

# COMMUNITY NEWS

News & Events for the City of Vestavia Hills • February 2020

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

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

February 2020

- 6 **Design Review Board**, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 10 **Senior Citizens Luncheon**, Dogwood Room, 11:30 a.m.
- 10 **City Council Meeting**, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 11 **Chamber Luncheon**, Vestavia Country Club, 11:30 a.m.
- 13 **Planning and Zoning Commission**, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 17 **City Council Work Session**, Executive Conference Room, 6 p.m.
- 20 **Board of Zoning Adjustment**, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 24 **City Council Meeting**, Council Chamber, 6 p.m.
- 27 **Friends of the Library**, Library in the Forest, 10 a.m.

### City Hall

1032 Montgomery Highway, 35216  
205.978.0100 • vhal.org

### Chamber of Commerce

1975 Merryvale Road, 35216  
205.823.5011 • vestavi hills.org

### Board of Education

1204 Montgomery Highway, 35216  
205.402.5100 • vestavia.k12.al.us

### Action Center

<https://vhal.org/action-center/>



## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

*Ashley C. Curry, Vestavia Hills Mayor*

Happy New Year to everyone! We are starting a new decade in our city. It is

hard to believe that we will also be celebrating our city's 70th birthday this year. You will be hearing more about events to honor our city's past, celebrate our present quality of life, and learn more about the future for our city.

But what a year it has been as we continue to see the Infrastructure and Community Spaces Plan come to fruition. What started off as mounds of dirt being moved at Wald Park is now taking shape with ballfields, swimming pools, inclusive playgrounds and a roadway beside Vestavia Hills Elementary West. We are excited about the new Miracle League field for our special needs citizens. What used to be just ballfields behind Vestavia Hills Cahaba Heights Elementary is now becoming the Cahaba Heights Park, complete with new ballfields,

inclusive playgrounds, dog parks, enlarged parking areas and a "new" New Merkel House.

Weather permitting, the baseball fields will be ready late spring and the swimming pools ready by Memorial Day weekend. The Community Building will begin to take shape once these other projects are complete. It is exciting to watch all these renovations take place.

During this past year we implemented two programs that are firsts for the Birmingham metropolitan area. Our "Phoenix Program" was started this past July. This program affords addicted individuals the opportunity to contact our police department or any of our fire stations to seek help for their addiction without fear of being charged for possession of drugs. To date, we have had 11 people seek assistance. This far exceeds what we anticipated. It is

– *Mayor's Message continued on page 2*



## CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

*Jeff Downes, Vestavia Hills City Manager*

I hope everyone is having a happy new year! One of the tasks I enjoy at the onset of each new year

involves an evaluation of the past 12 months, focusing on successes and failures. For many years, the results of this annual review have been used by the city's governing body for strategic planning. At the risk of boring the audience that hates numbers, here I go ...

In Vestavia Hills, we have many tools to assist with the evaluation process. We have been blessed with gracious and plenty input from our residents. Two main forms of collecting this information have been the use of a "Citizen Survey," which is mailed at random to residents, as well as "Vestavia Hills Listens," a

more subjective measure. Both allow the ability to trend the direction of our city. They serve as a way-finder for the decision makers. Should we invest in one area over another? Are we moving in the right direction to continuously improve? I want to share with you a few of the high level findings that have been determined in my efforts this year. As this edition of the Community News is published, our elected leadership will be making strategic 2020 decisions based upon this information.

The first measure that I would like to celebrate is that we are blessed with superb public safety officials who create a foundation for a wonderful community. A city that is not safe cannot achieve a banner of success. The chart

– *Manager's Report continued on page 3*

## BOARD OF EDUCATION



### FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

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

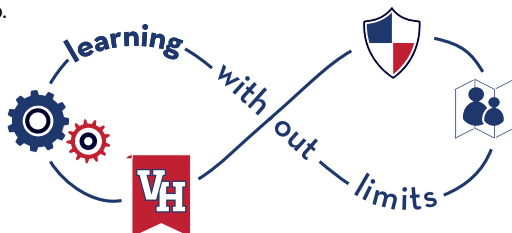
Through its almost 50 years of existence, Vestavia Hills City Schools has established a tradition of graduating students that are prepared for their college and career pursuits. The six-year college graduation rate for students from VHHS is consistently above 80%, compared to about 60% nationally. This information is particularly important given that more than 9 out of 10 of our graduates attend college.

The first goal of our district's strategic plan is to "Ensure that students learn and demonstrate a profound understanding of knowledge and skills consistent with expectations of teachers, parents, and the community, and ensure that students find value and meaning in the work provided to them." One of the measures we use to determine the success of this goal is whether students can articulate the value of what, and why, they are learning.

When I was in school, I often questioned why it was important for me to solve an equation, quote lines of a verse, or point out countries on a map. Today, I have a much deeper understanding of why we had to learn what was taught to us. I also have a greater appreciation for the importance of how to best learn. If research is clear about anything in education, it is that students learn at a profound level when they are engaged in, and find meaning in the work they are doing.

An underlying theme emerges when listening to teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, service clubs and business leaders about our first goal: the desire to broaden the learning experiences for our students by including opportunities for them to explore career pathways. Students at VHHS can take courses in health care, business, marketing, finance, architecture, construction, human services and information technology. We are considering how to broaden these pathways to align with student interest and emerging career opportunities.

VHCS is committed to ensuring that how we learn is as important as what and why we learn. Students who take career pathways courses make this connection through meaningful and engaging work. We believe these experiences add another layer of preparation for our graduates whether they pursue a college degree or go immediately into a job.



### Mayor's Message *continued from page 1*

evident that a need was there and that we are providing a service to individuals that did not know where to go for help, or who otherwise, were afraid to seek help.

The other program, which was initiated in November, is an anti-human trafficking program coordinated with the Children's Policy Council of Jefferson County, the Junior League of Birmingham and the U.S. Institute against Human Trafficking. With the passage of the Vestavia Hills proclamation on November 25, 2019, the City has committed to provide training regarding general awareness and notification procedures for City employees, businesses and concerned citizens. All the while, our police department will continue to address the criminal aspects of trafficking. In doing this, Vestavia Hills is the first city in Alabama to be designated a "TraffickingFree Zone." Vestavia Hills is acknowledging that sex trafficking is a national (and international) problem and that our city will actively pursue these perpetrators and help the victims of this modern-day slave trade.

If you are making a New Year's resolution for this year, I might suggest a resolution to volunteer some of your time or talent to the volunteer groups that contribute so much to the quality of life that we enjoy in Vestavia Hills. There are opportunities for all ages to volunteer with our seniors programs, library, schools, parks and recreation, civic clubs and churches, just to name a few.

I wish everyone a healthy, happy and prosperous new year!

Vestavia Hills City Schools Foundation  
**DINNER & DIAMONDS**  
Benefiting the Vestavia Hills City Schools Foundation

Saturday 2.22.2020  
7 to 11 PM

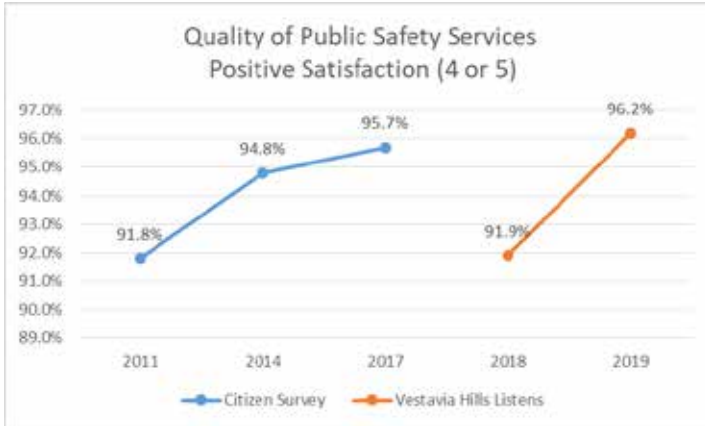
Vestavia Country Club  
400 Beaumont Drive, Vestavia Hills

Enjoy dinner, entertainment, and silent and live auctions  
Complimentary valet

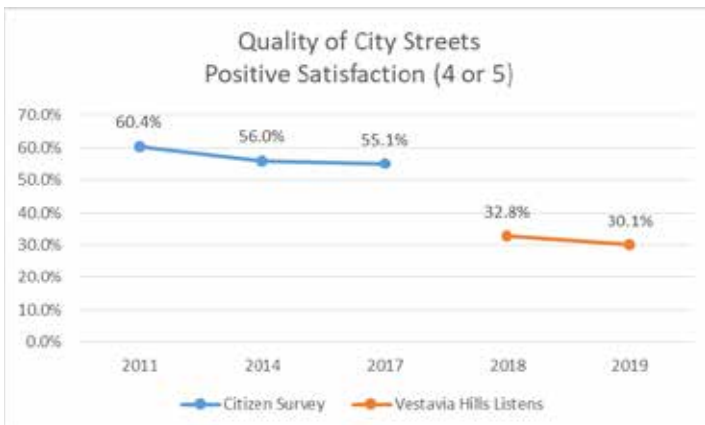
FOR TICKETS, VISIT [WWW.VESTAVIAFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.VESTAVIAFOUNDATION.ORG)

Special thanks to Liberty Park Middle School student Mallory Smith for this year's artwork.

below emphasizes that the high level of public safety satisfaction is shared by residents and, even though I never thought it could get better, the satisfaction level continues to rise. During the past year, the City Council has invested in improved benefits for our employees that should continue to attract the best and brightest. They have also made significant investments in new equipment for both Police and Fire departments. The 2020 planning efforts will further explore ways to improve response times and sustain these enviable metrics.



The next measure is one that has and will continue to be a focus of the City – improving our road infrastructure. The metrics shown below indicate a community dissatisfaction over the condition of our roads. During the last 12 months, the City has invested in paving over 20 miles of city roadways. Furthermore, the next 12 months will see significant resurfacing efforts as well. Given the fact that we have Jefferson County and ALDOT roadways within our city, we must collaborate with these entities to make great strides in the future. Projects, such as the repaving of Shades Crest Road and the widening of Massey Road and Crosshaven Drive, require collaboration with these entities and are set for significant work in 2020. Despite current dissatisfaction with road infrastructure, we hope satisfaction will greatly increase once the main roads in the City are improved and the scheduled neighborhood resurfacing is either completed or in progress over the next 12 months.



While these are just two trends, we have many more variables that we are working to sustain and, in some cases, resolve. The main purpose of this article is to let you, the valuable resident, know that we are intentionally evaluating and investing to make our community a better place in an objective manner. Our efforts are not haphazard. They represent strategic movement in a direction designed to utilize taxpayer funds by the most effective means. The last metric, I share below, is the overall satisfaction with City services and City government as a whole. I am proud that the residents, in this measure, think we are moving in the right direction. This is very reassuring to our team. We appreciate your support as efforts are made to make Vestavia Hills the best community that we can be. I hope your dreams for 2020 become reality.



## RECYCLE RIGHT

to avoid contamination

### INTER-CITY RECYCLING CHALLENGE

Vestavia Hills is competing with Homewood, Mountain Brook and Hoover to reduce contamination in our recyclables! **For info on how YOU can help Vestavia Hills come out on top, visit <https://vhal.org/inter-city-recycling-challenge>.**



## SENIOR SERVICES NEWS

Hello! My name is Sandi Wilson and I am the new Senior Services Superintendent. I am very excited about the opportunities on the horizon for the City of Vestavia Hills, but most importantly for the Parks and Recreation department and our senior adult community! I would love to meet each of you and hear your ideas for senior activities, events, trips and classes so that together, we can make it happen! I truly believe that Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM) and I cannot wait to see what 2020 has in store for us all!

Mark your calendar for a "Meet & Greet" at the Vestavia Hills Civic Center on February 20, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. until noon. This will be a great time to get to know each other, share ideas and discuss our Vision 2020! In addition to light refreshments and fellowship, guest speakers will share the latest update on the Community Building, New Merkel House, etc. Hope to see you there!

## NEW MERKEL HOUSE

**Monthly nutritional education, events and guest speakers; Games EVERYDAY!**

**Monday-Friday:** Fun, Fellowship & Lunch (served at 11:45 a.m.)

**Tuesday:** Tai Chi & Table Games, 12:30 p.m.

**Wednesday:** Students from VHECH visit New Merkel House for "Getting to Know You" lunches

**Thursday:** Tech Talk Thursdays

**February 11:** Tuesday Art with Tina Chaffin

**February 14:** Valentine's Day Celebration

More information, including the **full calendar of Senior Programming activities**, can be found on the City website at <https://vhal.org/community/senior-living/> or by contacting Melanie Perry at 205.967.5977.



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## CHAMBER NEWS

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

Happy New Year from the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce! We have a lot of new businesses opening this year. Be sure to visit the Community Calendar on our website at [www.vestaviiahills.org](http://www.vestaviiahills.org) and join us at the Ribbon Cuttings for these new businesses. It's a great way to meet the business owners and welcome them to our community, as well as an opportunity for businesses to meet our residents. Some of the businesses opening in January and February include Swaid Vestavia Medical Center & Surgical Institute, Pigtails and Crewcuts, Ardent Preschool and Day Care of Patchwork Farms and Longleaf Liberty Park. Be sure to welcome these new businesses to our community!

Stories for the 2020 "Vestavia Hills Living" will be finalized within the next few weeks. If you have an idea for an interesting story that you would like to have considered, please send it to me at [kareno@vestaviiahills.org](mailto:kareno@vestaviiahills.org) along with your contact information.

Please join me in thanking the following Chamber members for their commitment and contributions to the Vestavia Hills Chamber as well as the Vestavia Hills community:

- **Board Member of the Year:** Taylor Burton, Taylor Burton Co., Inc.
- **Dr. Charles A. "Scotty" McCallum Leadership Award:** James Robinson, Spire
- **Ambassador of the Year:** Kayla Alexander, America's First Federal Credit Union
- **Member of the Year:** Vestavia Hills High School
- **Volunteer of the Year:** Larry Gibson, Art Teacher – Pizitz Middle School
- **Chair's Choice:** Jeff Florio, Old Oak Advisors, LLC
- **President's Choice:** Alan Stabler, America's First Federal Credit Union

In addition to the individuals above, please join me in recognizing **Donatos Pizza as our 2019 Business of the Year – Retail**. Owner Robert Sullivan is an incredible asset to our business community and Donatos Pizza stands out for many reasons, but their sense of community and dedication to the City of Vestavia Hills, along with absolutely delicious food, make this local pizza shop such a staple in our community. It's the numerous youth sports teams that Donatos and Sullivan have sponsored over the years, his partnership with the school system and his involvement in community events, such as Community Night Out, that were considered when choosing Donatos for this award.

We also want to recognize **Philadelphia Baptist Church as our 2019 Business of the Year – Service**. Philadelphia Baptist Church has done so many wonderful things to serve the Vestavia Hills community, and strives to make service a key part of their overall mission. Pastor Cory Varden serves as a great example of dedication to service, currently serving bi-vocationally, also working as a project manager for a local construction company. Specifically, Philadelphia Baptist Church helped the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce serve our community by generously hosting this year's Back 2 School in the Hills event. With our usual event location under construction, Philadelphia Baptist Church offered their newly renovated space for the annual community event.

Thank you all for being such a vital part of Vestavia Hills!

It is gratifying to have businesses helping others make Vestavia Hills a great place to have a business! Our doors are always open at the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce. Feel free to drop by and see us or email us thoughts or ideas you may have as we work together for "A Life Above."



## ARBOR WEEK, FEBRUARY 23-29

Arbor Day is an annual observance that celebrates the role of trees in our lives and promotes tree planting and care. The City of Vestavia Hills is renewing our efforts to promote the value of trees and we have a longstanding record of caring for trees in our landscape. As such, we encourage you to plant a tree during Alabama's Arbor Week, February 23-29, 2020.

**The best time to plant is during the winter, while trees are dormant.** Call 811 to check for utilities before planting, and please do not plant in rights-of-way or easements without first consulting the City. Residents are encouraged to consider both good planting technique and appropriate selection of tree type for the site when planting. For more information, visit <https://www.arborday.org>.

## CAPTAIN DRAKE AWARD

Battalion Chief Christian Elliott, the Training Officer for the Vestavia Hills Fire Department, was recently awarded the Captain Drake Award by the Alabama Firefighters Association. This award is presented to a training officer who exemplifies and provides dedication to the fire service and training of its personnel. Chief Elliott was nominated for his exemplary work improving the training division of the department in the short time he has held the position.



Chief Elliott has been a member of the Vestavia Hills Fire Department since 2002. He is highly respected among his peers in the department, as well as his peers from neighboring departments, and was recently named as the training coordinator for the Central Alabama Fire Chiefs Association.

This award is special to the VHFD because it was Captain John Drake that trained Vestavia Hill's original 12 volunteer members back in 1951. Chief Elliot is the first Drake award winner for the City of Vestavia Hills. Congratulations Chief Elliott!



Save the Date!

Casino Royale  
Saturday, March 7, 2020  
at the Library in the Forest

For more information or to buy tickets,  
visit [vhlibraryfoundation.org](http://vhlibraryfoundation.org).



FOUNDATION  
VESTAVIA HILLS  
LIBRARY IN THE FOREST

# LIBRARY IN THE FOREST

Full descriptions, including location and online registration, are available on the Library in the Forest website at [www.vestavialibrary.org](http://www.vestavialibrary.org).

## CHILDREN & TWEENS:

205.978.0158 (*Children: Birth-Grade 2;*  
*Tweens: Grades 3-5*)

- 1 Ms. Casey's Marvelous Music & Movement, 10:30am
- 3 Toddler A-Go-Go, 10:30am
- 4 Pick Up STEAM: Lights & Shadows, 3:30pm
- 5 Story Friends, 10:30am
- 5 12 Below: Hangout at the Hills, 3:30pm
- 6 L.I.F.T., 9:30am
- 6 Book Babies, 10am
- 8 Library Stop, 10:30am
- 10 Toddler A-Go-Go, 9:30 & 10:30am
- 11 Pick Up STEAM: All About Hearts, 3:30pm
- 12 Story Friends, 10:30am
- 12 12 Below: Tween Valentine's Day Party, 3:30pm
- 13 L.I.F.T., 9:30am
- 13 Book Babies, 10am
- 14 Make Valentines, All Day
- 15 Ms. Casey's Marvelous Music & Movement, 10:30am
- 17 Toddler A-Go-Go, 9:30 & 10:30am
- 18 Pick Up STEAM: Weights & Measurements, 3:30pm
- 19 Story Friends, 10:30am
- 19 12 Below: Game Changer, 3:30pm
- 20 L.I.F.T., 9:30am
- 20 Book Babies, 10am
- 21 Harry Potter Horcrux Hunt, 6:30pm
- 22 Lego Wars, 11am
- 24 Toddler A-Go-Go, 9:30 & 10:30am
- 25 Pick Up STEAM: Challenge, 3:30pm
- 26 Story Friends, 10:30am
- 26 12 Below: Minute to Win It, 3:30pm
- 27 L.I.F.T., 9:30am
- 27 Book Babies, 10am
- 29 Library Stop, 10:30am

## TECHNOLOGY: 205.978.4679

- 5 Intermediate Microsoft Word, 4pm
- 11 Apple Mobile Devices, 2pm
- 13 Windows 10, 4pm
- 17 Intermediate Excel Part I, 4pm
- 24 GIMP: The Free Photoshop, 5pm

## TEENS: 205.978.3683 (Grades 6-12)

- 4 Cookie Wars, 4pm
- 5 Writing Group, 4pm
- 7 Open Gaming, 4pm
- 11 Love is in the Air, 4pm
- 12 Tabletop Gaming Group, 4pm
- 14 Open Gaming, 4pm
- 18 Pocket Size Pixel Art, 4pm
- 19 Writing Group, 4pm
- 21 Open Gaming, 4pm
- 25 Anime Night, 4pm
- 26 Teen Art Group, 4pm
- 28 Mario Kart 8 Tournament, 4pm
- 29 Dungeons & Dragons, 9:30am

## MAKERSPACE: 205.978.3683

(All ages, unless otherwise noted)

- 1 Open Maker Lab, 1-5pm
- 1 Paper Marbling, 2pm
- 3 Intro to 3D Printing, 4:30pm
- 6 Open Maker Lab, 3:30-7:30pm
- 11 Teardown Tuesday, 4:30pm
- 13 Open Maker Lab, 3:30-7:30pm
- 17 Vinyl Cutting 101, 4:30pm
- 20 Open Maker Lab, 3:30-7:30pm
- 22 Open Maker Lab, 1-5pm
- 25 Type-In, 3:30pm
- 27 Open Maker Lab, 3:30-7:30pm
- 29 Open Maker Lab, 1-5pm

## ADULTS: 205.978.4678 (Ages 18+)

- 3 Knit Night in the Forest, 6pm
- 4 Eighth of March Book Group, 6pm
- 5 Makerspace for Adults: Sweetheart Wreath, 6:30pm
- 6 Read & Feed Book Group, 6:30pm
- 7 First Friday Fiber Arts, 10am
- 7 Upcycle City: Watercolor Hearts, 7pm
- 11 Zumba for Beginners, 6:30pm
- 12 ABCs of Medicare, 1pm
- 19 Grown-Up Gaming: Tabletop Game Night, 5:30pm
- 20 OLLI Presents: The Peace Corps in Our 50s, 1:30pm
- 25 Zumba for Beginners, 6:30pm
- 27 Friends of the Library: Author Debra Goldstein, 10am

## HARRY POTTER HORCRUX HUNT

The Library in the Forest will be transformed into the Ministry of Magic where kids can report for Auror



training! Perform tests to determine your magical talents, select a wand and search for the hidden horcruxes and magical items.

Grades 2-6. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR THIS EVENT!**

Only 75 Auror applicants will be admitted. Registration opens February 10, 2020. To register (on or after February 10), call 205.978.0158.



City of Vestavia Hills  
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[fa.ml.com/dwt](http://fa.ml.com/dwt)



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