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Lakeland currents

Bi-monthly news magazine

First Lakeland Team, First Win

pages 2-3

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CONTENTS:

>> Message from the City – Pages 4-5
>> Happening – Page 6
>> Alan Johnson – Page 7

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Many Firsts: Parks and Rec

It was a night of firsts, following a series of firsts for the City of Lakeland.

The Lakeland Lions youth football team played its first ever football game Sept. 1 and in another first, won handily against a team from rival Arlington 22-0.

In a year that has seen an explosion of sports and recreation programs in the City, the football rivalry was another indication that Lakeland is on the cusp of great offerings for its citizens.

The two sports offered in the city last year, youth basketball and soccer, have been expanded to eight sports options for youth and adults. The 134 participants last year have increased almost five-fold to 658 youth and adult players, according to Robbie Spencer, director of the City Parks and Recreation Department.

And Mr. Spencer's plans don't stop with the current successes. He's working with the Parks and Recreation Board to start phase one of a sports complex and several parcels are being considered. He also hopes to introduce canoeing and kayaking, trails education and more.

"We will create a state-of-the-art complex that everyone will be proud of. With this complex, we're planning on offering new sports programs and tournaments for all ages. We hired Kevin Rooney as a recreation coordinator in September. He will help run the new programs."

Another first added this year was a concert series at The LAMP, the newly built outdoor stage in IH Park at 4523 Canada Road. The venue featured three free concerts this season with the final band to perform Oct. 22 from 7 to 10 p.m. Food trucks, a beer garden and activities for children were included at every event.

The Lakeland Senior Center (LSC) is under Parks and Recreation. "We've decided that Kim Odom will be our Senior Center manager with Kevin helping her. The hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p. m," said the director.

Mayor Wyatt Bunker affirms the success and popularity of the new programs. "We are so excited about all the positive things happening within parks and recreation," said the Mayor. "As expected, football is a resounding success on and off the field. Our teams are enjoying winning records and the program has a positive financial impact.

"From the concert series at The LAMP to growing athletic programs to planned capital improvements, our parks and recreation program is quickly becoming one of our most notable successes."

Mr. Spencer, hired just over a year ago in July, worked in Wyoming and Florida before taking the job in Lakeland. He and his wife Brittany have a two-year-old son Jett and a dog Tahoe.

"Before I came here, they offered two sports. We now offer eight options for youth and adult: youth soccer, baseball, flag and tackle football, cheerleading, basketball and tennis clinics along with adult flag football and basketball."

Mr. Spencer said this year there are 443 youth participants with 215 on adult sports teams. .

"We have plans to start outdoor recreation programs that include canoeing and kayaking, trails education and more. We also plan to start a Youth Olympics and also recreation classes that include cooking and other educational classes.

An "elephant in the room" emerged last year when Mr. Spencer asked the Lakeland Board of Commissioners (BOC) to fund $20,000 for football uniforms and equipment. A few Lakeland residents expressed their displeasure over tax money spent for youth sports.

The proposal, brought to the BOC in December, was to purchase good quality equipment to rent to participants, creating a top notch program for the City and generating revenue each year. "As of right now our youth football program has brought in $23,482.83. So not only have we paid back the $20,000 that was allocated but we've made an extra $3,482.83. So next year every penny we make will be revenue with about 70 percent going towards profit."

Last fiscal year the Parks Department raised over $18,000 in sponsorships and donations. If any businesses want to become a sponsor they can contact Mr. Spencer about programs and benefits as a sponsor at 867-5407 or rspencer@lakelandtn.org

Actual brick and mortar parks are also getting do-overs "Every park is getting personal attention. Once we finish one park project we're moving to the next. We've finished phase one of IH Park and most recently Plantation Hills Park and now we're moving onto Zadie Kuehl Park.

"We will be providing Zadie Kuehl with better security (more patrols from the Shelby County Sheriff's Office) and ways to combat the problems we've faced with this park in the past. By cleaning up this park, we feel will help draw more residents to this park." At the Park Board September meeting, it was announced that The

About the Cover: The Lakeland Lions played its first ever football game Sept. 1 against Arlington and won 22-0. Photo by Casey Condo.

LAKELAND CURRENTS

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If the publication goes to electronic, the staff would work with advertisers to link their web sites to their ads and also adjust advertising rates.

To facilitate possible electronic receipt of the bi-monthly Magazine, please send your email to lakelandcurrents@gmail.com , Sherrye Willis. Jim Atkinson, Lakeland city manager, said the collected emails would also be used by the City to disseminate news and bulletins to citizens.

Pet Hospital in Lakeland will construct a new building on Canada Road and wants to donate land adjacent to the Park to be used as a dog park.

"After Zadie Kuehl, we'll be discussing what park needs the next project and we'll go from there," said Mr. Spencer. "But I will say that we do have plans to renovate Windward Slopes Park and the tennis courts. Plans include fixing the trails that are falling apart before this year ends, creating a pickle ball court, resurfacing the tennis courts, adding two more courts and adding lights. This will be a project that we will have to plan in phases as well."

To keep better tabs on parks and their conditions, Michele Dial, commissioner and liaison to Parks and Rec, said "The Parks Board will start having monthly meetings at the different park locations as the seasons/weather allows. We want citizens to have pride and ownership in their neighborhood parks, and more importantly feel safe when utilizing the parks. We are urging neighbors to call the non-emergency number (379-7625 – Shelby County Sheriff's Office) to report any questionable activity in our parks. I would like to hear from citizens about what they want in our parks (mdial@lakelandtn.org)." Mrs. Dial added, "As our City grows and evolves, our goal is to provide our community with comprehensive Parks and Recreation activities offering something for everyone."

Lakeland Lions cheerleaders

Concerts at The LAMP

It was an evening of high-energy music, children playing, neighbors greeting neighbors, food, snow cones and beer for the inaugural concert at The LAMP (Lakeland Amphitheater) July 30.

The newly terraced IH Park, 4523 Canada Road in Lakeland, was filled with 300+ people to hear Swingin' Leroy, a three-man, one woman group specializing in rock, pop, country, R&B and funk. Double the number attended the second concert Aug. 27.

A newly created parking lot adjacent to the Stage was filled and overflow cars parked at Lakeland First Baptist Church. Shelby County Sheriff's Office deputies helped with traffic control and monitored the event.

The outdoor venue featured a play area with a bounce house sponsored by Sprouts Farmers Market and face painting by Mark Louderback with Edward Jones and Christine Conwell from Sam T. Wilson Public Library.

Pop-a-Lock had giveaways and Sprouts offered healthy snacks of bananas and apples. Hayden's Grill food truck sold sandwiches and fries and Beaker's Sno Cones had a variety of flavored ice for sale.

Those attending were encouraged to visit the IH Clubhouse recreation room with a new extended deck and games inside including a pool table, shuffle board and darts.

The free City of Lakeland summer concert series continues with one more program from 7 to 10 p.m. Oct. 22 with the band Seeing Red.

For more information on the concerts or to rent space at the IH Club house, call 867-2717.

City of Lakeland

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Drafted by the Economic Development Commission and adopted by the Board of Commissions on August 11, 2016

The overarching vision of the City of Lakeland is to proactively create and maintain a high quality of life for all of its citizens and to continually evolve as a city where people and businesses prefer to reside or visit. Quality of life involves one's perceived satisfaction resulting from many diverse factors including health, family, education, employment, wealth, religious provision, social interaction, environmental surroundings, safety, and respect. As Lakeland's Strategic Plan, this document serves as a road map for the City's leadership, regarding the definition and achievement of a high quality of life for Lakeland's citizens. As many of the factors listed above are subjective, elements and details of the plan are expected to evolve as the City evolves. The vision statements and goals of the document are meant to provide direction and priority for the ongoing development of tactics and action items for the City of Lakeland's stakeholders.

Vision Statement 1: Create a positive business climate to encourage business development.

Goal 1: Provide a competitive tax structure.
- Develop and maintain a conservative budget.
- Develop and maintain a conservative borrowing policy.
- Establish debt limit guidelines for the city.
- Increase revenues from quality business operations and property taxes.
- Regularly and proactively monitor grant opportunities.
- Ensure accurate census participation for optimal funding.

Goal 2: Maintain high standards for building codes, signage, aesthetics, etc.
- Develop and provide well-defined policies.
- Provide and enforce a stringent aesthetic standards ordinance.
- Require developers to engage with the city early and regularly during the planning process.
- Provide a pro-business sign ordinance.

Goal 3: Provide adequate inventory and accessible information for interested developers.
- Systematically monitor inventory and maintain a determined quantity of inventory.
- Develop an informative web tool to promote available inventory.
- Zone a portion of the undeveloped lakefront for commercial use and develop a strategy for use.
- Systematically meet with land owners of targeted development parcels to encourage them to make properties available for development.
- Ensure proper zoning, infrastructure and pre-development activities on targeted development properties.

Goal 4: Enact a proactive communication/marketing strategy.
- Provide a centralized web presence to market available sites and provide information.
- Maintain an organized and informative lakelandtn.gov website.
- Develop an extensive email database for scheduled push communications.
- Consider a budget and strategy for various advertising channels,
  business conferences, etc…
- Develop an effective system for prospective business inquires.
- Assign someone as a point person for collecting and managing press releases.
- Develop and execute a marketing strategy for attracting commercial and residential targets.

Goal 5: Develop and maintain efficient plans, processes, policies and regulations.
- Systematically evaluate processes, policies, and regulations with regard to feedback. Adjust accordingly.
- Develop a system for responding to, tracking, and resolving business owner inquiries and issues.

Goal 6: Employ attractive tax incentive programs.
- Market a TIFF program/policy.
- Market a PILOT program/policy.

Goal 7: Develop a business advisory council.

Goal 8: Develop a systematic communication channel with commercial leasing agents.

Goal 9: Develop a land use strategy for the Canada Rd.

interchange.
Goal 10: Maintain an updated gap analysis of business sectors.
Goal 11: Ensure involvement of business leaders / city officials.
Goal 12: Ensure adequate staffing resources and training.
Goal 13: Work synergistically with City of Memphis and EDGE.
Goal 14: Develop and communicate a vision for industrial / manufacturing
Goal 15: Pursue the Adventure Tourism designation and market tax incentives.

Vision Statement 2: Create a positive residential environment to encourage residential development.

Goal 1: Provide a competitive tax structure.
Goal 2: Maintain and enforce high standards for building codes and residential projects.
Goal 3: Develop internal policies to provide quick response to issues.
Goal 4: Ensure adequate staffing resources and training.
Goal 5: Develop and define policies to preserve and leverage natural elements.

Vision Statement 3: Provide an excellent quality of life for our citizens.

Goal 1: Develop attractions and features for Lakeland to become a destination city.
- Research successful attractions of other cities and identify local needs/opportunities.
- Define preferred and acceptable attractions.
- Develop a strategy for proactive recruitment.
- Provide needed incentives and opportunities for desired attractions.
- Provide signage in strategic locations to identify attractions.
- Consider a budget and strategy to market attractions.

Goal 2: Develop a long-term strategy for comprehensive high performing schools.
- Set objective triggers for considering High School Development.
- Develop a strategy and objectives for high quality athletic programs.

Goal 3: Provide desirable public facilities, parks, and amenities.
- Systematically engage residents.
- Prioritize, fund and execute.

Goal 4: Define and adopt a low tolerance to crime and litter philosophy.

Goal 5: Investigate the feasibility of city run fire and police services and other strategies to improve government services.

Vision Statement 4: Plan and provide adequate infrastructure to accommodate and encourage business and residential growth.

Goal 1: Plan and provide accessibility from major roadways.
- Monitor and facilitate the I/40 Canada Road interchange project.
- Prioritize and facilitate land acquisition for needed improvements.
- Complete new Canada Road project by 2020 or sooner.
  - Secure funding.
  - Investigate grants.
  - Complete any needed right-of-way acquisitions.
- Develop a corridor management plan for Hwy 70 and Hwy 64.

Goal 2: Plan and provide adequate infrastructure to accommodate businesses and citizens.
- Systematically review and adjust infrastructure development plan.
- Prioritize projects and provide projections for best case, expected, and worst case growth scenarios.
- Set objective triggers for infrastructure projects.

Goal 3: Develop and communicate a general strategy for North Lakeland.

Vision Statement 5: Encourage a greater sense of community for Lakeland citizens and businesses.

Goal 1: Develop a brand identity and logos.
Goal 2: Continue gateway signage at major thoroughfares.
Goal 3: Develop and execute a comprehensive push communication strategy.
Goal 4: Incorporate public events desirable to citizens and visitors.
- Systematically survey citizens regarding desires.
- Prioritize, fund and execute.
- Identify and develop a local focal point.

Goal 5: Provide and communicate opportunities for volunteer involvement.
Goal 6: Engage citizens through regular surveys.
Goal 7: Systematically evaluate the feasibility of a Lakeland Post Office and Zip Code.

LES Lakeland Elementary School PTA News

Brittney Buchanan, PTA president

The 2016-17 school year has started off with a bang! Thanks to the sponsors, players and all who are participating in the Lakeland Schools Invitational Golf Tournament. In conjunction with the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, we are able to raise money for our school and bring attention to the wonderful businesses in Lakeland who support our School.

Our Boosterthon kicked off in September with a pep rally. The Fun Runs are scheduled on Oct. 6 at LES as follows: Pre K, K and 1st – 10:30; 2nd and 3rd – 9:15; 4th and 5th – 1:30. The theme this year is "Backyard Box Office". This is always a fun time for the kids with daily, inspirational pep talks and interaction with the Boosterthon team as well as being a great fundraiser for the school!

Next up is the Book Fair. This year's theme is "Bookaneer – Where Books are the Treasure". The book fair runs from Oct. 20-24 in the LES gym. Saturday, October 22nd is Community Day and everyone is welcome to attend.

We wrap up October with "Muffins With Mom" Oct. 27 - 28. We are also having a month long spirit event with Papa John's Pizza. For every order placed in October using an LES promo code, Papa John's will donate a portion back to the PTA.

Remember for a $25 donation to the PTA, you will receive a "Let's Go Lions – Lakeland Pride" yard sign. For a $10 donation, you will receive a lion head magnet or two sticker decals or for a $5 donation, receive a sticker decal.

Also, three easy ways to support our school are to collect Box Tops, which are collected on a monthly basis; link your Kroger card account to Community Rewards and enter Lakeland Elementary PTA or NPO# 80282; and when shopping on Amazon, login through www.smile.amazon.com and select Lakeland Elementary PTA as your charity. By purchasing products you already use and shopping at places where you already shop, you can help raise money that will go directly to our school!

LAKELAND YOUTH BASKETBALL

Youth basketball in Lakeland is scheduled for this fall. The program will focus on teaching children the fundamentals, teamwork and understanding of the game. Experience not required, according to Robbie Spencer, Parks and Recreation director. "Year after year we want to have each kid coming back and playing in this program. Don't worry if you haven't ever played the game of basketball because this is where you'll learn," he said.

Registration: Through Oct. 24; late registration is Oct. 25 – 31.

Sign up in person at Lakeland City Hall, 10001 US Highway 70. 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Online at www.Leagues.bluesombrero.com/lakelandparksandrec - 24/7. Call the City of Lakeland office at 867-2717

COACH CLINIC AND DRAFT

6 p.m. Nov. 4 at Lakeland Elementary School.
Practices: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays starting Nov. 14. Potentially be on Saturdays.
Games: Tuesdays and Thursdays starting Dec. 12 .
Age Groups: 5-6 yr., 7-8 yr., 9-10 yr. 11-13 yr.
Fees: $100 includes a Junior Grizzlies reversible uniform, leather basketball and free Grizzlies ticket.
Late Fees: Sign-ups after Oct.24 will be $125.

Contact Kevin Rooney at the City of Lakeland office or email at krooney@lakelandtn.org if you have any questions.

The Lakeland Senior Center offers programs for those 55+ at 4527 Canada Road. For activities and special October programs, contact Kim Odom 746-8195, 867-2717 kodom@lakelandtn.org

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Happening in Lakeland

The first **Lakeland Schools Invitational** will be Oct. 3 benefiting Lakeland Elementary School (LES) at Stonebridge Golf Club. It is sponsored by the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce assisted by the LES PTA. You can register for the two-person scramble at www.mylakelandchamber.org Cost is $120 per team which includes a cart, lunch (at 11:30 a.m.) and prizes. Tee off at 12:30 p.m.

The annual **Lakeland Halloween Festival** will be from 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 30th at IH Park, 4523 Canada Road. Activities include giant obstacle inflatables, trick-or-treating, face painting, photos with costumed characters, pumpkin carving and decorating stations, spooky baked goods, food for sale and more! Featured contests will be Costume Contest, Pumpkin Bake-Off, Pumpkin Pie-Eating Contest and Pumpkin Pre-Carved Contest. New this year: a Family Costume Contest! Lots of prize giveaways including a season pass to the Memphis Children's Museum, a family value pack to Memphis Incredible Pizza and more.

The Christmas Festival is planned from 6 to 9 p.m. Dec. 9 at IH Park.

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Alan Johnson

The newly constructed stone signs announcing "City of Lakeland" began with a volunteer's flourish and desire to improve two entrances to the City.

When no local design or build firms would design gateway signs, Alan Johnson, a six-year Lakeland resident, started drawing to-scale sketches of different ideas. What you see today at U.S. Highway 64 at Canada Road and Fletcher Trace Parkway are his original drawings, brought to life with stone, limestone engraving and pillar caps.

And his contributions to the City do not stop with two signs. He admits he has a hard time "sitting still" and often says "Yes" to projects others bypass.

Mr. Johnson said Ginny Dunn, economic development coordinator for the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, obtained grant money from EDGE (Economic Development Growth Engine) for the gateway sign project in 2015.

"In the fall, I was working with Jim Atkinson (Lakeland city manager) and Tom Skehan (Lakeland city planner) on the new logo and branding standards for the City of Lakeland.

"The plan was to use the new logo on the sign. In late fall, the new logo for the City was approved, and the City put out an RFP (Request For Proposal) to several local design/build firms to design and construct the two gateway signs.

"We received no responses, so I volunteered to spearhead the project. With the help of Sherri Gallick (commissioner) and Tom Skehan, we gathered some ideas and settled on a general theme to match the beauty and sophistication of Lakeland. I did some research and basically started drawing to-scale sketches of different ideas.

"I was familiar with the work of Christie Cut Stone on U.S. Highway 64, so I worked with them on the limestone engraving and pillar caps. We arrived at a final design that was approved by the BOC (Board of Commissioners) at the end of the year. In the spring of 2016, Tom Skehan gathered some interest in the construction of the design and put out an RFP for the construction work. They received bids and moved forward with the construction."

According to Emily Harrell, city engineer, the project was publicly bid April 6. "There were two bidders: Wagner General Contractors for $95,000 and Viktor Hall Construction, $44,000," she said. "We have no control over how many bids we receive. An ad is placed in the Memphis Daily News and on the website (through Vendor Registry) for two weeks. We get as many bids as are submitted by the contractors."

She noted the bid amount for the Canada Road sign was $26,000 and Fletcher Trace was $20,000. "We had two EDGE grants $26,000 each, of which the City's match was 50 percent. So in total we had $26,000 in grant funds and $26,000 by the City. The structural design and construction plans were completed by Pickering at a cost of $4,500."

Mr. Johnson is vice chairman of the Lakeland Development Corporation (LDC) and the Lakeland Economic Development Committee (EDC). "I spearheaded the Lakeland Economic Development Strategic Plan that was just approved by the BOC and am currently working on a Marketing and Communications Strategy for the City, with the help of the EDC. I am also currently designing some marketing materials for the city."

A cyclist himself, he created the idea of the Tour de Lakeland (spring 2016) "as a way to promote our beautiful City, encourage families to exercise and help build a sense of community," he said. "I hope to soon pull together enough interest to hold a triathlon or children's triathlon in Lakeland." He can be reached at 355-3767 if anyone is interested.

He works in operations and development for the Lifesigns and HealthyHere brands. He and his wife Jodi are parents to Gabe, 11, and Emma, 10. "We all bike and do triathlons. All my work for the City is volunteer. I believe in giving back to the community in any way that you can and derive great pleasure in seeing Lakeland evolve. I also have a hard time sitting still."

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