

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills July · August · September 2024

A joint publication of the City of Vestavia Hills & Vestavia Hills City Schools

From Mayor Ashley Curry

Celebrations and Successes

As you may have noticed, the *Community News* is now published quarterly. This new format is designed to provide you with a comprehensive update on local Vestavia Hills activities and developments. I will address items of interest or impact to the City in each issue and, in this article, I will delve into the activities upcoming in July, August and September.

I hope you are enjoying your summer and looking forward to the early fall. From the crowds observed at the Aquatic Complex, Wald Park and the SHAC, it is evident that residents are getting out and taking advantage of the summer activities. As grandparents of four, my wife and I have been part of this crowd.

I should also mention the Civic Center, which has certainly surpassed our expectations for events. I truly don't know how we could have managed with the old facilities that we had. Between the park renovations and the acquisition of the Civic Center, our quality-of-life amenities increased tenfold and I am proud to have been a part of these community improvements.

This summer and early fall, construction will begin on the pedestrian bridge connecting Wald Park and the Library in the Forest. This project was conceived many years ago, at least as far back as the administration of Mayor Scotty McCallum. It has been through several design changes, several bid processes and seemingly never-ending ALDOT reviews. Many of us, myself included, wondered if this project would ever be completed. Hallelujah, the end is in sight!

You will also see in late summer/early fall completion of the initial development of the south end of Highway 31. The construction of a retail center anchored by Big Bad Breakfast and Waldo's Chicken is well underway and should be completed this end of this year.

Meanwhile, construction is ongoing at The Bray in Liberty Park. This much-anticipated development, along with the Medical Properties Trust headquarters in the Urban Center, is progressing.

Events to remember this quarter include Independence Day and Labor Day. Sometimes we take these for granted and forget the significance attached to each one.

Independence Day, also called the Fourth of July, originated on July 4, 1776, with the signing of our Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. This holiday is the most recognized celebration of our independence and the freedoms that we enjoy. As you celebrate with your families, enjoy fireworks and probably eat too much, let's remember what we are celebrating.

Observed the first Monday in September, Labor Day is an annual celebration to honor the nation's workers and their contributions to the country's well-being. I will take this opportunity to thank the 350+ employees of our City. They make our quality of life possible.

In closing, how many of you remember the old-fashioned rule that you don't wear white after Labor Day? That is a topic for further research, and I won't attempt to answer it in this submission. But I will suffice it to say that with this summer's heat, we may be wearing white until December! I hope you all have a safe and relaxing summer.



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Firefighter/Medic Caleb Andrews

Caleb Andrews joined the Vestavia Hills Fire Department in July 2019. On Father's Day of 2021, Caleb experienced a sudden onset of paralysis from the chest down. His team of physicians could not initially diagnose the issue except to say it was a neurological disorder. Ultimately, they came to diagnose a spinal stroke – a disruption in the blood supply to the spinal cord that can cause injury or damage to tissues and can block nerve impulses traveling along the spinal cord.

Caleb spent nearly three months in the hospital, including time in Spain Wallace Rehab. Caleb was confined to a wheelchair when he returned to work in a light-duty capacity. He transitioned to a walker in the spring of 2022 and ultimately walked with the assistance of a cane just a few short months later. By the end of that year, Caleb was walking unassisted for the first time in more than a year and a half.

There were many times when Caleb fell out of the wheelchair or tripped while re-learning to walk. Walking down a hallway was a huge accomplishment when Caleb returned to work. He constantly pushed himself to get stronger by lengthening his walks or walking up stairwells.

Caleb is a tremendous asset to the Vestavia Hills Fire Department and was recently awarded a Medal of Merit for his tenacity, hard work, and spirit. He is an inspiration to all who work with him. Caleb continually impresses everyone, not only his physical strength but also his mental strength. He set a goal to one day work on a fire engine again, and he will accomplish that goal just three years later.



Calendar of Events

July 2024

- **4** Municipal Offices Closed* in observance of Independence Day
- **8** Senior Citizens Association Luncheon, Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- **8** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **9 Design Review Board,** Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- **11 Planning and Zoning Commission,** Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **15** Council Work Session, Council Chamber 6 p.m.
- **16** Parks and Recreation Board, Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.
- **18** Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **22** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- * Sanitation holiday routes will run on a one-day delay for the remainder of the week

August 2024

- **1 Design Review Board,** Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- **8** Planning and Zoning Commission, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **12** Senior Citizens Association Luncheon, Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- **12** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **13** Chamber Luncheon, Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- **15** Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **19** National Senior Citizen Day Celebration, Civic Center, Ballroom, 3:30-7:30 p.m.
- **19 Council Work Session,** Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **20** Parks and Recreation Board, Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.
- **26** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.

For additional event dates or to subscribe to the City calendar, visit vhal.org/calendar.

September 2024

- **2** Municipal Offices Closed* in observance of Labor Day
- **5 Design Review Board,** Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- **9** Senior Citizens Association Luncheon, Civic Center, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- **9** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **10** Chamber Luncheon, Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- **11 Patriot Day Ceremony,**City of Mountain Brook, TBD
- **12** Planning and Zoning Commission, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **14** Vestavia Hills Shred & Recycle Day, City Hall & Civic Center, 8 a.m.-noon
- **16** Council Work Session, Council Chamber 6 p.m.
- **17** Parks and Recreation Board, Civic Center, 7:30 a.m.
- **19** Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- **23** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 30 Splash Pad Closes



For more information about any of these programs or events, call 205.978.0166 or visit www.vhparksandrec.com

Active Adults (55+)

Senior Luncheon: Monday, 7/8 – 12pm; Civic Center Enjoy a delicious lunch for only \$8 per person. Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

Lunch Bunch & Trip: Bud's Best Cookies: Thursday, 7/18 – 10am Enjoy a trip to the Bud's Best Cookies headquarters in Hoover, AL. Meet at the Vestavia Hills Civic Center at 10am. Transportation provided.

Senior Luncheon: Monday, 8/12 – 12pm; Civic Center Enjoy a delicious lunch for only \$8 per person. Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

National Senior Citizens Day Celebration: Monday, 8/19 – 3-8pm; Civic Center

Join us for a special event featuring live music by Razz Ma Tazz, delectable hors d'oeuvres and an opportunity to connect with old and new friends while exploring vendor booths showcasing local services and products for seniors.

Senior Luncheon: Monday, 9/9 – 12pm; Civic Center Enjoy a delicious lunch for only \$8 per person. Bring your friends for an afternoon of fun.

Rec Sports Registrations

For more information or to register, visit https://bit.ly/vhpr-register.

Youth Flag Football - Registration Open: 5/1 - 7/22 For more information, contact Will Harrington (205.834.5295; wharrington@vhal.org).

Youth Girls Volleyball – Registration Open: 5/1 - 7/31 For more information, contact Mike Sullivan (205.978.0167; msullivan@vhal.org).

Youth Girls Softball - Registration Open: 7/29 - 8/26 For more information, contact Bevia Robinson (205.978.0177; brobinson@vhal.org).

Youth Baseball – Registration Open: 8/1 - 8/20 For more information, contact Will Harrington (205.834.5295; wharrington@vhal.org).

Miracle League - Registration Open: 8/1 - 9/27 For more information, contact Bevia Robinson (205.978.0177; brobinson@vhal.org).



From City Manager Jeff Downes

Employees ... Our Most Valuable Asset

One of my long-held opinions as City Manager is that our City's most valuable asset is its employees. The ability to provide stellar service to residents and consistently superior results in growing the City in a healthy manner rests with attracting and retaining the best available professionals committed to public service. I contend that our organization is strong in this regard. Our community surveys consistently rank our employees very high in their ability to provide superior services across all departments. While other cities lament the inability to keep their ranks full of employees, we have waiting lists for openings from police officers to lifeguards. We are an employer of choice for highly qualified applicants. Once hired, our employees stay for very long periods of time. Nearly 50% of employees have 15 or more years of service. These facts are excellent indicators of an organization that prioritizes the well-being of these seasoned, highly trained and qualified individuals.

Our Mayor and City Council have consistently supported our employees by providing a strong compensation and benefits structure. Additionally, we have introduced a multi-year program called "Service Stars" to reinforce an organizational culture that focuses on placing our customers first. I often refer to the platinum rule – a version of the golden rule. The platinum rule states that an individual should treat others as the other wants to be treated, as opposed to the golden rule, which states that you should treat others the way you want to be treated. Our Service Stars program reinforces this concept for our employees. I am confident you will see this principle in action now and long into the future.

While the aforementioned thoughts are truly notable, our employees are humans. They have good days and bad days. They have personal challenges to overcome. They also come from many different backgrounds that influence their work. Two Vestavia Hills employees recently have shown the ability to persevere through incredible personal struggles - Corporal Jerry Hughes and Firefighter/Medic Caleb Andrews. I hope you take the time to read their profiles in this issue (see pages 2 and 5).

We recently celebrated all of our long-tenured employees. One of those employees is Bobby McDaniel. Bobby and six of his fellow employees have worked in Vestavia Hills for over 30 years! I hope you will take a moment to visit the City's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/ @cityofvestaviahillsalabama8508 and watch the video celebrating these legacy employees. We all want to follow Bobby's lead and "keep our noses clean." I am very proud of our employees and will do whatever I can to attract and retain the best and brightest! Thank you for sharing in the celebration of their accomplishments.

> Two long-tenured employees: Pam Parson, Library in the Forest, 34 years of service; and Bobby McDaniel, Parks and Recreation, 33 years of service

Years of

Marty Caffee, Police

Johnny Evans, Police

Jeff Hughes, Public Services

Rebecca Leavings, City Clerk

Bobby McDaniel, Parks and Leisure Services

Pam Parson, Library

Mike Swann, Public Services



SYears of

Greg Ackley, Fire

Barry Bartlett Jr., Public Services

Keith Blanton, Building Safety

Marvin Green, Fire

Tommy Hale, Fire

Jason Hardin, Police

Steven Hopson, Fire

Michael Keller, Police Ray Morrow, Public Services Kevin Underwood, Fire Greg Wallace, Library

Kevin Ware, Fire Greg Williams, Police

Years of Service

James Bensko Scott Boone Annie M. Brown Christopher Chappell Jonathan Cherry Joseph Dease Christian Elliott Darrin Estes Stephen Evans Ryan Farrell Scott Ferrell

Christopher Garrett Joel Gaston Mark Gibbs Jeremy Gurley Pink Henderson Jr. Scott Hunter David Johnson Christopher Mareno Roger Mauldin Chip Owings Suzanne Remenschneider Michael Roy

Alan Strickland Jennifer Swann Jerry Thomas Julie Tucker . Taneisha Tucker Melvin Turner III Christopher Vines Loraine R. Ward-Ryce Shane Ware Donald Whitworth Todd Wilson



Years of

Kevin Allred Chris Ambrose Derek Anderson Christopher Brady Andrew Chapman Chad Crowe Kareem Duncan Kim Evans

Clete Foshee

Jared Freeman Kristin Harding-Jones Terri Leslie Melissa Hipp Rita Hosmer Blair Hughes Kevin Humphrey Shirley Johnson Jacob Jones Randall Jones Michael Kelley Jr.

Ronnie Loggins Beau Markham Ralph McCall Steven Michael Adrian Millican Keeandre Minter Joe Nobles Jr. Michael Patton

Wesley Porter Sean Richardson Terrell Robinson Daniel Sieg Timothy Smith David Wendorf Derek Wilcox Robert Wilson







From School Superintendent Dr. Todd Freeman



STEM Learning Opportunities

As we look toward the future of Vestavia Hills City Schools, I am thrilled to share some exciting news that will impact our elementary students. Beginning next school year, students in kindergarten through fifth grade will participate in a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) class. This initiative marks a significant step forward in our commitment to providing our students the opportunity to learn without limits.

This incredible opportunity is the result of the collaborative efforts and generous contributions from our dedicated community. State Senators Jabo Waggoner and Dan Roberts, Representatives Jim Carns and Mike Shaw, the Vestavia Hills City Schools Foundation, our five elementary PTOs, Lathan Architects, Schneider Electric and

Shipt have collectively donated over \$500,000 to bring this vision to life. Their support will enable us to purchase the necessary supplies, materials, classroom furniture and professional development to ensure the success of these STEM classes. The VHCS Foundation has also pledged funds to support new health science and engineering courses for our high school students. We look forward to debuting these classes next year along with more advanced math options for middle school students.

This past spring, the Board of Education approved the hiring of five exemplary STEM teachers: Billie Jean Price at Vestavia Hills Elementary East, Noelle Bradshaw at Vestavia Hills Elementary West, Katie McDaniel at Vestavia Hills Elementary Dolly Ridge, Heidi Burgess at Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights and Martha Martin at Vestavia Hills Elementary Liberty Park. These educators bring a wealth of knowledge and a passion for STEM education that will inspire and engage our students.

This new program is the culmination of a four-year vision to enhance STEM education across our school system. The establishment of these new STEM classes is a testament to the power of community collaboration and the shared belief in the importance of preparing our students for the future. We continue to seek partners to ensure the sustainability of this program and invite businesses, organizations and individuals to join us in this endeavor.

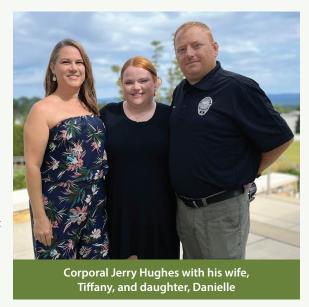
As we embark on this new chapter, I am filled with optimism and gratitude. Together, we are not only enhancing our students' educational experiences but also building a foundation for their future success in a rapidly evolving world. Let's continue to work hand in hand to provide our children with the profound learning opportunities they deserve!

Corporal Jerry Hughes

If you meet Vestavia Hills Police Department Corporal Jerry Hughes, he will unabashedly share God's divine plan for his life with you. He often says the Lord ordained every step that prepared him to fight his battle with kidney failure – a battle that eventually led him to receive a kidney transplant.

Jerry's wife, Tiffany, has made great sacrifices to help him maintain his health and his job with VHPD, including administering his dialysis from home so that he would not miss work. His VHPD family has also made accommodations so that Jerry could continue working. He was reassigned from patrol to the evidence room so that he could continue contributing to the department. His daughter may have played one of the most significant roles in seeking a donor for her father through the power of social media.

Jerry is grateful to everyone involved in making his health journey a success – to the Lord for loving him daily, his loving and dedicated wife and his persistent daughter – all walking alongside him every step of the way. He values the Vestavia Hills Police



Department and the City of Vestavia Hills for making appropriate provisions to keep him on the force. Most importantly, he is eternally grateful to his donor, Lt. Mike House, for his obedience to God's word and this stranger's willingness to save his life.

Highlighting Teachers and Staff

The success of our school system is dependent on the community making education a top priority. Surveys conducted periodically by the City of Vestavia Hills consistently reveal that our residents rank education as the top priority. For more than five decades, the commitment of our community to the school system has consistently allowed us to meet and exceed the expectation to provide excellent schools.

The heartbeat of that success in our school system is the team of exemplary teachers, support staff and administrators. Vestavia Hills City Schools has more than 900 employees who are committed to the mission of providing every student the opportunity to learn without limits. No matter the position, every member of our team has an invaluable role in fulfilling that mission.

We all can remember teachers that left an indelible influence on us. Each year, we have the privilege of honoring the best of the best in our schools. Earlier this year, we recognized our nine teachers of the year: **Erika Ponder** at VHECH, **Debbie Bowman** at VHEDR,

Kristen Kovarik at VHEE, Melissa McIntyre at VHELP, Jennifer Burns at VHEW, Mary Wyers at LPMS, Becca Poe at Pizitz, Kira Aaron at VHHS Freshman Campus and Holly Robinson at VHHS. Mrs. Aaron was later named as the Alabama Alternate Teacher of the Year and Alabama Secondary Teacher of the Year. In addition, you can see the list of impressive accomplishments and recognitions of some of our wonderful teachers.

The Board of Education has traditionally developed budgets that prioritize recruiting and keeping the best teachers. To do this, our Board has endeavored to ensure that we compensate our teachers in the most deserving way while also focusing on optimal class sizes, high quality professional development, and classroom resources. As you can see in our STEM emphasis, we are also blessed to have strong classroom support from our PTOs, Foundation and community partners. This level of commitment is the formula for another successful school year.



Class of 2024 Raises the Bar for Excellence

The Vestavia Hills High School Class of 2024 graduated in May and made an indelible mark on the legacy of the school system. 225 members of the senior class graduated with the Advanced Academic with Honors Endorsement on their diplomas, including 13 National Merit Finalists. 88 percent of the graduating class plan to attend four-year colleges this fall along with another 12 percent who will be attending two-year colleges, entering the military, entering the workforce or taking a gap year. The 2024 graduates will be attending some 88 colleges across the country. 75 percent of seniors were offered scholarships totaling more than \$45 million — a school record.

RISE raised more than \$227,000 for the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB; Youth Leadership students accumulated more than 5,000 service hours, and 41 seniors earned "AP with WE" service recognition for donating more than 4,000 books to schools in Alabama's Black Belt.

19 VHHS teams qualified for postseason play in the 2023-24 school year, and 17 teams finished in the "Elite 8" or higher of their respective sports. 30 Rebels won individual state championships, along with state championships in cheerleading, boys' cross country, and boys' and girls' tennis. The Math Team also repeated as state champions, and the Speech and Debate Team also won its third consecutive state title.

Congratulations to these remarkable graduates as they prepare to embark on the next chapter of their lives!

20 Years of Service

Joy Bragan, Kate Donaldson,
Blair Dorman, Aimee Farrar, Ralph
Gardner, Sonya Johnson, Kathie
Knickrehm, Nancy Littleton, Nancy
McCrary, Brigid Meadow, Evonne
Mullet, Heather Palmer,
Keta Peterson, Linda Swing,
Brad Toland, Jenni Walton,
Martha Martin, Amy Wilbanks

Teacher Awards

Deanna Bell:

2024 Music Education Exemplary Service Award from UAB

Pam Dennis, Stacie Pegouske, Dorina Smith:

CALT Certification

Heather Hurt:

Finalist for Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching

Haley Wright & Ann Marie Corgill:

Presenting at NCTE/NCTM
Conference on neuro-inclusive teaching in literacy and mathematics

Brent Brizendine:

Metro South 8th Grade Football Coach of the Year

Heather Cantwell:

Dr. Thomas R. Smith Award for Excellence in Choral Music from the Alabama chapter of American Choral Directors Association

Nicole Slowik:

National STEM Scholar Program honoree

Chassi Wadell:

Alabama ASCD Emerging Leader Award

Laura Casey:

Outstanding Masters Degree Student Award from Samford University School of Education

Jamie Stephenson:

Alabama Theatre Hall of Fame inductee

Kira Aaron:

2023-24 VFW Citizenship Education Award

New Administrators Take the Lead in VHCS



Cindy Echols

Vestavia Hills Elementary East

Cindy Echols is the new principal of Vestavia Hills Elementary East. Echols has been assistant principal of VHEE since 2012. She previously served as an assistant principal and principal of schools in Homewood and Trussville.



Dori Hardee

Liberty Park Middle School

Dori Hardee is the new principal of Liberty Park Middle School. Hardee had been assistant principal at LPMS since 2022 and previously served as the school's physical education teacher and coach of the school's volleyball and girls' basketball teams. She has nearly 20 years of experience in education at schools in four states.



Dr. Blair Inabinet

Vestavia Hills High School

Liberty Park Middle's former principal, Dr. Blair Inabinet, moves to Vestavia Hills High School as the Rebels' new principal. Inabinet also served previously as principal of Vestavia Hills Elementary Liberty Park. She has been a teacher, gifted coordinator and administrator of schools in Alabama and Georgia for the past 20 years.



Susan McCall

Vestavia Hills Elementary West

Susan McCall is the new principal of Vestavia Hills Elementary West. McCall was assistant principal at VHEW since 2016 and previously served as an instructional coach and teacher at schools in Mountain Brook, Hoover and Gwinnett County, Georgia.



Kim Polson

Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights

Kim Polson is the new principal of Vestavia Hills Elementary Cahaba Heights. Polson had served as the school's assistant principal since 2021 and was previously a special education teacher at VHECH. Prior to arriving in Vestavia Hills City Schools, Polson worked as a special education teacher at elementary schools in Mountain Brook and Shelby County.



Applications for Vestavia Belles open in August!

For more information and the link to apply, visit https://vhal.org/community/vestavia-belles.





History of a Historical Home:

413 Sunset Drive

Monday, October 21 at 2pm - Vestavia Hills City Hall

Speaker Ben Burford will share the history of his home. The home, built in 1951, is Vestavia Hills' newest historical site.



COMMUNITY NEWS

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