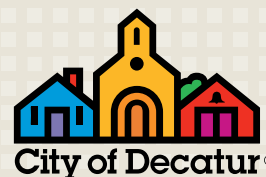


City of Decatur FOCUS

INSIDE:
CITY OF DECATUR
ANNUAL
REPORT



JULY-AUGUST 2026
Volume 37 • Number 1

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CITY OF DECATUR, GEORGIA

Welcome Back to Decatur Square



After more than a year, the Square is open again. Read the full story on page 3.

Sign Up for the Next Decatur 101

Decatur 101's next class starts in February 2027 and the community is invited to participate and learn more about their local government. Complete the interest form at decaturga.com/decatur101 or contact Renae Jackson at renae.jackson@decaturga.com to sign up. Include your mailing address, phone number, and whether you are interested in the morning class (10 a.m.-noon) or evening class (7-9 p.m). Decatur 101 is an annual program that was created in 2000 and was designed to develop informed and involved citizens. Participants learn how the City of Decatur works, who does what, and how they can make a difference in their community over the course of eight weeks.

There is also a Smart Growth walking tour for both classes on one Saturday. Classes are held on Thursdays in various city buildings, and guided tours are offered each week before class starts. Topics covered by the city include equity and engagement, economic development and capital improvements, budget and administrative services, public safety, tourism, volunteer opportunities, volunteer boards and commissions, parks and recreation, and more.



Apply for the Decatur Youth Council

The Decatur City Commission invites high school students to apply for the 2026-2027 Decatur Youth Council (DYC) leadership program. The program is open to students who live within the city of Decatur limits and attend public, private or home-based schools. DYC members plan projects and events, volunteer in the community, and serve as an advisory board to the City Commission. Applications of interest are available at decaturga.com/dyc and must be submitted by Friday, Aug. 7. Contact staff liaison Meredith Roark at meredith.roark@decaturga.com for more information.



Read the Decatur Focus online at decaturga.com/focus.

Limited copies also available at Decatur City Hall, Decatur Visitors Center, and City of Decatur Recreation Centers.

Information for the FOCUS should be submitted by mail to Editor, Decatur Focus, P.O. Box 220, Decatur, GA 30031, or by email to decaturfocus@decaturga.com, or by using the submission form found at decaturga.com/focus.

The Decatur Focus is a joint publication of the City of Decatur, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority and the Decatur Business Association. It is a newsletter intended to provide announcements and information related to events, activities, and businesses in the city of Decatur. The purpose of the newsletter is to promote the city and encourage the exchange of information among residents, business owners and the school system. Letters to the editor, editorials or other opinion pieces are not published. All press releases, announcements and other information received for publication are subject to editing. Information found in the Focus is also posted on Decatur's official website at decaturga.com. The deadline for submitting articles, announcements or advertising is the first day of the month preceding publication. Contact: Editor, Decatur Focus, P.O. Box 220, Decatur, GA 30031, 678-553-6540; email: decaturfocus@decaturga.com.



DECATUR CITY COMMISSION

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Development Authority**

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Decatur Square Transformation Complete

The City of Decatur celebrated the completion of the Decatur Square Transformation Project with a ribbon cutting ceremony at the new downtown performance stage in June. Mayor Tony Powers, Deputy City Manager David Junger, and Assistant City Manager Angela Threadgill were among those who marked the occasion alongside City commissioners, project partners, and community members.

The first initiative to emerge from the Town Center 2.0 Plan, the project broke ground in April 2025 and delivered a new performance stage, public restrooms, an expanded green infrastructure, and improvements to the plaza including new landscaping, and play area. The Town Center 2.0 Plan was adopted by the Decatur City Commission in June 2023 following a community engagement process that included input from more than 1,000 Decatur residents.

Deputy City Manager Junger recognized the partners whose work made the project possible, including design firm Jacobs, construction company JHC, and MARTA. The ceremony concluded with an introduction to the Amplify Decatur Music Festival, which presented the first public performance on the new stage.

Thank you, Decatur, for your patience. The Square belongs to all of you.



2025 Welcoming Business Awards Spotlight



The Better Together Advisory Board recognized five local businesses with Welcoming Business Awards at the Decatur Business Association Holiday Party in December. The annual award was first presented in December 2020.

The Welcoming Business Award, established by the Better Together Advisory Board, recognizes Decatur-based businesses that act with intention to create inclusive environments for employees and customers alike. To learn more about the award, visit decaturga.com/wba.

The City is spotlighting a 2025 recipient each month, beginning with Trellis Horticultural Therapy Alliance in July and Kemper Pelvic Physiotherapy in August, with the remaining honorees featured in the issues ahead. Watch the monthly video features on Instagram at [@cityofdecaturga](https://www.instagram.com/cityofdecaturga).

Kemper Pelvic Physiotherapy | 755 Commerce Dr.

Kemper Pelvic Physiotherapy is a Decatur practice specializing in pelvic health physical therapy, offering individualized care built around each client's goals and needs. Following a thorough evaluation, the team develops personalized plans of care and equips clients with the knowledge and skills to maintain their progress long after therapy ends.

Kemper was recognized in part for its commitment to LGBTQIA+ affirming care, providing a welcoming environment for clients of all gender identities and sexual orientations. That inclusive approach, paired with care that treats each client as an individual rather than a diagnosis, reflects the values at the heart of the Welcoming Business Award.

Trellis Horticultural Therapy Alliance Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr.

Founded in 2017 by certified horticultural therapists Rachel Cochran and Wendy Battaglia, Trellis works to support organizations and individuals in developing therapeutic gardening programs and accessible garden spaces. The organization recently completed the Ability Garden at Legacy Park, a wheelchair-accessible garden offering recreational and therapeutic gardening programs for adults living with long-term disability, chronic illness, and other life challenges.

In addition to the garden itself, Trellis renovated the adjacent building where classes are held to ensure full accessibility. The organization has also expanded its reach to serve the broader community, with plans underway to establish a public cutting garden and additional garden-based programming.

Trellis was recognized not only for its direct work but for the broader impact it has had on Legacy Park, where its efforts have prompted the organization to reimagine its events and spaces with greater accessibility and inclusivity in mind.



Stacking Energy Rebates Can Make Home Upgrades More Affordable



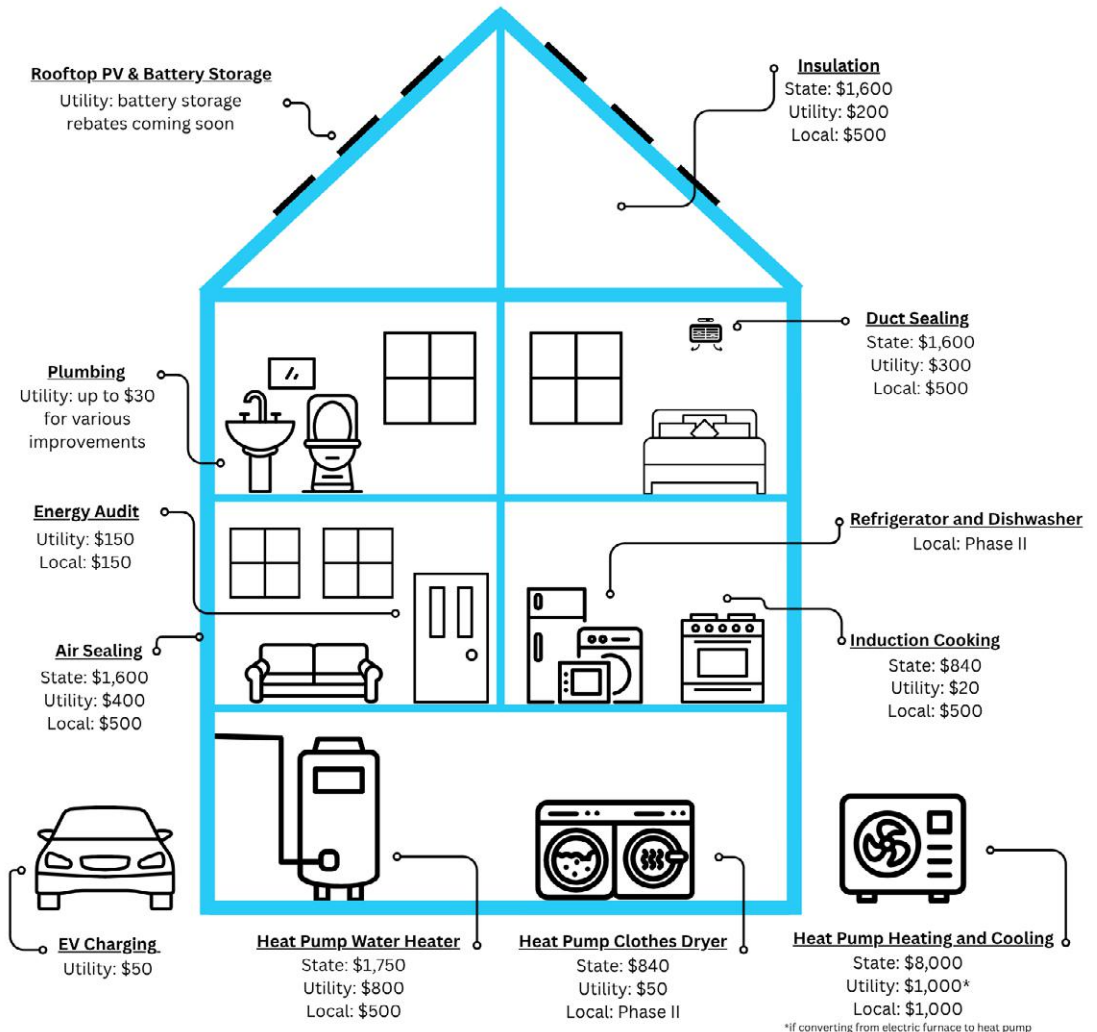
Decatur residents have access to several programs that can lower the cost of home energy improvements when used together.

The City of Decatur's Community Energy Rebate Program helps homeowners invest in more efficient homes by providing rebates for eligible projects. Covered upgrades may include heat pumps for heating and cooling, heat pump water heaters, electrical panel upgrades, insulation, air sealing, duct sealing, induction cooktops, and other energy-saving improvements. Depending on the project and eligibility requirements, residents may receive rebates covering up to 50 percent of project costs.

Decatur rebates can often be combined with additional incentives available through the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) and Georgia Power. By layering multiple rebates and incentives, homeowners can substantially reduce out-of-pocket costs and make larger energy upgrades more affordable.

For example, a homeowner replacing a gas water heater with a heat pump water heater could receive a rebate of 50 percent up to \$500 from the City of Decatur Community Energy Rebate Program. Depending on income eligibility, they may also qualify for a rebate of up to \$1,750 through the GEFA Home Electrification and Appliance Rebate program. Georgia Power customers could receive an additional utility incentive of up to \$800. Actual rebate amounts vary by household income, equipment selected, and program availability.

GEFA administers Georgia's Home Energy Rebates Program, which offers incentives for qualifying energy-efficiency and electrification projects. Eligible



improvements may include heat pumps, insulation, air sealing, electrical upgrades, and energy-efficient appliances. Rebate amounts vary based on household income and projected energy savings.

Georgia Power customers may also be eligible for utility-sponsored rebates that complement local and state incentives, helping reduce long-term energy consumption and monthly utility expenses.

Electrify Decatur has launched a rebate calculator that allows residents to estimate potential savings by combining local, state, and utility incentives. The calculator is

available at electrifydecatur.com.

Electrify Decatur is a community-led initiative that helps residents learn about clean energy technologies and home electrification. The program provides educational resources, guidance on available rebates and tax credits, contractor referrals, and practical information to help homeowners make informed decisions. To learn more, visit electrifydecatur.com or email hello@electrifydecatur.com.



WALK & ROLL SUPERSTAR

Meet the **Iriers, Lorraine, Hasan,** and their two sons (sons not pictured), our July/August Walk & Roll Superstars. The Oakhurst family has built their daily life around biking, walking, and transit, and has called Decatur home for nearly two decades.

Lorraine and Hasan's connection to cycling goes back to the beginning of their relationship. The couple met in 2000 while Lorraine was attending Emory University, and one of her earliest invitations to Hasan was to see the new bike she had purchased on her own. They married in 2004, when Hasan was a graduate student at Emory, and continued to rely on bikes, scooters, walking, and public transit as their primary transportation options.

When they purchased their first home in Oakhurst in 2008, the choice was intentional. The neighborhood offered easy access to MARTA and bike-friendly streets, allowing Hasan to commute to



campus and Lorraine to travel to work by transit. More than 15 years later, the family still calls Oakhurst home.

Their two boys walk to school with friends and bike to activities, growing up with active transportation as a

natural part of daily life. Family outings often include MARTA trips to Atlanta United matches, biking during Porchfest, or quick rides to downtown Decatur. More than 20 years after first bonding over a bicycle, the Iriers remain a one-car family, a choice driven by both economic and environmental values. Rather than purchasing a second vehicle, they invested in Edison electric bikes for local trips.

The family appreciates Decatur's continued investment in bicycle infrastructure, including improvements such as the Howard Avenue bike lane, which make cycling more accessible for families. Their approach to getting around reflects a broader value: that walking, biking, and transit can meet most of a family's daily needs.

Who is your Walk & Roll Superstar?

Nominate someone who inspires you at bit.ly/Walk-and-Roll-Decatur.

Grow with us.
Work here. Make an Impact.

DecaturGA.com/jobs

City of Decatur

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Applications Open for Decatur's Child Friendly Cities Initiative Teen Leadership Team

High school students who live in the City of Decatur are invited to apply for the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Teen Leadership Team.

The Teen Leadership Team is a youth leadership program that gives students the opportunity to work directly with city staff, community partners, and fellow teens to help shape decisions that impact children and youth in Decatur. Through leadership development, team-building activities, and community projects, participants play an active role in implementing Decatur's Local Action Plan for Youth.

The City of Decatur became one of only 3 communities in the nation to earn official UNICEF Child Friendly City recognition. A key part of that achievement has been ensuring that young people have a voice in local government and community decision-making. The Teen Leadership Team helps make that possible by empowering students to identify issues that matter to them and work toward meaningful solutions.

The 2026-2027 Teen Leadership Team will meet throughout the school year from September 2026 through April 2027. Participants will collaborate on projects that support the well-being of children and youth while gaining valuable leadership experience and community service opportunities.

Applications are now open. Students interested in making a difference in their community are encouraged to apply and learn more at decaturga.com/cfci.



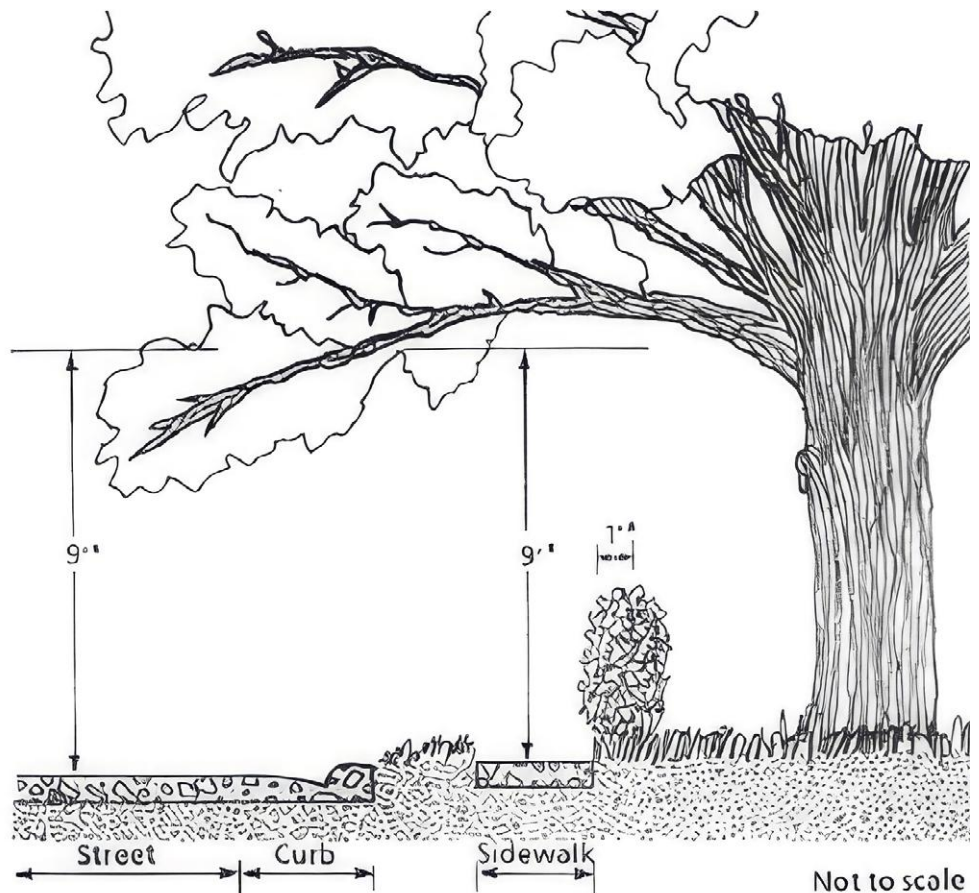
Safe Routes to School: Sidewalk Pruning Reminder

Homeowners and property owners within the City of Decatur city limits are reminded to trim shrubs, trees, and vegetation away from sidewalks to provide safe passage for pedestrians. The deadline to clear sidewalks is July 31, ahead of the start of the school year.

City work crews have been clearing and pruning right-of-way areas and intersections. Community members are also required to keep trees and shrubs pruned clear of sidewalk areas and to avoid blocking roadway visibility. Homeowners may prune street trees planted in the right of way in front of their property.

All tree work performed within city limits on protected trees, on both public and private property, must be conducted in accordance with current ANSI A300 Standards for Tree Care Operations, ANSI Z133 Safety Standards, industry best management practices, and the administrative standards accompanying the City of Decatur Tree Canopy Conservation Ordinance.

For more information, contact City Arborist Kay Evanovich at treepermits@decaturga.com.



**HOLIDAY
SOLID WASTE
& RECYCLING
SCHEDULE**

LABOR DAY

Monday, September 7

Monday route will move to Tuesday, Sept. 8.

Tuesday route will move to Wednesday, Sept. 9.

NO CHANGES TO THURSDAY & FRIDAY ROUTES

Hometown Habitat Winner: Michelle Mergler and George Hughes

After years of city living, Michelle Mergler and George Hughes were excited to finally have an outdoor space of their own when they moved into their Oakhurst home. Their new space was green, but not the ecosystem they had in mind. The couple wanted something more like their favorite Chicago park, Lurie Garden, with its sweeping meadow grasses and wildflowers filled with bees, butterflies, and other critters. Michelle's mother taught the couple about the advantages of using native plants in the landscape to create habitats and ecosystems to solidify their vision for the yard.

They started transforming their yard by hiring a landscape designer who produced a gorgeous watercolor painting of the vision for their front yard. The painting hangs in their house now and is used as inspiration as they make changes to the yard. Like most beautifully layered landscapes, this yard was not built in a day. Each season, the homeowners remove a bit more lawn and add a few more plants.

Michelle is active in the Georgia Native Plant Society. Through this organization, she has learned about and accessed an array of plants that are both beautiful and important parts of a thriving ecosystem. The best part: Michelle doesn't keep that ecosystem and knowledge contained in her space. She loves sharing information and extra plants with neighbors and friends. Thank you to Michelle Mergler and George Hughes for being a resource and inspiration for their community.

Decatur Hometown Habitats is a program sponsored by the Decatur Environmental Sustainability Board. If you would like to nominate a Decatur resident for Decatur Hometown Habitats, please scan the QR code below. The committee is looking for yards that display at least one of the following qualities: native plantings and invasive removal, storm water solutions, recycled and reused materials, healthy tree canopy, and eco-friendly maintenance and stabilizing infrastructure.



INTRODUCING

CONNECTED DECATUR

Decatur's neighborhoods are linked by sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and transit. Connected Decatur is a new quarterly column offering a route through the city built around local destinations: a park, a museum, a corridor worth exploring and the ways to get there without a car. Each installment highlights a different part of Decatur and the connections that make it easy to move through the community on foot, by bike, or by transit. Connected Decatur was inspired by an idea from Decatur resident Harlan Downs-Tepner, who proposed a recurring column showing how easily the city connects on foot, by bike, and by transit.

West Ponce de Leon Avenue

Walkable • Bikeable • MARTA accessible

West Ponce de Leon Avenue runs west from downtown Decatur through the Beacon Hill neighborhood, passing a mix of local restaurants, coffee shops, record stores, breweries, and retail along the way. The corridor is bikeable via dedicated bike lanes, walkable on connected sidewalks, and accessible from Decatur MARTA Station at the eastern end of the route.



Start: Downtown Decatur

Begin at the corner of West Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive, just steps from the Decatur MARTA Station, and head west on foot or by bike. Within the first few blocks, the corridor offers locally owned pizza, vinyl and record shops, a neighborhood brewery, and coffee — a stretch made for stopping, browsing, and refueling before the route opens up toward Beacon Hill.

Detour: Toy Park

A short detour off West Ponce leads to Toy Park, a neighborhood playground and gathering spot tucked into the residential streets north of the corridor.

Midpoint: Adair Park

Continue west to Adair Park, where the pace slows into open lawns, picnic areas, a playground, and a dog park. It is a natural midway rest before the final stretch.

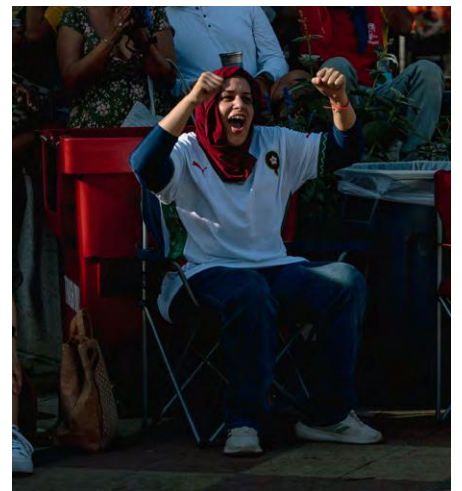
Finish: Ebster Recreation Center and Beacon Hill Museum

105 Electric Ave.
From Adair Park, head east along Trinity Place to Ebster Recreation Center, home to the Beacon Hill Museum. Through exhibits, photographs, and artifacts, the museum documents the history of Decatur's historic Beacon community and the former Trinity High School campus. On a warm day, Ebster Pool offers a fitting way to end the route — with a swim.

The whole loop: approximately 2 miles on foot, or less than 10 minutes by bike, round trip from Decatur Square.

Seen Around WatchFest

The 34 days of FIFA World Cup™ match screenings on the square and daily concerts are drawing to a close. Decatur WatchFest '26 kicked off with a free concert by Big Boi on June 11, and ends with the Indigo Girls after the World Cup final on July 19. It was hot fun in the city, and a grand debut for Decatur's transformed square.



Seniors

Mark your calendar for our upcoming events for seniors.

Aging Independently: Planning Before a Crisis

July 15, 2 p.m., Free

Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.

What does independence really mean as we grow older? Is it staying in the same home no matter what, or having the ability to make thoughtful choices before someone else makes them for us? This session explores housing, support systems, finances, and decision-making, and how planning ahead can help preserve control, dignity, and options for the future. RSVP to demetri.wheeler@decaturga.com.

Estate Planning 101

July 22, 6:30 p.m., Free

Oakhurst Rec Center, 450 East Lake Dr.

In this educational and empowering presentation, Atlanta metro attorney Kimberly Cain will help you create a plan that works when your family needs it most. Parents will learn how to protect their children, and those planning a legacy will gain guidance to make thoughtful, confident decisions for their heirs. RSVP to patrick.white@decaturga.com.

End of Summer Party

August 12, 11 a.m., \$5 at the door

Oakhurst Rec Center, 450 East Lake Dr.

Come celebrate the end of a great summer with music, dancing, light refreshments, and good company! Let's send summer off in style. RSVP by August 7 to patrick.white@decaturga.com.

AI, Scams & Deepfakes: Staying Safe in a Digital World

August 19, 2 p.m., Free

Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.

Technology is changing rapidly—and so are today's scams. Learn how AI, deepfake videos, fake calls, and online fraud are impacting older adults and families, along with practical tips to stay safe and informed. RSVP to demetri.wheeler@decaturga.com.

Youth Events

Register on CommunityPass.

Esports Tournament

July 10 • 4:30-8:30 p.m. • \$10 R/\$15 NR

Ebster Rec Center, 105 Electric Ave.

Get ready for an exciting gaming showdown! Our FC tournament offers high energy competition in a fun, welcoming environment. Players will test their skills, compete for bragging rights, and enjoy friendly rivalry while promoting teamwork, respect, and sportsmanship. All gaming equipment and light refreshments will be provided. Grades 6-12.

Glow in the Dark Pickleball Tournament

July 24 • 7-9 p.m. • \$15 R/\$20 NR

Oakhurst Rec Center, 450 East Lake Dr.

Step into the spotlight for an electrifying indoor glow-in-the-dark pickleball tournament! When the lights go down, the competition heats up. Neon courts, glowing balls, and fast-paced rallies create a high-energy atmosphere where skill, strategy, and focus shine bright. Perfect for competitive beginners and seasoned players ready to battle under the glow and play for the win!

Parents' Night Out – End of Summer Bash

July 31 • 5:30-9 p.m. • \$35 R/\$45 NR

Oakhurst Rec Center, 450 East Lake Dr.

You deserve a break—let us help! Drop off your kids (ages 5-12) for a fun night of games, activities, indoor and outdoor activities, and more while you enjoy some time to yourself. Dinner and a snack are included. Discounts available for siblings. Let's close out the summer with a bang!

Back to School Bash

August 7 • 6:30-8:30 p.m. • \$25 R/\$35 NR

Ebster Rec Center, 105 Electric Ave.

Start the school year with a high-energy bash packed with group games, dancing, karaoke, music, and more. Kids can reconnect with friends, make new ones, and celebrate the new school year with activities, food, treats, and plenty of fun in a welcoming environment. Grades 3-5.



Register

for Parks and Recreation programs at register.communitypass.net/cityofdecatur

Community

Celebrate Parks & Recreation Month in Decatur

July is Parks & Recreation Month, a nationwide celebration of the parks, programs, and people that help build healthy, connected, and vibrant communities.

To celebrate, Decatur Parks & Recreation is hosting a variety of free activities throughout the month. Residents can participate in a community bike and run challenge connecting all three recreation centers, help create nature-inspired murals through Arts in the Parks, enjoy popsicles at the pools, join family-friendly nature activities, attend a movie night, and take part in special events for teens, older adults, and families.

A highlight of the month will be Community Day on July 17, featuring games, activities, music, food, and opportunities to connect with community organizations. The event will also include the Soccer Forward Fest, a free soccer celebration and youth clinic held in partnership with the U.S. Soccer Foundation's Soccer Forward initiative.

Whether you're hitting the trails, creating art in a neighborhood park, attending a community event, or simply enjoying time outdoors, Parks & Recreation Month is a great opportunity to experience all that Decatur's parks and recreation system has to offer.

Follow [@decaturparksandrec](#) on Instagram and Facebook for event details and updates throughout the month.



“Power Her Dreams” Basketball Clinic

Girls ages 6-14 are invited to lace up their sneakers and hit the court for the Atlanta Dream's free Power Her Dreams Basketball Clinic on Tuesday, August 11, from 6-8 p.m. at the Decatur Recreation Center.

Open to all skill levels, the clinic uses basketball as a tool to help girls build confidence, courage, and community in a fun and encouraging environment. Participants will learn the fundamentals of the game, develop leadership skills, connect with positive role models, and make new friends along the way.

Registration is free at dream.wnba.com/power-her-dreams-basketball-clinics.

DECATUR SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Walk & Roll into the New School Year

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national initiative that empowers communities to make walking and biking to school safer, more convenient, and part of everyday life. In Decatur, the program is coordinated by the City's Parks & Recreation Department and supported by a dedicated team of city staff, crossing guards, and parent champions.

The goal is to get more students and adults moving, reduce traffic congestion, and improve air quality around our schools. When walking and biking become safe and routine options, the whole community benefits from improved health, stronger connections, and a cleaner environment.

As we look ahead to the 2026–2027 school year, now is the perfect time to start planning your family's walk-and-roll route to school. Participating in a walk audit is a great way to get involved—these guided assessments help identify both barriers and opportunities for safer, more accessible routes. Parents, guardians, and community members all play a vital role in making Decatur safer for our students. After all, when streets are safer for children, they're safer for everyone. For more information, go to decaturga.com/SRTS.



Go to decaturga.com/playbook or scan the QR code to see the latest Playbook, and dozens of programs for active children, youth, adults, and seniors.

DBA Membership Meetings

The Decatur Business Association invites the public to its monthly membership meetings.

The gatherings offer an opportunity to

hear announcements, connect with fellow business owners, and share ideas. For more information, visit decaturbusinessassociation.com.

July Meeting Tuesday, July 28, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

August Meeting Tuesday, Aug. 25, 5:30-7:30 p.m.



DBA Member Highlight: July

Kim Ritger is the owner of Greater Decatur Speech Therapy, a mobile pediatric speech therapy practice serving children in Decatur through home and school-based sessions. Ritger is a speech-language pathologist with more than 20 years of experience working with children and families across a range of speech, language, and developmental needs, with a focus on early intervention, early childhood language development, and executive function skills.



Sessions are play-based and child-led, with an emphasis on building trust and communication through shared play. The practice supports communication through a variety of methods, including spoken language, sign language, picture-based communication, and assistive devices.

DBA Member Highlight: August

Jeremy Haselwood is the founder of Ampla Marketing, a digital marketing firm serving nonprofits and small to mid-sized businesses. Haselwood, a Decatur resident of more than 10 years, works with organizations to clarify their message, identify their audience, and develop marketing strategies aimed at sustainable growth.

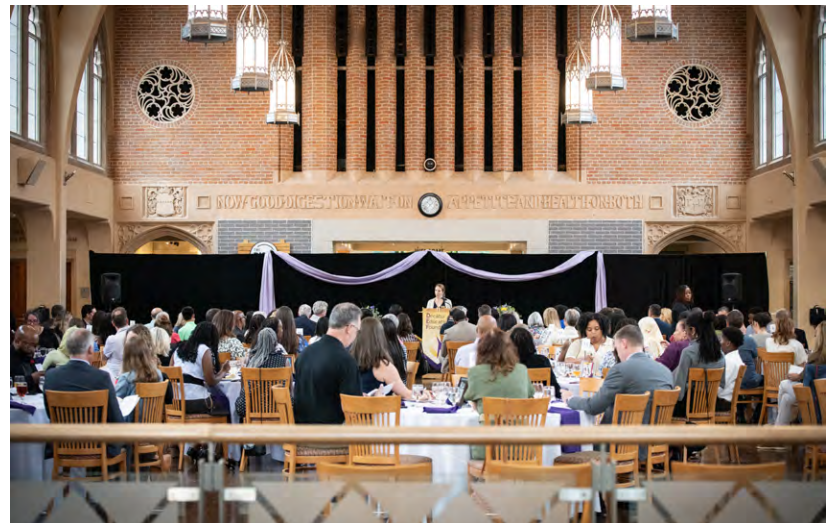


Decatur Education Foundation Awards Scholarships to CSD Graduates and Teachers

The Decatur Education Foundation (DEF) awarded scholarships totaling \$149,000 to 23 recipients on May 21. Twenty scholarships went to graduating Decatur High School seniors and three to CSD teachers pursuing further education.

The DEF college scholarship program was established in 2003. Scholarships recognize academic achievement, resilience, and commitment to community service.

A full list of 2026 DEF Scholarship recipients is available at decatureducationfoundation.org/2026scholarships.



Decatur Civic Chorus Prepares for New Season

The Decatur Civic Chorus begins its new season Monday, Aug. 17. The group is open to all singers without audition and meets Monday evenings.

For more information, visit decaturcivicchorus.org or follow the chorus on Facebook and Instagram at Decatur Civic Chorus, Georgia.



Meaningful Conversations in Decatur

Guild+Journeyman hosts a community event every Saturday from 2-4 p.m. called "Meaningful Conversations in Decatur." This free event, organized by the Decatur Bahá'í community, is meant to spark meaningful dialogue. Inspired by writings from the Bahá'í Faith, the event is open to everyone and welcomes every perspective. Go to facebook.com/MeaningfulConversationsDecatur to learn more about upcoming topics.



Little Shop of Stories Named to Fodor's List

Little Shop of Stories, the independent children's bookstore in downtown Decatur, has been named one of the top 10 children's bookstores in the United States by Fodor's Travel. To read the full list, visit fodors.com/world/north-america/usa/experiences/news/photos/best-childrens-bookstores-in-america.



Decatur Recreation Center Hosts First Atlanta Classic Karate Tournament

The Decatur Recreation Center and Atlanta Shotokan Karate clubs hosted the inaugural Atlanta Classic traditional karate tournament in April. Students from across the Atlanta area competed in three events: Kihon (basic techniques), Kata (forms and routines), and Kumite (free sparring). The tournament was directed by Dr. David Renner.

The event focused on traditional karate, with an emphasis on character development, sportsmanship, and skill. Organizers hope to host additional local events and build a circuit connecting traditional dojos across the area.

Decatur student results:

Beginning/Novice Division

Ellie Zhou — 1st in Kata; 2nd in Kumite and Kihon

Mila Stanojevich — 1st in Kihon

Riley Johnson — 2nd in Kata; 4th in Kihon (first competition)

George Donaldson — 3rd in all events

Rollo Nagle — 5th in Kihon and Kata (first competition)

Novice/Intermediate Division

Julian Nayak — 1st in Kihon; 4th in Kata (first competition)

Beckett Parrot — 3rd in Kihon (first competition)

Thomas Morris — 3rd in Kata and Kumite (first competition)

Charlie Morris — 1st in Kumite; 4th in Kata (first competition)

Ryan Zhou — 4th in Kumite

Advanced/Black Belt Division

Michael Johnson, competing for the first time as the only beginning adult competitor, entered the Advanced/Black Belt division and placed 3rd in Kumite, 4th in Kata and Kihon.

For more information, visit atlshotokankarate.com.



Decatur Busking Program Update

The Decatur Busking Program is continuing to evolve, with several administrative updates taking effect Aug. 1.

All current buskers are required to reapply for the program. Current badges will remain valid through Aug. 1, 2026. Beginning Aug. 1, the following fees will apply: \$10 for an initial busking badge and \$5 for replacement badges.

New applicants are required to submit a performance video of less than five minutes, either uploaded directly to the application or submitted as a YouTube link.

Badge pickup and monthly tag renewals will be available Fridays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Decatur Arts Alliance office, 113 Clairemont Ave. Alternate pickup times may be arranged by contacting staff via email. Visit decatursalliance.org/for-artists/busking-program for more information.

Keep It Moving Community Fitness Classes

Saturdays, July 11, 18 and 25, 10-11 a.m.
Ebster Recreation Center, 105 Electric Ave.

Keep It Moving, a community fitness program led by certified instructor Teretha Green, offers low-impact cardio and wellness classes for seniors and adults of all ages and abilities at Ebster Recreation Center. Each one-hour session includes 45 minutes of cardio and 15 minutes of health, wellness, and community resources. Chair routines are available for participants with limited mobility.

Classes are held the first through third Saturdays of each month. Participants are asked to arrive by 9:45 a.m. for warm-up and sign-in. To register, contact Teretha Green, teretha.green49@gmail.com or 470-362-8533.

GB2 Lady Tigers Basketball Camp

Aug. 23, 10 a.m. -1 p.m. • Woodruff Athletic Complex, 225 E. Dougherty St.

The GB2 Lady Tigers AAU program will host a basketball camp for girls in grades 2-10 at the Woodruff Athletic Complex. The camp fee is \$20. The registration deadline is Aug. 10. To register, visit gb2inc.com.

GB2 Lady Tigers AAU Evaluation Day

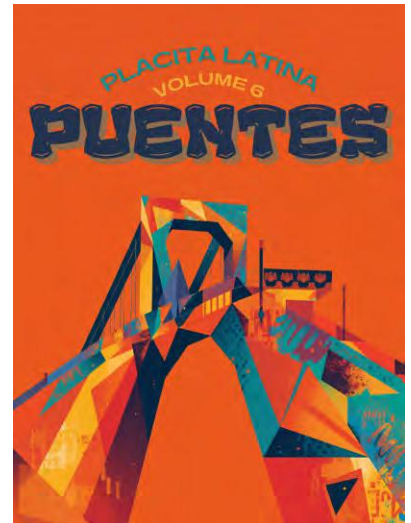
Sept. 13 • Woodruff Athletic Complex, 225 E. Dougherty St.

The GB2 Lady Tigers AAU program will hold player evaluations for girls in grades 2-10. Grades 2-5 will evaluate 1-2:30 p.m. and grades 6-10 will evaluate 2:30-4 p.m. Players should attend the session corresponding to their current grade. Registration deadline is Sept. 12. To register, visit gb2inc.com.

Placita Latina Exhibition v.6: Open Call for Submissions

The Decatur Arts Alliance invites artists to submit work for the sixth annual Placita Latina exhibition, a juried show held in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. This year's theme is "Puentes" (Bridges), exploring the ways Latin artists build understanding, preserve cultural heritage, and create pathways for dialogue through painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, and other forms of creative expression.

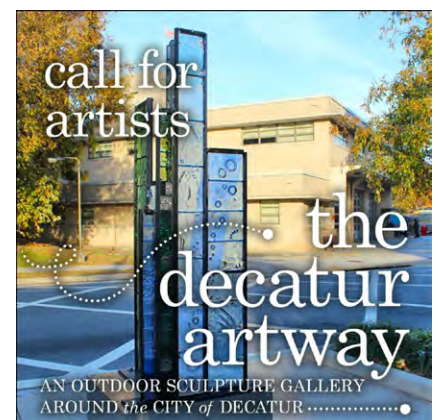
Applications are accepted July 6 through Aug. 16 at decatursalliance.org/opencalls. Artists may submit up to three works for jury consideration. There is no application fee.



Decatur Artway IX: Open Call for Submissions

The Decatur Arts Alliance is accepting applications for Decatur Artway IX, the ninth installment of Decatur's outdoor public sculpture program. Selected sculptures will be displayed on temporary two-year loans at locations throughout the city. An interactive online map and on-site plaques will provide information about each artist and work.

Apply from July 15 through Sept. 15 on CallForEntry.org. For more information, visit decatursalliance.org/open-call/decaturs-artway-ix-sculptures.



EVENTS CALENDAR

JULY

- 4 Pied Piper Parade**, Concert & Fireworks, 4 p.m., Downtown Decatur
- 7 Better Together Advisory Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., Virtual
- 14 Parks & Rec Board Meeting**, 6 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 18 Decatur DeKalb 4 Miler**, 7 a.m., Decatur High, 310 N. McDonough St., page 17
- 20 City Commission Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 27 Lifelong Community Advisory Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.

AUGUST

- 3 Active Transportation Committee**, 4 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 3 City Commission Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 4 Better Together Advisory Board**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 7 Screen on the Square**, 7 p.m., Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square, page 16
- 10 Zoning Board of Appeals**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 11 Parks & Rec Board Meeting**, 6 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 11 Planning Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 14 Safe Routes to School Committee**, 9 a.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr.
- 14 Pan African Festival Documentary Screening & Panel Discussion**, 6:30 p.m., Decatur High School Performing Arts Center, 310 N. McDonough St., page 17
- 15 Pan African Festival**, 2 p.m., Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square, page 17
- 17 City Commission Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 18 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 24 Environmental Sustainability Board Meeting**, 4 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 24 Lifelong Community Advisory Board**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Truckin' Tuesdays**, 5 p.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr., page 17
- 1 Better Together Advisory Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 3 Oakhurst Jazz Nights**, 7 p.m., 321 W. Hill St., page 16
- 4 Safe Routes to School Committee**, 9 a.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr.
- 7 Active Transportation Committee**, 4 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 8 Truckin' Tuesdays**, 5 p.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr., page 17
- 8 Parks & Rec Board Meeting**, 6 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 8 Planning Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 8 City Commission Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 10 Oakhurst Jazz Nights**, 7 p.m., 321 W. Hill St., page 16
- 11 Screen on the Square**, 7 p.m., Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square, page 16
- 14 Zoning Board of Appeals**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 15 Truckin' Tuesdays**, 5 p.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr., page 17
- 15 Historic Preservation Commission Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 17 Oakhurst Jazz Nights**, 7 p.m., 321 W. Hill St., page 16
- 19 Placita Latina, Salsa on the Square**, 4 p.m., Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square, page 17
- 22 Truckin' Tuesdays**, 5 p.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr., page 17
- 24 Oakhurst Jazz Nights**, 7 p.m., 321 W. Hill St., page 16
- 28 Environmental Sustainability Board Meeting**, 4 p.m., Decatur Rec Center, 231 Sycamore St.
- 28 City Commission Meeting**, 7:30 p.m., City Hall, 509 N. McDonough St.
- 29 Truckin' Tuesdays**, 5 p.m., Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr., page 17

Visit decaturnwatchfest26.com for remaining Decatur WatchFest 26 concerts and FIFA World Cup matches.



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Woodlands Garden Annual Fall Plant Sale

Saturday, Sept. 20 and Sunday, Sept. 21
Woodlands Garden, 932 Scott Blvd.

Woodlands Garden will host its annual Fall Plant Sale over two days in September. The event features a self-guided shopping experience with native Piedmont plants, houseplants donated by local gardeners, and plants harvested from the garden. More than 50 native plants will be available for purchase, many grown from seed and harvested on site or sourced from native plant nurseries. Proceeds support garden maintenance.

Additional programming will include plant walks and talks with local environmental specialists. Due to limited parking, registration is required. A full plant availability list and registration details are available at woodlandsgarden.org/fall-plant-sale.



Screen on the Square

Zootopia 2 • August 7, 7 p.m.

GOAT • September 11, 7 p.m.

Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square

Zootopia 2 follows rookie cops Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde undercover on the twisting trail of a perilous case that turns the animal metropolis upside down.

GOAT follows Will Harris, a small goat with big dreams who gets a chance to join a professional roarball league, a high-intensity, co-ed, full-contact sport. Will defies the odds to compete against the fastest and fiercest animals in the world.

All screenings are free and open to the public. Bring blankets and lawn chairs. Popcorn will be available for \$1, and Kona Ice will be on site for purchase. Presented by Visit Decatur GA and the Decatur Downtown Development Authority.



Oakhurst Jazz Nights

Thursdays, Sept. 3, 10, 17 and 24, 7-9 p.m.

The Solarium lawn, 321 W. Hill St.

The Oakhurst Neighborhood Association presents free outdoor jazz concerts on the lawn in front of The Solarium every Thursday evening in September. Concerts are rain or shine. Blankets and low chairs are welcome; high-back chairs are not permitted on the lawn. Table reservations and accommodations are available. For more information, visit oakhurstjazznights.com.



Studio Artists' Collective Exhibition

July 10-Aug. 22

Thursday through Saturday, 1-5 p.m.
Hyatt Cottage, Legacy Park
500 S. Columbia Drive
The Hyatt Cottage Studio Artists' Collective presents its second annual exhibition, curated entirely by the studio artists themselves. The public is invited to view diverse bodies of work on display throughout the summer.



Opening Reception

Friday, July 10, 6:30-9 p.m. • Hyatt Cottage, Legacy Park
The opening reception also offers a final opportunity to visit the open studios of the 2025-2026 studio artists.

Volunteers are needed to serve as gallery sitters. To sign up, visit decaturartsalliance.org/get-involved/volunteer. For more information, visit decaturartsalliance.org/event/2025-2026-studio-artists-collective-exhibition.

Truckin' Tuesdays

Tuesdays, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 5-8 p.m.
Legacy Park, 500 S. Columbia Dr.

Food trucks will be on site at Legacy Park every Tuesday evening in September. The park offers open green space for families to spread out and relax. Children and leashed pets are welcome. Events are weather permitting.



Placita Latina Salsa on the Square

Sept. 19, 4-10:30 p.m. • Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square
Salsa on the Square returns to Decatur Square for an evening of Latin music, dance, and community. The event will feature local food and artisan vendors and free dance lessons open to all experience levels. The performer lineup is to be determined. Co-sponsored by the Decatur Business Association. For more information, visit decaturdba.com.

Madison Avenue Derby Returns Oct. 24

The Madison Avenue Derby returns to Oakhurst on Saturday, Oct. 24, bringing a day of soapbox racing, homemade car builds, costumes, and family-friendly activities to Madison Avenue.

Participants of all ages are invited to design, build, and race gravity-powered soapbox cars, competing for speed and design awards. This year's optional theme category celebrates the 1980s, with racers welcome to incorporate retro inspiration from the decade into their car designs. All car designs are welcome regardless of theme participation.

The event will also feature food, entertainment, and community activities throughout the day. Spectator admission is free. Sponsors, volunteers, and race participants are currently being sought. For registration, sponsorship opportunities, and volunteer details, visit madavederby.org.

Decatur DeKalb 4 Miler

Saturday, July 18 • 7-10 a.m.

Decatur High School, 310 N McDonough St.

The Decatur DeKalb 4 Miler is part of the Atlanta Track Club's 2026 Grand Prix Series. The race runs through Decatur neighborhoods and is considered one of the Atlanta Track Club's more challenging courses. Registration opens 60 days prior to the event. For more information, visit atlantatrackclub.org/grand-prix-series.

Pan African Festival

Friday, Aug. 14, 6:30 p.m.

Documentary Screening and Panel Discussion

Decatur High School Performing Arts Center, 310 N. McDonough St.

The Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights will present the debut screening of its documentary on Aug. 14, followed by a panel discussion on reparations in Decatur and abroad.

Festival Day, Aug. 15, 2-10 p.m.

Decatur Square, 101 E. Court Square

The theme for this year's festival, presented by the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights in conjunction with the City of Decatur, is Liberation Rising: Remember, Resist, Rejoice.

The festival will feature a children's village with arts, crafts, and games; live painting; a food court; and an African marketplace with vendors offering clothing, jewelry, art, and health and body products. Music will include a set by Stan Zeff and a headlining performance by Sa-Roc. Attendees can also participate in a self-guided walking tour of the Beacon Hill community.

For vendor inquiries, contact Fonta High at transformation88.3@gmail.com. For volunteer opportunities, contact Sonja Willis at sonjawillis68@gmail.com. For sponsorship information, contact Phil Cuffey at pcuffey@gmail.com. For general information, visit beaconhillblackalliance.org.

Agnes Scott College Offers Masters in School Counseling

Agnes Scott College is accepting applications for its School Counseling Master of Arts program for a fall 2026 start. The program prepares graduates to sit for the National Counselor Exam (NCE) and the Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators (GACE) subject tests in school counseling, supporting certification eligibility in Georgia.

The curriculum prepares students for careers in K-12 school settings, private practice as educational consultants, or roles within community organizations.

The School Counseling program launches alongside the College's Clinical Mental Health Counseling master's program. The most recent graduating class, in May 2026, was the largest counseling class in the College's history, with 73 students completing the program.

For more information, visit agnesscott.edu/forwardthinkers.

Celebrating the STM Class of 2026

Saint Thomas More (STM) Catholic School celebrated 45 graduates this spring as the Class of 2026 completed its final year at STM. It is the school's 75th anniversary class.

Over the course of their time at STM, students engaged in academic study, faith formation, friendship, service, and community involvement. The graduation ceremony included remarks from students reflecting on their experiences and the lessons they will carry forward.

For more information, visit stmga.org/student-life/after-graduation.cfm.



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DHS Celebrates Class of 2026

The City Schools of Decatur (CSD) community gathered at the Georgia State Convocation Center in May to celebrate the Decatur High School (DHS) Class of 2026 graduation. The graduates were honored by the Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, CSD teachers and staff, and family and friends.

Prior to graduation, members of the Class of 2026 returned to their elementary schools for the annual Senior Walk, giving graduates, current students, and staff an opportunity to mark the occasion together.






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CSD Honors 16 Retirees

City Schools of Decatur (CSD) honored 16 retiring staff members in 2026, recognizing a combined 293 years of service to CSD students and schools.

2026 retirees:

- Carolyn Edwards, College Heights, 11 years
- Elecia Fulton, College Heights, 15 years
- Lynn Hanson, Wilson Center, 24 years
- Denise Henderson, Westchester, 7 years
- William Hughley, Operations Department, 18 years

- Lisa Johnston, Beacon Hill Middle School, 8 years
- Toni Olsen-Wilson, Beacon Hill Middle School, 12 years
- Regina Shipp-Jones, Decatur High School, 6 years
- Angela Spencer, Westchester, 21 years
- Kristen Tavel, Winona Park, 24 years
- Julia Walsh, Westchester, 14 years
- Jackie White, Beacon Hill Middle School, 42 years

- Doug Whitehead, Beacon Hill Middle School, 23 years
- Arlethea Williams, Decatur Virtual Academy, 29 years
- Liz Williams, Beacon Hill Middle School, 10 years
- Greg Wiseman, Winona Park, 29 years

City Schools of Decatur thanks these individuals for their dedication and service to the community.



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Talley Street Fifth Graders Showcase Soft Skills at Amazing Shake Competition

Talley Street Upper Elementary fifth graders participated in the school's 2026 Amazing Shake competition, demonstrating soft skills including handshakes, eye contact, conversation, and poise as they interviewed to serve as the next group of Talley Street house leaders.

Judges included Decatur Mayor Tony Powers, Commissioner Cheryl Kortemeier, members of the CSD Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Gyimah Whitaker, local elected officials, and community members.

The 2026-2027 Talley Street house leaders are Lu Starrchan (Altruismo), Kate Schoeman (Amistad), Austin Sims (Isibindi), Hailey Richardson (Nukumori), Ian Ramon (Onraka), Evie Kelly (Rêveur), and heads of house staff, Jillian Farley, Alicia Reno, Jessica Young, Lindsey Combs, Ashley Forman, and Lyndsei Pacini.



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DHS Class of 2026 Sets School Record for Volunteer Service

The Decatur High School Class of 2026 logged 16,026 volunteer hours during their four years of high school, setting a school record for community service. The total is nearly double that of previous classes.

Students volunteered with organizations including Trees Atlanta, the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and Zoo Atlanta, among others. On campus, contributions included painting murals, working concessions, and supporting teachers.



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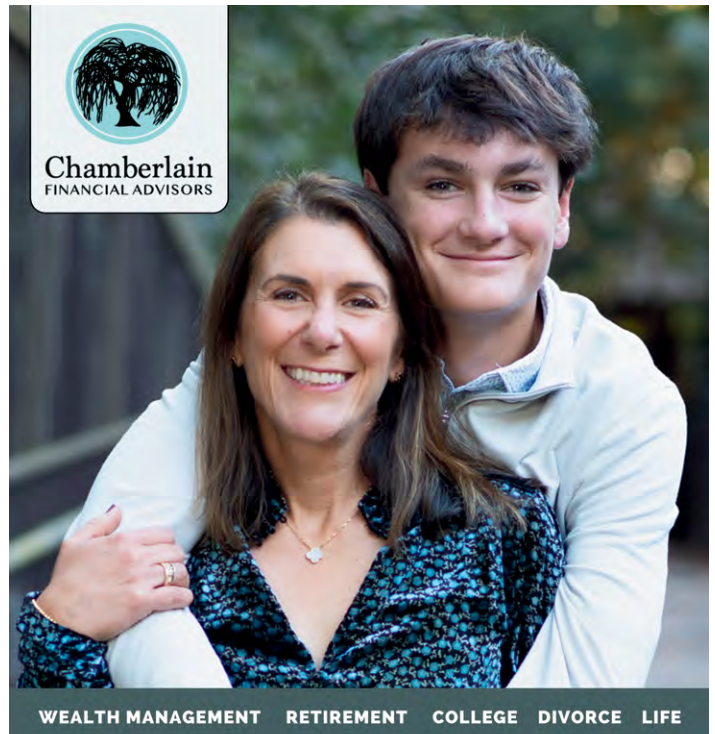
*Source: 2025 NAR/MLS
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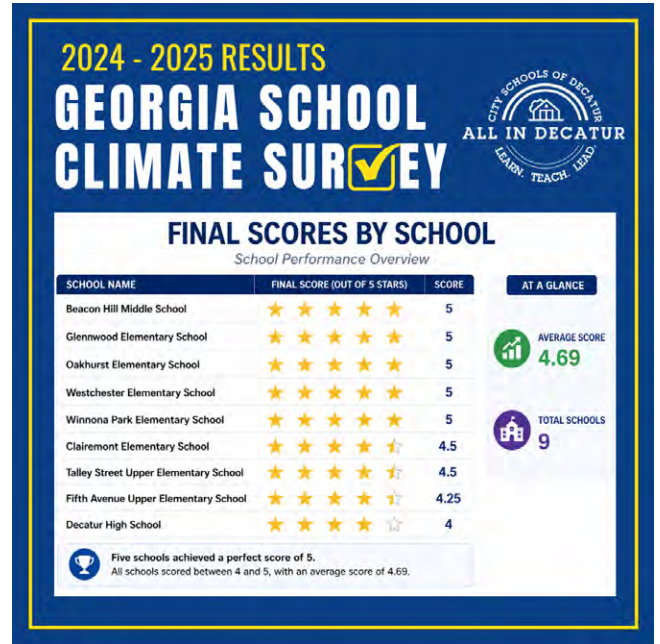
City Schools of Decatur is highly ranked among Georgia schools and at the heart of a supportive community. CSD invites you to be "All In" and subscribe to receive the latest news and information at tinyurl.com/csdschoolnewsletter, or scan the QR code.



All CSD Schools Earn Top Climate STAR Ratings

All City Schools of Decatur schools earned at least four out of five stars on the 2024-2025 Georgia Department of Education Climate STAR Rating Survey, which asks students, families, teachers, and staff to assess school environments, safety, relationships, and conditions that support student learning.

Glennwood, Oakhurst, Westchester, Winnona Park, and Beacon Hill Middle School each earned five stars. Clairemont and Talley Street earned 4.5 stars, FAVE earned 4.25 stars, and Decatur High School earned 4 stars. CSD's average Climate STAR rating for 2024-2025 was 4.69, up from 4.4 the previous year.



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