

COMMUNITY NEWS

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills • February 2022

A joint publication of the City of Vestavia Hills, Vestavia Hills City Schools & Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce



Jeff Downes,
City Manager

City of
Vestavia Hills

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

As I write my first article of 2022, I have just completed my review of the City's financial results for the first quarter of the fiscal year. The results continue a positive long-term trend that has transcended pandemic-related pressures, as well as other cultural changes in how people engage with our city's economy.

The City's financial strength is heavily driven by the purchase of goods which generates sales tax dollars that can be utilized for City services.

However, over the last decade or so, more and more of our residents have made purchases online as opposed to purchasing at a "brick and mortar" business in Vestavia Hills. This trend is not unique to Vestavia Hills. Obviously, the convenience and diversity of options from the web provide value to the resident shopper; however, we must all remember that we need to support our community-based businesses as well.

I continually applaud efforts that remind residents to shop local because of the aforementioned logic. That said, I also believe that residents who shop local and support our "brick and mortars" *because they actually enjoy the experience* are much more valuable than those who shop local *out of a sense of obligation to the local economy*. Why would one choose to get away from the front of a computer or tablet when making a purchase? One big reason might be the local shopping experience – the enticing sounds, smells, surroundings and experiences at one of our shopping destinations. All it takes is a quick look around Vestavia Hills to see this strategy in action. The fine leadership team at the City Center on Highway 31 is in the process of completing shopping center upgrades and new tenant mixes and the changes are drawing rave reviews. With a dedicated green space, special events and seasonal décor, customers have flocked to these "brick and mortar" locations. The smell of fresh cookies, the sound of music and the gathering of locals have made it the latest go-to spot. This was an intentional act to create an experience that cannot be replicated through an online purchase. Similar efforts are taking place throughout Vestavia Hills, thanks to the efforts of various businesses and supporting organizations, including the Cahaba Heights Merchants Association, Chamber of Commerce, Beautification Board and various neighborhood associations.



Using these successes as a launchpad, numerous business and community stakeholders are embracing the "experience making" concept as one reason to rebrand the long-standing Vestavia Hills Dogwood Festival and, under the Dogwood Festival moniker, hosting a series of events throughout Vestavia Hills in March and April. This group of community-minded individuals has volunteered to celebrate spring by providing our residents great experiences that support

shopping opportunities, celebrate the season of dogwood blooms and simply give us a reason to gather and enjoy each other's company. Visit <https://vhah.org/community/dogwood-festival> to stay up-to-date on everything happening during the Dogwood Festival. Also, watch for notices, promotions and other materials that will guide you to enjoy the very essence of Vestavia Hills while also supporting our local economy. We welcome everyone to exit winter hibernation and their computer screens to be a part of the new and evolving Vestavia Hills experience. I look forward to seeing you there!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- 3** Design Review Board, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 8** Chamber Luncheon, Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- 10** Town Hall Meeting – The Bray, Council Chamber, 12pm
- 10** Planning and Zoning Commission, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 14** Valentine's Day
- 14** Senior Citizens Luncheon, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- 14** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 15** Parks and Recreation Board, Executive Conference Room, 5:30 p.m.
- 17** Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 21** President's Day
- 21** Council Work Session, Council Chamber, 5 p.m.
- 28** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.

DOGWOOD LUNCHEON

Make plans to join us for the annual Vestavia Hills Beautification Board Dogwood Luncheon to be held Wednesday, April 6, 2022 at Vestavia Country Club.



This year's event features chef and cookbook author, Whitney Miller. Tickets are \$30 and will be available for purchase beginning March 1. Additional details, including the link to purchase tickets, will be available on the Dogwood Festival web page, along with social media and in the March issue of *Community News*.



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

I hope that all of you had a great holiday season and that the New Year is going well for you. Hopefully, your New Year's resolutions are still intact. Given that 75% of resolutions are forgotten by February, it prompted Mark Twain to say, "resolutions come in one year and go out the next year."

Just when I thought our resolution to be rid of Covid-19 was possible, the New Year brought us the Omicron variant. In spite of this, we will persevere and adapt as needed to continue providing City services and programs, along with completing a variety of City projects.

Some of the City's New Year's resolutions include completion of on-going projects. In 2022, we will complete the Infrastructure and Community Spaces Plan, including the road and sidewalk improvements on Crosshaven Drive. Once complete, the improvements should greatly reduce traffic congestion, particularly at peak commute times.

The renovations at Wald Park continue. The Council is reviewing several options for the completion of Wald Park Phase III. We have received significant input from our residents regarding the tennis facilities and availability of soccer fields. As we proceed with the decision surrounding the completion of Wald Park, we are working to make the best decision for our residents.

Another resolution for the City is the completion of our new Civic Center. This is one of the most exciting recreational improvements, as it will include two gyms, multiple meeting rooms and a grand ballroom with banquet-size capacity. If you drive by City Hall, you will see that completion of the walkway from the lawn of City Hall into the second level of the Civic Center is well underway.

The City is also reviewing options for the development of a passive park environment for Altadena Valley Park. These park improvements include the possibility of connecting walking trails, as well as construction of a parking area and pavilion. Other amenities, such as a canoe launch to access the Cahaba River, playgrounds and a disc golf course, have also been proposed. These options are in the planning phase and a project budget has not been approved by the Council.

This past month we experienced wide swings in our weather – a sunny day nearing 80 degrees, followed the next day by freezing temperatures and nearly an inch of snow! It reminded me of the old adage, "If you don't like the weather in Alabama, just wait a few minutes." On Groundhog Day, maybe Punxsutawney Phil will give us some indication of what to expect for the rest of the winter season.

Did you know that in addition to Valentine's Day, there is another unofficial nationally recognized event? February 13 is Galentine's Day.

Ashley Curry,
Mayor
City of
Vestavia Hills

In a 2010 episode of Parks and Recreation, Leslie Knope, creative and crafty and bursting with kindness for the people she loves, invented a way to do something American culture had not traditionally been too good at doing: celebrating, in an official capacity, the joys of female friendship. So, in 2010, this unofficial holiday began. I hope our female readers will celebrate their friendships on this day and I hope you all have a Happy Valentine's Day.



WE NEED YOU!

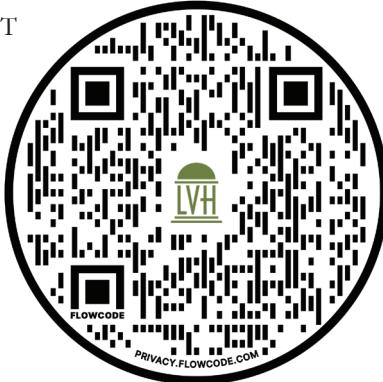
If you are a Prime Timer (age 55+), we need your help!

Leadership Vestavia Hills is helping Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation raise awareness of the programs and services offered to residents who are in the "prime time" of life. With the recent opening of the brand-new senior center, New Merkel House, along with the new Civic Center nearing completion, Vestavia Hills will offer lots of new activities designed especially for our Prime Timer residents.

To help Parks and Recreation provide information about its programs, Leadership Vestavia Hills is compiling contact information for our residents who are 55 or older. If you are a Prime Timer, please help us out by completing a short survey. To access the survey, scan the QR code at right or visit https://bit.ly/LVH_PrimeTimer. Any information you provide will only be used by the City of Vestavia Hills to enhance and improve programming for our residents.

Your information will NOT be sold, and you can easily unsubscribe from our communications at any time.

Thank you
in advance
for your participation!





**Todd Freeman, Ed.D.,
Superintendent**

Vestavia Hills
City Schools

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Vestavia Hills City Schools has a storied history of exceptional educators. In December, the Board of Education recognized five of them as the second class of inductees into the Educator Hall of Fame. They included Sammy Dunn, Barbara Grant, Michael Gross, Rick McKay and John Rush. Their

129 years of combined service to our school system are representative of the level of commitment that has made our school system a special place.

During its January meeting, the Board of Education recognized another group of distinguished educators who were named 2021-22 Vestavia Hills City Schools Teachers of the Year from each school: Caroline Barrow, Allison Charles, Erin Deerman, Laney Graham, Cari Haywood, Cortney McKinney, Brett Richards, Jordan Singletary and Jill Wiggins. Mrs. McKinney and Mrs. Wiggins were also selected as the district's Elementary and Secondary Teachers of the Year. Congratulations to each of these difference makers!

For more than 50 years, VHCS has prospered because of the commitment of excellent teachers, parents and the community. The 519 VHCS teachers employed in our system are the most important in-school factor to the academic success of our students. Because of the unparalleled support of this community, we employ 86 more teachers than what the state provides for us in our budget. This nearly \$5 million annual investment means we can maintain comfortable class sizes, employ art and music teachers in all elementary schools and offer numerous elective and advanced courses for our future graduates.

We are also able to invest in quality professional learning opportunities that foster our mission to provide every student the opportunity to learn without limits. For example, VHCS partners with state and nationally recognized organizations including the Alabama Best Practices Center; Solution Tree; Project Lead the Way; the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative, and Hope Institute at Samford University. Teachers engage in many other experiences that include training in best practices in literacy and math instruction, and many aspects of providing a safe and nurturing place for students to learn.

VHCS is committed to investing in our teachers through professional learning that is aligned with our strategic plan goals, encourages excellent instruction and challenges students through profound learning experiences. You can learn more about professional learning, along with content standards and curriculum offered in our school system, by visiting our website and listening to *The Intentional Pursuit* podcast on Spotify and Google Podcasts.



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Community News • February 2022 • Page 3



CHAMBER NEWS

Happy New Year from the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce! We are all looking forward to getting the pandemic behind us and pray 2022 will be that year!

**Karen Odle,
President**
Vestavia Hills
Chamber of Commerce

experience with your support. Thank you for keeping our businesses going strong!

We recently celebrated (or will soon celebrate) the opening of nearly 50 businesses and are delighted they have chosen to locate their business in Vestavia Hills! We are thrilled to have you here!

Stories for the 2022 “Vestavia Hills Living” will be finalized within the next few weeks. If you have an idea for an interesting story, please email it to kareno@vestaviahills.org along with your contact information.

I would like to thank you for the support you have given to me personally and to the Vestavia Hills business community over these last 20 years. On January 31, I gave my official notice of retirement to the Chamber Board of Directors with my intention to retire on April 29. It has truly been an honor and a blessing to me to be part of this incredible organization and this city. Steve and I have raised our family here and made so many incredible friends over the years that it is difficult to leave this great organization, but the time is right to bring on the next person that will lead the Chamber to the next level. “Thank you” is inadequate, but it is from my heart! I have truly been blessed!

Please continue to shop local as it makes a difference to our businesses when you buy from them instead of online. It's easier to keep our businesses ‘in business’ than it is to recruit new businesses. As always, we welcome you to drop by and visit us at the Chamber. I look forward to seeing you in Vestavia Hills!



LEADERSHIP VESTAVIA HILLS COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Leadership Vestavia Hills will honor outstanding local citizens at the 2021 Community Leadership Awards Banquet on February 22 at 6 p.m. at Vestavia Country Club. Antoinette (Toni) Vines, founder and president of Mercy Deliverance Ministries, will receive the Distinguished Citizen Award, and Karen Odle, president of the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce, will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award. Tickets for the dinner are \$50 and may be purchased at leadershipvestaviahills.com or at the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce. For sponsorship information, contact Penny Lewallyn (lewallyn@aol.com; 205.223.7381).

Toni, a long-time Vestavia Hills resident, served her country in the United States Army Reserve for four years. From there, she earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at UAB, graduating cum laude, and embarked on a nursing career. She received the “Outstanding Student Award” in community health nursing, which laid the foundation for what would later become Mercy Deliverance Ministries. Toni had a growing concern about communities in the Birmingham area and beyond where people needed health care and food, as well as a path out of poverty. The mission of Mercy Deliverance Ministries aims to break cycles of poverty through the delivery of fresh food and produce, healthcare and education. Toni’s entire family is involved – husband, Tim, and their three daughters, LaTrisha, Hannah and Angelica.

Karen Odle settled in Vestavia Hills as a young professional. Her UAB degree in Management Information Systems, along with her extensive work experience at BellSouth/AT&T, provided the foundation for her to work as a freelance consultant for large companies throughout the area. After marriage to Steve Odle and the birth of their two children, Erin and Tyler, Karen became heavily involved as a school volunteer and was tapped for leadership positions, including PTA president at Vestavia Hills Elementary West and president of the Vestavia Hills PTA Council. In 2001, she was appointed to the Vestavia Hills Board of Education, where she served five years, including a year as president. In 2002, Karen accepted the job of Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce president, realizing that a strong business community was an important component of a strong city. During her tenure, the Chamber has grown from 296 members to 1,102, as of January 2022, the largest Chamber in Jefferson County. After almost two decades as Chamber president, she will retire in late April, and is looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially her grandchildren.

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HELP YOUR CITY GROW

In the ancient Jewish story of the old man and the fig tree, the old man is asked why he is planted a tree even though he is 100 years old. He replies that if he does not live long enough to enjoy the fruit of the tree, then he will leave it for his son, just as his own father left the fruit of his labors for him. Now in Vestavia Hills, the present generation of residents largely enjoys the trees that were planted and tended decades ago!

As our city grows with new homes, sidewalks, roads, communication lines, etc., it is increasingly important to give careful thought to tree species and the planting process so that all can continue to support and love our canopied community. Vestavia Hills has held Tree City USA® designation since 1992 and we understand that planting a tree invests in our future, providing generations to come with healthy, mature trees, and we appreciate those who thought to plant trees in Vestavia Hills long ago.

Arbor Week in Alabama is the last full week of February and the best time to plant trees is now, in the spring. But it isn't as simple as digging a hole! Some common mistakes that may result in a wasted investment are planting too deep, over-watering, digging too small of a hole and improper mulching (or not mulching at all). It is also wise to research the features of the tree you are considering so that you can be prepared for future maintenance and not plant where roots or debris may become an issue.

While this may all sound challenging, don't be discouraged from planting for the future. There are many resources to help homeowners, and we will be happy to assist you in locating information and agencies who can provide guidance if you feel uncertain about how to plant. The many benefits beyond the simple enjoyment of nature make it well worth it.

**For Manny,
MENDING HIS
HEART**

Manny
Tetralogy of Fallot Patient

HEART

was a very sensitive issue.

Manny was born with a congenital heart defect requiring several surgeries, which is fairly common. What's unique is that Manny has sensory sensitivities that can cause stress, anxiety and overwhelming feelings. Through Children's of Alabama's Sensory Pathway, Manny's Child Life Specialist, Noelle, was able to help him cope with the stress and scary feelings about his surgery. She was with him every step of the way, making the experience less stressful for him.

To learn more visit
ChildrensAL.org/heart



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PARKS & RECREATION

SPORTS REGISTRATION

Miracle League. Registration is open now through February 10 for the 2022 spring Miracle League! Register online today at https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/clientpage_t2.wcs. For more information contact Bevia Robinson (205.978.0166; brobinson@vhal.org).

Adult Basketball. Registration is open now through February 9. Register online at https://vhrecreation.activityreg.com/clientpage_t2.wcs or in person at the Vestavia Hills Parks & Rec office. For more information, contact Doug Rogers (205.978.0178; drogers@vhal.org).

PART-TIME JOB OPPORTUNITIES!

Want to work outdoors, enjoy the sun and get paid at the same time? Don't miss this opportunity to lifeguard this summer at the Vestavia Hills Aquatic Complex! Informational meetings for anyone interested will be held on February 13 and February 20 at 6:00pm in Meeting Room 1 at the Rec Center, 1973 Merryvale Rd. For more information, contact William Laatsch (205.978.0166; wlaatsch@vhal.org).

SENIOR ADULT ACTIVITIES (55+)

Wind Creek Casino Day Trip, Wetumpka, AL

February 10 | 7:30am-5pm

Transportation provided; reservations required – 205.978.0166

Senior Luncheon, Civic Center Dogwood Room

February 14 | 11:30am

For reservations contact Ms. Ruby at 205.822.8788

Lunch Bunch, Bob Sykes Bar-B-Q

February 17 | 10:45am

Transportation provided; meal not provided; reservations required – 205.978.0166.

For more information on any senior adult activities, contact Melinda Burnett (205.978.0166; mburnett@vhal.org).



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FEBRUARY events

Children (Birth-Gr. 1) | **Tweens** (Gr. 2-6) | **Teens** (Gr. 6-12) | **Adults** (Ages 18+)
Tech (Ages 18+) | **Makerspace** (All ages, unless noted)

- 1 **Toddler-a-Go-Go**, 9:30am, Community Room
Toddler-a-Go-Go, 10:30am, Community Room
The Resistance, 4pm, Community Room
- 2 **Story Friends**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
Handmade with Holly: Edible Treats!, 11am, Community Room
Picking Up STEAM: Index Card Building, 3:30pm, Children's Program Room
Writing Group, 4pm, Historical Room
- 3 **Open Maker Lab**, 2-6pm, Makerspace
Chess Club, 4:30pm, Historical Room
Read & Feed Book Group: The Code Breaker, 6pm, Zoom
- 4 **Open Gaming**, 4pm, Community Room
Library After Hours: Cozy Night Out, 7pm, Main Floor
- 5 **Ms. Courtney's Library Stop!**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
- 7 **Books-To-Go: Blind Date Book Bag**
Intro to 3D Printing, 4:30pm, Makerspace
- 8 **Toddler-a-Go-Go**, 9:30am, Community Room
Toddler-a-Go-Go, 10:30am, Community Room
Facebook Security, 4pm, Electronic Classroom
Family Night with Lee Andrews, 6pm, Community Room
- 9 **Story Friends**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
Picking Up STEAM: Heart Art Salt Painting, 3:30pm, Children's Program Room
Art Group, 4pm, Treehouse
- 10 **Open Maker Lab**, 2-6pm, Makerspace
- 11 **Open Gaming**, 4pm, Community Room
- 12 **Dungeons and Dragons: The Journey Continues**, 10am, Historical Room
- 14 **Valentine's Day**
Make a Valentine, All Day, Children's Department
- 15 **Toddler-a-Go-Go**, 9:30am, Community Room
Toddler-a-Go-Go, 10:30am, Community Room
Button Making, 4pm, Treehouse
Teardown Tuesday, 4:30pm, Makerspace
- 16 **Story Friends**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
Picking Up STEAM: Paper Plate Marble Run, 3:30pm, Children's Program Room
Among Us, 4pm, Discord
Basic Microsoft Excel, 4pm, Electronic Classroom

- 17 **More Than Words Book Group: The Newcomer**, 11:30am, Tree House
Open Maker Lab, 2-6pm, Makerspace
- 18 **Open Gaming**, 4pm, Community Room
Craft*Lab: Book Page Art, 7pm, Community Room
- 19 **Ms. Courtney's Library Stop!**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
- 21 **Vinyl Cutting 101**, 4:30pm, Makerspace
- 22 **Toddler-a-Go-Go**, 9:30am, Community Room
Toddler-a-Go-Go, 10:30am, Community Room
Romanime, 4pm, Community Room
- 23 **Story Friends**, 10:30am, Children's Program Room
Unravel the Mysteries: Genealogy for Beginners, 12pm, Community Room
Picking Up STEAM: Painting with Straws, 3:30pm, Children's Program Room
Teen Jeopardy Challenge, 4pm, Treehouse
- 24 **Friends of the Library presents Art & Soul: The Artistic Process**, 10am, Community Room
Open Maker Lab, 2-6pm, Makerspace
iPad Basics Part I, 4pm, Electronic Classroom
- 25 **Super Smash Bros. Tournament**, 4pm, Community Room
- 28 **Intermediate Microsoft Word**, 5pm, Electronic Classroom



“LEAF” A LEGACY

Looking for a special gift idea? Interested in supporting our local library in a meaningful way? Purchase a leaf for the Leaf Wall at the Vestavia Hills Library in the Forest as a gift, honorarium or memorial to a special loved one. The Leaf Wall is permanently located on the main level near the Grand Staircase. Anyone may be honored or recognized on etched acrylic plaques with bright, colorful leaves. For more information, email foundation@vhlibraryfoundation.org.



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