

# The Bright Side™

VOLUME 35 No 1

SERVING ACWORTH, KENNESAW, MARIETTA SINCE 1992

JAN 2026



## 2025 MARIETTA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

### BILL BRUTON, CITY MANAGER, CITY OF MARIETTA

Bill Bruton, Jr., has dedicated his entire professional life to public service and civic engagement. Serving as City Manager of Marietta since 2000, Marietta has been recognized for its strong financial stewardship, smart development policies, and proactive community engagement under his leadership. He has played a pivotal role in the development of Marietta Square, supported key projects like the Hilton Atlanta/Marietta Hotel & Conference Center, and worked collaboratively with local organizations to ensure the city's public services are accessible, efficient, and community focused.

Bruton is a member of the Georgia City-County Management Association (GCCMA) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). He has served on numerous boards and task forces representing Marietta's interests in regional planning, economic development, and municipal operations. His financial acumen and steady leadership have been recognized by peer associations, and his reputation for ethical governance has made him a trusted leader across Georgia.

Bruton has helped lead Marietta to receive multiple distinctions over his tenure, including top ratings in financial transparency, awards for urban planning, and recognition for innovative public-private partnerships. While he often deflects credit, his behind-the-scenes work has earned him widespread respect from elected officials, city staff, civic leaders, and residents. Through decades of steady, principled leadership, he has ensured that Marietta remains not only a well-run city, but also a thriving home for families, businesses, and the arts.

Pictured above is Bill Bruton with his family.



## 2025 TOWN CENTER CITIZEN OF THE YEAR PRESIDENT KAT SCHWAIG, KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

Kat Schwaig initially served as interim president of Kennesaw State University in 2021 before being named president in 2022. Under her leadership, KSU has launched "Taking Flight," a new strategic plan aimed at achieving national prominence and institutional excellence. During Schwaig's tenure, KSU has embarked on a comprehensive student success initiative, established more than 50 new undergraduate and graduate degrees and minors, professional

programs, and credentials for in-demand fields, launched FLIGHT — a class-year, student success engagement program for first-year students focused on community, progress, and retention, realized an 81% increase in external research awards, and more than doubled research expenditures. Schwaig also oversaw KSU's move to Conference USA and relaunched HatchBridge, a community-focused business incubator.

Kat is pictured here with Tracey Styf, Executive director of the Town Center CID.



### KENNESAW'S MAYOR: DEREK EASTERLING

The Kennesaw Business Association will host Kennesaw's Mayor, Derek Easterling on Tuesday, January 13 as he presents his annual State of the City address. Register online at [www.kennesawbusiness.org](http://www.kennesawbusiness.org). Lunch is \$20 for members, \$25.00 for guests. This event takes place at the Governor's Gun Club, 1005 Cobb Place Blvd., Kennesaw, 30144. The event begins at 11:00 am.



### ACWORTH'S MAYOR: TOMMY ALLEGOOD

The Acworth Business Association will host Acworth's Mayor, Tommy Allegood on Thursday February 5 as he presents his annual State of the City address. Register online at [www.acworthbusiness.org](http://www.acworthbusiness.org). Lunch is \$20 for members, \$30.00 for guests. This event takes place at the Acworth Community Center, 4361 Cherokee St., Acworth, 30101. The event begins at 11:30 am.



## 2025 ACWORTH CITIZEN OF THE YEAR MEGAN STRANGE, NORTH COBB CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Megan Strange has served for over two decades at North Cobb Christian School, where she currently leads as Upper School Principal. Her commitment to academic excellence and student growth has shaped countless lives and helped elevate the school's standing in the community. Beyond her local contributions, Strange has demonstrated visionary leadership across the region by leading the Principals 101 leadership group through the Atlanta Christian School Association—mentoring and equipping fellow educators for effective leadership. Her influence

also extends internationally, having served as a presenter and delegate at the Vancouver Symposium on Christian Education, where she shared insights and collaborated with global leaders in faith-based education.

## 2025 KENNESAW CITIZEN OF THE YEAR BARBIE BROWN, THE BROWN AGENCY

A lifelong resident of Cobb County, Barbie Brown has dedicated her life to creating a meaningful and lasting impact in her community. As the founder of The Brown Agency, she has built her business from the ground up, helping countless individuals build successful careers and brighter futures for their families with multiple branches in the area.

Brown is a selfless leader who serves on many non-profit committees, including serving on the board of directors and the treasurer of the Davis Direction Foundation in Cobb County, supporting individuals and families impacted by addiction and mental health challenges.

She gracefully balances her many roles—as a business owner, a community advocate, and dedicated citizen of Kennesaw. Barbara is pictured here with Mayor Easterling



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE BRIGHT SIDE NEWSPAPER MAINTAINS A CALENDAR OF EVENTS ONLINE IN THEIR DIGITAL NEWSPAPER AT [WWW.BRIGHTSIDENEWSPAPERNEWS.COM](http://WWW.BRIGHTSIDENEWSPAPERNEWS.COM). CHECK THIS SITE OUT - MANY STORIES AND A GREAT WAY TO KEEP UP WITH OUR LOCAL EVENTS

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## **THIS AND THAT**



### **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY DEDICATES HOME**

Habitat for Humanity of NW Metro Atlanta celebrated the final milestone of its final build of the year as nearly 100 supporters, sponsors, volunteers, and community leaders gathered Thursday to dedicate the completed 2025 Women Build home for future homeowner Makailah and her family in Marietta.

What began with pink hard hats and pink shovels at the October Land Dedication has now come full circle. Over nine weeks, 237 volunteers worked 4,141 hours side-by-side with Makailah and her mom, Lisa, to complete this home. More than 75 percent of the volunteers who built this home were women.

Makailah, a Police Service Representative with the Marietta's Police Department, was joined at the dedication by her mother, Lisa, and her son, a third grader; and sister Matilda. In 2023, she applied for this home through City of Marietta and Habitat's Public Service Housing Program and was selected in 2024.

At the dedication, Makailah said, "As I looked at my 10-year goals, I considered changing my goal to buy a home as something that was unrealistic. I considered changing to a goal to rent, yet, when I looked at renting, I saw that was unrealistic too."

"There is a great need for families like Makailah and Lisa — since 2019, 76 percent of our homeowners are female-headed households," said Habitat for Humanity of NW Metro Atlanta CEO Kyle Huhtanen. "The last time we opened our application process, we received more than 900 applicants, and we build only 5–10 homes per year. That should tell all of us — there is a need." To learn more about the local affiliate, visit [habitatnwma.org](http://habitatnwma.org).

Pictured above with Makailah and her family are officers from the Marietta Police Department.

### **HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR RAISES \$2,500 FOR LOCAL FAMILIES**

Graham Auldrige, a senior at Harrison High School, has turned his passion for pickleball into meaningful support for families facing food insecurity in Cobb County. What began as a simple idea to bring people together for a friendly community tournament became a successful fundraiser benefiting The Center for Family Resources' (CFR) annual "Thanks for Giving" program.

The Auldrige family has supported "Thanks for Giving" for several years. Graham's father recalls the early days of their involvement: "Our family first got involved with The Center for Family Resources after we saw a post several years ago about Thanks for Giving. At the time, we took our sons shopping for the items to fill a couple of family boxes to show the importance of giving back and the value of doing so."

Graham says that experience stayed with him. As he grew older, he became increasingly aware of the food insecurity affecting many of his classmates and neighbors. Wanting to do more this year, he organized a pickleball tournament with a goal of raising \$1,000 for families in need.

Graham exceeded that goal, raising \$1,250 through the event. With a matching contribution from his father and his father's employer, his total donation reached \$2,500.

The CFR's CEO Melanie Kagan praised Graham's leadership and compassion. "It is truly inspiring to see young people like Graham stepping up to help children and families right here in their own community," says Kagan. "His initiative and the heart behind it reminds us that meaningful impact often begins with one person deciding to make a difference."



## **Bright Side page 2**

### **LOCAL HISTORY STORIES**

Andrew J. Bramlett

In 1943, local resident Private Norman Roberts became the first African American soldier from Cobb County killed in World War II. Roberts was serving in North Africa when he was killed. Five years later, in 1948, his body returned to Georgia to be laid to rest in the Marietta National Cemetery.



National Cemetery. The next year, the Cobb County Board of Education approved a new school for Black students in Acworth, which was named after Private Roberts.

In 1953, construction began on the new Roberts School. The structure was designed with five classrooms and an auditorium, with the whole building expected to serve 125-150 students. The school opened before 1956 and served African American elementary-aged students from both Acworth and Kennesaw. At the time, there was no African American high school in Cobb County.

In 1961, two new rooms were added to the Roberts School. When Cobb County schools were integrated, students from the Roberts School began attending Acworth Elementary School. Roberts School closed in 1968 and was used by the county for storage.

Over the next thirty years, Roberts School served a variety of purposes. Owned by the City of Acworth, it was a health center in the early 1970s and was later home to the city streets department. In 2000, former Roberts School student Tim Houston spearheaded a renovation effort to turn the Roberts School into a community center. Since this renovation, the Roberts School building has returned to its place as a focal point of Acworth. More recently, part of the building was renovated to become the Rena Henton Theatre, the new home of the Acworth Theatre Company. A ribbon cutting for this new venue will be held on January 15 at 4:30 PM.

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### PAT FERRIS RETIRES AS CITY COUNCILMAN

The City of Kennesaw thanks Councilmember Pat Ferris for 25 years of dedicated service to the City of Kennesaw.

Prior to taking the dais last night, oaths of office were administered to City Councilmembers Jonathon Bothers (Post 3) and Anthony Gutierrez-Leon (Post 5) by the Honorable H. Luke Mayes, IV, and to Antonio Jones (Post 4) by the Honorable Kellie S. Hill.

We thank Councilmember Ferris for his longstanding commitment to Kennesaw and congratulate our Councilmembers as they begin their terms of service.

PICTURED: Pat Ferris on left with Mayor Derek Easterling on right.



### BOOK SWAP

Kennesaw Parks & Recreation will host its annual Book Swap on Saturday, Jan. 24, from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Ben Robertson Community Center.

Area residents may drop off gently used hardcover or paperback books, music CDs, DVD movies and vinyl records on Jan. 22 and 23 from noon to 8 p.m. Participants will receive a ticket redeemable for the same number of items during the open swap on Jan. 24.

Books must have intact front and back covers and be in good condition. CDs, DVDs and vinyl records must be in their original cases and fully operable. Magazines, software, VHS or cassette tapes, adult content, and unauthorized or illegal material will not be accepted. Each participant may bring up to 50 books, 30 CDs, 30 DVDs and 30 vinyl records.

Items will be organized into categories. The swap is free, and items may not be purchased with money. Any remaining items at the end of the event will be donated.

Kennesaw Parks & Recreation is seeking volunteers to assist with setup, event operations and breakdown. Help is needed during drop-off times and during the event with receiving, sorting, counting and bagging items. Volunteers must be able to bend, stoop, stand and lift up to 20 pounds.

Those interested may view available opportunities and sign up for volunteer shifts through the CivicRec registration website. Select "Volunteer Opportunities" to see the full list for the annual Book Swap.



### SMITH GILBERT GARDENS

Join us as we kick off the 2026 Community Volunteer Days! Monday, Jan. 19, 10 AM - 12 PM | MLK Jr Day of Service

Our project for this service day is trail construction. Staff will guide volunteers as they help build trails in the Gardens. To celebrate the new year we will have garden branded gear for participants!

Registration is free and required to participate. Children are welcome to join with parents (there will be a parent consent form on site at check-in for your child to participate). Each volunteer day will begin at 10 AM and conclude by noon.

We will provide all of the tools and gloves, but you are also welcome to bring your own. Wear pants to help protect your knees, and layers as it will be cold some mornings as we begin. Bring your water bottle too!

REGISTER ONLINE AT <https://ticketscandy.com/e/community-volunteer-day-3474>

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### KENNESAW'S VALENTINES DANCE PARTY

Spend the evening with your big and little ones and experience all the fun of a magical night! Join Kennesaw Parks & Recreation for the Valentines Dance Party on Saturday, February 13, 2026

Dress your best and get ready to dance! Guests will enjoy a festive atmosphere as the Ben Robertson Community Center's Banquet Hall is beautifully decorated for the occasion. Children ages 2 and under do not need a ticket if they will be sitting in laps. Tickets are \$18 each and are available at <https://secure.rec1.com/GA/kennesaw-ga/catalog> - select Special events and register. Or purchased in person at the Ben Robertson Community Center. Advance purchase is required.

### ALERT, ALERT New USPS Postmark Law Alert (Started Dec. 24, 2025)

A new rule means mail dropped in boxes may not receive a postmark until it reaches a regional processing center, potentially delaying the official date by 24–48 hours. This impacts tax deadlines, legal filings, and 2025 year-end charitable donations. To ensure a same-day date, visit a USPS Post Office location and request a manual hand-stamp or a Postage Validation Imprint (PVI) at the retail counter.

### NEWCOMERS CLUB

The Newcomers Club of Cobb County meets at 10:00 a.m. on the third Tuesday of most months and has other activities throughout the month. [www.newcomersofcobbcounty.com](http://www.newcomersofcobbcounty.com) for the location of the next meeting or activity. Those NEW to Cobb or just looking for NEW friends and activities are invited to join us.

### ACWORTH

#### CULTURAL ARTS

#### RIBBON CUTTING

Join Acworth Cultural Arts as we celebrate the Ribbon Cutting of the Rena Henton Theatre, the new home of Acworth Theatre Company.

The ribbon cutting will be held on Thursday, January 15 at 4:30 pm at the Roberts School 4681 School St, Acworth, GA 30101

Come celebrate community, creativity, and the future of live theatre in Acworth! Bring a friend, snap a photo, and be part of this special moment.

Visit [acworthculturalarts.org](http://acworthculturalarts.org) for more information.



### ROBERT JONES HAS RETIRED

#### An Institution at Goodwill

The Goodwill on South Cobb Drive in Smyrna is about to lose one of its brightest lights: special needs worker and longtime greeter Roger Jones, who is retiring next Friday, his last day after over 28 years with Goodwill and 21 years at the South Cobb store. Roger stands by the door day after day, offering a kind word to every customer, remembering everyone's name, and asking sincere questions like "How are you? How's your family? Is there anything I can help you with?" while following up on details he remembered years later, even once recalling a man's dog well after it had passed. Regular shoppers are hoping you can use your platform to share his story and honor the way his everyday kindness has quietly built community inside a thrift store doorway.

### Meet Adam Alexander MY DIGITAL MEDIA TEAM

Adam Alexander created My Digital Media Team in June 2025. He previously worked in Sales & Customer Service at Stone Forest Materials, now SiteOne Landscape Supplies, located on Main Street in Kennesaw. Adam spent 10 years working at Georgia Aquarium where he managed the Sales Ambassadors & Membership program. After the Aquarium, he worked at an independent insurance agency before deciding to establish My Digital Media Team. Adam received a Bachelor of Science in Communications from Kennesaw State University.

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### TRAINS, TRAINS, TRAINS! -

The Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History will host the return of its largest annual event, *Trains, Trains, Trains!*, on Saturday, Jan. 24, and Sunday, Jan. 25, 2025.

The event will feature an extensive display of model train layouts, train-themed activities and historic railcars. Model train groups from across the Southeast will present layouts in a variety of sizes, gauges and themes, with many displays featuring interactive elements designed for younger visitors. Participating groups will travel from states including Kentucky, Alabama and Tennessee to showcase their work.

During the event, the General Emporium, the museum's gift shop, will expand to offer additional train-themed merchandise, including apparel, collectibles, toys and model trains.

"Every year we look forward to welcoming new and returning guests to experience these spectacular model train layouts," said Dr. Richard Banz, executive director of the museum. "Many of the layouts are interactive, and we are excited to host both returning and first-time model train groups representing the most popular gauges and scales in model railroading."

**The Board the Caboose Experience** will offer visitors the opportunity to tour a historic caboose for a \$5 donation to the Kennesaw Museum Foundation. Children 3 years old and younger are admitted free. Proceeds support the museum's mission.

Museum hours for *Trains, Trains, Trains!* are 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days. General admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors ages 65 and older, and \$5 for children ages 3 to 17, active-duty, reserve, guard and retired military personnel with ID, and university students with ID. Museum members receive free admission. Tickets are available online.

The Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History is located at 2829 Cherokee St. NW in downtown Kennesaw. Parking will be available at Swift-Cantrell Park, 3140 Old 41 Hwy. NW, with a free shuttle service to the museum.

Event sponsors include Watson Injury Law, Gay Construction Company, J. Lunsford CPA, the Kennesaw Museum Foundation, the Kennesaw Business Association and the City of Kennesaw. For more information, visit [southernmuseum.org](http://southernmuseum.org) or call 770-427-2117.



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## ACWORTH NEWS



### MLK DAY OF SERVICE AND CELEBRATION

The Acworth MLK Celebration and Day of Service will be held Monday, January 19, 2026. The community is welcome to join us for a light welcome breakfast at 8:30 a.m. at the Roberts School Community and Education Center. Following the welcome breakfast, the City of Acworth Unity Walk will begin at 9:15 a.m. and leave from the Roberts School and finish at the Acworth Community Center. The MLK Day of Service and Celebration honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will take place at 10:00 a.m. in the Tanyard Creek Overlook of the Acworth Community Center. After the program concludes, we will begin our service project helping an organization in our community. MLK Day of Service merchandise will be for sale at the Acworth Community Center leading up to and on the day of the event. All proceeds will go towards the Acworth Expanding Horizons Foundation Inc to support the Expanding Horizons and Acworth Achievers programs. For more information on these programs or to donate, please visit [www.acworthexpandinghorizons.org](http://www.acworthexpandinghorizons.org)

#### ACCEPTING DONATIONS

Leading up to the event, the Acworth Parks, Recreation and Community Resource Department will hold donation drives for Family Fun Night & Hygiene Kits to support foster families in the Acworth community with Georgia Kids Belong. Donations can be dropped off at the Acworth Community Center.

Items Needed: Family Fun Nights Donation Drive: New or gently used card games, board games, decks of cards, dice, puzzles, popcorn, sudoku, books, crossword puzzles, etc.

Hygiene Kit Donation Drive: Toiletry bags/Ziploc, toothbrush, toothpaste, small hairbrush, small lotion, wash cloth, ChapStick, small body wash, small shampoo, deodorant.

Day-of Service Projects: Sort donated items for family fun nights and hygiene kits.

'Cards for Kids in Care' Making Station: Create encouraging and uplifting cards for foster kids with words of love and support that show them they belong.

'Belong Bracelets' Making Station: Foster kids participating in the I Belong Project receive "Belong Bracelets" similar to friendship bracelets that show love and care from the community. Bracelets can include words of encouragement like hope, belong and brave etc.

For more information on these programs or to donate, please visit [www.acworthexpandinghorizons.org](http://www.acworthexpandinghorizons.org). For additional information, please contact Jordon Gonzalez at [jgonzalez@acworth-ga.gov](mailto:jgonzalez@acworth-ga.gov)



### CONGRATULATIONS ACWORTH CADETS

Acworth Public Safety Cadets competed in the Cobb Cadet Challenge at the Cobb County Safety Village, taking home 6 individual trophies.

Team 1 earned 1st place Suspicious Person, 1st place Domestic Dispute, 1st place Unknown Trouble, and 3rd Place Overall.

Team 2 earned 2nd place Suspicious Person and 2nd Place Overall.

The City is incredibly proud of their hard work, teamwork, and professionalism throughout the day, and for representing Acworth with pride, confidence, and dedication.

### A LOOK AT BROOKWOOD'S READING PROGRAM

#### BY KIM WIGINGTON, DIRECTOR

Brookwood Christian School reading instruction is based on the Orton-Gillingham method. OG is a research-based framework that was developed specifically for students who have difficulty decoding words.

Dyslexic students do not intuitively grasp sound-letter relationships, Orton-Gillingham is explicit, systematic, and structured. Rules are taught, practiced, and built upon.

Students are taught through multi-sensory methods. They hear sounds, say them aloud, write them, and incorporate movement. This helps the brain form more connections.

Students learn rules, syllable patterns, and word structures. Students stop guessing at words and start applying the principles they have learned. As their decoding improves, so does their confidence.

By meeting students where they are, the reading programs at Brookwood allow dyslexic learners to develop skill, confidence, and a love of learning.

### CITY OF ACWORTH'S SENIOR LUNCHEON

Senior luncheons are held at Acworth Community Center. The JANUARY luncheon will be held Wednesday, JANUARY 21 Join us every third Wednesday of the month for the City of Acworth's Senior Luncheon. This program is free to City Residents 55 and up, but you must register to attend. Registration closes 1 week before the luncheon. Visit [www.acworthparksandrecreation.org](http://www.acworthparksandrecreation.org), navigate to the menu on left, click on register or reserve now. Select Senior from Age Group and then click on Senior Luncheon under Active Adult Programs.



### MEET THE COWARTS, NEW OWNERS OF HENRY'S

The Acworth community showed up for Henry's Louisiana Grill & Henry's Uptown on Friday, January 9, as Mayor Allegood, the City Team, and the Acworth Business Association welcomed new owners and operators Brian and Taylor Cowart to Main Street! Congratulations to the Cowarts and to the entire Henry's family on this new and exciting beginning, and thank you for investing in Historic Downtown Acworth. Henry's is open every day but Monday. Visit [www.chefhenrys.com](http://www.chefhenrys.com) for more information. Scroll to the bottom of the page.

### ACWORTH ARTS ALLIANCE CALL FOR ARTISTS ACWORTH ARTS ALLIANCE- "OUR TOWN, OUR STORIES" EXHIBIT

Submissions open to artists who can hand deliver their work to the Art House. (Submissions accepted: Wednesday, December 17 until Sunday, February 15) The idea behind the "Our Town, Our Stories" Exhibit is to display and offer for sale artwork that is about Acworth and surrounding nearby areas... (Acworth images are always a hit!)

Two and Three Dimensional Works in any medium will be considered for this exhibit. Please submit up to four 2-dimensional pieces or up to six 3-dimensional pieces. Maximum size (inclusive of frame, if framed) to be considered is 18x24. All works submitted must be available for sale.

Delivery of works: Tuesday & Wednesday, March 3 & 4, Noon-6 pm. Pick-up of works at the end of the exhibit: Tuesday & Wednesday, April 28 & 29, Noon-6 pm.

Receptions: Saturday, March 8, 4-7 pm and Saturday, April 12, 4-7 pm. For more information visit: <https://www.acworthartsalliance.org/submit>.



This fall, muralists Kelsey Wishik and Leigh Ann Culver unveiled vibrant works that reshape the trail's underpasses into dynamic community landmarks. PICTURED ABOVE: Culver's Stained Glass mural casts light beneath the bridge with panels that bring a sense of serenity and reflection.

### TOWN CENTER'S GROWTH IN 2025

This year has been one of creativity, connection, and continued growth for our community. As we look ahead to 2026, we're excited to reveal the progress and collaborative energy shaping the district.

Our shared spaces came alive in new ways. The Noonday Creek Trail continued to grow as a destination for art, recreation, and everyday enjoyment, with new murals, installations like Tiny Doors ATL, and thoughtful enhancements. Our Bikeshare Program also marked 10 years of service and more than 100,000 rides, strengthened by e-bikes, expanded access, and the generous support of our anniversary sponsor, Georgia Power.

Community engagement reached new heights. Free yoga at Aviation Park, sponsored by Kaiser Permanente, saw record participation, and cornerstone events like Ecologie Vintage EcoFest and Caffeine & Octane deepened our reach. New collaborations, such as our sponsorship with KSU Athletics, created fresh opportunities for connection, while partnerships with local businesses grew through educational programs and networking events.

Major projects continue to move forward, including the South Barrett Reliever, Lanie Park, Wayfinding, George Busbee Complete Street and Noonday Creek Pedestrian Bridge, as well as planning efforts through the Livable Centers Initiative to support a more connected future.

We also know that meaningful progress doesn't happen alone. We are deeply thankful for the strong partnerships across organizations, institutions, businesses, and individuals that make this work possible. Our role is to be a resource—a tool in the community's toolbox—supporting a shared vision for a thriving, connected, and forward-moving district.

Together, we're writing the next chapter of our story, built on innovation, collaboration, and the power of working together.

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**KENNESAW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION AWARDS**

The following awards and recognitions were presented at the December KBA luncheon. President Austin Porter thanked and recognized the following KBA members. Austin presented his Presidential awards to three deserving and hardworking members. Michael Everhart, Chair of Taste of Kennesaw, Marlon Longacre, Chair of Big Shanty Festival and Megan Davis, chair of Monthly Luncheon Programs. In addition, the members are invited to select candidates who deserve to be recognized for making a positive difference in the both the organization and the community.



**MARLON LONGACRE, PRESIDENTIAL AWARD IN RECOGNITION OF HIS LONG TIME COMMITMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BIG SHANTY FESTIVAL. KBA'S FUNDRAISER FOR THE YEAR. MARLON IS ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF PIEDMONT CHURCH.**

**MICHAEL EVERHART, PRESIDENTIAL AWARD IN RECOGNITION OF HIS LONG TIME COMMITMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE TASTE OF KENNESAW. ALL PROFIT IS GIVEN BACK TO THE COMMUNITY. MICHAEL IS THE GENERAL MANAGER OF SOUTHERN OFFICE MACHINES.**



**MEGAN DAVIS, PRESIDENTIAL AWARD IN RECOGNITION OF HER EXCELENT SERVICE AS PROGRAM CHAIR FOR THE KBA LUNCHEONS. MEGAN IS VP OF DEVELOPMENT FOR THE TOMMY NOBIS CENTER..**



**CHRIS BLACKERBY, KBA MEMBER OF THE YEAR IN RECOGNITION OF HER DEDICATION AND SUPPORT OF ALL OF KBA'S EVENTS AND FOR SERVING AS LONG TIME TREASURER OF KBA. CHRIS IS THE FOUNDER OF LEGACY ACCOUNTING AND TAX SERVICES, LLC CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS, KENNESAW.**

**GOVERNOR'S GUN CLUB, KBA BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

Pictured above l-r are Bert and Kristina Brown, Governor's Gun Club owners, Sandra Tanner, Events & Membership Manager, Head Chef Larry Epps

Governor's Gun Club isn't just a shooting range, they are a full service event facility providing the ideal setting for corporate events, social gatherings, and more! They can accommodate your event ranging from 12 guests for your Board Meetings all the way to using their Banquet Hall which accommodates up to 350 guests. With their "Build Your Own Package" they will help create a memorable experience within your budget. Visit <https://governorsgunclub.com/kennesaw-2> for more information. Their food and services are excellent. PS their gun ranges provide a wide range of activities including shooting pistols, rifles, and shot guns, plus a little axe throwing. They are located at 1005 Cobb Place Blvd NW Kennesaw, Ga. 30144

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## MARIETTA NEWS



### 2025 WEST COBB CITIZEN OF THE YEAR Joyette Holmes, Georgia State Board of Pardon and Paroles

Joyette Holmes, Board Member on the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles, has greatly contributed to the Cobb County community. She made Cobb County history by becoming the first female and African American to serve as both Chief Magistrate and District Attorney. In these roles, she helped maintain law and order within the community and improve public safety. Holmes tackled each case with a balanced approach of justice and compassion. She also served as a partner and member at the Marietta law firm of Gregory Doyle Calhoun and Rogers (GDCR) before being appointed by Governor Kemp to her current full-time role as a member on the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Along with her professional duties, Joyette serves on the boards of MUST Ministries, Wellstar's Kennestone Regional Hospital Board, Kennesaw State University President's Community Advisory Board, the Cobb County Prayer Breakfast Committee, and the Capital City Bank Advisory Board. She also serves on the board of the Cobb Chamber as Marketing Chair and as Co-Chair for Leadership Cobb's 2026 class. As a testament to her well-respected reputation within the community, the Cobb NAACP and the Cobb Ministerial Alliance both honored her with awards named for United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. She also received a Community Service Award named for one of her mentors – retired Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham. Joyette is a dedicated public servant who continues to make the community better through her service.

### GEORGIA WOOD ARTISTS A JURIED EXHIBITION, JURIED BY MCMA

The Marietta Cobb Museum of Art presents the first MCMA-juried exhibition of wood art and woodworking. Focused solely on artists working in wood that live within the state of Georgia, this exhibition presents a selection of fine wood art from over 150 submissions. Showcasing a diverse array of techniques and practices, this exhibition highlights the remarkable skill and creative depth of Georgia's wood artists. The exhibition will be on display until March 22.

### ART AND THE FINER THINGS AUCTION MCMA ONLINE AUCTION | FEBRUARY 13TH-15TH

The Marietta Cobb Museum of Art presents a curated online auction celebrating creativity, craftsmanship, and culture. Art and the Finer Things will feature a diverse selection of fine art, luxury items, exclusive experiences, and one-of-a-kind collectibles. This auction will raise critical funds to support MCMA Education, Exhibition, Lectures, and Community Outreach Programs. This event offers an opportunity for donors and participants to support a meaningful cause while acquiring beautiful and unique pieces that represent the best of the arts and fine living.

In-Person Preview | Friday, February 13th, 6-8pm Bidders will have the opportunity to view a curated selection of auction items during the in-person preview at the February 13th, MCMA Art of the Cocktail event. Online auction bidding will remain open until Sunday evening February 15th.

### MARIETTA HISTORY CENTER JANUARY POP-IN EVENT

The Marietta History Center is excited to announce that its popular monthly Pop-In for Family Fun events will continue in 2026! These engaging and educational events will take place on the third Saturday of every month, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Designed for children and their families, Pop-Ins feature fun and interactive activities and crafts, each centered around a unique theme.

"We want to make sure that museums are seen as exciting and educational spaces for everyone, especially children," said Museum Director, Amy Reed. "By hosting these events, we hope to ignite a lifelong love of museums in the next generation and create memorable experiences for families to enjoy together."

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Cauthorn, Owen, and Sanders, Pop-In for Family Fun is free of charge to all attendees, ensuring that the museum is accessible regardless of financial circumstances. The Marietta History Center is thrilled to be able to offer this fantastic opportunity to the community throughout 2026.

The first Pop-In of 2026 will be held on January 17th with a focus on Presidents of the Past with themed crafts and activities for all ages.

#### Event Details:

When: 3rd Saturday of every month, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Where: Marietta History Center, 1 Depot Street, Marietta, GA 30060

Cost: FREE, thanks to the sponsorship of Cauthorn, Owen, and Sanders

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## 2026 TASTE OF KENNESAW

BY MICHAEL EVERHART, CHAIR

We are proud to announce this year's 2026 Superior Plumbing Taste of Kennesaw donations. All donations are presented through a great partnership between The Kennesaw Business Association and the City of Kennesaw. Each of our partners will each be receiving a check for \$6,871.02 (yes we give back every penny). We will be handing out checks at this month's luncheon. Our luncheon is Tuesday December 9, 11:30am at GovernoTaste rs Gun Club. I hope that you will be able to attend. We will also ask that you stay after the luncheon for a few minutes for pictures and brief video testimonials that will be used for social media.

It goes without saying that none of this would be possible without our sponsors. I have attached a sponsor list for your information, as well as a history of giving.

Finally, thank you to JRM Management for putting it all together, incredible execution and making us all look good!

## LEARNING ABOUT MOSES

Marlon Longacre, Associate Pastor, Piedmont Church

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Hebrews 11:25

Over the Christmas break I rested and got prepared for the year 2026. 2025 was such a momentous year for Piedmont in the community. But being such a competitor, I wanted Piedmont to be even more effective and have an even greater impact in 2026. I have been studying Moses. Moses was so effective, and God used him to accomplish so many things that we are still learning from him today.

Moses settled some basic questions in his life. Now I want to look how he settled this question "What are my choices?"

### WE MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR OWN LIFE.

Do not blame somebody else for your life. Do not say, "It is not my fault." Do something about it. Decide to change.

The fact is, I have choices I can make in life and so do you. I have options for making these choices. God has given us the freedom to choose. What I choose today will determine my tomorrow. That is called accepting responsibility. The Bible says that people who accept responsibility for their own lives tend to lead effective lives.

In Hebrews 11 v. 24 we see Moses refusing and in v. 25 we see Moses choosing. There is a principle here. The negative is followed by the positive. God never says, "Do not do this. Do not do that. He says, whenever you take something out of your life, you put something positive in its place. You see the refusing and then you see the choice. Christianity is not a negative religion of a bunch of do nots.

In v. 23 as a baby, God chose Moses. "By faith, Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born because they saw that he was no ordinary child and they weren't afraid of the king's edict." God chose Moses as a baby. But when Moses grew up, v. 25, it said he had to choose God.

God has chosen you. Have you chosen Him? v. 24. When did Moses make his choice? "When he had grown up." One of the marks of maturity in life is when you accept responsibility for your own decisions. You do not blame other people. Society loves to let us shift responsibility. You cannot blame somebody else for the direction of your life. You cannot live off somebody else's spiritual commitment. You must make your own spiritual commitment.

And Moses, when he grew up, chose. He made an act of responsibility. Your happiness will be determined by your character in life. Your character is determined by the choices you make. Be yourself. Accept responsibility for your own condition.

Is 2026 the year that you accept responsibility and take ownership of your faith journey? The strength of your life is in your commitments. I hope that you will be in attendance on Sundays. Ike and Daniel will be sharing with you some exciting news concerning Wednesday nights at Piedmont.

## LOVE DOES SOUPER BOWL JANUARY

Soups and detergents are this month's Love Does project. January is always the "Souper Bowl" of giving month.

A great way to help us with our Love Does project for January. We need you to bring soup and laundry detergent to Piedmont church. We are partnering this month with frontline ministries such as Storehouse Ministries, Georgia Military Care, The Children's Haven, The Cobb Center for Young Adults, and KSU Cares. All these frontline ministries need soup or detergent. Detergent goes to The Cobb Center for Young Adults, Davis Direction Foundation, and The Children's Haven. Soup goes to Georgia Military Care, KSU Cares, and Storehouse Ministries. You can take the

items to the Love Does tables in the Conference Room, or call Piedmont Church at 770-422-2566, for information on dropping off your donation.



## REGISTER FOR THE ANNUAL NOONDAY SHANTY 5&10K

Make strides along the Noonday Creek Trail at the Annual Noonday Shanty 5&10K. Kick off your spring running season and enjoy the scenic views along Noonday Creek Trail while supporting future greenspace and trail projects in the Town Center area. This event features two USA Track & Field certified race lengths and a paved course on the trail and roadway. Runners, walkers, and families are all encouraged to participate.

Participants will experience scenic views, greenspaces, and attractions along Noonday Creek Trail and Town Center such as Noonday Creek, Aviation Park, Cobb International Airport, Fifth Third Bank Stadium, and wetlands and bird habitats including the Chimney Swift Tower. TO REGISTER AND learn more visit: <https://www.towncentercid.com/noonday-shanty>

### KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

#### GOLF TOURNAMENT - MARCH 30

The Saint Catherine's Parish Knights of Columbus annual Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, March 30, 2026 at the Pinetree Country Club, Kennesaw. Registration begins at 9:00 am with a Shot Gun Start at 10:00 am. The fee is \$520.00 for a four person team; A Single Golfer \$130.00. We have numerous Sponsorships Opportunities: including Hole-Sponsorships: Tee Box Signs \$100.00 each.

EMAIL OR CALL and ask about other available Sponsorships. Please contact Chuck Guta, cgeagle6@bellsouth.net Or call (404) 805-3218 or contact Don Cazeaux, cazeauxdon@gmail.com Or call (678) 361-0612.

Proceeds go directly to support our local Charities which include Habitat for Humanity; Homeless Veterans; Georgia Special Olympics; And several others in and around Kennesaw and Acworth.



#### CROY ENGINEERING DONATES SPORTS EQUIPMENT

As part of its Croy Cares initiative, Croy Engineering collected new soccer balls and basketballs to donate to Devereux Georgia in Kennesaw, on behalf of The Dave Krache Foundation.

Croy Engineering is headquartered in Marietta, Georgia. Its Croy Cares program is a week-long initiative launched in 2022 by Vice President Sasha Ugi, designed to provide opportunities for all team members to engage in volunteer activities within their local communities. Croy employees are encouraged to engage in individual community service throughout the year as well.

The Dave Krache Foundation was founded in 2012 to help kids play sports when their parents have fallen on tough financial times. The Foundation helps to pay registration fees for students in school and rec league sports throughout Metro Atlanta.

"Each year, I'm inspired by our team's unwavering commitment to giving back to the communities we serve," said Scott McNally, Engineering Department Manager at Croy Engineering. "As Vice Chair of the Dave Krache Foundation, I was especially excited to see Devereux selected as the beneficiary of our 2025 Croy Cares Week on behalf of this Foundation. Watching our employees unite to support a local organization, particularly during this season of giving, reminds me what makes Croy such a special place to work. When it comes to serving others, our team truly knows no bounds."

The staff at Devereux Georgia was excited to accept the donation and said the balls will go to good use.



#### CRUSHIN' FOR A CAUSE CELEBRITY HOME RUN DERBY, JANUARY 31ST

It's Back, Baseball Friends! Join The 6-4-3 Foundation and the SagerStrong Foundation for the third annual Crushin' for a Cause Celebrity Home Run Derby on January 31st at Aviation Sports Complex, 455 Aviation Rd. Marietta, 30060. Sports fans of all ages are invited to join us for Crushin' for a Cause - a baseball-themed festival-style afternoon of good food, family fun, baseball opportunities, music, silent auction and more, all leading up to the Celebrity Home Run Derby. Gates open at 12:30. The Prep Baseball GA Amateur Home Run Derby begins at 1:00 and the professional hitters take the field at 3:30! All information can be found on our website at [www.The643Foundation.org/crushin2026](http://www.The643Foundation.org/crushin2026)



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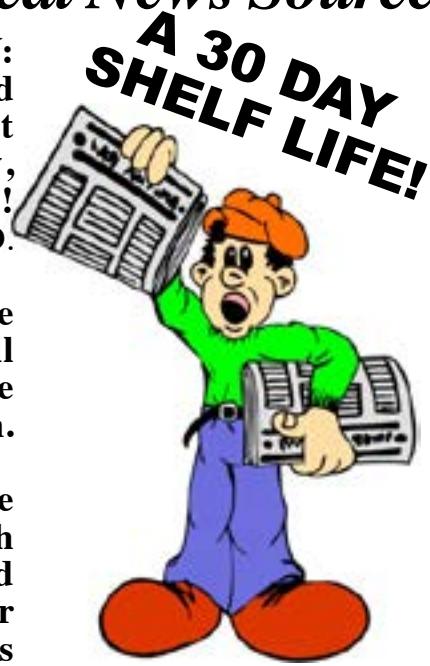
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## ROSE WAMBSGANSS, ARTIST

*Local Artist Rose Wambsganss Awarded Prestigious Residency at SVA New York*

Rose Wambsganss, an internationally exhibited fine-line ink artist and passionate arts educator, has been selected for a coveted artist residency at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York City. This honor recognizes Wambsganss's visionary work exploring sacred geometry, symbolic glyphs, and philosophical themes through intricate visual storytelling.

The SVA residency provides artists with studio space, mentorship, and professional development opportunities in the heart of Manhattan's vibrant arts scene. Wambsganss will use this time to advance her ongoing series, Thresholds of Surrender, which weaves cosmic resonance, astrological overlays, and meditative symbolism into multi-platform installations.

"I'm deeply honored to join SVA's community of boundary-pushing artists," said Wambsganss. "This residency is a chance to refine my conceptual language, expand my technical mastery, and connect with curators and creators who share a commitment to emotional depth and visual clarity."

Upcoming Solo Exhibition Wambsganss will debut new works from her Intensity series in a solo exhibition at the Mable House Arts Center, running from February 26, 2026 through April 10, 2026. The public is warmly invited to attend the Opening Reception on February 26, 2026, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, where the artist will be present to discuss her process and inspirations.

Current Exhibitions Rose's work can also be viewed at several regional venues, including: Smyrna Community Art Show, Atlanta Artist Center, Acworth Arts Alliance, Colony Square Atlanta

Her residency marks a significant milestone in her journey toward national recognition and future graduate study in illustration.

Community members can follow her residency progress and exhibition updates via her website and social media channels. Visit website for Rose Wambsganss: [www.rosewambsganss.com](http://www.rosewambsganss.com) or @art\_by\_rose\_w.

## STEPHANIE RUFFNER KMHS NOMINATED FOR NATIONAL LIFECHANGER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Kennesaw Mountain High School math teacher Stephanie Ruffner has been nominated for National Life Group's 2025-26 LifeChanger of the Year award. National Life Group's LifeChanger of the Year recognizes and rewards the very best K-12 educators and school district employees across the United States who are making a difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence, and leadership.

Ruffner was nominated by her colleague, David Larsen, for her more than 15 years of extraordinary service to students and her transformative leadership in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education. She was previously a math teacher and STEM Director at Cooper Middle School, where she spent seven years building and leading the Cooper STEM Academy, creating a culture that fosters curiosity, creativity, and confidence in problem-solving.

Ruffner elevated Cooper Middle School into a model STEM institution by leading successful Cognia and Georgia State STEM recertifications and by sharing best practices with educators across the region. In the classroom, she has served as lead Algebra teacher for over a decade, maintaining an average student proficiency rate of 95% while helping students overcome self-doubt and believe in their abilities.

Her dedication extends beyond the school day through a decade of coaching robotics and Future City teams, guiding students to top finishes at the Georgia Regional level while instilling teamwork, leadership, and perseverance. A respected leader and mentor, she has been named Teacher of the Year at both the Early College Academy of Columbus and Cooper Middle School.

"Ms. Ruffner doesn't just teach math or lead programs. She changes lives," said Larsen. "Her leadership, innovation, and compassion embody what it truly means to be a LifeChanger."

### ABOUT LIFECHANGER OF THE YEAR

Since 2011, LifeChanger of the Year has recognized and rewarded more than 8,600 K-12 teachers, administrators, and school employees in 2,300+ school districts. The program has awarded over \$850,000 in cash prizes to winners and their schools for making a significant difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence, and leadership.

## KENNESAW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK JANUARY PROGRAMS

Museum Tours, Monday/Wednesday/Friday @ 2:00 pm  
All programs begin at 11:00 am unless otherwise noted

- January 17 - The Importance of Civil War Battlefields Talk  
**THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELDS**
- January 18 - Special Field Orders No. 15 Talk
- January 24 - Visitor Center Museum Tour

### VISITOR CENTER MUSEUM TOUR

This 1-hour program is a perfect primer for the Atlanta Campaign and the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain. Our Rangers will tell the story of the war in North Georgia, using the artifacts in the museum as a medium.

- January 25 - Pigeon Hill Battlefield Tour  
(Parking is at Pigeon Hill Lot at intersection of Old Mountain Road and Burnt Hickory Rd)
- January 31 - Red-Tailed Hawk Program

\*All programs will be held at the Visitor Center unless otherwise noted

\*\*All guided hikes/outdoor programs may be cancelled or moved due to weather

\*\*\*To check the status of programs/or for any other questions, please call 770-427-4686.



### WELCOME GATHER & BLOOM

The City of Acworth welcomed the opening of Gather Bloom with a ribbon-cutting on December 5. Gather & Bloom is a floral boutique featuring custom floral arrangements, locally made gifts, and workshops, and is located at 4873 N Main St, Acworth, GA 30101.



### WELCOME THE BROWN DOG BOOKSHOP

The City of Kennesaw welcomes the opening of The Brown Dog Bookshop with a ribbon-cutting on Thursday, Jan. 8. The Bookshop is located at 2940 Dallas Street, Kennesaw. In the big white house across the street from the Baptist church. Visit [TheBrownDogBookshop.com](http://TheBrownDogBookshop.com) for more information. Better yet, go visit.

### ACWORTH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

By ABA PRESIDENT Alicia Todisco

Acworth is more than just a place to live—it is a community built on hard work and helping hands. My name is Alicia Todisco, owner of ACE Handyman Services, and I am proud to step into my new role as the President of the Acworth Business Association (ABA).

The ABA is a group of local business owners who care deeply about our town. Before I opened my own shop four years ago, this group welcomed me. They showed me that when local businesses succeed, the whole community wins.

I want to thank our outgoing leader, Kim Wigington. Under her leadership, the ABA worked closely with the City of Acworth and Kennesaw State University to offer free classes for small business owners. She also spent the year supporting local charities that care for our neighbors in need. We are so grateful for her heart and her hard work.

This year, our theme is LEGACY.

Legacy is more than just a name on a building. It is about the "essence" we leave behind and how we treat our neighbors. We want to be intentional about how we serve you. Whether it is through sponsoring events like the Taste of Acworth or helping a neighbor find a trusted local professional, our goal is to make our town even better.

Running a small business is a lot like raising my two young boys—it's a lot of work, but it's worth it! By supporting each other, we build a stronger future. If you are a business professional, trades professional, sales professional, or business owner that would like to get more involved in the ABA, we would love to connect with you. Please visit us at [www.acworthbusiness.org](http://www.acworthbusiness.org) for information. We hope to connect with you. Together, let's build a legacy we can all be proud of.

#### ACWORTH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

THUR JAN 15 WOMEN'S LUNCHEON - 11:30-1:00 at THE HOLBROOK. 4491 S Main Street. Please RSVP at [www.acworthbusiness.org](http://www.acworthbusiness.org). Member is \$20.00.

THUR FEB 5 ACWORTH LUNCHEON - 11:30-1:00 ACWORTH COMMUNITY CENTER. Featuring ACWORTH'S Mayor Tommy Allegood as he discusses upcoming development and planning.. Please visit acworth's website for more information and to RSVP [acworthbusiness.org](http://www.acworthbusiness.org)

THUR FEB 12 ACWORTH ALIVE AFTER 5 Join the ABA for after hours food, fun and networking event is free for ABA Members, \$5 for Guests RSVP at [www.acworthbusiness.org](http://www.acworthbusiness.org) for more information.

#### KENNESAW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

TUES JAN 13 KBA LUNCHEON - 11:00-1:00 GOVERNOR'S GUN CLUB, 1005 Cobb Place Blvd, Kennesaw Guest Speaker: State of The City with Mayor Derek Easterling. If you choose not to register in advance, you will pay an additional \$10 at the door. RSVP at [www.kennesawbusiness.org](http://www.kennesawbusiness.org).

TUES JAN 20 ALIVE AFTER FIVE 5:30-7:30 AT Governor's Gun Club. Co-hosted by Up, Up and Away Junk Hauling. This event is free for KBA members and \$5 for guests.

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## THE BEST KITCHEN-THEMED GIFTS FOR BEGINNER COOKS

By chef Andrew gruel

Every holiday season, I get the same question: "What should I buy for someone who's just starting to cook at home?" And every year, my advice stays the same: skip the gimmicks and focus on the foundational tools that actually help someone grow in the kitchen.

Before we dive in, a quick note: I'm not listing brand names because I'm not here to promote any particular product, and I'm not paid to endorse anything. My goal is simply to give you the categories of tools that genuinely help new cooks.

### AND HERE'S AN INSIDER TIP:

Local restaurant supply stores (many open to the public) are some of the best places to get professional-grade tools at great prices. That's where chefs shop — not influencer gift lists.

### NOW LET'S GET INTO THE ESSENTIALS.

#### 1. A Reliable 8-Inch Chef's Knife

This is the foundational tool every cook needs. An 8-inch chef's knife is the ideal size for beginners — versatile, balanced, and capable of handling nearly all prep tasks.

It doesn't need to be expensive; it needs to feel sturdy and comfortable.

#### 2. A Large, Heavy Wooden Cutting Board (Safer and More Sanitary)

A big wooden cutting board gives stability and room to work, and wood naturally has antimicrobial properties, making it safer than many plastic boards.

Its weight prevents slipping, which is essential when someone is still learning proper knife control.

#### 3. A Full Chef's Apron

A high-quality apron with deep pockets and full coverage helps a new cook feel organized and confident. It's practical, protective, and instantly upgrades their kitchen presence.

#### 4. A Cast Iron or Carbon Steel Pan

Instead of a basic heavy-bottomed skillet, a cast iron or carbon steel pan is a far better tool for someone learning to cook.

Here's why: They hold heat extremely well, making searing easier; They develop a natural nonstick surface over time; They last for decades with minimal care; They help beginners learn key skills like heat control, browning, and seasoning a pan.

Cast iron is great for slow, steady heat. Carbon steel is lighter, quicker, and extremely versatile. Either one is a lifetime gift.

#### 5. Heat-Proof Utensils That Make Cooking Easier

A simple set — tongs, wooden spoon, heat-proof spatula, and scraper — helps beginners navigate recipes without battling flimsy tools. Practical, durable, and essential.

6. A Baking Sheet + Wire Rack Combo This combo unlocks crisping, roasting, cooling, draining, and resting. It's one of the most versatile and underrated setups any new cook can have.

7. A Simple Digital Thermometer This instantly boosts confidence by removing the guesswork behind doneness. A thermometer is one of the fastest ways to help beginners cook proteins correctly.

#### 8. Prep Bowls and Storage Containers

Organization is half the battle. Prep bowls build the habit of mise en place, and good storage containers support leftovers and meal planning.

#### 9. A Medium-Sized Dutch Oven or Heavy Pot

This one vessel teaches braising, simmering, searing, boiling, and slow cooking — all in one. It's incredibly versatile and beginner-friendly.

#### 10. A Good Peeler and a Microplane

A sharp peeler makes prep safe and fast. A microplane opens up a world of flavor: citrus zest, garlic paste, ginger, nutmeg, and delicate cheese shavings. These little tools create big "wow" moments for beginners learning to season properly.

11. A Beginner's Culinary Textbook (Like The New Professional Chef) Instead of a trendy cookbook, give the gift of real culinary fundamentals.

A professional-style beginner's textbook teaches knife skills, heat methods, safety, sauces, organization, and the science behind cooking.

It's the kind of reference that lasts a lifetime.

#### 12. A Monthly Meat Box from a Local Farmer

One of the best and most inspiring gifts for a new cook.

A local farmer's monthly meat box introduces high-quality proteins, variety, and seasonality. It encourages creativity and supports local agriculture. Plus, it's just fun — every month feels like Christmas for a home cook.

#### The Bottom Line: Give Gifts That Build Skills, Not Clutter

Beginner cooks don't need gadgets. They need confidence, good tools, and ingredients that inspire them.

And again — I'm not paid to promote any specific products or brands, which is why this list focuses on categories and fundamentals, not labels.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

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MANY THANKS, CHEF.



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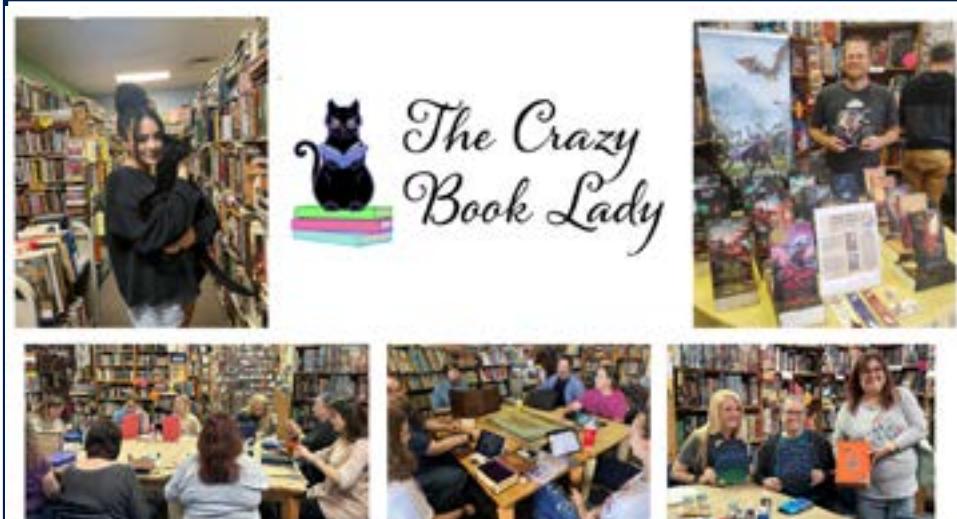
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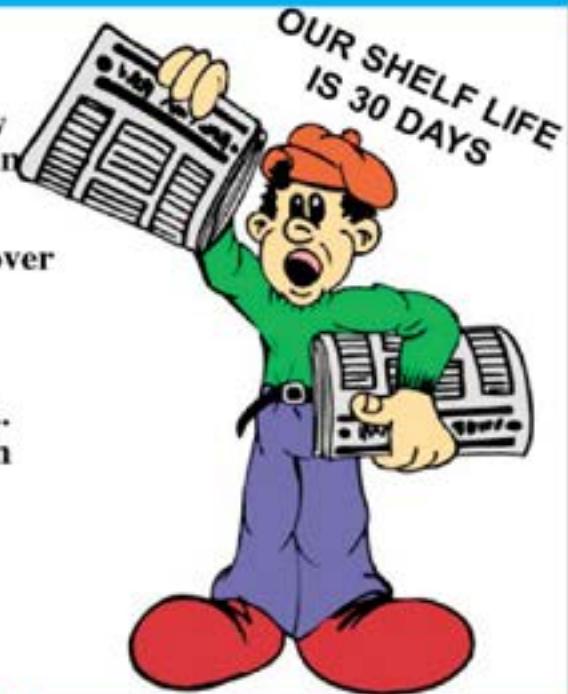
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# The Bright Side

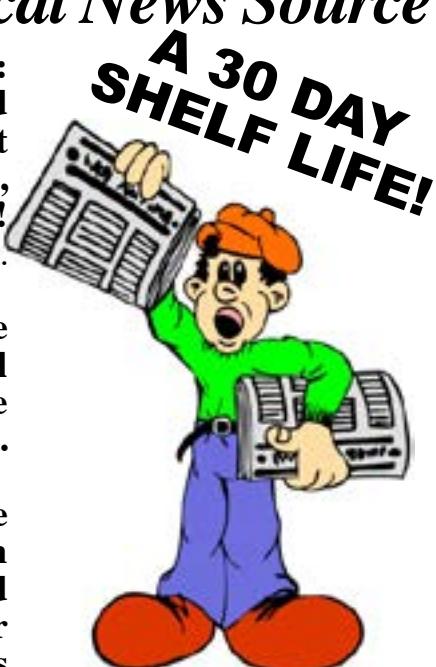
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