

COMMUNITY NEWS

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills • Dec. 2020/Jan. 2021

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



IT'S A MIRACLE!

Jeff Downes, Vestavia Hills City Manager

Our individual value systems are a product of our experiences that evolve over the course of time. They lead to our motivations and actions. One such experience in my own life has been my sensitivity towards those with special needs. I grew up in a middle class family, not touched by any extraordinary disabilities or super challenges. In my formative years, I met others in need of a little “extra” attention or help and I felt sympathy, but not empathy. My understanding changed when I met my wife, Penny, and Chad, her son from a previous marriage. Chad, my 31-year-old stepson, suffers from an intellectual and motor skill developmental disorder. I am blessed to have Chad live with us full-time, as my experiences with him have led to me being a participant in the “game” rather than being simply an observer of those with special needs.

As my relationship with Penny strengthened, my relationship with Chad also grew very strong. I observed that Chad was an incredible sports fan. We would go to Little League baseball games where my family and friends’ children would enjoy the thrill of victory or the challenges of defeat. Right there on the sideline or in the bleachers, Chad would cheer on our family friends, and believe me, he was very loud! It saddened me that Chad was relegated to observer status. Why could he not participate? Well, at the time, the city where we lived did not offer opportunities for someone like Chad to play ball. Luckily that changed thanks to some very generous people. Ultimately, a Miracle League was organized and Chad was the first to volunteer to participate. In his very first at-bat in his very first game, Chad hit a home run. His home run was exciting, but it was so much more.



It was a home run for the community. I am so proud that, while always empathetic and inclusive, Vestavia Hills leadership has stepped up to the plate themselves. Residents, volunteers and elected officials have invested in the special needs community by building our own Miracle League Field. This past month, these individuals celebrated the opening of the Vestavia Hills Miracle League Field at Wald Park.

From this point forward, the special needs community in Vestavia Hills will have a home, not just a program. They will look forward to the many seasons of activity where they will be able to actively participate, not just watch. Many well-meaning Vestavia Hills residents will now get to experience the joys of engaging with the most vulnerable of our community and everyone will experience special memories at their new home in Wald Park. While we celebrate the holiday season and rejoice over the New Year, I hope you will keep in mind those with the greatest need. Bless you all as we enter 2021!



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The events and dates provided are subject to change. Please refer to the calendar on the City of Vestavia Hills website at <https://vhal.org/calendar> for the most up-to-date information.

December 2020

- 1 Tree Lighting Festival, City Hall, 6 p.m.
- 3 Design Review Board, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 8 Chamber Luncheon, Virtual, 12 p.m.
- 10 Planning & Zoning Commission, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 12 Drive Thru Breakfast with Santa, VHEW, 7:30 a.m.
- 13 Christmas Parade, Liberty Park Sports Complex, 2:00 p.m.
- 14 City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 17 Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 21 Council Work Session, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 24 & 25 Municipal Offices Closed, Christmas*
- 28 City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 31 Municipal Offices Closed, New Year's*

*Holiday Trash Schedule: Collection will occur on a one-day delay; Friday AND Saturday will be serviced Saturday.

See page 2 for January calendar.



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Ashley Curry, Vestavia Hills Mayor

As I mentioned in last month's submission, we will always remember 2020 as the year of the pandemic and how our lives were changed because of the virus. Let's try to focus on the positive things that transpired for our city this year: the City celebrated its 70th birthday and our City schools celebrated 50 years of excellence this year.

On November 8, 1950, a majority of voters approved the incorporation of Vestavia Hills. We have come a long way from the 600 or so residents at that time. COVID-19 precluded us from hosting a public gathering to celebrate this milestone, but maybe we can have a belated birthday gathering once the virus is behind us.

We were not able to host an in-person Veterans Day event this year, also due to the high health risk to our attendees – veterans and their families. We instead honored our veterans by producing a video that is available on the City's website. Commissioner Kent Davis, a retired Rear Admiral who presently serves as the Commissioner for the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs, was the keynote speaker for this year's virtual event. He paid great tribute to our veterans and you should definitely take the time to view his presentation. The video also includes incredible performances by members of the VHHS Band and VHHS Honor Choir.

I can't believe that, I, along with my colleagues on the City Council, have completed a four-year term that began with our election in 2016. Some of our accomplishments include:

- Sustaining financial strength and spurring economic growth with a sound fiscal strategy. The City's credit rating, issued by Moody's Investor Services, was increased to the highest possible rating of Aaa. The City has also been able to increase its emergency reserves during this term. Simply put, our city is in the strongest financial position in its history.
- We are in the final stages of completing the largest infrastructure and parks renovation program in the City's history. The new parks and our community spaces will ensure that our amenities, one of the critical components of a "quality of life" assessment, will be something of which our citizens can be proud. The new Cahaba Heights Park, Aquatic Complex, New Merkel House and Miracle League field are great examples of what is to come upon completion of this program.
- We have approved and funded major new road construction and sidewalk construction throughout the City. During 2019, 20 miles of paving was completed. This was sorely needed, as the City had fallen behind on keeping up its streets. Additionally, we have established an annual resurfacing program that will fund the paving of 7-8 miles of roadway annually.

- We have improved our communication efforts to ensure transparency and information sharing. During this term, we have approved the hiring of a Communications Specialist. Subsequently, the City added an email newsletter and various community engagement tools to supplement our existing monthly newsletter.

I am very proud of these accomplishments and am looking forward to the next four years. Congratulations to my colleagues on the Council, our City Manager and all the department heads for making all of this possible.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

January 2021

- 1** Municipal Offices Closed, New Year's*
- 7** Design Review Board, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 11** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 12** Chamber Luncheon, Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- 14** Planning & Zoning Commission, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 18** Municipal Offices Closed, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 18** Council Work Session, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 19** Parks & Recreation Board, Executive Conference Room, 7 a.m.
- 21** Board of Zoning Adjustment, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 25** City Council Meeting, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.

**Holiday Trash Schedule: Collection will occur on a one-day delay; Friday AND Saturday will be serviced Saturday.*



City NEWS

Keeping Vestavia Hills Connected & Informed

Have you registered to receive the bi-weekly digital newsletter from the City of Vestavia Hills? Sign up today so you won't miss a thing. It's easy! Visit www.vhal.org, scroll to the bottom of the home page and simply enter your email address to have the newsletter delivered directly to your inbox!



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Todd Freeman, Ed.D., Vestavia Hills City Schools Superintendent

This school year has given us time to reflect upon, and celebrate, the 50th anniversary of Vestavia Hills City Schools. What made this celebration most compelling has been hearing about the people and events that established a foundation for our longstanding tradition of excellence in academics, arts and athletics. The determination and commitment from the leaders who built our system from the ground up are the mortar that binds our history which lives on through our mission and beliefs.

Friday, October 30, 2020 marked the end of an era of exemplary leadership from one of those pioneers. That night, Buddy Anderson walked off the field for the last time as the head football coach of the Vestavia Hills High School Rebels. The evening was filled with gratitude and appreciation from countless individuals whose lives he touched. It was an emotion-filled night that his family, friends and former players celebrated together. The exhilarating atmosphere was the proverbial icing on the cake of a remarkable career.



Photo courtesy of Karen Askins Photography

Coach Anderson would be quick to point out that state championships, induction into halls of fame and a victory in the last game will never be more important than winning young people. His tradition of success that resulted in 346 career wins was established by teaching the things that matter most. His calling has always been to influence players and students to aspire toward the highest virtues for a meaningful life. For Coach Anderson, it begins with humility – what Saint Augustine referred to as “the foundation of all the other virtues hence.” Then comes respecting yourself, putting others above yourself and doing to others what you would want done to you.

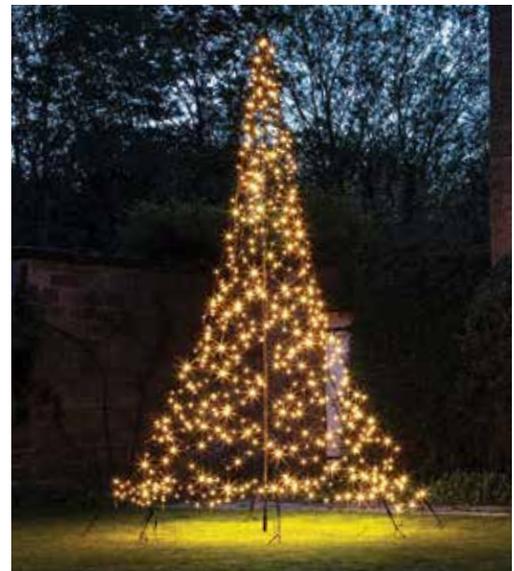
The virtues Coach Anderson ingrained in his players for almost a half-century have faded in the national discourse. This year, we have all experienced crises accompanied with uncertainty, fear, disappointment, anger and a laundry list of other emotions. Indeed, it seems we are at a high-water mark of discontent. But my optimism says that “hope springs eternal,” and I believe those virtues embodied by Coach Anderson are more valuable than ever as we continue the work of winning young people.

This season, we each have the opportunity to lift up the souls of our fellow brothers and sisters. The virtues of humility, respect and selflessness are cornerstones for a strong community that focuses on the things that matter most. These are the gifts that keep on giving!



CHRISTMAS YARD JUDGING

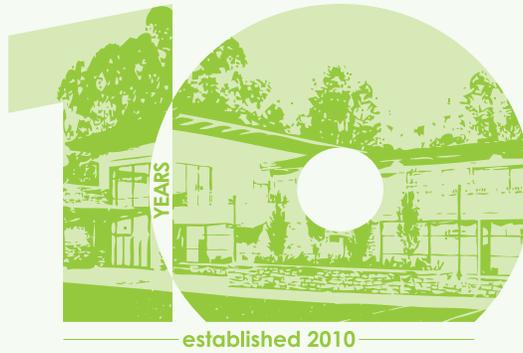
Vestavia Hills Beautification Board members will conduct the annual Christmas yard judging **December 6-13, 2020**. Yards are judged on appearance in both daytime and evening time periods. Winners in each of the areas will be awarded a certificate of thanks from the Mayor’s office and will host a “Winning Yard” sign until the end of the month. Happy decorating!



LIGHT UP VESTAVIA HILLS

The Beautification Board invites residents to Light Up Vestavia Hills! Beginning December 1, 2020, residents are encouraged to place a 4-6 foot live or artificial tree, featuring white lights, in your yard and visible from the street. Let’s make Vestavia Hills the brightest city!

VESTAVIA HILLS LIBRARY IN THE FOREST



Commemorating 10 years of exceptional service!
Join the celebration!

10 Ways to ♥ Your Library

Give. Your donation goes a long way!

Connect. Get your library card today.

Visit. The library is **your** community space.

Volunteer. Share your time and make a big difference.

Join. Serve on the Library Foundation,
Junior Board or Friends.

Attend. Programs are available for all ages and interests.

Make & Take. Teach a class or learn something new
in our DIY makerspace.

Follow Us. Check us out online:

Facebook @LibraryintheForest

Instagram @vestaviahillslibrary

Twitter @VestaviaHills

Download & Upload. Check out books, movies, audiobooks,
DIY tutorials and more from vestavialibrary.org.

Be in the Know. Sign up for our e-newsletter
at vestavialibrary.org/contact-us.

10 Facts About Your Library

Come In. Opened December 12, 2010.

Forward Thinking. First LEED (Leadership in Energy
and Environmental Design) certified library in Alabama.

More Than Books. Hotspots, databases,
online resources and programming.

First-Class Service. Curbside service; remote lockers in
Liberty Park; virtual bookshelf of reading recommendations.

Travel the World. First library in Jefferson County
to offer passport services.

Living Large. 4th largest circulating library in Jefferson County.

Best Library. Honored by *Birmingham Magazine*
as one of the best libraries in Birmingham.

Technologically Advanced. One of the
first libraries to incorporate RFID technology.

Recognition & Accolades. Gold Level/Blue Ribbon Library
of the Alabama Library Association; Cahaba River Society
Conservation Development Award.

Money Well Spent. \$12.7 million to build.

To love your library, mail a donation today or donate online
at vhlibraryfoundation.org. **WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!**

MAKING LEMONADE OUT OF LEMONS!

It seems that the better part of this year has been spent making lemonade out of lemons! Despite the challenges, we were able to celebrate the opening of many community amenities – Cahaba Heights Park, the Vestavia Hills Aquatic Complex, futsal and pickleball courts at SHAC and the Miracle League Field at Wald Park. These outdoor spaces have allowed grand opening attendees to remain safely distanced while still engaging in activities, and even tournaments, for both youths and adults. The community has taken advantage of many opportunities to get outside and safely enjoy some recreational fun. The wonderful people in this community have truly made the best of 2020!

As most of you know, city-wide growth is still ongoing! A new New Merkel House, adjacent to Cahaba Heights Park, will break ground soon. Construction is also well underway on the new Community Building (formerly Golds Gym). So, while we are happy to say “we made it through 2020,” we are continuously planning ahead with new facilities, programs and events for 2021 and beyond!

NEW MERKEL HOUSE

New Merkel House has continued to serve our senior adult community with weekly frozen meal pick up, drive in Bingo sessions and even a Reverse Trunk or Treat. In December, seniors can attend Drive-In Christmas Caroling and Christmas Bingo. It is always great to see people smile and interact with each other, giving “air hugs” from the safety of their cars!



SPRING SPORT REGISTRATION

Spring sports will be here before you know it. Registration for baseball, softball, soccer and lacrosse will begin in December and January.

PICKLEBALL!

VESTAVIA HILLS PARKS & RECREATION

The pickleball program is going strong! Youth through senior adults are playing pickleball in the gym at the former Vestavia Hills Elementary Central, and now at the new outdoor courts at SHAC.



Whether you are an experienced player or just wanting to check it out for the first time, there is an opportunity for you to play! Participation is FREE for Vestavia Hills residents.

Be sure to check the Parks and Recreation page on the City website for game and open play times. For more information, contact Jeff Corley (205.978.0166 or jcorley@vhal.org).

RECREATION CENTER & GYM

Please note the Recreation Center's winter hours*:

Sunday	1 - 8 p.m.
Monday-Friday	7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Saturday	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

***For holiday hours and closures, visit the Parks and Recreation page of the City website.**

8U SOFTBALL CHAMPS

The 8U Vestavia All Stars won the Alabama USSSA Recreational League Softball championship on Saturday, October 17, 2020 capping off a perfect 11-0 All Star season.

The 8U Vestavia All Stars are Hannah England, Reagan Fizer, Kate Flanagan, Emmerson Greene, Megan Marron, Ann Clayton McKinnon, Lucy Polson, Anne Marie Seal, Wesley Sullivan, Mary Beth Weyandt, Ava White and Emmeline Yother. The team was led by head coach Clayton McKinnon with assistant coaches Aaron England, Joe Flanagan, James Seal and Mitchell Weyandt.



CHAMBER NEWS

Karen Odle, Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce President

As we come to the close of another year, I can't say I will be sad to see 2020 in the rearview mirror! It has been challenging and stressful but

has also has shown the tenacity and courage that we have as residents of this wonderful city, state and country! I am so very grateful to have the freedoms that we have in this country, we remain blessed beyond anything we any deserve. I want to thank the many wonderful people that spend countless hours making our community a better place for all. Our citizens continue to amaze me with their energy and focus on making Vestavia Hills a great place to work, play and live as we strive for "A Life Above" for every member of our community.

I trust that as you are thinking about your holiday shopping and dining, you will remember the many incredible businesses we have in Vestavia Hills. They are the ones you go to when you need a silent auction item, a sponsor for your little league team or something for your church projects, so please help keep our small business IN business. Taxes from the revenue produced by these businesses are what enables our city to provide the many incredible services that we enjoy.

If you wonder what's in it for you, remember that small businesses:

- Small businesses are the life blood of any community.
- There are 30.2 million small businesses in the U.S. (SBA, 2018)
- Small businesses account for 99.7% of all businesses in the US. (SBA, 2018)
- Small businesses make up 47.5 % of the private workforce and are responsible for 66% of net new jobs created. (SBA, 2018)
- Small businesses donate 250% more than larger businesses to non-profits and community causes (Source: Seattle Good Business Network).
- It is easier to keep a business than recruit a new one, so support of the small business community is vital for retention.
- COVID-19 has placed an undue hardship on our small businesses, as overhead continued even though revenue largely stopped during the shutdown.

I encourage you to help our Vestavia Hills small business owners stay in business – buy local instead of shopping outside Vestavia Hills. They have each been hit hard by COVID-19 and many are struggling to stay afloat. Please support our local businesses to show them how much we value them ... YOU can make a difference!

My family and I would like to wish you and yours a blessed holiday season, abundant peace and joy. May 2021 be a year blessed with good health and prosperity for each of you. Our doors are always open at the Chamber office. We look forward to working with you as we strive for "A Life Above."



HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

According to the National Fire Protection Association, fire departments across the United States respond on an average of 160 house fires per year that are started with Christmas trees. Though they are not common, there is a better chance for them to cause serious damage and injuries when they do happen. Christmas trees are combustible items that become more flammable as they continue to dry out. When putting up a tree:

- Keep your tree in the best possible condition by buying it fresh and watering it daily.
- Always locate your tree away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, candles, heating vents and space heaters.
- Limit the number of light strands on the tree or, if possible, use LED lights that emit less heat than incandescent lights.
- Do not leave the lights on when unattended (leaving your house, going to bed, etc.)
- Confirm lights on artificial trees are in good condition. Check for frayed wires and damage to plug connectors.

The Vestavia Hills Fire Department hopes you stay safe this holiday season!

VHFD ACCEPTING DONATIONS



The Vestavia Hills Fire Department has once again partnered with

the United States Marine Corps Reserve and the Toys for Tots program this Christmas season. The mission of the Toys for Tots program is to collect new unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to less fortunate children at Christmas. **If you wish to donate, simply drop a new unwrapped toy by any VHFD fire station by December 11, and we will take care of the rest.** As always, we thank you for your support! Merry Christmas!



HOLIDAY in the HILLS

Vestavia Hills

Tree Lighting Festival

December 1

**Vestavia Hills City Hall, 6:00 pm
1032 Montgomery Highway**

Enjoy entertainment, merchant give-aways, a visit with Santa and the lighting of the tree!

Drive-Thru Breakfast with Santa

December 12

**Vestavia Hills Elementary West, 7:30-10:00 am
1965 Merryvale Road**

Drive-thru to pick up a Dunkin Donuts breakfast and see Santa! Free to attend—Breakfast courtesy of the City of Vestavia Hills.

Vestavia Hills Christmas Parade

December 13

**Liberty Park Sports Complex
to Alston Meadows, 2:00-4:00 pm**

Enjoy the city's official parade!
Register to be in the Parade! Find the form at
www.vestaviahills.org.

**Presented by the City of Vestavia Hills &
the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce**

**Visit www.vestaviahills.org for more
details and an extended list of events.**



Vestavia Belles

The Vestavia Belles have been hard at work this year helping those in need in the City of Birmingham. They have teamed up with Food for Our Journey, a non-profit organization serving the homeless in the Birmingham area. The Belles have collected, assembled and distributed over 300 hygiene kits containing essential items, such as soap and washcloths, and 200 cases of water in the past three months. They will continue this for the remainder of the year, donating whatever items that are requested. They also will be visiting local nursing homes in the month of November, spreading cheer and treat bags to residents.

The Vestavia Belles new president, Priscilla Drummond, had a vision to use the Belles' tremendous gifts and talents to not only serve the City of Vestavia as hostesses, but to spread their gifts and talents to those in need in other communities. All service projects are planned by the elected officers and carried out by all of the Belles. The other elected officers this year are: Vice-President, Natalie Dunn; Secretary, Alison Stubbs; Treasurer, Anna Carlisle Worrell; and Historians, Margaret Ann Green and Lydia Powell. The Vestavia Belles are under the direction of Rita Greene.



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