it to add makeup, remove wrinkles, add colorful flowers to her room with get-well cards and fanciful balloons, which I sent her to lift her spirits.



But the fun doesn't stop with portraits. AI can become your personal interior decorator. Simply upload a picture of your room and ask for ideas such as a coastal theme, country cottage style, modern elegance, or classic New England décor. It can suggest new paint colors, furniture arrangements, lighting, rugs, and artwork—all while using your actual room as the starting point.

Being a garden enthusiast, I find AI inspiring. Upload a snapshot of your yard to ChatGPT and request that it be transformed into a colorful vision of blooming azaleas, roses, hydrangeas, or wildflowers. Curious how a certain area could be dressed up with a wooden bench, a flower box, or a statue? Just ask. AI can create realistic previews before you change anything.

Travel and history buffs can have fun placing themselves in famous locations or historical settings. Imagine seeing yourself strolling through Paris in the 1920s, visiting an English castle, or dining with the King of England.

Holiday cards, birthday greetings, and family reunions can also benefit from AI creativity. Add festive decorations, create whimsical backgrounds, or design personalized invitations that look professionally made.

The best part is that you don't need to be a computer expert. Most AI image tools simply require you to upload a picture and describe what you'd like to see: "Make the flowers brighter," "Add a sunset," "Create a colorful flower garden," or "Suggest a better hairstyle." And don't put off getting started. Just as computers and iPhones changed how we live, it's best to start using AI early to shorten the learning curve.

As with any technology, use AI responsibly. Be respectful of others' privacy, avoid misleading uses of edited images, and always make it clear when a picture has been digitally altered.

Whether you're preserving cherished memories, planning a home makeover, designing your dream garden, or simply satisfying your curiosity, AI image editing offers an entertaining and creative new way to explore possibilities. You may be surprised by just how imaginative—and fun it can be.

HEALTH NOTES: *By Cheri Schneider, M.D., Staff Writer*

Summer Heat Rashes

Summer is upon us and so is the heat! During the first heat wave of the summer - and it was a doozy - I went on vacation. The trip included traveling all day on an airplane to my destination. Once I got there, I spent several hours in the 90-degree weather carrying luggage on and off trains to our hostel. My husband and I settled into our un-airconditioned room and then went on a 3-mile hike to our dinner with friends. By the time we arrived back to our un-airconditioned room for the night we had spent well over 6 miles in the heat.

The next morning, I awoke with a purple and pink speckled rash above the sock line on my lower legs: completely flat, no itch, but with swollen ankles. A little research revealed I had Golfer's vasculitis — inflammation of the capillaries following heavy exertion in hot weather. It resolved in three or four days with leg elevation and avoidance of the heat.

The summer is a time many seasonal rashes pop up. Here are a few common ones to look for, with advice for treatment and prevention.

Heat Rash or Prickly Heat: Babies and young children cannot regulate their temperatures as well as adults, and they often have chubby skin folds that sweat. When it is hot and humid, small, raised spots accompanied by an itchy, prickly feeling can appear in the neck folds, elbow creases, groin, or back. On dark skin the spots may look gray or whitish; in severe cases, blisters or burning bumps can form. The rash resolves once the skin cools down — cool packs, loose cotton clothing, and a cool bath or shower all help.

Sun 'Allergy' — Polymorphous Light Eruption (PMLE): This seasonal rash is triggered by UV rays and has no known cause. It is more common in women and tends to run in families; up to 75% of people see some resolution over 30 years. The rash appears within hours to days of sun exposure on the arms, lower legs, chest, and neck — in patches, papules, or forms resembling eczema or hives. Treat with sunscreen, UV-protective clothing, and shade. Severe cases may require hydroxychloroquine, nicotinamide, or oral anti-inflammatories.

Photodermatitis: Some people react to the sun when wearing certain fragrances or while taking certain medications. Common culprits include tetracyclines, sulfa drugs, and some cardiac medications such as Amiodarone and Hydrochlorothiazide, among others. Use sunscreen to prevent severe sunburn.

Phyto-Photo Dermatitis: Sun rash caused by contact with certain plants — common culprits include celery, limes, lemons, and fig sap. The rash typically appears 24–48 hours after sun exposure at the spot the plant touched the skin, with blisters, redness, and scaling that can occasionally cause ulcerations. Treat with cool compresses, topical steroids, and Tylenol. Vegetable pickers and farm workers should wear gloves and protective clothing.

Other rashes more common in summer or heat:

- Eczema, acne, and folliculitis can all be worsened by sweating and heat.
- Swimmer's itch: itchy rash from an allergic reaction to parasites found in shallow warm water.
- Sandworms: creeping eruption with lines of blisters from worms found in pet-frequented sand. Wear water shoes on pet beaches.
- Hot tub rash: Pseudomonas bacteria rash from hot tubs.
- Molluscum contagiosum (in children): worsens in hot weather.
- Sweaty sock syndrome and athlete's foot: peeling, cracked feet from heat trapped in enclosed shoes. Allow feet to breathe.
- Melasma (gray or brown patches on the face) darkens with sun exposure.

My recommendation for your summer: wear sunscreen, dress for the heat in loose breathable fabrics such as cotton and linen and check all medications to rule out sun-related skin reactions. Stay hydrated and avoid sun exposure during the hottest hours — 10 am to 2 pm. Oh, and have a good time!

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

Cardinal Enjoying Blueberries

Gazing out the kitchen window, I couldn't help but notice the heavily laden blueberry bush nestled at the edge of the cheerful flower garden. The berries seemed to have ripened overnight, and several extra-juicy ones were scattered on the ground below.

Suddenly, a flash of brilliant red caught my eye. Mr. Cardinal had come to enjoy the sweet, tantalizing fruit, proudly popping a plump berry into his beak.

Blueberries not only provide spring and summer birds with extra energy during nesting season, but they also offer valuable hydration during the hot summer months. The deep color of the berries contains carotenoids that help keep the cardinal's vibrant red plumage looking spectacular.

As Mr. Cardinal flew off with his tasty treasure, I couldn't help but smile, knowing the blueberry bush was feeding more than just my family, it was sharing a little summertime sweetness with the backyard birds as well.



What Have 250 Years Taught Us?

By Joel Gilbert, Staff Writer



This month, we celebrate a major milestone for any nation, so I thought it would be appropriate to consider what the founding fathers might say if they were here today and asked to comment. After considerable research, I concluded their messages would likely be surprisingly different from one another. They agreed on independence, but often disagreed sharply about government, religion, economics, and human nature. I believe they would all give our country some good marks, but we should all humbly heed their warnings.

If George Washington spoke, he might say: "My fellow Americans, your republic has endured far longer than many believed possible. Yet the greatest threats have never come from abroad. They come from division, faction, and the pursuit of party over country. Remember that liberty requires virtue, self-restraint, and a willingness to place the common good above personal ambition."

In his Farewell Address, he repeatedly warned about political parties becoming more important than national unity. He believed citizens should be educated and informed, and make decisions for the good of the country, not for a party.

If Thomas Jefferson spoke, he might say: "The promise of America was never perfection but continual improvement. Every generation must examine whether it is living up to the principle that all people possess equal dignity and unalienable rights. Do not worship the past. Learn from it and improve upon it."

Many believe Jefferson would warn against voters electing leaders who promise "benefits without cost," and that each generation should rethink institutions rather than blindly preserve them.

If James Madison spoke, he would probably focus on the Constitution:

"We designed a government not because men were angels, but because they were not. Guard your institutions carefully. The Constitution survives only when citizens respect both liberty and the rule of law." He relied on structural checks and balances, believing that preserving the country required protecting the independence of the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches and preventing any one of them from consolidating power. Furthermore, he'd likely say, "Learn to love gridlock because the system was purposefully designed with overlapping powers to balance strength and restraint. Expect the legislative process to be slow, messy, and frustrating." He would view legislative gridlock as the system working exactly as intended to prevent an excess of hastily written laws.

If Benjamin Franklin spoke, he would probably be both humorous and blunt:

"You have accomplished wonders beyond our imagination. You converse across continents, fly through the skies, and place vast libraries in your pockets. Yet the question remains the same as I asked in 1787: Can you govern yourselves?"

In September 1787, as Benjamin Franklin left Independence Hall after the final session of the Constitutional Convention, a prominent Philadelphia socialite asked: "Well, Doctor, what have we got? He replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."

What They Might Say Together: Despite their differences, they might unite around a few themes, such as:

1. The American experiment is a work in progress.
2. Freedom requires responsibility and adherence to laws.
3. The Constitution depends on civic virtue, not merely laws.
4. Political opponents are not enemies to be demonized.
5. Each generation must renew the republic.

Perhaps their collective closing message would sound something like this: "We gave you neither a perfect nation nor a perfect system. We gave you an experiment in self-government. For two hundred and fifty years, generations of Americans have struggled, sacrificed, argued, and worked to preserve it. Whether it endures another two hundred and fifty years depends not on us, but on you."

That last idea is probably the Founding Fathers' most authentic message of all: "America was never intended to be a finished achievement, but a continuing project entrusted to its citizens to work together for the common good."

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Victoria R. Crosby

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blended in delicious creations,
we are a multitude of cultures, colors and nations.
Just like broken pieces arranged to form a work of art,
we celebrate America, the mosaic of our heart.

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General Federation of Women's Clubs History

By Barbara Luton, Staff Writer

The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) is an international organization dedicated to community improvement by helping the lives of others through volunteer service. In 1868 Jane Cunningham Croly, a professional journalist attempted to attend a dinner at an all-male press club honoring British novelist, Charles Dickens. Croly was denied admittance based upon her gender and in response, formed a woman's club--Soros. Soros is a botanical term which means "an aggregation; a sweet flavor of many fruits, as in the pineapple". Ellen Demorest, co-founder of Soros, was the inventor of mass-produced paper sewing patterns. In celebration of Soros' 21st anniversary, Croly invited women's clubs throughout the U.S. to become a federation by attending a convention in New York City. On April 24, 1890, 63 clubs officially formed the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The Stone Mountain Woman's Club is a member of the general federation.



Highlights of GFWC history include securing passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906). In World War I GFWC raised \$4,880,000 in Liberty bonds, \$90,000 for the Red Cross \$55,000 for camp libraries and \$89,788 for the YMC A. In WWII it raised \$101,617,750 to buy bombers, \$154,459,132 to buy planes and over \$300,000 for training nurses. GFWC was a force in founding America's first national park and supported the creation of the National Park Service. In 1914 the organization officially endorsed the Women's suffrage Movement to secure the vote for women. GFWC began the campaign to name official state birds and flowers in the 1920's. By 1933, GFWC had founded 75% of America's public libraries and pioneered the idea of book mobiles. Many modern safety measures were early Woman's Club programs--seatbelts in all cars, streetlights on neighborhood streets, accurate labeling of food and medications.

Julia Ward Howe (author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic") and Eleanor Roosevelt were both clubwomen. GFWC is the largest organization for women volunteers in the world.

Smoke Rise Baptist Church's Mission to Eastern Kentucky

By William Henry

For many years, Smoke Rise Baptist Church (SRBC) has partnered with God's Appalachian Partnership (GAP), a faith-based nonprofit ministry serving the people of eastern Kentucky. Through this partnership, SRBC supports GAP's mission of meeting the spiritual and physical needs of people in Appalachia through resource distribution, educational ministries, home repairs, and Bible studies.

GAP primarily serves residents of Floyd, Knott, and Pike counties, an area of Kentucky that is among the most economically depressed in the United States. Coal mining was once the major, and in many cases the only, source of employment for many residents. With the decline of the coal industry, many people now have little or no income.

One of the ways SRBC supports this ministry is through financial contributions, leadership support, and donated supplies. In addition, SRBC sends a team of men on a mission trip to McDowell, Kentucky, twice each year to help residents in need. These teams usually range from eight to twelve men. Projects range from repairs to almost complete home rebuilding. In May 2026, a group of eight men from SRBC traveled to eastern Kentucky to repair a home, including replacing all of its windows. On another trip, the team worked on a small house that had been damaged by flooding. The yard was immaculate, with beautiful flower baskets hanging from the front porch, showing how much the homeowner cared for the property. Inside, however, only the floor joists remained. When the SRBC team left, there was new flooring, framed walls, and revised electrical work ready for the next team to complete the finish work.

The partnership also allows SRBC members to support GAP's new 7,000-square-foot distribution center, completed in 2024. The facility includes a food and household-needs store, meeting rooms, and a kitchen for educational programs. The previous distribution center operated from a 1,500-square-foot office in an abandoned coal shipping facility. At the beginning of each month, clients receive a certain number of points based on the size of their family. Each food item, cleaning supply, and household necessity has an assigned value, and clients spend their points on the items they select.



Mission Volunteers from Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Appalachia

SRBC also sends a team of women to eastern Kentucky each fall. The women serve at the food distribution center, apartment complexes, and several senior centers.

The need remains great, extending beyond food to include mental and physical health support. Through its ongoing partnership with GAP, SRBC continues to answer the call to serve. Another men's mission trip is planned for September 2026, and a women's trip is scheduled for October. Volunteers do not have to be members of SRBC to participate.



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**Garden Therapy:
Morning Glories and the GA Regional Hospital-Atlanta**

By Quill Duncan

In 2018, The DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs embraced a new garden therapy project at the Georgia Regional Hospital- Atlanta’s Decatur campus. For the last eight years, we have provided grants and horticultural advice to the staff at the hospital. It all began with a Sensory Garden and then it expanded to include a large vegetable garden and multiple gardens across the large campus. The hospital serves full-time residents and part-time patients with a wide variety of therapies. Now there is a work program for the patients who are assigned to the vegetable garden. They work every morning and receive payment for their labor that can be banked for when they are released from the hospital.

The Morning Glories are involved because the hospital’s Art Therapy Coordinator Mary Cochran is a member of the club. Morning Glories members Gwinnett Master Gardener Bonnie Pennington and DeKalb Master Gardener Quill Duncan make site visits to the hospital, meet with staff and advise them on best gardening practices. We also write grants to fund their many projects on the campus.



In June, Bonnie and Quill met Mary and visited the large sunny vegetable garden by the hospital gym. The garden features strawberries, blueberries, figs, mint, okra, sweet peas, sweet potatoes, radishes, squash and cucumbers. The garden has large overscale rudbeckia plants, zinnias, sunflowers and many other annual flowers to tempt the pollinators for the crops. This year they have a muscadine vine bearing grapes on a bamboo trellis devised by a former patient.

The vegetables and fruits that are harvested are cooked and savored by the patients and the staff. Staff donate vegetable starts and seeds and enjoy visiting the garden to check on the progress. The photos show their early summer bounty!

One area of the hospital is the Skilled Nursing Unit and for that garden therapy they have brightly colored containers filled with annuals to brighten the atrium space for the patients who are confined to specialty medical chairs. Gardens can lift spirits anywhere! Happy Gardening this summer and Plant Red, White and Blue for the 250th anniversary of the USA!



**Mountain Mums Garden Club
Continues to Grow and Serve
Throughout the Summer**

*By Maureen Fraser,
Publicity Chair and Newsletter Co-Editor*

A garden never takes vacation and while regular meetings are on hiatus during the summer months, members of the Mountain Mums Garden Club remain actively engaged in projects that support our community, promote gardening education, and foster fellowship.

An ongoing outreach effort is providing horticultural therapy activities for residents at ATRIA Park of Tucker assisted living facility. Members assisted residents in making patriotic door hangers while sharing stories, smiles, and friendships with each other.

The club is also continuing its monthly partnership with NETWorks Cooperative Ministry, assisting with hydroponic gardening efforts that help provide fresh produce to individuals and families in need. This innovative growing method allows vegetables and herbs to be produced year-round, helping strengthen food security within our community.

Ten members represented the club at the recent Redbud District Meeting at Callanwolde where garden club members from across the region gathered to honor three new “legends” members who have reached the age of 100 and to participate in the jewelry, purse and scarf sale to benefit the National Garden Club Natural Disaster Relief fund.

Another ongoing project is the collection of Ronald McDonald House Charities pop tabs. Collection boxes have been placed at local restaurants and businesses, making it easy for members and the community to contribute. Funds generated from recycling the tabs help support families whose children are receiving medical treatment away from home.

In addition, several club members participated in a cleanup and maintenance day at the Smoke Rise Community Garden. These efforts help ensure the garden remains a beautiful and productive space that benefits the entire community.


Members also attended the Blue Star Memorial Marker Dedication at The Carter Center. Blue Star Memorial Markers are dedicated to honor all who have served, are serving or will serve in the United States Armed Forces.

As we enjoy the beauty of the season, we encourage everyone to spend a little time outdoors, visit a local garden, plant something new, or simply take a moment to appreciate nature’s many gifts.

Although summer provides a break from formal meetings, the Mountain Mums look forward to the fall with new projects and opportunities. The Mountain Mums Garden Club will resume regular meetings in August.

Interested in joining? Contact Mary Jacobson at mjacob1010@gmail.com for more information.

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Food & Home Fixin's

by Joyce Ray, Staff Writer

What is Your Grill Style?

This month, our regular columnist Joyce Ray is joined by fellow staff writer Joel Gilbert for a special feature on grilling.

Backyard BBQs have always elicited excitement. Some become obsessed with achieving special recognition as "Grill Masters," while most of us just relish the smells of open-fire cooking. Perhaps it is the primal sizzle and tempting aromas of meat cooking over an open fire. And certainly, it is the kind of fun that children have when cooking a hot dog on a stick.

Well, today, there is a dizzying array of cooking appliances that can be matched to the task.

The easiest and least expensive to purchase and use is the basic charcoal grill that will cook your burgers and hot dogs, fish and chicken with a smokey flavor. The downside is that you must be willing to stay close-by to tend to the fire to keep the temperature consistent.

If you are looking for fast cooking and a fire that heats up quickly while maintaining a consistent temperature, opt for a gas grill. It can serve your needs for many years, though cleanup can be more involved, and its multiple components may rust over time.

If brisket, ribs, pulled pork and effortless smoking is more your cooking style, the pellet grill might be an investment you are willing to make.

For those who believe in "Low and Slow" and want to tackle the big stuff, like pork shoulders, beef brisket and turkeys, the Kamado (Egg) ceramic cookers can provide an all-day adventure. They come in several sizes to fit your needs. There are some basic cooking techniques that all these technologies rely upon. The first is to be sure you cook your meat to safe temperatures, and a modern digital thermometer is perfect for that. It can be very hard to know when your meat is safe without this, especially if you grill when it is very cold outside.

The second is to start with a clean grill, so be sure you scrub it clean from the last time you used it. Third, is to coat your meat with olive oil or your favorite alternative so that it doesn't stick to that nice clean grill.

How often you open the grill and flip your food depends upon the cooking method and the item you are cooking. Cooking fish can be especially tricky here and we suggest you leave the skin on as you start cooking to keep it from falling apart. Take it off as the last step before serving and sear that side once more to create nice grill marks.

If you are new to outdoor grilling, start simply to get the hang of your equipment, unless you want to spring for that pellet grill that got your attention where the whole process has been automated so well for you.

Then, remember that any meat being cooked has to rest before serving to let the temperatures across its diameter equilibrate and for the juices to be redistributed once again. You can put it on a nice wooden cutting board to do that... all your guests will start to drool.

Sweet & Savory Surprises from the Grill

If you think the grill is for only meat, here are two side dishes that could change your mind!

Grilled Asparagus with Garlic and Parmesan Cheese

- 1 bunch of fresh asparagus. Choose the thicker spears for this recipe
- 2 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon salt
- 2 Tablespoon fresh minced garlic
- 1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Wash asparagus and cut off woody ends. Toss spears in a bowl with oil, salt and garlic. Place spears across grills and cook for about 5 minutes on each side or until marks are evident. Remove to a serving plate and toss cheese on top while spears are hot. Keep warm until ready to serve.

Grilled Pineapple with Honey Glaze

- 1 fresh pineapple peeled, cored, and cut into rings.
- 3 Tablespoons melted butter
- 1 tsp. honey
- ½ tsp salt
- dash of hot pepper sauce (optional)

Place pineapple rings in a large resealable plastic bag. Add butter, honey, salt and hot pepper, if desired. Marinate for 1-2 hours in refrigerator. Preheat grill for high heat and lightly oil grates. Skewer pineapple rings from side through center and through other side. Stack 2-3 on each skewer. Grill until heated through and grill marks appear, 2-3 minutes per side. Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

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

Trivia Answers (Questions on page 6)

1. John Adams occupied the White House in 1800 and every president since then has lived there.
2. 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
3. There have been 27 versions of the flag.
4. Thomas Jefferson invented the swivel chair, and is said to have written much of the Declaration of Independence from the chair.
5. The first Capitol of the United States was in Philadelphia.
6. George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson designed and had gardens built. Thomas Jefferson collected plants from all over the world to bring to America for planting.
7. France gifted the Statue of Liberty to the U.S. to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was cut into 350 pieces to move by ship to the U.S.
8. Alfred Hitchcock, Harry Houdini (born Eric Weisz) and Albert Einstein entered Ellis Island as immigrants along with over 12 million others. Ellis Island is now a museum.



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