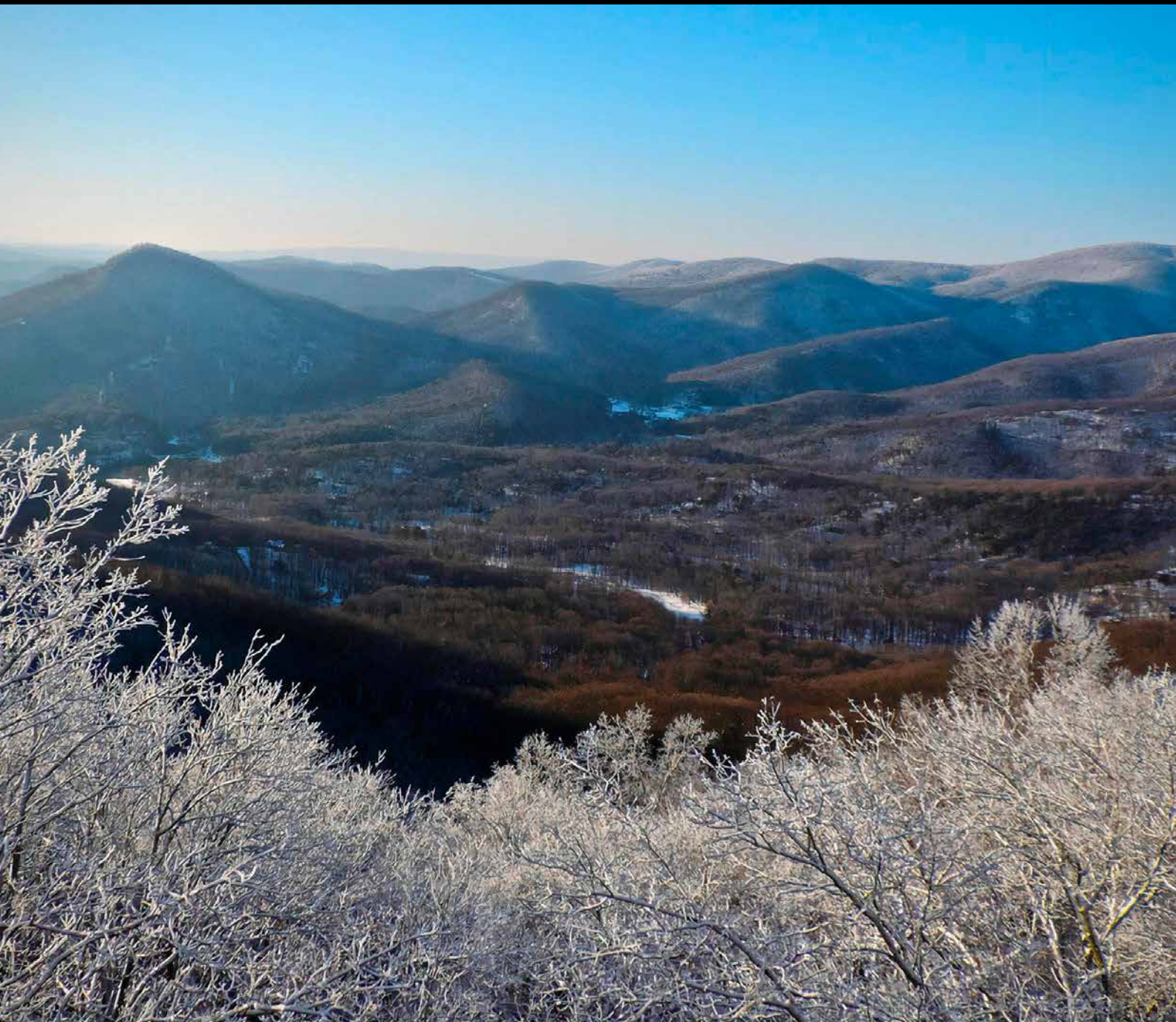


*Bent Tree* the **echo** January 2024





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## About

## DR. MICHELLE F. IRELAND



For over 20 years, Dr. Michelle F. Ireland has perfected the smiles of thousands of patients. Dr. Ireland graduated with her Doctorate of Medicine in Dentistry (D.M.D.) from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) in 1994 and became licensed to practice as a general dentist. Upon graduation, she completed additional educational requirements and specialized training at the UAB School of Dentistry to become a prosthodontist.

Dr. Ireland has served as a professor at UAB School of Dentistry in the Department of Prosthodontics, where she enjoyed teaching crown and bridge prosthodontics and

removable prosthodontics with an emphasis on esthetics, occlusion, and implant restoration.

Over the years, Dr. Ireland has counseled former students, general dentists and their patients, and continues to receive extensive training in the field of dentistry and prosthodontics. Dr. Ireland has built a reputation as a caring, compassionate, and competent dental practitioner. Her additional expertise is a blessing and is evident in the way patients are accepting of her recommendations.





# Happy New Year

By Buddy Creef, President, Board of Directors

Happy New Year to all of us who are lucky enough to live in this beautiful mountain community and enjoy the many amenities it provides. We are truly blessed and should be thankful for all that we have.

At the same time, I'm sure that none of us is thankful that assessments have been raised by 5.36% and AGUF has gone up \$100 per year. But the stark reality is that Bent Tree has near and long-term capital needs that are currently underfunded and we need to find a way to change that.

In 2023 we were able to make some headway. We changed our banking relationships so that we earn more interest, the lease on the cell tower was modified to provide more rent over the next few years, and you, the community, authorized a CC&R change that allowed us to implement the Capital Contribution Fee. We believe that these changes will add about \$200,000 in revenue in 2024. \$200,000 that does not come from us.

These changes help with the problem but, as was stated over and over in 2023, there is no silver bullet. There is no one fix that will provide all the funds we need to pave roads and maintain our infrastructure. We need to explore multiple ways of finding additional revenue and of reducing expenses. A major goal of the board in 2024 will be to find ways to do exactly that to provide more funding for our capital needs.

We will be examining all the possibilities that we can imagine, and we ask you to imagine with us. We intend to involve you in the process so we will be setting up Ad Hoc Committees and/or Think Tanks to explore possibilities. Many of you will be asked to participate in these groups. Additionally, we intend to have Town Hall meetings to explore opportunities and changes. We need your involvement. Please participate.

If you have comments or suggestions, or if you just want to get involved, please feel contact any board member, email us at [boardcomments@bent-tree.com](mailto:boardcomments@bent-tree.com), or contact me at [buddycreef@bent-tree.com](mailto:buddycreef@bent-tree.com) or 713/623-3444.

Bent Tree is a unique and uniquely beautiful community. Part of the beauty is from nature but much of it comes from the people who live here. We need to ensure that this special place remains so for another 50 years. The 2024 board intends to keep that goal in focus and build toward it.

# Transponder Updates 2024

By Michael Koorey, Director of Safety and Emergency Management

It's time to begin renewing transponders for 2024. Because of the major audit completed in 2023, the process for 2024 renewal will be much simpler. Below is everything you need to know. Renewal Information

Make sure you know all the vehicles with transponders that should be on your account. This includes vehicles belonging to "preferred guests" such as family or friends who do not live here. You do not need to know your license plate or transponder numbers. The only exception to that is if you obtained a new license plate on one of your vehicles during 2023. In that case, we will need to know the updated license plate number and which vehicle it goes with.

## Action Required

Call Public Safety at 770-893-2628 or come to the gate to review your account any day between the hours of 7:00AM – 6:00PM. This call or meeting should only take a few minutes. We will simply go through what is listed on your account and verify there are no vehicles listed that should not be. This must be done, even if your vehicles have not changed. Advise the officer you speak with if there are any extra vehicles that you do not wish to be renewed for 2024. These may belong to "preferred guests" who are no longer valid. We will also ask which two vehicles you consider to be the primary ones included with your annual fees and advise how much is due for transponders not covered by them. Any amount due can be paid at your convenience prior to transponders expiring on 3/1/2024.

## Fees

The fee for transponders in 2024 is still \$35 per vehicle. This can be paid with cash or check at the Front Gate or credit card at Admin. Owners of improved lots (house on property) and Designated Members get two transponders included with their annual fees. Owners of unimproved lots (no house) must pay for each transponder unless they have an upgraded membership. Residents who pay for additional transponders at Admin will need to provide a receipt to Public Safety and ensure we know which vehicles were paid for.

Residents with questions or the need for any special assistance should contact Director Michael Koorey via email at [michaelkoorey@bent-tree.com](mailto:michaelkoorey@bent-tree.com) or phone at 770-893-2628.



**CONTACT US TODAY - 770-623-6220 - [info@frontporchatlanta.com](mailto:info@frontporchatlanta.com)**

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The contents of this newsletter are provided for the members of the **Bent Tree** neighborhood as a courtesy only. No representations are made as to information presented, the quality of the goods or services advertised, or the veracity of the statements relating to the goods and services. The printing of opinions, information or advertisements does not constitute an endorsement by the neighborhood of such opinions, information, goods or services.

# THE ARTS COUNCIL 2024



**Saturday, Feb 10**

Valentines Dance Party

**Saturday, March 23**

Medieval Banquet

**Sunday, April 14**

Poetry Slam

**Friday, May 3**

Cinco DeMayo Latin Dance Party

**Friday, Aug 2**

Summer Dance Party - 60's and 70's

**Fri/Sat Aug 9 and 10**

Dinner Theatre

"The Art of Dining"

## Public Safety Stats from 11/1/23 – 11/30/23

By Michael Koorey - Director,  
Trevor Beavers - Fire Chief,  
John Hawkins - Assistant Fire Chief

### Call Responses

Fire	25
Medical	25
Resident Complaints	2
Resident Assists	12
Property/Resident Checks	5
Animal Calls	16
Public Safety Calls	35
Total	120
2023 Total	1,210

### Patrol Mileage

Total Patrol Mileage (11/1 – 11/30)	1,621
2023 Total	23,087

### Citations

Written Citations	12
Warnings	15
Total (11/1 – 11/30)	27

40 Little Pine Mountain Road Jasper, GA 30143  
770-893-2628 • [publicsafety@bent-tree.com](mailto:publicsafety@bent-tree.com)



## Employee Birthdays

Donald Arp	1/03	Public Safety
Kendall Wilkins	1/06	The Tavern
David Lowery	1/25	Grounds Maintenance
Peyton Bush	1/27	The Tavern
Daniel Childers	1/30	Public Safety

## We Want You...

- ... to email us short stories, interviews, poetry, and articles of general interest to our residents.
- ... to tell us what articles you would like to see.
- ... to share with us some of your amazing Bent Tree related images.

### Thanks.

### echo Editorial Committee

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#### 2023 Bent Tree Board of Directors

Board President – Glen Harris  
Vice President – Tom Robinson  
Secretary – Mark Christensen  
Treasurer – Arty Allen  
Gary Pyott  
Buddy Creef  
Michael Kahn  
Ralph Morse  
David Stone

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#### Editorial Committee Members

Taree Darby – Editor/Marketing and Communications Manager  
Verna Jones  
Carol Kopetski  
Jean Bogas  
Peggy Simmons

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Contact the Editor of the echo at  
[btecho@etcmail.com](mailto:btecho@etcmail.com)

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#### GPS Directions to Bent Tree

Please give your visitors the following address (1 Little Pine Mountain Rd, Jasper, GA) to gain access into the front gate on Bent Tree Drive, which will alleviate GPS systems from sending them to the back gate off Grandview Rd.



### On the cover...

The cover image was submitted by Sheila Thompson.

### echo Submission Policy

The following describes the policy guidelines regarding articles/photos/graphics submitted for publication in the *echo*. Submissions which do not adhere to these guidelines may, at the sole discretion of the Editor be returned to the submitter or omitted from publication.

### echo Deadline Date

Submissions are due to the Editor at [btecho@etcmail.com](mailto:btecho@etcmail.com) by 4 p.m. on or before the seventh of each month prior to the publication month. Submissions sent to any other email address will not be considered.

### Articles

All articles must be submitted via email, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced in MS Word (or similar) format. Please use built-in double spacing options instead of typing extra returns at the end of each line. We have to go through and manually remove them. Any article received not double spaced will be returned to submitter for correction. All articles must include the author's name. A contact phone number must be included in the email.

### Photos

Do not send embedded photos. Submissions including embedded photos will be returned to the submitter for correction. Most modern equipment has settings you can adjust in the image quality menu to medium or high size. We suggest you set your camera to the highest image quality setting. Note that photos that are attractive online may not be of high enough quality for print. If a photo is not of adequate size for print, it will be omitted. Include with your photo a suggested caption including names of any people in the photo, left to right. Use of stock photography is discouraged, except where it is the only option available. It is the sole responsibility of the submitter to obtain any photo release(s) which may be required.

### Photo Locations

When wanting a photo to appear in a specific location of an article, merely write insert 'golfeventpic JDoe 1 here' with appropriately named photo. See Naming Files section.

### Naming Files

Multiple files included in a single submission should have corresponding filenames. For example, photos submitted with the article should be named in the following manner - (Name of photo to match title of article, capitalized first letter of first name, followed by capitalized first letter of last name, with the remainder of the last name of the photographer, followed by number of photo.) For example, an article named golfevent.doc that has two accompanying photos would be named golfeventpic JDoe1.jpg, golfeventpic JDoe2.jpg

### Captions

Captions should be written at the bottom of the article and should reference their corresponding photos. For example, golfeventpic JDoe 1 - John Doe at a tournament.

### Accuracy

It is the sole responsibility of the author to ensure accuracy of all information included in any article or event promotional material submitted for publication in the *echo*. Articles shall reflect correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Any submission with other than a minor amount of correction required may, at the sole discretion of the Editor be rejected.

### Letters to the Editor

The current policy of the Board of Directors is that we do not include Letters to the Editor in the *echo*.

### Political Articles

The current policy of the Board of Directors is that we do not include political articles in the *echo*.

### Space

In consideration that there may be space constraints and the publisher is not able to include all submitted articles/photos/graphics, organizations submitting multiple items for publication should inform the Editor of their preferred priority. If no priority is provided, selection of items to be omitted will be at the sole discretion of the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to condense lengthy articles or to omit pictures as necessary to manage available space.

# 2023 in Review

By Jim Pryor, General Manager

In January 2023, I was honored to be named the new General Manager at Bent Tree. I eagerly accepted the challenge to learn as much about the community as quickly as possible, get acquainted with staff and the Board of Directors and start putting some initiatives in place. I received a tremendous welcome from the community from the start and that has made my experience here very rewarding.

Within 2 months I was able to present an operational assessment to the Board of Directors which looked for efficiencies within the operation. It did not take long to realize that our most valuable resource was our staff, and we have a great core of them. The assessment launched a slight reorganization which streamlined our operation into 4 departments (Administration, Public Safety, Community Services and Operations) and 4 Directors were assigned to lead these areas. The reorganization also designated a vacant position to become a Marketing & Communications Manager. This position was intended to focus on communications internally and externally as well as branding the community to market for real estate, designated memberships, and spotlight our amenities. The major impact of the reorganization was dividing Grounds Maintenance, Facilities Maintenance, and Roadways Maintenance into their own divisions (it was previously bundled into one unit). Each division has their own team, initiatives, budget, and focus on improvements to our infrastructure. With our great staff, the reorganization materialized very quickly, efficiently and in my opinion immediately improved our operations.

I believe the major initiative of the year was creating a Community Vision process which kicked off with a needs assessment survey sent to every property/household stakeholder in Bent Tree. The vision survey generated a 49% response rate and provided some excellent data for future planning, operation, and capital improvement. With the survey complete, an ad hoc committee has been created to review the data in depth and create a Strategic Community Vision Plan, which will be presented to the community and Board of Directors on January 16, 2024 at the Board of Directors Work Session.

2023 has seen the execution of many capital improvement projects that have been in formation for years.

- Thanks to the incredible bequeath from Bob & Barbara Foley to the Bent Tree Foundation, the golf course has received expansion of the driving range, a new chipping practice area and a clock tower to commemorate the generous gift.
- A paving project was completed to encompass the widening/milling/patching/paving/stripping of 2.5 miles of roads within the community, improving some of the worst condition rated roads from the 2021 engineer study.
- A trash rack was designed and successfully installed over the sluice gate of the dam at a depth of 84'. This allowed us to meet the GADNR dam requirement of opening/closing the dam which allows us to better control water levels of Lake Tamarack. This gate had not been opened for 25 years previously.

- A project is now underway to make ADA improvements to the 19th Hole building at the golf course. These improvements will allow safer ingress/egress to the Golf Shop and The Tavern.
- After dealing with substantial leaking of our swimming pools, American Leak Detection completed a complete review of both pools and were able to find the source of the leaks. Both pools were repaired and fared very well in 2023. The pump for the upper pool was replaced after 25 years of operation.
- Our water utilities crews have engaged in a project over the last several years to locate and replace the existing water lines which have been in use for over 50 years. This is a project that we handle internally with our staff to keep the cost of the project very efficient.
- Our Golf Course Maintenance crew teamed with our Grounds Division crew completed turf and fencing repairs at the Dog Park, improving its appearance and function.

Mother nature provided many events in 2023 with heavy rainstorms causing extensive tree fall and power outages. Amicalola EMC has been a constant visitor to our community repairing power lines. On July 20, 2023, we experienced a large storm which resulted in 2 tornados touching down causing extensive damage. The Bent Tree Emergency Management team sprang into action immediately communicating with residents, clearing roads, expediting areas of concern to AEMC, and supplying water tanks to full capacity. With community support and volunteers, we overcame this event. The cleanup has ultimately taken a while, but our team worked very hard to try to restore Bent Tree back to normal as quickly as possible. It was a tremendous response from everyone to overcome a large emergency event.

There were 3 other big accomplishments in 2023 that will have big effects on our community in the future. First, we reached a buyout agreement on the existing AT&T cell tower on the top of Hendricks Mountain. The sale of this easement will amass \$250,000 in revenue to our community over the next 10 years. Next, through a great vision of our Board and community, the Capital Contribution Fee model passed and will start on January 1, 2024. This will create a revenue stream from home sales in Bent Tree dedicated to improving our Road infrastructure. Finally, I would like to applaud our Safety & Emergency Management Director Michel Koorey for his involvement in getting Bent Tree involved as a Wildcat Community. Being a large part of this organization is going to bring us a large Federal grant worth several millions of dollars towards making our community Firewise, or practices limiting our risk of fire. Almost 75% of our homeowners have signed up to be part of this program.

I believe 2023 was a very productive year for BCTI, our staff, our Board of Directors, and our active community members which made all of the accomplishments mentioned possible. This has only set the table for 2024 to be great as well.

As your General Manager representing our team of BCTI employees, our goal is to make Bent Tree Community a better place today than it was yesterday.



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# Tennis Spotlight–Getting to know your neighbors... an interview with Daniel Fitts

By Bob Coleman

**Q. Where were you born, and when?**

A. Jasper GA. April 1st 1953.

**Q. How many different places have you live?**

A. 10

**Q. Did you attend college?**

A. No college, I attended Pickens Tech, where I studied commercial electrical wiring, and received a license in HVAC.

**Q. How did you and your wife meet?**

A. I met my wife at Pickens Middle School. I was servicing an account with Pepsi Cola there and we just struck up a conversation. I asked her out and here we are.

**Q. How did you wind up in Bent Tree?**

A. I had retired from Pepsi Cola after 25 years of service. The tennis center was in need of assistance. I loved playing tennis and was blessed to be hired on staff. I just celebrated my 8-year anniversary with BT. I thoroughly enjoy playing tennis as I have been playing now for over 30 years. I also enjoy maintaining our great facility here for our members and guest.

**Q. What was your favorite subject in school?**

A. US History

**Q. Who was your childhood best friend?**

A. Mike Wofford. He actually traveled (by Greyhound bus) with me once to Greenwood SC to attend a tryout camp for the Atlanta Braves single A team. After 3 days I was released. I had been invited to attend the tryout by a scout who was attending a game we played against Roswell High School, where I had gotten several hits. Roswell went on to win the State Championship that year.

**Q. What's your favorite food?**

A. Crab cakes

**Q. What's the craziest thing you've ever done?**

A. A friend and I accidentally set the woods on fire. The fire grew out of hand, and the Pickens County Forestry Service had to intervene to extinguish the fire. I was very surprised and grateful we did not get into more trouble with that fiasco.

**Q. Is there something people would be absolutely surprised to learn about you?**

A. I love Sci-Fi movies.

**Q. Have any other hobbies?**

A. I enjoy fishing also. I love taking my granddaughter fishing here at Lake Tamarack. I may have caught the biggest fish, but Lilly has certainly caught more fish than I.

**Q. What is your favorite genre of music?**

A. I really enjoy the late 60's, early 70's Rock.

**Q. Do you have a favorite song?**

A. "One way out" Allman Brothers

**Q. What's the last book you've read?**

A. "Barlow", by Hank Hollensbee

**Q. Can you describe your perfect day?**

A. Waking up by my wife Estelle, of 20 years, spending time with my kids and grandkids.

Thanks to Daniel for sharing a small portion of his story. Daniel takes great pride in our Tennis facility here in Bent Tree. He is a great asset to our community. Please come by and meet him for yourself and you'll agree. Consider sharing your story also. All of our lives are impactful, to someone. That "someone" you may never meet, but be assured, the impact is there. So please be willing to share. Hope to see you at the Courts at Bent tree in 2024.





# Pickleball Happenings

by Bob Coleman

Pickleball continues to gain momentum here in Bent Tree, as well as many other areas. While some feel very excited and passionate regarding this growth, not everyone shares this same enthusiasm for the sport. Some feel the sport itself is too loud, and the players themselves can be a bit rowdy at times. There is a lot of whooping, hollering, and laughing on the pickleball courts. Many times, there's even music being played during games. All this noise can become very distracting for tennis players who may be playing on nearby, or maybe even adjacent courts. (Pickleball has had a similar impact on tennis as "Happy Gilmore" or maybe even the 16th hole at TPC Scottsdale has had on Golf). There is no doubt that the equipment used for pickleball is much louder than that used in tennis. USA Pickleball is devoted to addressing this sound challenge by partnering with manufacturers of paddles, ball, and court surfaces to design products that reduce the noise made while playing. While progress is being made with sound mitigation, there is still much to do in this endeavor. In addition, players can also assist with noise reduction by keeping the celebrations a little quieter when other "non picklers" are playing nearby. Always pay attention to never interrupt a game or match by crossing a court while play is underway. Be patient and wait for a break in the action to pass through/over. Consideration goes a long way to mend fences. Our goal is to attract new players and continue to grow our pickleball community. The social and health benefits offered through pickleball is something anyone can benefit from through participation. Please consider attending one of our beginner classes to see for yourself how easy it can be to learn how to play. Again, pickleball is "easy" to learn, "hard" to master. As we age, we need to be challenged to keep us sharp, and at our best. Let pickleball be one of your challenges for this upcoming new year. I'd be honored to help with that. Be on the lookout for our socials, round robins, and tournaments and make it a priority to attend. We'd love for you to join our pickleball, and tennis community.



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# From the Golf Pro

By Patrick Higgins

November was a busy month here at the golf course. We had close to 1,200 rounds played, aided by the beautiful warm weather stretch that lasted well into the fall. Black Friday welcomed the 1st Annual Black Friday Costume Tournament where we also had a Balloon Sale in the golf shop and saw some very interesting characters show up, not much different than a regular day at the office! Thank you to all who participated and made it a joyous occasion.



The 2024 schedule is almost complete. Please download a copy for your convenience. This schedule may change but I will keep you all notified of any additions or changes as they arise over the course of 2024.

The LGA had their Christmas Party at the Tavern on Dec 5th. If you want to be entertained before the Holidays, this is a sure-fire way to get a good belly laugh! The food, fellowship & games were all entertaining to say the least and the tears were rolling from so much laughter. The challenge is now up to the men to produce....



Looking forward to having you all down at the club soon, feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.





# 2024 Bent Tree Golf Schedule

## January

13 (Sat) Bent Tree Icebreaker Tournament 10:30am Shotgun

## February

10 (Sat) Bent Tree Yellow Tee tournament 10:30am Shotgun

12-13 (Mon-Tu) Aerification

## March

16 (Sat) MGA Opening Day "Maverick" breakfa meeting 9am

20 (Mon) Pickens Chamber "snowball" Outing 10:30am Shotgun

## April

1 (Mon) NE GA Seniors 9am Shotgun

13 (Sat) MGA 1 Day Member/Mem 9am Shotgun

18 (Thu) Larry Reuter-Lo back open 1pm Shotgun

25 (Thu) Robin Dunn Cares Tournament 11am Shotgun

27-28 (Sat-Sun) Bent Tree "Rick Abbott" Net Championship -  
points. T-Times

## May

4-5 (Sat-Sun) MGA 2-Day Mem/Mem 9am Shotgun

12 (Sun) Mother's Day

15 (Wed) Optimi Tourney Outing 1pm Shotgun

20 (Mon) River North Ladies

## June

11 (Tu) Bent Tree Ladies Invitational

16 (Sun) Father's Day

20-22 (Thu-Sat) MGA Member/Guest Tournament

## July

1st- 5 (Mon-Fri) Bent Tree Youth Fest 8-11am

20 (Sat) MGA Red/White/Blue Tournament 9am Shotgun

## August

5 (Mon) GSGA Member Play Day 10:00 am Shotgun

17-18 (Sat-Sun) MGA 9am Shotgun

24 (Sat) Bent Tree Foundation Animal Center Fundraiser  
9am Shotgun

## September

5-7 (Thu-Sat) Hirschy/Smith Group 10am-10:30am

10-12 (Tu-Thu) LGA 18 - 9-Hole Club Championship

11 (Wed) Rotary Outing 10:30am

14-15 (Sat-Sun) Bent Tree Club Championship-Gross

16- 17 (Tu-Wed) Greens Aerification

## October

11-13 (Fri-Sat) MGA Collegiate Classic 9am Shotgun

22 (Tu) Joy House Fundraiser 1:30pm

## November

2 (Sat) MGA Final 6's-Shootout 9am

# A Word From the Men's Golf Association

by El Presidente Bill Fickes and Grumpy Old Chuck

Greetings, from border to border and coast to coast and all the ships at sea, let's go to press.

Congrats to the winners of the last MGA tournament of 2023. The Mixed Format was won by David Tobin, Tim Lester, Wayne Bunker and Dino Colston.

2023 was the inaugural "yearlong" quest for the coveted "Foley Cup" and the winner was none other than Jay Biddle pictured with your outgoing President. Congrats Jay!

A great big thank you to Ken Baxley, Butch Goldi, Bob Rizzuto and Rick Santia for their dedicated service to the MGA board! New officers were elected on November 4th for the 2024 season. It will be lead by Ken Baxley (President), Ron Hunter (VP), Bill Duncan (Secretary), Chuck Davis (Treasurer) and Brian Feehan (Golf & Greens). Thank you in advance to you fine fellas!

Thank you to Patrick Higgins and his staff for managing our sometimes-complicated tournament needs. And how about John Leach and his staff! Thank you for making Bent Tree golf the best place to play and have fun - "Period" (you know, like the PXG commercial). Also, we can't forget to thank Bent Tree Food & Beverage for providing us with what we needed throughout the year!

If your phone doesn't ring, you'll know it's me!



Mixed Format Winners 2023



# Bent Tree Ladies 18 Holers News

By Lyn Orletsky

The golf season may be over, but celebrations continue with the Ladies 18-hole Christmas Party!

Friendship, laughs, and joy were spread at this annual December luncheon with competitions in corn hole and putting. Instead of singing Christmas carols, Carole Falgren, a former children's choir director, gave each member a square of wax paper and a comb, and everyone hummed the tunes through their "kazoos", filling the Tavern with jolly sounds of folly. The final activity was the left-right sock exchange, which even Patrick participated in. What a sport.

May friendships continue to flourish throughout the holiday season and into the New Year!

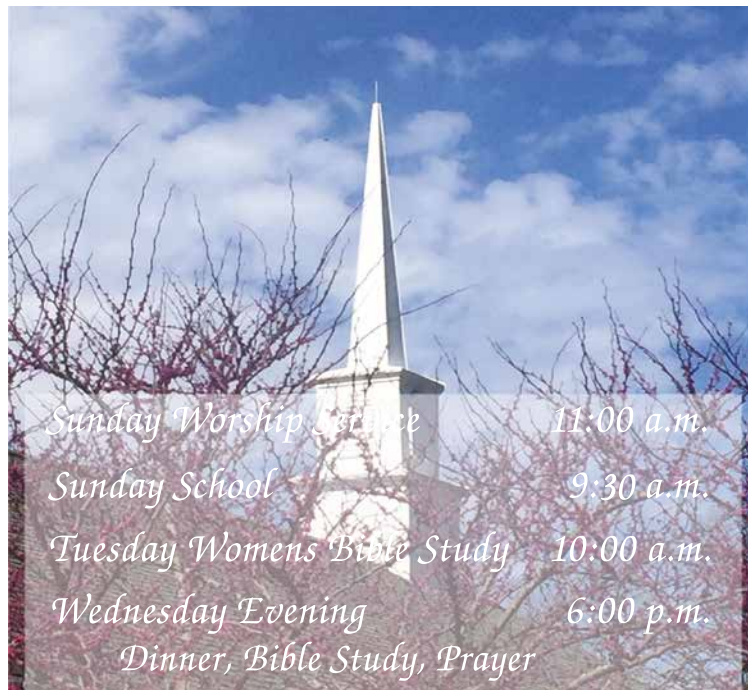






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Wednesday Evening 6:00 p.m.  
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# Finding Home: You Are Invited To Have A Happy New Year!

By Chris Rumble

2024 is stretched out before us, waiting for us to fill it with good happenings.

Surely, there are occurrences around the corner, both happy and sad, that are unexpected and beyond our control.

However, if you share my belief that we are powerful and endowed by our Creator with the freedom to pursue and choose happiness, please accept these invitations and respond ASAP with your RSVP.

**You are cordially invited to surround yourself with positive, loving people.**

In order to do this, you may first need to be decisive in kicking out any negative, self-involved parasites who have attached themselves to you. If this makes you uncomfortable, then the need to show them the door may be greater than initially imagined.

Here's the good news: You do not have to endure them any longer. I know how considerate and sympathetic so many of you are, but, no need to worry about them. They will quickly find others who are willing to be their hosts.

Simply smile (or laugh!), wave goodbye and let the fun begin!

Once you have extricated yourself of the narcissistic, energy draining party poopers, the best way to find yourself surrounded by positive, loving people is to choose, moment by moment, to BE a positive, loving person and take the risk of reaching out to others who are making the same choice.

Here in beautiful Bent Tree in lovely Jasper, GA you don't have to look very far to find a whole bunch of loving, positive individuals! Make yourself available. Go where they go. Get involved in some new activities. Volunteer. Attend a happy church. Join a club or two. Put on your dancing shoes and find a place with good, foot-stomping music and put them to use. Whatever it takes! This may require some moving out your comfort zone, but, that's a good thing! In due time, you will find yourself having more fun with more beautiful people than you ever thought possible!

**You are cordially invited to laugh.**

The importance of a deep, hardy belly laugh cannot be underestimated. It is FREE and better than any drug. Laughter, indeed, does a heart good like a strong medicine. A healthy guffaw triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain. Laughter helps us to release anger and forgive sooner.

Laughter draws people together in ways that promote healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. It strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress.

Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert.

So, go ahead! Throw back your head and laugh until you cry!

**You are cordially invited to embrace your dreams and pursue them with all your heart.**

At the risk of sounding too elementary, the dreams you had in the fourth grade will give you a clue as to what you may want to be pursuing now.

Go back to the dreams you had before you decided to be "realistic" or before someone you perceived as older and wiser gave you the impression that your dreams were foolish.

Life is too short not to take action towards the passions that make you uniquely you. You owe it to yourself and you owe it to the WORLD to become that amazing person that you were created to be.

Pursuing our unrealized dreams leads us to wonderful, unexpected plot twists in the story of our lives, opens doors to new unexplored worlds and kindles new relationships with kindred spirits that we would have missed otherwise.

And, dare I mention, pursuing our dreams opens up the potential of seeing them materialize before our very eyes. It cracks open the door of the possibility of experiencing the joy of saying out loud, "I did it! And it was more satisfying than I could have ever imagined!"

Please consider this your invitation to a Happy New Year!

**As suggested earlier, please RSVP ASAP.**

---

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# BTAC Arts Council: A Year in Review

by Andrew Kidd, Chair

The newly created Bent Tree Arts Council was formed in the Fall of 2022 and is an arm of the Activities Committee. The mission of Arts Council is to combine the talents of the Bent Tree Community and surrounding residents to promote an awareness of the Instrumental Performing Arts, Vocal Performing Arts, Literary Arts, Visual Arts, Theatre Arts and Textile Arts by promoting and organizing events in our community. What a year we had in 2023!

We began the promotion of the arts our first year by hosting two “Meet the Bent Tree Authors” events in the Fireside Lounge on Sunday, February 5th and Sunday, April 23rd. Bent Tree is so lucky to have so many published authors living inside the gates of our community. Lynn Conrad, Christine Cobb, Hank Hollensbe, Liisa Pasila, Carolyn Ridder Aspenson, Chris Feldt, Mike Harris, Gerald Hunter, and Tim Long all presented an information about their craft.

On May 7th, an inspiring photography exhibit by professional photographer Peter Kilpo was held. The Recreation Room of Club Tamarack was transformed into a beautiful art museum with over 50 photographs taken by Peter. Many of the art subjects were scenes from our Bent Tree Community, as well as places from around the globe.

The BTAC Arts Council hosted the Bent Tree Artists Exhibition on Sunday, June 11th. It consisted of 15 talented Bent Tree Artists. Samples of their works, which represented several types of media, were exhibited. Both adult and youth entries were represented in this art show.

On Sunday, July 16th published playwright, Reid Conrad presented Act 1 of his original play “Mama and Papa at the Gates” - A reading of portions of the play were presented by Chris Rumble, Reid Conrad and September Hoeler, local theatre professionals. Discussion followed on writing techniques, sets, songs, and many more tips for interested Bent Tree playwrights.

A 1960’s Retro Poetry Slam was set up in the Fireside Lounge, complete with anti-war and peace slogan banners on Sunday, August 20th. Incense was burned to set the 1969 mood. Attended by over 25 residents, the afternoon was filled with poetry and song. The participants were dressed in the style of the 1960’s and kept “in character” for the afternoon. Many of the folks recited original poetry along with published works. Some even recited powerful song lyrics to match the mood of the 60’s.

On October 22nd and 23rd, Club Tamarack Dining Room was transformed into an intimate dinner theatre venue. “Mama and Papa at the Gates”, Reid Conrad’s latest play, came to Bent Tree for its premiere performance. The play portrayed the family struggles of Mama and Papa as they attempted to visit their daughter and

family. It was told through humor, despair, song and dance. Joining our Mama and Papa on their journey were Aaron Green, Alex Glover and Ryan Bathurst, three accomplished professionals who share their comedy stylings in the play as the characters Everett, Robinson and Theobald! These three young men were students of Reid’s at Seabreeze High School in Ormond Beach, Florida twenty years ago. They kept in touch since that time and enjoyed a reunion in Bent Tree to rehearse and perform. The cast also included our very own Bent Tree and Tator Patch actress, September Hoeler as “Mama”.

“Murder at the Big Ta-Doo” was the title of the murder mystery that was staged on Nov. 12th and 13th. Held in the Fireside Lounge of Club Tamarack, guests served as improvisational actors in this upscale murder mystery social event. Residents dressed and acted their parts at an elite cocktail party honoring the fictitious Big Joe Fisk, the local marble baron. The cast was made up of BT residents who enjoyed hors d’oeuvres and champaign toasts. Suddenly a fictitious power outage occurred and during the confusion, Big Joe Fish was stabbed. The group solved the murder of Big Joe just before the power was restored.

The holiday season brought two very successful events to Club Tamarack. On December 10th, the “Bent Tree Strings” (dulcimer ensemble) presented a festive and educational concert in the Fireside Lounge. The intimate Info-Concert presented a bit of history of the Appalachian Dulcimer along with many traditional Christmas Carols. The audience enjoyed an afternoon of education and sing-alongs by this long standing dulcimer ensemble.

To finish out the holiday season, residents were welcomed by Santa’s elves, to the 5th Annual Bent Tree Cozy Christmas Concert. This concert featured our very own resident jazz/ pop combo and took place in Club Tamarack Rec Room to a packed house. The concert featured traditional Christmas and holiday favorites in jazz and Latin flavors. Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus surprised our audience and made a brief appearance at the end of concert! Santa read “Twas the Night Before Christmas” to the delighted audience. Mr. and Mrs. Claus posed for photos at the end of the concert. What a treat to have this duo and their elves make an appearance at our concert during such a busy time of the year. Rumor has it that they were traveling back to the North Pole to pack up their sleigh for the big Christmas Eve deliveries!

In all, BTAC Arts Council held ten events during its inaugural year. Many thanks to the many residents who made these events a success by participating, attending, or spreading the word. If you would like more information about the Arts Council or would like to be a part of the planning committee, please contact Andrew Kidd @ 386.290.6002. We look forward to an even more exciting year in 2024!







# Bent Tree Stables - 2024

by Keeve Krasner, Stable Master

We are pleased to share the news that despite any previously circulated rumors, the Bent Tree Stables is looking forward to a vibrant and healthy stables operation for fiscal year 2024. This includes all of your favorite stable activities: trail rides, arena rides, riding lessons, Youth Fest, Halloween Shindig and yes, Summer Horse Camp. Last year our summer horse camps filled up very fast and we had to keep a waiting list for those campers who requested a week that was already full. Space is limited due to the number of available horses, the size of our stable and the capacity of our staff to operate in a safe and personal manner. Watch for camp dates to be announced soon in the Friday News and next month's Echo.

Remember, the barn is open all year, so catch a not too cold day during the winter season, and come on down to the stables and enjoy a beautiful trail ride or tune up your skills with a horse riding lesson. We are open Wednesdays thru Sunday with same day reservations; and also open Mondays and Tuesdays with 24 hour advance reservations. Until then, Happy Trails.

For more information and reservations, please contact the stables at 706-692-6322.





# BTAC Lights up the Holidays

by Sheila Hedgpeth

It was a sparkling holiday gathering featuring gnomes of all shapes and sizes. From place cards to tree ornaments, 1" to 20" tall, there were gnomes here and there and everywhere! There was a collective ooh when the spectacular tree was lit up! Portrait Party Favors were a favorite and expertly arranged and taken by Karen & Bruce Parker.

Guests were treated to delectable festive eats prepared by Bent Tree Events. All joined in as Club Tamarack was filled with the sounds of the season, led by our own Ralph Shattock as keyboardist Jared McDurmont tickled the ivories. There were door prize drawings galore, and many went home with their own gnome!

Volunteers brought the cheer and decked out all the tables with the look and feel of the holidays. With the magical help of Elves Sandra Stewart and Cheryl Lynch each tabletop was uniquely dressed so party goers experienced a wide array of seasonal themes. It was a Tree Lighting celebration to remember!

Next up for Social Programs will be the Inaugural Winter Ball. Prepare for a formal, sit-down dinner event like no other! Come all dressed up and be ready for ballroom dancing and upscale dining. We're building our Ball Team now, so if you'd like to assist with this sure to be awesome event then email us at [btacspecialevents.com](mailto:btacspecialevents.com).

Happy Holidays!





# Into the Lair of the Dragon

By Gerald Hunter



*Riding the winding roads*

Many years ago (about 40) in a land far away (Conyers), there lived a knight named Sir Wayne, who was courting a fair maiden named Princess Susan. Totally smitten, Sir Wayne presented a beautiful diamond ring and asked Princess Susan to marry him, but there was an addendum to the proposal. He told her that if she did not accept, he was going to return the ring and buy a Porsche. Fortunately, the princess said yes, and today, after decades of happiness together, she still wears a wedding ring that has an inscription on the inside which reads, “MY PORSCHE”.

Upon retiring from their sales and teaching careers, Sir Wayne and Princess Susan moved to the fair city of Jasper and bought a house in the wonderful kingdom of Bent Tree. But there was an itch which Sir Wayne had for many years that he had not been able to scratch, until one day he drove south and solved the malady. He came back to Jasper driving a beautiful dark blue, low mileage 2012 Porsche Carrera 911!

Before much time had passed, he organized quarterly road trips through the north Georgia mountains, accompanied by fellow Bent Tree residents driving their own sports cars. They would meet for breakfast at the Huddle House, then a half dozen or so Porsches, BMW's and Miata's would head out, zipping through a round trip of the curviest roads available. A lunch break at a small riverside restaurant would allow a brief respite from the journey before heading home.

Recently, caution was tossed aside and the group took on one of the most dangerous drives in the Southeast, aptly named “The Tail of the Dragon”. One of Discovery's top 10 motorcycle rides



*It's a wonderful life!*

in America, it is an 11 mile road boasting 318 curves, most of them hairpin. The route skirts the southwest border of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park near the Tennessee/North Carolina border and ends at Chilhowee Lake in Tennessee. Wrecks occur often, with an occasional loss of life, and motorcycle and car parts hang from the “Tree of Shame”, a monument to riders who have lost their lives on the ride.

Most of the vehicles in Wayne's group don't include a passenger, but occasionally someone will want to ride along, where the fear level in the passenger seat is elevated as the control factor is reduced. On this recent outing, Wayne had a new passenger to brave the ride, none other than Verna Jones, one of our favorite Bent Tree residents who happens to be 97 years young. She not only survived the trip, but when I asked her about it a few days later, she exclaimed, “Oh, it was wonderful!”

I believe that there is an important lesson to be learned from this event. As we get older, we tend to plan fewer adventures, and are certainly inclined to take less risks. I no longer board the high-flying rides at the fair, telling folks that at my age, I am close enough to death without trying to hasten its occurrence. But maybe I am wrong. Maybe life, including retired life, is about making memories, and doing so with good friends. So as 2024 rolls in, I would challenge you to be like Verna, forging ahead with new experiences, even if they are sometimes a little scary. Follow the philosophy of Lucille Ball, who once quoted, “I'd rather regret the things I've done than regret the things I haven't done.”



# One Man's Opinion

Joe Fore, cc (certified codger)

I believe in Angels!! God was exceptionally gracious to me, He was looking the wrong way some years ago and one of His Angels slipped out the Pearly Gates. I married her forty-one years ago. I had thirty years, four months, twenty-eight days of wedded bliss with her, she had only one fault, lousy taste in husbands. If you look in the dictionary under "Soul Mates", you'll find our picture.

I've had other Angels in my life. My Mama was one, she raised eight kids through the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression. and World War II. Her oldest son was killed in that conflict. My four sisters can easily qualify as Angels.

Down through the years, I crossed paths with more Angels, and in the past years, I've found there are even more Angels right here in Bent Tree. What started out as fellow property owners, then neighbors, then Friends have evolved into Angels.

I've had a good life, will finish my 92nd

year January 24, and am in amazingly good condition. I like to say I've outlived my warranty by several years and I'm enjoying these bonus years. Never fear, I plan to be around for several years, I'm curious to see what's gonna happen next.

My Bent Tree Angels have made me appreciate the love and friendship of my neighbors. Eldon, my best friend, stops by frequently to check on me and always checks if there are odd jobs that need attention. We usually partake of a good helping of medicinal scotch as we discuss the happenings in Bent Tree.

Of recent note the Bent Tree Mem's Bible Study Class have come forward. I awoke one morning several months ago to hear some activity on my front porch. I opened my door and lo-and-behold I found several good friends and neighbors, Angels all, with a pickup load of lumber constructing a ramp for my climb up the four stair steps

from my driveway. That ramp has been a boon to my advancing years. When I complained that my firewood provider was no longer delivering, Rick and his crew showed up with a big load of firewood. I've enjoyed several evenings of a sparkling warm fire thus far and look forward to many more.

I would make a sure bet if we did a survey, we would find that there are many stories of similar good friends acts within our gates. My Sweetie Pie Nita and I frequently discussed that Bent Tree is unique, it's more than friends and neighbors, it's more like a big, extended family. We love you all!  
!

We are entering our forty-third year of being a Bent Tree member. It is our hope that 2024 will be a magnificent year for all our Angels and Neighbors!!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

---

## Day Tripping – Appalachia

by Lynn Kaiser Conrad

Appalachia is a culture born from people living in the mountains, the blue ridge mountains to be more precise. The culture was created out of necessity because folks in the hills needed to be self-sufficient, as they were off the beaten path, if you will. Appalachia is known for its crafts, such as pottery, woodwork, quilts and even music and poetry. The present-day movement called Homesteading takes some lessons from Appalachia, and American folk art can be directly attached to Appalachia. Lots of ethnicities brought their traditions to the Appalachia table; however, the dominate ones are German, African, and Native American. Appalachia people even have their own language dialect, and their history is fertile with myths and stories passed down from generation to generation.

North Georgia is full of museums and centers that feature Appalachia culture and exhibits, but you have to seek them out. The largest and most well-known center preserving and educating the public about Appalachia is the Foxfire Museum, which is a two hour drive from Bent Tree. The Foxfire Museum is an open air museum in Mountain City. (I'm sure the museum being located in a town

with that name was no coincidence.) The site has 20 historic log constructed buildings and each contains artifacts of Appalachia life. The museum also keeps the crafts alive by offering classes or demonstrations in weaving and wood stove cooking, and more. You may even visit on a day when the blacksmith is working. [www.foxfire.org](http://www.foxfire.org)

If you're looking for something closer to home, the Funk Heritage Center at Reinhardt University focuses on the history of Appalachian settler. <https://www.reinhardt.edu/funkheritage/>

The Santee Nacoochee Cultural Center concentrates the history of life in the north Georgia region with more than one museum on site to explore. <https://www.snca.org/snc/home.php>

The Walker County African American Museum in LaFayette is committed to not only preserving but also keeping alive the history and stories of those Appalachia people with African heritage and lineage. The museum opened on December 17, 2022. <https://www.walkercountyafrikanamerican.com/museum>

# Big Adventures – British Isles and Europe cruise

by Lynn Kaiser Conrad

Remember your first plane ride? You buckled up, learned about the oxygen mask dropping for the ceiling. You heard the engines roar, the plane driving along, and then you felt the tires lift off from the tarmac and you were airborne. For residents Kerry and Mike Chambers that memory is fairly recent. In September, they took their first plane ride. And where did they choose to go for the first time soaring in the skies? They crossed the pond and landed in England. That was the start of their big adventure. Mike and Kerry were traveling with their Bent Tree friends Kim and Dave Stewart.

The four flew over in comfort plus seats which was great for a long 8-hour flight (and not bad for your first flight!). The Stewarts wanted to go to Scotland, for obvious reasons with a name like Stewart, and they were talking to the Chambers about going on a cruise together, so the two ideas became one grand trip. From door to door the trip was about 16 days, including travel, cruise and some time on each end to explore the port towns.

They booked on the NCL cruise line, and Kim says she likes to book an aft suite, so you have amazing views. The Chambers were right next door. The cruise left out of Southampton and traveled the British Isles and key ports in western Europe, including Amsterdam, Brugge and Normandy.

September is supposed to be a good time to visit, with moderate weather, and not a lot of crowds. The couples packed sweaters and jackets in case the weather took a winter turn, but it did not, and they had very little rain which was unusual. However, high seas kept them from disembarking and seeing Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland.

Kim offers a few travel tips if you plan to go on a similar trip. Perhaps cruise earlier in the year, as the weather was transitioning to winter, the seas were a bit turbulent and sadly they missed one of the key ports and prime excursions, a tour of the Guinness factory. Also, if you stay in London before or after your cruise, stay in a hotel near a tube station (the subway). The couples planned their own pre and post land excursions rather than use the cruise tour company.

They brought euros and British pounds for tips and incidentals but primarily used credit cards and had no issues. (But remember if you go overseas not all places take American Express, so have a back-up credit card, like Visa or MasterCard). Also keep in mind that some public bathrooms are not free and require local coins to access.

Highlights from the trip for Kerry were that she learned that other countries preserve their architecture and history, and Kim marveled that there were more bicycles than people in Amsterdam. They also enjoyed the sounds and tastes of the English pubs. Kim appreciated the Scottish brogue accents.

“We want to go back and spend some time in Brugge. It’s a beautiful city, and there is decadent chocolate and delicious pomme frites to eat while you enjoy the architecture and the canal,” Kim said.

*(if you have recently taken a trip domestic or international and want to share the experience, please reach out to the author)*





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# Happy New Year!

By Veda L. Wohlford, Photos by Veda L. Wohlford

Happy New Year from your Bent-Tree Volunteer Animal Shelter! How about making 2024 great by welcoming a new Fur-Baby into your life? Meet some of the cutest kitties, and one cute dog, that are available for adoption.

Remember, all our cats and dogs are fully vetted medically and spayed or neutered before being eligible for adoption. Ready to start 2024 with a new member of the family? Bent-Tree's Animal Shelter has so many kitties (and one adorable dog) available for adoption, kitties of all personalities, shapes, and sizes, and all of them just want a fur-ever home with you and your family! If you would like to visit any of our kitties to see if you're a match made in heaven, please contact LuAnn Chambers at 678.414.1047.



***Sugar** is a pretty calico female, who is a little shy but really sweet!*



*This beautiful girl is **Callie 2.0**, 2.0 because we recently had another kitty named Callie. Beautiful markings, very friendly. Dare I say sweet? Am I over-using that word? Nope, all of our kitties are sweet!*



***Bunco** is the current welcoming committee at the shelter. He has to know what's going on with you at all times, and will follow you around the whole time you're there.*



*Last, but certainly not least, here is **Honey**! Look. At. That. Face! Honey barked at me when I first came into the shelter, but within a couple minutes she was licking my fingers and wanted to be good friends!*



***Idris** is a big, beautiful boy, who is sweet as can be and loves to play. Look at that face peeking out over the edge of the kitty-shelf! I know that look in photo 1 makes him look mean, but he's really very, very friendly! I guess I just caught his "bad side".*



***Davey**, just chillin', yet again. At least he's in a different spot this time, but as usual he's just chilled out and observing the world around him.*



# Deer Survey Executive Summary

by Elden Bonnette

The results of the recent Bent Tree deer survey conducted by the University of Georgia in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources have been compiled and an Executive Summary released. The survey revealed the following:

- Most respondents perceive a general increase in the Bent Tree deer population since they moved in
- 51% want the population to remain the same
- 35% want the population to decrease

## Top three most common deer conflicts:

- Damage to ornamental landscape plants
- Disagreements between residents over deer
- Neighbors feeding deer

## Top three least tolerable deer related conflicts are:

- Illegal hunting activity in the community
- Residents sabotaging legal hunting efforts
- Neighbors feeding deer

## Two most supported deer harvesting sources:

- Government/professional sharpshooters
- Private hunters meeting Bent Tree and proficiency standards

## Severity of conflicts between deer and residents

- 36% viewed conflicts as not an issue
- 34% felt it was a minor issue
- 34% felt it was a moderate or higher issue
- 54% did not want to spend money to resolve deer related conflicts
- 54% were neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with Bent Tree response to deer related conflicts

## Top three supported deer management techniques:

- Education
- Eliminate Supplemental Feeding
- Improving habitat

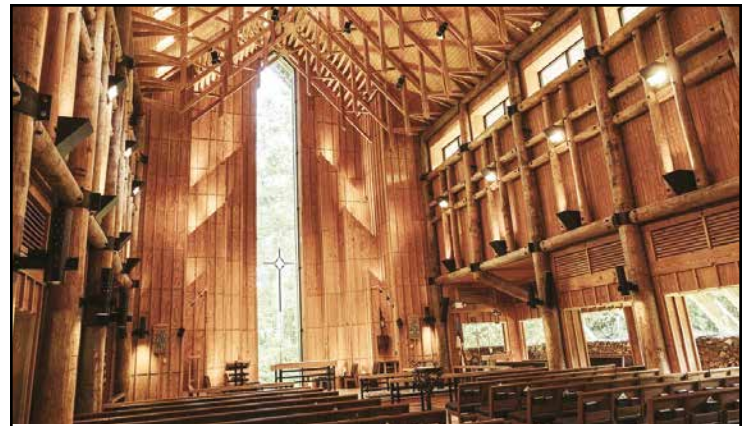
## Top three techniques perceived to be effective in deer management:

- Professional shooting
- Education
- Eliminate supplemental feeding
- Respondents were most concerned about the health of the Bent Tree deer herd

## Three most acceptable situations to harvest deer:

- Control diseases
- Improve the deer population health
- Manage the deer population size

A total of 893 surveys were mailed to Bent Tree residents with a 57% response. Many thanks to all who responded. UGA and DNR will continue to analyze the survey data and begin drafting a customized deer management plan for Bent Tree expected to be released in the Spring of 2024.



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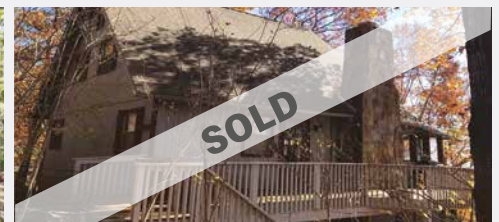
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