

SMOKE SIGNAL

VOLUME 52, ISSUE 9

Serving the Smoke Rise Community since 1968

December, 2019

www.smokesignalnews.com



**Merry Christmas and
Happy Holidays**
from the Smoke Signal staff!

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PEACE on EARTH

P is for “Be PRESENT in every moment”. This moment is God’s Present to you. You will never have it again.

E is for “ENTER into the lives of others”; you may be the only one who comes that day.

A is for “ALWAYS be thankful”-- for the big and the small, for thankfulness brings great joy.

C is for “Care for those who have no one”. A touch or word is all it takes leave an imprint of value on another.

E is for Everlasting...the impact you can have on someone’s life. They may never forget.

Christmas is a Time For Reflection

by Barbara Bruschi

Christmas is revered by Christians all over the world. It is the night Jesus Christ was born in a manger in Bethlehem to illuminate humanity with peace, love, forgiveness and hope for redemption.

Christmas is a time for joyous celebration. Each country pays tribute to Christmas according to their own customs and traditions.

Remembering my childhood in Germany, even though it was a time of war, I recall the warmth of my family and the mystery and magic of the season.

The excitement started on the 5th of December in anticipation of St. Nicholas Day. We polished our boots and put them outside the bedroom, hoping to receive candy and small gifts. St. Nicholas was an actual person who lived in the 4th century in Asia Minor. He was known to be beloved because of his humble benevolence.

Advents Zeit (advent time) was to follow. On the fourth Sunday before Christmas an evergreen wreath was placed on the living room table with four large candles. Each Sunday the family would gather and light one candle to reflect upon their good fortune to be alive and well during this time of war. Cookies, hot chocolate, Stollen (fruitcake) and Glühwein (mulled red wine) would be served, sitting by the fire. We would sing Christmas carols and watch the snowflakes trickle from the sky. A glittering winter wonderland of icicles and leaves shimmering like jewels blanketed the earth.

Baking with my grandmother was always a real treat. It is my hope that the grandmothers of today continue this wonderful tradition.

During the advent season, Christmas Markets, a tradition dating back to the 15th century--delight their visitors with many culinary specialties, as well as arts and homemade crafts. In particular, wooden figurines like angels, nutcrackers, pyramids and a host of other ornaments can be found. A sea of lights give these markets a dream-like atmosphere. More and more North American cities are adopting this wondrous German tradition.

The Christmas tree originated in Germany in the 16th century “when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes”. Martin Luther is said to have walked home one night and admired the brilliance of the twinkling stars. This gave him the idea of attaching candles to the trees.

Years ago the large Christmas tree was guarded in our home and only revealed on Christmas Eve. The family would get dressed up and the children recited a poem before the door to the Christmas room was opened. My mother would play Christmas songs on the piano and finally all

...continued on page 6



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

9:00 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

**SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SILVER HILL ROAD, STONE MOUNTAIN, GA**

Holiday in Smoke Rise, a longstanding tradition of the Smoke Rise Community, is a holiday craft and gift show which started in 1980. It is always held the first Saturday of each December for holiday season shopping. It’s success is a testament to the support of our Smoke Rise

community and the wonderful crafters that come back year after year!

More than 100 artists, crafters and holiday vendors participate each year. Shoppers swarm by the hundreds to the show to find that just right gift for the holidays (or a little something for themselves!) including art, home accessories, home baked goods, clothing, garden art, glass/copper works, ornaments, scarves and shawls, wearable artwork, gourmet foods and gift items / eco-friendly vendors, natural spa products, and yarn designs.



A Whole Lot of Christmas

It’s beginning to look at lot like Christmas everywhere you go! That sentiment is definitely true at 1833 Smokerise Summit. The Christmas season is in full swing, and Santa Claus is preparing for his weekend visits to take photos in his sleigh. As in years past, donations are being collected for the Georgia Make-A-Wish Foundation. Please note that 100% of collected donations go directly to this worthy charity. Help us exceed last year’s total of \$6779.85 and reach our new goal of \$7000.00. Since 2012, a total of \$29,556.83 has been collected for charity.

Proceeds benefit the Smoke Rise Elementary School through the Smoke Rise Elementary Jaguar Endowment Fund, their parent supported fundraising organization. Among the many contributions to the school over the years are whiteboards, Computer Smart Boards, paint, science lab equipment, Apple laptops and accessories.

Breakfast with Santa to Benefit the Stone Mountain Co-operative Ministry

Saturday, Dec. 7

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Includes breakfast with Santa, silent auction, Santa’s Secret Shop, photo op (your camera) with Santa

Tickets \$7, children three and under eat free

Fellowship Hall
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
5801 Hugh Howell Road, Stone Mountain



See page 4 for more holiday events in the area!



Smoke Signal

P.O. Box 763, Tucker, GA 30085
 A non-profit service organization devoted to furthering neighborhood cooperation with the aid of good neighborhood communication.

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December Calendar of Events

- Now thru 12/24:
 Stone Mountain Christmas: Weekends and Christmas Eve
- 5-20 *Cinnamon GRITS-Christmas in the South* ART Station
- 7 Holiday in Smoke Rise: 9:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m.
Smoke Rise Elementary School
 - 7 Breakfast with Santa: 8:30-11:00 a.m.
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
 - 7 City of Lilburn Christmas Parade
Begins at 10:00 a.m., Main Street Lilburn
 - 14 Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts: Holiday Showcase
1:00 p.m., Smoke Rise Baptist Church
 - 14 Home for the Holidays Christmas Home Tour
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 - 23 Hanukkah
 - 24 Christmas Eve
 - 25 Merry Christmas
 - 31 New Years Eve



Smoke Signal Deadlines

DECEMBER 13

Please e-mail articles to:

staff@smokesignalnews.com

(Word documents or text file attachments preferred)
**PLEASE DO NOT SEND CLASSIFIED ADS
 TO THIS E-MAIL ADDRESS**

Extra copies may be picked up at
The Smoke Rise Community Garden on Hugh Howell Rd.

Deadline for classified ads is DECEMBER 10

SMOKE SIGNAL FLYER INSERT POLICY

Cost: \$150 by check to *Smoke Signal*
 Deadline to Receive: 6:00 p.m. on 19th of month
 Flyer inserts should be 8 1/2" x 11" (flat, not folded)
 Please provide 2,300 copies
 Reservation Required:
 Contact Barbara Luton, (770) 491-6711 by 15th of month.

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 or visit our website at www.smokesignalnews.com
 Link to the digital version of the *Smoke Signal*
 at <http://eepurl.com/pjn4v>
 or scan this QR Code
 with your smart phone!



Letter to the Editor:

Thank You!

On election night, November 5, 2019, I was honored to learn that you have put your trust in me to serve another term as your District 1, Post 2 City Councilman. I am truly grateful to each one of you for your support and vote of confidence. I will continue to work very hard for our wonderful community and help bring great things to the city of Tucker and to our District.

One of the defining moments in my life was to join the Rotary Club years ago as a young businessman. As a Rotarian, I have learned to focus on problem solving, community building, service, and integrity in everything I do. There are guiding principles and a code of conduct that I learned many years ago that still define me both in business and as a public servant. I will continue to serve with the code of a Rotarian—which is to:

1. Act with integrity, and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life.
2. Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect.
3. Use my professional skills through Rotary to mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world.
4. Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians.

Thank you again for putting your trust in me. I will continue to do the very best I can to serve your interests with honor, integrity and goodwill.

William "Bill" Rosenfeld
 City Council
 770-414-1390

BRING A BOOK TAKE A BOOK



Don't forget to check out the Little Libraries near the swim clubs.

Smoke Rise Baptist Church

Dr. Chris George: Senior Pastor
 Bart McNeil: Associate Pastor
 Becky Caswell-Speight:
 Minister of Families, Faith Formation and Connection
 Jeremy Colliver: Minister of Youth, Mission and Communication
 Danny Vancil: Minister of Music and Worship
 Amanda Coe Burton: Ministry Director for Children and Families
 Harrison Litzell: Co-Director of the Weekday School
 Stacey McNeil: Co-Director of the Weekday School
 Telephone: (770) 469-5856
 SmokeRiseBaptist.org

Sundays:
 9:00 a.m. Worship in the Chapel
 9:45 a.m. Sunday school
 11:00 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary
 Communion: Second Sunday of each month
 Wednesdays:
 5:00-5:45 Fellowship Dinner
 6:00-7:00 Programs for children, youth and adults
 7:00-8:30 Sanctuary choir
 Nursery provided

Eastminster Presbyterian Church

5801 Hugh Howell Road ~ Stone Mountain, GA 30087
 770-469-4881 ~ www.eastminster.us

Pastor ~ Rev. J. Caleb Clarke III
 Pastor of Senior Adult Ministries ~ Rev. Jeanne Simpson
 Director of Mission & Youth ~ Mark Sauls
 Office Coordinator ~ Christina Wetzel-Sizemore
 Director of Weekday Ministries ~ Celeste Sears
 Director of Respite Care Center ~ Helen Wilborn
 Financial Coordinator ~ Jan Zabarac
 Organist ~ Carole Mitchell
 Choir Director ~ Joy Chittick

Respite Care Center Hours: 10 a.m. - 3p.m. Wednesday

Sundays:
 9:15 a.m. Sunday School for all ages
 10:30 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary – nursery is provided
 Communion: First Sunday of the month
 Wednesdays:
 5:45 p.m. Join us for dinner and fellowship
 (\$8 per adult & reservations are required by Monday of each week)
 Program with guest speaker
 Chancel Choir

Holiday Worship Services:
 Lessons and Carols: 10:30 a.m. December 15th
 Christmas Eve Service: 5:30 p.m. December 24th

MC3 Church

Senior Minister: Art Stansberry
 Worship Minister: Leslie Riley
 Student Minister: Will Tyler
 Coordinator of Kids Ministry - Jim Barber
 Telephone (770) 783-1035
 www.mc3.life

Sunday Worship at Parkview High School Auditorium
 9:30 a.m. -- Coffee and donuts; adult and student c-groups; nursery and Sunday school for infants to 5th graders.

10:30 am. - Worship service

C-groups throughout the week at various homes -- check out our website for more times and addresses

Business Address and Hours:
 1316 Rockbridge Rd, Suite M
 Stone Mountain, GA 30087
 Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Mailing Address:
 1227 Rockbridge Rd., SW, STE 208-251
 Stone Mountain, GA 30087

First Moravian Church

Pastor: Rev. Elroy Christopher
 Congregational Acolyte: Bill Hitz
 Telephone (770) 491-7250, (770) 755-8289
 www.gamoravian.org

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

Incarnate Word Lutheran Church

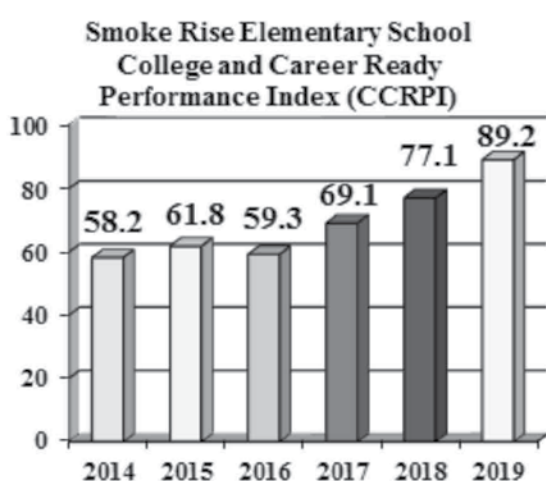
Please join us for worship on Sundays at 8:45 a.m.
 at the First Moravian Church sanctuary
 4950 Hugh Howell Rd., Stone Mountain, GA 30087

Mountain West Church

Pastor: Michael Shreve
 Worship Arts Pastor: Gary Robinson
 Telephone (770) 491-0228
 www.mwchurch.com
 4818 Hugh Howell Rd., Stone Mountain
 Service Times: Sundays: 9:00am / 11:00am / 1:00pm
 Christmas At Mountain West
 Monday, December 23rd – 7pm
 Tuesday, December 24th – 3pm / 5pm / 7pm

SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S 2019 College and Career Ready REPORT CARD Scores BIG!!

Principal Pamela McCloud proudly reports that the Georgia Department of Education has just posted the 2019 College and Career Ready Performance Index Report. These scores cover the 2018-2019 School Year. SMOKE RISE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL's score is 89.2. This represents the BEST performance in 5 years. Each year since 2014, the SRES's CCRPI scores have increased. The Report Card below shows how Smoke Rise Elementary School compares with the overall Dekalb County and State of Georgia numbers.



| Categories | State of Georgia | DeKalb County School District | Smoke Rise Elementary School |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Overall CCRPI | 75.9 | 75.4 | 89.2 |
| Content Mastery | 67.6 | 58.5 | 76.0 |
| Progress | 84.4 | 88.4 | 100.0 |
| Closing Gaps | 73.8 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Readiness | 80.9 | 77.4 | 82.2 |
| School Climate | | | ★★★★ /5 |
| Survey | | | 84.65 |
| Discipline | | | 99.32 |
| Safe & Substance Free Learning Environment | | | 100.00 |
| Attendance | | | 92.79 |
| Financial Efficiency | | | TBD |

AND THE WINNER IS...

By Kathryn Turner, THS Dugout Booster Club

On Tuesday, October 29, Coach Turner and the Tucker High School (THS) Fall Ball Team's 9-1 record earned them the honor of playing in the 2019 Fall Ball Championship at Brook Run Park. The Tucker Tigers took the field at 8PM with excitement and eagerness to finish what they had started at the beginning of the season. For seven intense innings, the Tucker Tigers fought hard to win, but alas, they came up short in a nail-biter, losing 3-4 to their opponents. However, the Tigers learned that they were still winners. Over the season, they grew as individual players and unified as a team by learning how to push through late night games (8 p.m. after school games) with tough opponents and tight scores. They did win. They won the respect of their opponents, fans & supporters, coaching staff, and each other.

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THS Fall Baseball Team (*denotes lives in Smokerise Community)
 1ST row - E. Moreau, C. Atchinson, T. Stroman
 (not pictured, B. Manning, J. Crick, M. Lewis, M. Faustin, I. Drake)
 2nd row - THS Asst. Coach Turner*, E. Guilford*, A. Hunter, L. Moody, T. Reeves, L. Atwell, A. Turner*, Fall Ball Asst Coach A. Stroman
 3rd row - C. Pope, N. Grayson, K. Robinson, R. Stanard, A. Jones *

One more win for the THS Tigers was the successful 2nd Annual Golf Tournament held at Stone Mountain Park on Sunday, November 10. There were over 45 golfers that showed up to compete for the coveted 1st place award while supporting the THS baseball program. As a result of those golfers and various hole sponsors and donors, the tournament raised over \$6K! On behalf of Coach Masce & coaching staff, Tucker Dugout Booster Club, and the THS baseball players, we would like to sincerely thank each of you for another successful tournament and your continued support in building up Tucker High School's Baseball Program! We ALL win!



SRP: Where Everyone is Welcome!

By Grier Kellett

Smoke Rise Prep, Stone Mountain's best kept secret, focuses on the core values of character, culture, and curriculum. In order to shape well-rounded students, our teachers and parents create an atmosphere that aligns with those core values. One way that we accomplish this is to create a healthy balance between academic rigor and enriching activities.

Smoke Rise Prep recently completed their accreditation with Georgia Accrediting Commission in October and are pleased to announce that they are Accredited with Quality which is the highest level you can obtain! Are you interested in learning more about us? Join us at our Holiday Open House on December 6 at 9:30 a.m. Hear from our students and administration, tour the classrooms, and enjoy light refreshments. Email our principal, Sherrie Waddell, at sherrie@smokeriseprep.org to confirm your attendance and don't forget to follow Smoke Rise Prep on Facebook and Instagram.

In November our middle school ventured to the Alliance Theatre to watch a riveting, dramatic adaptation of Jason Reynolds' young adult novel by the same name Ghost. And our elementary students visited Washington Farms where they learned the life cycle of a pumpkin, how to make a garden in a glove, and the importance of bees to the life cycle. Every SRP student takes an average of four educational and fun field trips each year, ensuring students can actively engage in their learning paths.

Thank you to all who cooked and/or attended the Chili Cook-off at the Smoke Rise Country Club on November 17. The chefs were amazing, and the results were mighty tasty! We love being a part of our Smoke Rise community and are appreciative of the neighborly support.

Be on the lookout for a student writing competition in the January *Smoke Signal*!



There's No Place
Like Home for the Holidays

Let Us Bring You Home



Smoke Rise Agents
PalmerHouse Properties

www.smokeriseagents.com 770.573.9715



ART Station's 2019-2020 Theatre Season opens with Cinnamon GRITS-Christmas in the South Book, Lyrics, & Music by Erica Allen McGee

This show runs December 5-20. Performances will be held Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. with one reduced-price matinee performance on Thursday, December 12 at 10:30 a.m. and Wednesday, December 18 at 10:30 a.m. All performances will be in the ART Station Theatre at 5384 Manor Drive in Stone Mountain Village. Visit our online box office at artstation.org or call our box office at 770-469-1105.



Everything is nice when you add a little cinnamon spice! The holiday sequel to the ART Station Southern hit GRITS: Girls Raised in the South centers on hilarious tales of holiday soirées and endearing family traditions. Four Southern belles from four different generations cope with their countrified Christmas celebrations. It's a little bit funny, a bit touching, and somewhat ridiculous, but all in the flavor of the South. The play is guaranteed to get everyone in the Holiday Spirit!

Lilburn Christmas PARADE

Parade Times: 10 a.m. until around 11:30 a.m.
 Where to Watch: Sidewalks on both sides of Main Street.
 Where to Park: City Hall-Library and Lilburn City Park. Greenway lot is accessible only. Main St. closed 9:30 a.m. to noon.
 Post-Parade Activities at City Hall-Library (340 Main St.): Free photos with Santa, kids' craft, and coloring.

Take your family to enjoy



STONE MOUNTAIN CHRISTMAS

Weekends:
 Dec 1, 6-8, 13-15, 20-23 and the 24th

See the Snow Angel, Nightly Christmas Parade, Polar Express, Cartoon Characters and wonderful shows.

www.stonemountainpark.com

Homes for the Holidays

CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR

Presented by
 GFWC Stone Mountain Woman's Club

**Saturday, December 14
 10:00-4:00 p.m.**

Tickets include lunch at Stone Mountain Methodist Church

Tickets Available for Purchase at:
 The Garden Enthusiast in Tucker,
 ART Station in Stone Mountain, from any member,
 or online at www.stonemountainwomansclub.org



SMOKE RISE ACADEMY OF THE ARTS to present THIRD ANNUAL HOLIDAY SHOWCASE

Free Program Will Showcase Talents of Students and Faculty

Students and faculty members of Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts (SRAA) will present their Third Annual Holiday Showcase on Saturday, December 14 at 1:00 p.m. The production will take place in Fellowship Hall of Smoke Rise Baptist Church, 5901 Hugh Howell Road in Tucker and is presented free to the public.

"Our annual Holiday Showcase has proved to be one of the most anticipated holiday events for Tucker and the surrounding communities," said Denise Burcham, executive director of Smoke Rise Academy of the Arts. "Our theatre is standing room only for attendance, and the audience eagerly looks forward to seeing the Academy's immensely talented students and faculty and a sneak preview of the drama department's new productions."

The holiday-themed program will include choreography from academy dance students of all ages, from preschool to adult; scenes from elementary and high school drama students; and instrumental performances by students and faculty. A post-event reception will follow.

"Our Holiday Showcase is our way to thank everyone for supporting all our productions throughout the year," said Burcham. "It's our holiday gift to the Smoke Rise and Tucker communities."

SRAA's spring session begins on Monday, January 6, 2020; classes offered include dance, music and art for all ages, and drama for elementary and high-school students. Details and registration are available at smokerisebaptist.org/arts, or by calling Denise Burcham at 678.533.0562.

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HOLIDAY RECEPTION YOU'RE INVITED!

**RSVP & JOIN US!
 COME SEE ALL THAT'S NEW ON THE RISE**

Membership has it's privileges! Come see all we have to offer from the recent club grounds and course enhancements, elevated dining and social event experiences ... and much more!
 Interested in seeing why being a Smoke Rise member is special? Come meet your neighbors and join us for a special holiday reception. Sunday, December 22 5:00-7:00 p.m. RSVP Required. Contact information provided below.

SMOKE RISE COUNTRY CLUB

Contact Heath McDaniel, Membership Director at 770-908-2582 or hmcdaniel@smokerisecc.com.
SMOKERISECC.COM/MEMBERPROMOTION
 4900 CHEDWORTH DRIVE | STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

By AvivA Hoffmann

'Tis the Season for Shopping... and Scams

Holiday shopping can be fun but be cautious. Online purchases are increasing across the globe each year, but that can also lead to identity theft, malware threats, or an inferior product. To reduce your chances of getting a bad deal, take precautions.

Do you rely on online reviews to help decide whether to make a purchase? They run the gamut from being detailed, vague, opinionated, false, or even downright funny. Thorough reviews can help us make better, informed, decisions. However, it's been proven some companies have used fake reviews to increase sales!

The Federal Trade Commission has taken action against the illegal practice of posting deceptive or inaccurate information about a product or service online. The FTC says it prevents consumers from making informed purchasing decisions. It's a good idea to consider the source of a review, before making a purchase. Reviews from trusted and impartial experts and organizations are likely worth more than a single customer review or one found on an unknown site. Also, it's a good idea to compare online reviews from several different websites - including retail or shopping comparison sites.

Use a credit card for online purchases. They're protected by the Fair Credit Billing Act and may limit your liability for fraud. Always check your statements regularly, so you can catch any attempted fraud on your account. Also, don't auto-save personal information online for future use. Consider if the convenience is really worth the risk.

Gift cards need caution too. Some scammers pose as a local, community leader to ask members or worshipers for gift card contributions "for a worthy cause." Appeals are often made by email but can come through on texts and phone calls too. The request often includes the name of the known leader and an official or legitimate looking email, telephone number, and/or mailing address. It's best to follow up in person - or with a direct phone call. Also, watch for a non-personal greeting where your name is not included, or a request for you to buy a gift card and share the gift card number and PIN. Those numbers let the scammer immediately get the money that's loaded on the card!

If you, or someone you know, paid a scammer with a gift card, report it ASAP! Call the card company to report the gift card was used in a scam. Then, tell the FTC about it at ftc.gov/complaint. Your reports may help law enforcement agencies launch investigations that could stop imposters and other fraudsters.

The Federal Trade Commission has a great website devoted to sharing information on scams. Go to: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/scam-alerts>. Also, be sure to check out the Internet Crime Complaint Center: <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>. And, whenever I get an email warning about a free offer or some new online threat, I go to the Urban Legends Reference Pages to investigate. You can find that site online at <http://www.snopes.com>.

Happy holidays and happy shopping!

In the Giving Mood? HOLIDAYS AND FOOD BANKS

It's always important to support our local food banks. With Christmas coming, there is an even greater need to be generous. Our closest three food pantries are the Lilburn Co-op (on Five Forks-Trickum road across from Brusters), the Stone Mountain Co-op, and NETworks in Tucker. Go to their websites or drive by to see what they need. If you are considering a donation, here are a few tips.

Food is always needed - such as canned fruit and vegetables, soup, peanut butter and jelly, canned meat and fish, cereal, pasta, rice, dried beans and mac and cheese. Holiday items like cranberry sauce, canned sweet potatoes, cans or packets of gravy mix and stuffing mix are always in demand.

Did you know that people who get food stamps cannot use them for non-food items such as the following: Bath soap, dish soap, detergent, toilet paper, toothpaste and brushes, feminine and incontinence products. Therefore, donations of these items are always needed.

Gift cards from grocery stores or stores like Walmart are very welcome for the holidays. With a gift card, clients can buy their own turkey or ham. If you donate a gift card, please make sure that the activation receipt is attached.

The Homeless also come to the food banks. They usually do not have access to a stove or microwave, so items like small flip-top cans, pouches of fish and meat, small packets of cheese crackers and protein bars are always welcome.

Finally, good old money can help food banks fill in the gaps. With it, the food banks can get what they need for their clients.

techtalk Echo Look?

By Joel Gilbert, P.E.

If you haven't heard of it yet, you likely will. The new product released from Amazon is the Echo Look, a hands-free camera and style assistant that includes Style Check to get a second opinion on your outfit. Really?

I guess the male perspective doesn't apply here. Most of us men have two or three pairs of shoes we wear and repair until they fall apart, possibly keeping them past that point. We have a few go-to pairs of pants and then possibly a dozen shirts or so we wear all the time depending upon the season and the daily plans.

So, the idea of a digital assistant to capture, compare, and criticize our wardrobe and how it looks on us is just not important. This male perspective of course explains my surprise that the latest manifestation of the Amazon Echo product portfolio, the "Look," is a product at all.

Of course, I am sure Amazon didn't do this without some careful market research. And, given today's obsession with the online social media and online pictures, I guess I see the evolution will now be that individuals will focus on showing all the outfits they own and of course being marketed to for those deemed perfect to improve their looks.

Not that you needed another warning about this, but there are no privacy concerns here either, are there? Seems like nefarious individuals would just love to hack into this device as voyeurs. Who am I to raise this as a fear? I have several Amazon Echo devices listening in already in my home and office locations.

I guess it was only logical to expand the point of view for those who seem to document everything they eat online. I am thankful that they do so often when I want to check out a new restaurant. But, I do think some have gone a bit too far. That is why this picture kind of says it all. I can't wait to see what Amazon comes up with next ... can you?



PALMERHOUSE PROPERTIES



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Christmas Reflections...
continued from page 1

the candles were lit. Oh, what a glorious sight it was! The tree sparkled with ornaments, collected through the years along with many sweets. Our family is keeping this tradition, without the sweets, alive to the present day.

For Americans the Christmas tree appeared to be an oddity at first. It was not until the year 1830 that the Germans of Pennsylvania displayed Christmas trees openly. The New England Puritans considered the trees to be sacred, and found all decorated trees to be a pagan custom.

The Germans invented the glass ornaments and lametta (tinsel). Glass ornaments date back to 1847. Hans Greiner established the first glassworks in the city of Lauscha. The ornaments were mainly hand-blown fruits and nuts. The United States adopted the custom around 1870. Tinsel was invented around the year 1610 in Nuremberg. It was fashioned out of extruded strands of silver. It represented the starry sky over the nativity scene in a splendid universe. Christmas Eve in all its glory had arrived. Presents awaited us underneath the tree and we were thrilled with our treasures. In spite of wartime our parents managed to gift us. One of my prized possessions was a new muff to keep me warm. Sledding and skating were activities during the winter that my sister and I cherished. One year the highlight was a puppet theater, constructed by our faithful carpenter. We invented characters and gave performances for family and friends.

Germany celebrates two Christmas days and part of the festivities is the traditional Christmas food. The traditional dinner features duck, goose, rabbit or roast along with apple and sausage stuffing, and potato dumplings as well. Sweets like marzipan, Christmas Stollen, (fruitcake) bursting with nuts and fruit and pastries are part of the splendid fare.

We should always remember the true sense of Christmas and open our hearts to share our love and gifts with those in need. We remember the service men protecting us all over the world in distant lands. Like the star on the top of the Christmas tree that shines brightly we should make this world a brighter place. Giving hope to those that are dreaming of a better tomorrow is a noble deed. May the memory of a blessed Christmas stay with you throughout the year and bring you wonder and much happiness. "Silent Night, Holy Night" is truly a time for reflection.

SRCA Board End of the Year Report

The final SRCA board meeting of the calendar year was held on November 11, 2019. City council members Pat Soltys and Bill Rosenfeld were present to interact with the board on several matters. The primary business was for guests representing Branch Properties to present the revised proposal for rezoning of 24 acres at the corner of Hugh Howell and Mountain Industrial. The proposal as presented to the board was strictly for a grocer-anchored commercial development that included retention of the grove of old growth forest. The second and third readings of the proposal before city council will be on January 27 and February 24, 2020.

Seasonal autumn plantings and clean up were re-scheduled for mid-November for an expanded list of chimneys. Plantings were delayed by the drought and record heat late into fall.

As projected at the spring membership meeting, SRCA will close the year running a deficit budget in excess of \$10,000. SRCA is not in any immediate financial duress, due to reserves planned for this scenario. Adding 200 new memberships to our loyal base of 800+ during the 2020 membership campaign would turn the deficit around. Please encourage your neighbors to pay their membership dues.

The SRCA board wishes all of our neighbors in Smoke Rise a joyous holiday season. As an all-volunteer, uncompensated SRCA board, we are especially grateful for the blessings of those who entrust us with their annual dues investment.

The board members who have been serving Smoke Rise as we close 2019 are Anna Ogletree, Beverley Ojo, Eileen Stone, Jenna Greene, Kalpana Patel, Kim Nesbitt, Lisa Khemani, Lori Jones, Pam Heisler, Virginia Rece, Lyle Collins, Ryan Tidwell-Davidson and Mike Huerkamp.

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Rules for Driving in Atlanta

1. You must first learn to pronounce the city name, Atlanta. Old-timers are still allowed to call it Alana.
2. The morning rush hour is from 5:00 am to noon. The evening rush hour is from noon to 9:00 pm. Friday's rush hour starts on Thursday morning.
3. The minimum acceptable speed on I-285 is 80 mph. On I-75 and I-85, your speed is expected to at least match the highway number. Anything less is considered 'wussy'.
4. Forget the traffic rules you learned elsewhere. Atlanta has its own version of traffic rules. For example, Ferraris and Lamborghinis owned by sports stars go first at a four-way stop. Cars/trucks with the loudest muffler go second. The trucks with the biggest tires go third. The HOV lanes are really designed just for the slow Floridians passing through who are used to hogging the left lane everywhere.
5. If you actually stop at a yellow light or stop sign, you will be rear ended, cussed out, and possibly shot. Unless there is a police car nearby.
6. Never honk at anyone. Ever. Seriously. It's another offense that can get you shot.
7. Road construction is permanent and continuous. Detour barrels are moved around for your entertainment pleasure during the middle of the night to make the next day's driving a bit more exciting. Generally, city roads other than the main streets have more potholes and bumps (usually speed bumps) than most dirt roads in the countryside.
8. Watch carefully for road hazards such as drunks, possums, skunks, dogs, barrels, cones, furniture, cats, mattresses, shredded tires, squirrels, rabbits, and crows.
9. Be aware that spelling of street names may change from block to block, e.g., Clairmont, Claremont, Clairmonte.
10. If someone actually has their turn signal on, wave them to the shoulder immediately to let them know it has been "accidentally activated".
11. If you are in the left lane and only driving 75 in a 55-65 mph zone, k, e.g., you are considered a road hazard and will be "flipped off" accordingly. If you return the flip, you'll be shot.

MOST IMPORTANT: If you get LOST, look for a road named PEACHTREE... Then you are somewhere in Atlanta.

Submitted by Dr. Ronnie Weathers. Author Unknown. If anyone knows the author, please let us know. We would love to give credit.

The *Smoke Signal* is posted to www.smokesignalnews.com the first of each month. Go to the "Smoke Signal Digital" link. You'll also find the link posted to the *Smoke Signal News* Facebook page each month with posting of pictures and stories throughout the month. For questions, contact Pat Soltys at pat@smokeriseagents.com.



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**Dr. Albert Scott named President
of Georgia OB/GYN Society**



Dr. Albert Scott, Jr. was recently selected as president of the Georgia OB/GYN Society (GOGS), which serves as the voice for women's healthcare in Georgia.

"It's a lifetime achievement and a career high," says Dr. Scott, founder and president of DeKalb Women's Specialists. "This is bigger than anything I've ever done and probably ever will do."

Dr. Scott's previous accomplishments include serving as Chief of Staff of DeKalb Regional Health System, being on the DeKalb Hospital Authority Board, graduating from the Georgia Physician Leadership Academy, and being named a Top Doctor by Atlanta magazine.

After serving on the Board of the Georgia OB/GYN Society for 12 years, Dr. Scott has seen firsthand how the organization continues making a difference in the realm of women's healthcare. This includes having an impact in various legislative changes throughout the years and supporting Georgia OB/GYNs in their care for patients.

As Dr. Scott begins his term as the organization's 69th president, he says he plans to focus on decreasing the disparities in access to women's healthcare, reducing maternal mortality, and increasing the number of OB/GYNs in rural areas.

"Each of these issues are independently important, as well as interconnected," says Dr. Scott. "Through awareness, legislative interaction, and working with key stakeholders, the Georgia OB/GYN Society will strive to bring positive change to women's healthcare, serving as a strong advocate for patients in our great state."

Dr. Scott has lived in Smoke Rise for nearly 30 years.

**TUCKER ELECTION RESULTS:
Incumbants Stay; Ethics Ammendment Fails**

Tucker's City Council will remain unchanged next year, as voters Tuesday overwhelmingly supported incumbents for the three seats up for grabs. The only contested seat was in District One, where Councilman Bill Rosenfeld took 77 percent of the vote over challenger Christine Bloodworth's 23 percent. Councilwomen Noelle Monferdini and Anne Lerner were unopposed in Districts Two and Three, respectively.

The other item on the ballot in Tucker Tuesday was a DeKalb County referendum to amend ethics standards that had been approved by voters back in 2015. The referendum, which critics say would have weakened ethics oversight in the County, failed by more than 12,000 votes. Tucker's next municipal elections will be held on November 2, 2021. That election will be for the Post One seats in each district, as well as for the office of mayor.



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Out the Window
By Beth Henson



Something had completely captured Kit, my calico's attention. She was laser focused out the kitchen's sunny bay window with a look of sheer lust. The hummingbirds were at it again. An aerial dog fight was unfolding around their cherry red feeder. It completely mimicked the old black and white movies showing the Spitfire and Messerschmitt engaging in a dangerous dance of combat in the sky. I could hear the tiny emerald hummers' squeals and chatter as they warned the invaders to leave their territory and more importantly, feeder. I knew each hummingbird species has it's own unique language and they use it to communicate with each other and warn off anyone daring to enter their territory. When not chasing off invaders these little guys spend their day consuming twelve times their body weight of nectar to maintain their miniscule weight of only a few grams. No wonder their wings are always a blur (beating 55 times a second), allowing them to hover and consume the large quantities of sweet nutrition they need. I looked again and as quickly as they had appeared the squadron jetted off over the low winter jasmine and into the horizon. There were other battles to fight and that darn cat would just have to entertain herself for a while!



Hummingbird by Beth Henson
Kit by Beth Henson

Report
SUSPICIOUS
Activity

Recently we have received calls in reference to suspicious persons and activity in the Tucker Precinct territory. I want to remind everyone that if you see any suspicious activity to call 911 to report what you saw.

Things to remember when you call 911.....What did I see?
 What was the suspicious activity I witnessed?
 What was the crime I witnessed?
 When did it occur?Date _____ Time _____
 How many people were involved in this incident? _____
 Did I recognize any person involved?Yes/ No
 And were they involved in committing the incident? _____

What information is needed to report a *Suspicious Vehicle and Person*:

- Vehicle's color, type, tag number (if possible)
- Description of driver and/or other occupants
- Vehicle location or the direction of travel
- Approximate time last seen in the area
- Always call 911 if a suspicious person/vehicle are witnessed in the area

Carry a cell phone and/or personal safety items when out in the community

Remember IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING
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Census Time *By Frank Luton*



I remember “way back” in 1950 (before many of you were born or maybe not) my aunt Catherine would go around the neighborhood knocking on doors and getting people to “fill out her census questions”. And guess what? It’s soon to be that time again...the 2020 Census is just around the corner!

Every 10 years we have the privilege of participating in the United States census count. While you won’t see much in the way of paperwork or questionnaires until the Spring, your local City of Tucker leaders have been working with the federal census representatives to learn about changes in the process for 2020 and how to best get a complete and accurate count of those who live in Smoke Rise and Tucker. Before you get inundated with mailers, television, radio and print ads, below are some things to know:

The concept of census is nothing new, and it even dates back to biblical times. Here in the US, our Constitution mandates that every person be counted every 10 years. Starting in 1790, the federal government has attempted to keep accurate count of how many people are living in the country and where they live.

If you’re a veteran of previous censuses, you’ll probably remember receiving a form in the mail, sitting down at your kitchen table, filling it out and mailing it back in. You can still do that, but this upcoming 2020 census will also have a digital option. You will get a postcard, inviting you to go on-line and fill in your information there. You will also have the option of completing the survey/form via telephone.

So, your question may be “why am I doing this?” In addition to providing the federal government with necessary information, there is also a significant local impact based on census data. The Census Bureau estimates that more than \$675 billion in federal funds and grants are doled out to localities based on census findings and figures. Think about money that goes to schools, hospitals, public works, as well as having an impact on redistricting, with some counties and cities gaining or losing “seats” due to increases or decreases in numbers.

As far as privacy of information goes, it is codified in federal law that the Census Bureau cannot share your answers with any other governmental agency or share responses that could identify you or your family.

Here are some key dates to look for:

- Mid-March: Letters/Post Cards Mailed
- April 1: Census Day
- May: Non-Response Follow-Up Begins
- December 31: Census Count Delivered to the President

And if you want to be like my Aunt Catherine, you can apply to be a census taker by applying on-line at 2020census.gov/jobs or by calling (855) 562-2020.

HEALTH NOTES:

by **Cheri Schneider, M.D.**

**TYPE 2 DIABETICS;
DO YOU KNOW YOUR NUMBERS?**

Diabetes is running rampant in our country today. I and many other doctors remember a day when it was not this way. Of course, obesity was not common either. And, yes, there is a connection. In this column, though, I do not want to complain. I want to offer a few tips to Type 2 Diabetics that will keep them in touch with how they are really doing managing their disease. It can be difficult knowing if you are managing it well because many diabetics do not feel any different when their blood sugar is high.

Having diabetes increases your risk for cardiovascular disease. Many consider the diagnosis of diabetes to be a ‘heart attack equivalent’. The American Heart Association says, “Adults with diabetes are 2-4 times more likely to die of heart disease than adults without diabetes”. If you are over 65, almost 70% of people eventually die from some form of heart disease. Sixteen percent will die of stroke. A third of Type 2 Diabetics develop kidney failure, and half will develop heart failure. This means Adult Diabetics need to strictly control all other risks for heart disease.

Now for the numbers: All diabetics need to know their “numbers”. Some of these will vary depending on your age or degree of frailty, so discuss this with your doctor. All diabetics should have these goals:

Blood Pressure goal: under 130/80.

LDL Cholesterol goal: under 100

Fasting Blood Sugar goal: 100-130.

A1C goal: <7.0.

GFR (kidney function test) goal of: >59

The LDL cholesterol is the ‘bad’ cholesterol and the main driver of heart disease. Other cholesterol elevations can be bad too (like triglycerides), but the LDL type of cholesterol is the main culprit. It is critical to keep this number down as a diabetic so that you do not develop heart and artery blockages.

The fasting blood sugar is a measurement of the sugar in your blood stream before you eat in the morning. If you ate a sugar cube it would go up. If you fasted three days it would be lower. The fasting sugar guides a diabetic in knowing generally how they are doing on a day-to-day basis. It can be a good guide if it begins to creep up.

The A1C is a blood sugar measurement that shows the three-month average of your blood sugar. You cannot ‘cheat’ this number by behaving a few days. The diagnosis of diabetes is reached when you are at an A1C of 6.5 or greater. As you notice, a GOAL of under 7.0 is still in the diabetic range. It is however a reasonable goal and has been shown to decrease heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. A1C levels between 5.8 and 6.4 are considered pre-diabetic. A normal level is up to 5.7.

The GFR is a measure of how well your kidney is filtering. It gives an idea about the health of your kidneys.

There are two other tasks a diabetic should do YEARLY. They should have their eyes checked for diabetic eye changes and they should have their feet checked yearly for loss of sensation. Your regular doctor can do this, or a podiatrist can help make sure your feet are healthy.

It usually takes a number of years to develop complications from diabetes. Keeping your ‘numbers’ in line will help you stay away from these problems and may help you live longer. I will write another article soon on the natural course of diabetes. This may help you understand more about why it is such a dangerous disease.

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Mountain Mums News *By Rene` Boven***Mountain Mums Bring Christmas Cheer and Crafts**

The Mountain Mums serve the community in several ways, including hosting Horticulture Therapy events several times a year. On November 1, nine Mums including Smoke Rise residents Connie Henry, Gaye Auman, Rene` Boven and Lynn Malone visited Brookside Stone Mountain for a morning of Christmas crafts and cheer! A holiday ornament featuring each participant's photograph was decorated with snowflakes and tiny ornaments. The residents then decorated cone-shaped Christmas trees made of Birch bark from trees in the yard of Kelley Samaras, HT coordinator for the Mums.

**Mountain Mums Get in the Holiday Spirit**

On November 7, thirteen members attended the 17th Annual Leading Lights Luncheon & Fashion Show at Callanwolde Fine Arts Center in Atlanta. Leading Lights is the major fundraiser for the DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs. Funds raised help support the Federation's many projects including Blue Star Markers, The Garden Center at Callanwolde, Healing Heroes and Keep DeKalb Beautiful.

It was cold outside but it was hot-hot-hot inside with 150 attendees, lots of volunteers, and several vendors selling original watercolors, handmade scarves, soaps, ornaments, purses, jewelry and lots more! A 'Swan Coach House' style catered luncheon was served, and Von Maur department store put on a fashion show. Ann Purr, a Mountain Mum, was one of the featured models. During the luncheon, lots of door prizes were awarded too.

AWARE Visited Mountain Mums in November

The Mountain Mums hosted AWARE – Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort for their program on November 13 at Jean Weathers' home. Hostesses Carol Wales, Gaye Auman and Mary Lou Still prepared a delicious brunch. Connie Henry provided the raffle.

In keeping with the Mums' theme for the year, "Water, Wildlife & Wonderful Wednesdays," the program featured animal ambassadors from AWARE....wildlife that you might find in your yards, including "KoKo" the Red Tail hawk, "Jeffrey" the black rat snake, "Sydney" the possum, and "Boogie" the Barn owl. The AWARE Wildlife Center rehabilitates Georgia's injured and orphaned native wild animals and educates the community about peaceful coexistence with wildlife.

The program was conducted by Marielle Kromis, a Wildlife Care Supervisor II. AWARE accepts up to 2,000 animal patients every year at its center at Arabia Mountain in Lithonia. Although we weren't allowed to touch the ambassadors, we did get to see them up close and personal and learned how they are beneficial to our gardens. For instance, did you know an opossum may eat 5,000 ticks in a year!

The Mums will enjoy their annual Holiday Party at the Smoke Rise Country Club on December 11 featuring lunch and a Santa Gift Exchange. If interested in membership or attending one of the programs, please contact Debbie Jones, Membership Chair at (678) 381-1648.

**Mountain Shadow Garden Club**

The November 11 meeting of Mountain Shadow Garden Club (MSGC) featured a program on "Native Plants for the Birds" by Esther Stokes (right), Chair of the Atlanta Audubon Society. She emphasized the need to control non-native, invasive plant species in home landscapes and provide year-round environments that can help reverse the loss of

desirable bird populations. During the meeting, Jeff Raines (left) was re-elected to serve as President of MSGC again for 2020. Smoke Rise resident Jeff Potter (center) serves as a board member.

MSGC does not have a regular meeting in December. The first program for 2020 will feature author Linda Copeland discussing her book, "Legends in the Garden," written in cooperation with Dr. Allan Armitage of the University of Georgia. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. Monday evening, January 13, in Founders Hall, Eastminster Presbyterian Church, 5801 Hugh Howell Road, Stone Mountain, Georgia. Free and open to men and women of all ages. Refreshments and socializing follow. For information, contact Jeff Raines at 404-641-8633.

Morning Glories Gather for Autumn Activities

Falling leaves, bright blue skies and brilliant shades of gold, red and copper fill Smoke Rise each fall and our club members cherish the beauty! On October 8th the club met at the Smoke Rise Country Club to hear Sandy Kruger, Olmsted Linear Park Alliance Executive Director review the history of the parks alongside Ponce de Leon Avenue and fill us in on their upcoming activities. Additionally, Susan Morrison reminded the club to register their gardens for the Community Wildlife Project which is sponsored by the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. Susan noted that there are five categories for certification from winter wildlife wonderland to backyard habitat to backyard nest box project designations.



On October 10, the Redbud District of GCG, Inc. held their Fall District Meeting at the Smoke Rise Country Club, hosted by the Dekalb Federation of Garden Clubs. One hundred guests enjoyed a delicious luncheon and shopped 'til they dropped at the "Share the Joy – A Christmas Bazaar" that featured beautiful handmade items like wreaths and holiday décor, baked goods, ornaments, note paper and many other wonderful gift items. The Morning Glories Quill Duncan, Redbud District Director, Cookie Roland and Joy Zaidan organized the event with help from dozens of other clubs across the district. The annual meeting featured a memorial service, educational exhibits, an awards ceremony and reports from the Redbud officers on activities across the district. Morning Glories helped set up and clean up and made many of the beautiful items for sale at the bazaar. All in all, it was a very successful and fun filled day! Next fall's Redbud meeting will be in Conyers hosted by the Conyers Garden Club.

Next up on the Morning Glories event calendar was the annual November spectacle of "Leading Lights" at Callanwolde. This event is a fundraiser for the Dekalb Federation of Garden Clubs and featured a fashion show by Von Maur, shopping from local vendors, raffle items and silent auction items and a wonderful luncheon and of course, door prizes. Morning Glories helped set up and clean up and sell tickets and host. This year two Morning Glories were beautiful models: Glenndolyn Hallman and Janet McGinnis!

On December 5th the club will decorate the Wells-Brown House in Stone Mountain Village with seasonal décor. December 10th will feature another special meeting where we will gather to enjoy a luncheon and bring toys to donate to the Partners Against Domestic Violence (PADV) shelter children. We will be bringing diapers for distribution at the Stone Mountain Cooperative Ecumenical Ministry.

Smoke Rise Garden Club: In the Giving Spirit

A gourmet lunch provided by Marilyn Oatway at her home this past July gave us a head start on wrapping gift boxes for patients at Children's Hospital during the holiday season. At least 60 boxes will be given.

Hostess Deb Halley's, collection of delicious teas, Margarita Fajardo's pumpkin chili and Paula McEvoy's spice cake provided us with the incentive to fill the boxes with great gifts that will bring joy to the children. Their excitement makes us happy too!

This fall, our club also purchased and planted bulbs in four locations in the Kelly-Cofer Park.

Our club is a member of the Dekalb Federation of Garden clubs. Their location is in the grand old Callanwolde Estate. Every third Thursday, excellent programs are presented during the Dekalb Federation meeting--for both the beginning and the more seasoned gardener. Christmas at Callanwolde is also gearing up for the holiday season and volunteers are needed.

Our January 6 meeting will be "Garden Therapy." By Joanne Bennett. If you are interested in joining or learning more about our garden club, please contact Jane Culbertson at 770-938-3060 or destovan@aol.com



Hostess Deb Halley, Co-hostesses, Paula McEvoy and Margarita Fajardo

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Amen, Let's Eat!



By Joyce Ray

Neighborhood gatherings, club parties, church events and employee celebrations are some of the fun occasions to get together for the Holidays and enjoy favorite party foods. Some of my most treasured recipes come from friends who brought them to share. If you know your dish is likely to be a "winner" you could create 3x5 cards and place beside your dish on the party table for guests to pick up.

Try these quick and easy favorites when time is short, and you want to make a delicious impression.

Angel Macarons

1 pkg (16 oz) one-step angel food cake mix
½ cup water
1 ½ teaspoons almond extract
2 cups flaked coconut

In mixing bowl, beat cake mix, water and extract on low speed for 30 seconds. Scrape bowl beat on medium speed for 1 minute. Fold in the coconut. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls onto a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 10–12 minutes or until set. Remove paper with cookies to a wire rack to cool. YIELD 2½ dozen.

Revised versions of stand-by favorite. Using Graham crackers or saltines as the base for making toffee-style cookies has been at the top of the "YUM scale" for many seasons.

This new version features the "Salted Caramel" craze and is this season's favorite from Southern Living. Both methods are included for your own comparison.

Salted Caramel Peanut Brittle

40 saltine crackers (from 1 ½ inch sleeve)
1 cup unsalted butter, cubed (2 sticks)
1 cup packed light brown sugar
1 ½ cups chopped unsalted roasted peanuts
1 (4 oz) bittersweet chocolate baking bar, chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon flaky sea salt

Preheat oven to 350°. Line a 13x10 inch baking sheet with aluminum foil. Lightly grease foil. Arrange crackers in a single layer on foil.

In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat, wish in brown sugar and cook, whisking often until mixture comes to a boil. Continue cooking and stirring constantly for approx. 3 minutes. Remove from heat and pour evenly over crackers, spreading to cover all crackers. Bake until bubbly, for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and immediately sprinkle chopped peanuts evenly over crackers, pressing to adhere. Let cool 20 minutes. Melt chocolate in glass bowl on high heat in microwave until chocolate is melted, stirring often. Remove from heat and drizzle over crackers, sprinkle with sea salt. Let cool in pan one hour. Break apart and store in airtight container.

Graham Cracker Pralines

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 cup butter (2 sticks)
1 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350°. Follow directions above but use graham crackers to line baking pan instead of saltines. Boil sugar and butter as above and remove from heat, stir in pecans and pour over graham crackers. Bake as above. Cool, then break apart and store. Option: Pour 1 small pkg mini chocolate chips over top when you remove from oven. Allow to melt for a few minutes and then spread over top.

Friendship Brownies

A welcome and economical gift for teacher, coach, scout leader or friend, and your kids will enjoy helping you make it and decorating the jars. It has a shelf life of 6 months. Decorate jar with your favorite ribbon and holiday fabric squares. Print the list of additional ingredients and directions for baking on card and attach.

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2/3 cup packed brown sugar
¾ teaspoon salt
2/3 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/3 cup baking cocoa
½ cup semisweet chocolate chips
½ cup chopped walnuts
ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS to add just before baking:
3 eggs
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla extract.

Pour flour into a 1 qt glass jar with tight fitting lid. On top of the flour, layer the brown sugar, salt, sugar baking powder, cocoa. Do not mix. Add chocolate (or other flavor) chips and nuts on top.

To prepare brownies: In a bowl beat the eggs, oil and vanilla. Shake the jar to combine brownie mix, nuts and chips. Add to egg mixture and stir well. Spread into a greased 9-inch square baking pan. Bake at 350° for 34-38 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack. YIELD: 16 brownies.

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