



The MouseHouse is back this month!

Amazing Animated Xmas Display on McLendon Ave.

by Beth Damon

You may remember the clever and unique diorama at the top of McLendon Avenue during the four years it was displayed beginning in 2020; it is a one-of-a-kind Christmas diorama that we are lucky to have in our own Lake Claire. The pictures here and on Page 5 give you an idea, but it is A MUST to experience this in person with the movement and the audio. I wrote about this in the Clarion in 2020 and 2023, but as a reminder, or in case you haven't seen the exhibit, or you are new to the 'hood, I wanted to reprint the story.

Don Newby and Joe O'Brien moved to their house on McLendon 46 years ago. When they retired from AT&T,
Cont. on p. 5



Stephanie Voss, Geigenbaumeisterin

by Jane Branscomb

Not every neighborhood can lay claim to a resident geigenbaumeisterin – a master luthier, or violin maker. We have Stephanie Voss.

Stephanie, a 20-year resident of Lake Claire, owns a store and workshop in the Old Fourth Ward, where she and two employees restore, repair, rent, sell, and hand-build bows and bowed instruments. Crossing its threshold in the bustling Ponce City Market district is like stepping into the old world.

Stephanie grew up in Hamburg, Germany. “My grandfather was a musician, my father was a musician, and as kids,

we always had to play an instrument. We could choose which one, but we had to at least give it a try for a couple years before we were allowed to stop it.” She began with recorder and moved on to classical guitar and then violin.

A staff member at a violin shop where she interned in high school told her about the violin-making school in Mittenwald, Germany he had attended. She decided to apply, despite its having upwards of 700 applicants for just 12 seats. She stayed in the running through the next round as one of 42 invited for a two-day bench test, which

Thanks for Attending the Lake Claire Craft Fair

With clear skies making us happy and relieved, our adventurous artists, musicians, and food vendors braved cold 40s setting up tents and tables on the morning of December 6. With the help of hot soup and beverages, 100s of neighbors and visitors to Lake Claire immensely enjoyed the day, joining us to create community in the way that has attracted people to our neighborhood for many years.

Thank you again to our generous sponsors: District 5 City Councilperson Liliana Bakhtiari; Cynthia Baer Real Estate; Neal & Wright, LLC; John Morgan (Park Realty); BOND Community Federal Credit Union, Hill Manufacturing, Steve Raimonde (Keller Knapp Realtor); Joe Agee; YOM Ice Cream; Meghan Riley (Keller Knapp Realtor); Little Muscles; Clifton Sanctuary Ministries; Beryl Firestone Design; and Lake Claire Neighbors.

We had two great first-time appearances: The Seed & Feed Marching Abominable Band participated (see pictures p. 4 and 16), and Meghan Riley

did a Holiday Photo Booth (see article and pics, page 17), hopefully the start of new traditions on both counts.

There are many moving parts to this venture, and it could not have been such a success without our volunteers—as well as all of you who attended and supported the artists and food vendors. See the thank-yous, more details, and pictures on our website (www.lake-clairecraftfair.com)—and a sampling of the pictures pages 4, 10–11, and 16. A special shout-out of appreciation to our Lake Claire neighbor/photographer Debbie Livingston, who was at the fair literally all day, taking **700+** pictures that she processed and whittled-down to the 218 on the website; on Page 1, click the link “View 2025 photos here.”

Finally, we are so pleased that through sponsorships and vendor sales, Lake Claire was able to donate \$7000 (!) to Midtown High School, Howard Middle School, and Mary Lin and Hope Hill elementaries.

Do check out the photos! Thanks, everyone!

involved playing the instrument, drawing, and about 10 hours of woodworking. “And then one day, there was this very slim envelope from the school. My mom put it on the table, and she just watched me. I thought, oh, that’s too thin! I didn’t want to open it. And then I just opened it, and it said something like, ‘Oh, congratulations. You scored number 10.’ So I was in, and that’s how I got started.”

Stephanie completed her studies and went to work in a Munich violin workshop until, in 1994, a tourist visa

led to an H-1B visa (and eventual citizenship) when she was recruited to join Williams Gengakki Violins in Atlanta. Four years later she hung out her shingle as an independent luthier, first working out of her home and then acquiring a space in Ponce Springs Lofts.

Stephanie is a walking encyclopedia on all aspects of the violin, viola, and cello—their history and evolution, their construction and acoustics, the industry and its history, the materials and their sourcing and regulation... I

Cont. on p. 17

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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and not those of Lake Claire Neighbors Officers, or the Clarion staff.

The Clarion Newspaper (and its predecessor Neighbors Monthly Newsletter and its predecessor Lake Claire Neighbors Flyer) has been written, edited, and distributed by volunteers since 1989.

Calendar for January

Plus, see Land Trust happenings on P. 19. Please note that Frazer Forest Volunteer Workdays with Trees Atlanta will resume this coming March.

15 The Lake Claire monthly neighborhood meeting - third Thursday of each month. Lake Claire Neighbors is continuing hybrid meetings, both in-person at the Frazer Center and virtual, on Zoom. See lakeclaire.org for updates and Zoom info. Sign up for neighborhood mailings and the Zoom link at lakeclaire.org/resources/newscast-sign-up/.

17 Fiddler's Green Coffeehouse (3rd Saturdays), 7 p.m. \$10 at door (members \$8). Doors open at 6:30. This month's musicians: Ron Hipp and Frank Critelli. For more details about the musicians, music schedule, and other info: aaffm.org/aaffm-events/

19 Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day (always observed on the third Monday of January to honor Dr. King's birthday, Jan. 15, 1929). Some community service opportunities for families are here, and you can surely Google for more: www.atlantahistorycenter.com/event/martin-luther-king-jr-day-2026/. And please see poem in honor of Dr. King on page 3.

31 Lake Claire Community Land Trust Winter Dance, 7-11 p.m. at the First Existentialist Church. See P. 19 & visit www.LCCLT.org/new-events.

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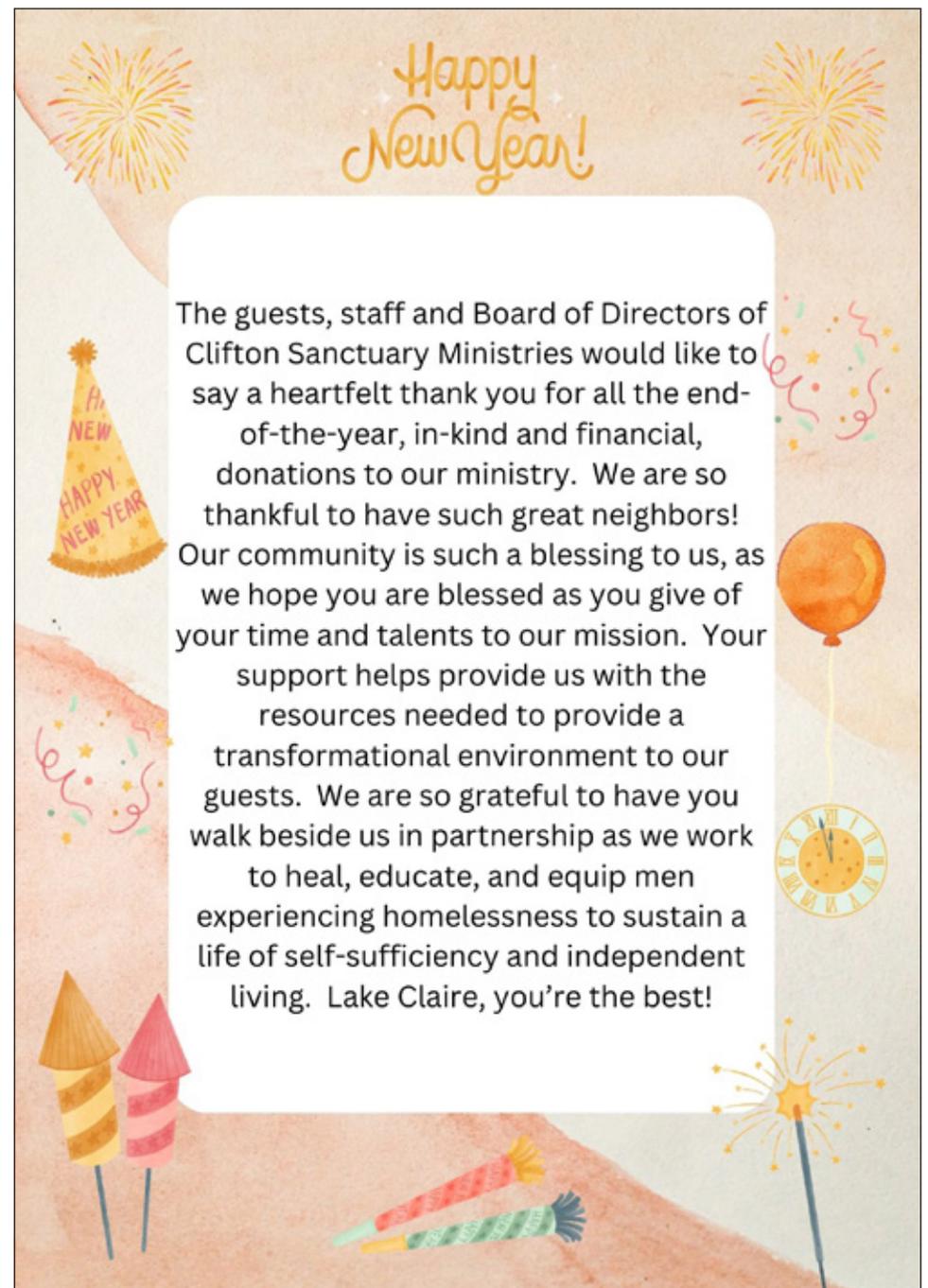
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Happy Hearts Arts and Crafts Show and Open House, featuring 8 artists from Lake Claire and adjacent neighborhoods—
 Saturday, February 7, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., 416 Lakeshore Dr NE



THE CLARION IS PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER.

And the Wind Fell Bleeding

for Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 20, 1986

by Stephen Wing

How long has it been
since I cried three times
in a night?

Once at the newsreel
of the three cops in riot helmets
wrestling the portly grey-haired lady
down

Again at the words
swelling in the golden throat of the dreamer
who saw the promised land and knew
we could not conquer it by killing
this time

And again when I heard
how that windpipe shattered
and the wind fell bleeding

*And I kept thinking what if
all over America in black
factory towns and cities
full of white marble*

*people are
walking out of chapels
and capitol rotundas tonight
feeling what I feel?*

Water & Traffic May Flow, but Don't Try Bathing in an Expressway

by Kevin H. Posey

Here's a question for you to consider: If a road is congested, should it be widened? If you answered yes, can you name a major urban highway expansion project that didn't revert within five years to the same average traffic speed as before the expansion?

Don't try too hard, because they don't exist.

Widening a road to alleviate congestion is an intuitively obvious solution to most Americans. Generations of planners reinforced this thinking by leading the public—and themselves—to think of traffic as being like water. The use of terms and concepts like Traffic Flow Models, fluid dynamics, and compression waves are a means by which highway planning professionals remove individual driver decisions from the process and replace them with mindless liquid. If there is too much flowing liquid in a channel, the impulse is to widen the channel to prevent backups. If traffic is viewed as a fluid, road expansions become the default choice for alleviating traffic congestion.

You can see this attitude in play in metropolitan areas all over the U.S. Whenever a road gets busy, planners look for ways to widen it, no matter what the effect may be on communities abutting the road. Homeowners along Georgia 400 north of Atlanta are continually losing parts of yards or even entire homes because commuters further out believe that a wider road will speed up their drive times. Planners can leverage this belief to justify expansion projects.

Too bad it doesn't work. Consider the Katy Freeway in Houston, an expansion project completed in 2011. Local planners and politicians believed it would remedy a major congestion problem with its astounding 23 lanes. Immediately after the project was completed, congestion dipped... briefly. Three years later congestion was 30% worse.

Need another example of a road expansion failure? Look at the experience of Los Angeles when the 405 Freeway

Cont. on p. 8

A Note from our LC Prez

Dear Neighbors,

It's been a while since I wrote in the Clarion. This time, instead of talking about particular events, I'd like to highlight how life in our neighborhood can be interesting by just hanging out in front of your house. Late this summer, I was going to my mailbox when a neighbor on Hardendorf Ave., the next street up, happened to be driving by and stopped to say hello. During the conversation, he mentioned a video of an interview with Sam Altman, founder of *Open AI* that would literally blow me away. Until that point, I had little understanding of AI except as an editing tool on Microsoft Word, so it seemed like a good idea to find out what Altman was saying. The interview was so amazing that I looked for others, finding one held at a Federal Reserve conference, in which he began with an ominous statement to a select audience: "You have no idea what's coming!" The rest of the interview was an honest portrayal of both the upsides and downsides of AI, ending with the prospect of a "superintelligence" capable of outthinking humans.

Now it's fair to ask, what has all this to do with Lake Claire, besides a chance encounter on the street? Lake Claire Neighbors isn't developing an AI software system so that one VP can run everything, and we don't have a large data center using up electricity and water resources (I think the closest one is in East Point). On the other hand, most of us are probably using AI in one way or another, and you may have seen a



Joe at the Lake Claire Craft Fair
(photo by Debbie Livingston)

Waymo autonomous vehicle dropping off and picking up passengers in the neighborhood. The reality is that it directly affects us, whether riding in a driverless car, a radical rearrangement at workplaces, amazing innovations in medicine, or the ability to expand research capabilities beyond what we could have ever imagined. All the while evolving at a faster pace than anything in technological history!

Much has been written about AI, and many of you are already aware of the implications of this new technology. The practical applications are obvious, but since it also concerns how we use our ability to think, a rich tradition developed for millennia, it begs the question of what will it mean to be human in the future? To have a better understanding of the impact of this in-

Cont. on p. 12

Increase in dues payments from \$20 to \$25, beginning in 2026

by Joe Agee

This is the first increase in Lake Claire dues since the process was begun many years ago. We don't like doing this, but clearly everything has gone up in price since then, and dues are crucial for covering our basic operating expenses. These include the annual incorporation renewal, post office box, website, meeting space at the Frazer Center, PayPal

fees, and most recently, expenses for our own Zoom site. Since paying dues is purely voluntary, we rely on your willingness and generosity so that we can continue to serve the neighborhood.

Our thanks to you all!

P.S. We still have a great promotion: \$5 off the Lake Claire banner, when you buy a banner at the time you pay dues.

Lake Claire Craft Fair – December 6, 2025

continued on pages 10, 11 & 16



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Mary Lin Chorus



Yom Ice Cream, one of the sponsors



Travelled longest: Beaumont Woodworking / comes every year all the way from Tallahassee, Fla!



Safer McLendon exhibit



Seed and Feed Marching Abominables

All pictures on pp. 4, 10, 11 and 16 by Debbie Livingston



Don Newby's MouseHouse

Continued from page 1.

they began decorating their front yard for all of the holidays, but Easter, Halloween, and Christmas have had the most elaborate decorations. "We did Halloween up big, before it was the rage to do so," Don told me. And at Christmas in 2020, they began featuring the diorama. Sadly, this past August, 2025, Joe passed away. (We express our sincere condolences to Don. Please see Page 7, for more on Joe.)

It is so exciting that neighbors/friends convinced Don to put out the animated display again this year after its hiatus. (Thank you, Gillian Grable.) Several neighbors helped Don set it up on Sunday, December 21 (see picture at right), and when you get this Clarion, you will find that it is now available to experience.

History: When Don was 15 years old, he made his first animated Christmas display to go in his home's picture window in Kokomo, Indiana. He had been fascinated by Christmas windows at the department stores in Indianapolis. He had requested that his mother ask in the store's upstairs office what they did with the old displays, since there were new ones each year. Don thought they might let him have one. After several years of her refusal to ask, Don said defiantly, OK, he would build his own. He finished the "MouseHouse," and he installed it on Christmas Eve

in 1965. He made it by dismantling his battery-operated toys and taking the parts and motors from the toys to construct it. It had two hand-sewn characters that were mice, so he called it the MouseHouse. Unfortunately, after only ten minutes, the batteries ran down, and all the movement stopped. Don's dad, who was a TV repairman, saved the day; he got a piece of equipment out of his shop that converted 110 volts to battery power.

Over the next five years, Don perfected and added to his MouseHouse. He tore up more toys to construct more moving parts, using tinker toys and old record players. He made everything with a toy saw and a glue gun. He changed out the mice for four kittens. The storyline is of three naughty kittens that have stayed up past their bedtime on Christmas Eve. Santa Kat catches them in the act of opening their Christmas presents.

Prior to 2020 in Lake Claire, the last time the MouseHouse was on display was 47 years before. Don had rented it out to a department store, and the lights in their store window were so hot that pieces of the MouseHouse kept falling off as the heat from the hot lights melted the glue that held everything together. At the time, Don didn't repair the MouseHouse, and when Don and Joe moved to Atlanta, the Mouse-

House came along as is. They stored it in the basement all of those years; there was no place to display it, but Don was not willing to part with it.

The MouseHouse needed a lot of work, it wasn't covered, and there were decades of dirt on it. Some motors would no longer work, and all those pieces that had fallen off had never been put back. But Don and Joe refurbished the display in 2020 and built a special Christmas shed for their front yard on McLendon to display it. It's never a finite project, though," Don told me wryly, "there is no handbook on repairing the MouseHouse; it is always touch-and-go with more improvements and enhancements, plus things breaking. And, it's hard to remember exactly how one did something 60 years ago."

Don's skills include building things, but notably, he is also a concert pianist. The background music in the display is a recording of Don's piano-playing. This is part of the reason you **must** experience this in person. As an aside, on the picture on Page 1, I didn't use Don's suggested caption, "Naughty Kitten dances on the bed after receiving a teddy bear for Christmas."

If you remember and loved the Christmas windows at Rich's in downtown Atlanta, as I did growing up here, then you will enjoy this scaled-down version complete with audio; and if you

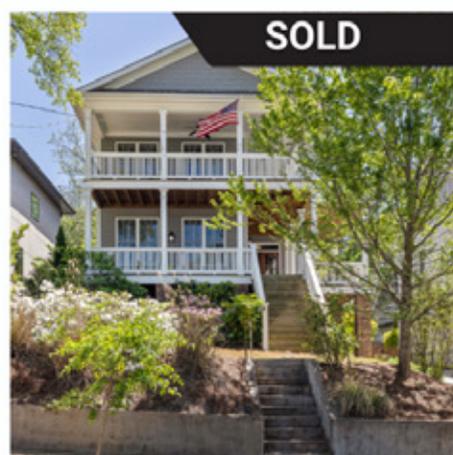
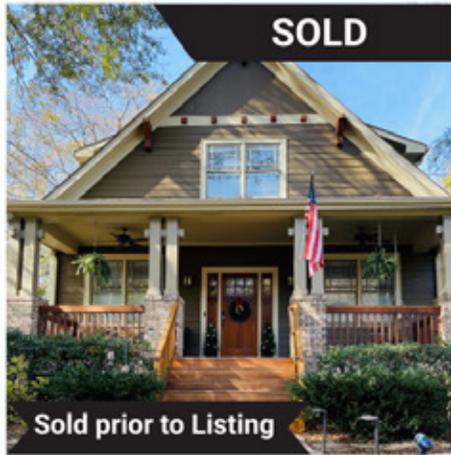


are too young to have heard of Rich's, you will also love it. The display is planned to be in place this year until around the end of January. Whether or not you have seen it before, it is worth your while to make your way to the east end of McLendon near Ridgecrest this month. I've enjoyed watching it multiple times! It runs between dark and 9:00 p.m. Just press the button, and enjoy... **Bring the family!**

Editor's Note: I wrote this in 2023, after many emails with Don, including this one that struck me as an example
Cont. on p. 12



Setting up the diorama on December 21 turned into a neighborhood event.



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Joseph "Joe" Francis O'Brien

August 30, 1944 - August 3, 2025

Joe O'Brien, longtime resident of McLendon Avenue, passed away August 3, at the age of 80, surrounded by family and friends. Joe and his husband of 53 years, Don Newby (formerly of West Middleton, Indiana) moved to Atlanta in 1979 with a dream to open their own piano and organ retail store. They were unsuccessful in starting that business, but Joe subsequently had a long tenure in management for Bellsouth (AT&T) and retired in 2002 at 58.



Joe O'Brien and Don Newby in their prime

Joe and Don bought their Lake Claire home on McLendon Avenue in 1980, then a dilapidated house that they restored together, doing all the work themselves. Joe loved working in the yard, and he and Don became well-loved in Lake Claire, for many reasons, and their unique front-yard decorations were certainly a conversation-starter (see article Page 1).

Joe was originally from Maine; he graduated from Vanceboro High School in June 1962, and he joined the United States Navy the same month. Thirteen years after high school, he earned his BBA in just three years from Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. He had a strong work ethic and a passion for life and travel. A stylish dresser in his youth, Joe was known to wear plaid pants and bright colors. Sunflowers were his favorite flowers. He collected rooster and Santa Claus



Joe with Maxx

figurines and was especially proud of his two dragon tattoos. Joe had a vivid soul and a memorable personality. In the early 1970s, eager to see the world, he traveled for three months in Europe, Egypt, and India. Later in his lifetime, he visited Russia, China, Australia, and South America, among other countries. In his domestic travels, he sought out county, state, and national fairs. In Joe's early travels, a weekend trip to Atlantic City with a group of friends turned into a life-changing encounter. While on the Boardwalk, Joe and his friends happen to meet Don Newby (who may or may not have already spotted them on the Boardwalk). They invited Don to a casual dinner at McDonald's, specifically a #1 value meal! While at dinner, Joe shyly invited Don for a stroll on the Boardwalk. From that moment, their lives were one.

Joe's funeral service was in Kokomo, Indiana, and he is buried there next to Don's family. The obituary noted that the bereaved included Maxx, Joe's miniature schnauzer, pictured here.

Don, we are deeply sorry for your loss.



“Pet Neighborhood” opened on December 17!

by Scott McLane

The long-awaited so-called “Pet Neighborhood” of 120 indoor/outdoor dog kennels opened on December 17 to much fanfare. Now, LifeLine will need to decide how to best use the new space. In 2024, Lifeline had to make the decision, influenced by the State Department of Agriculture's annual inspection, to set the number of dogs that could be humanely cared for given the facility limitations and county funding. With some negotiation, they arrived at the number 475 dogs.

The Pet Neighborhood will now provide appropriate space for “Dangerous Animals” and “bite quarantined” dogs, in addition to removing dogs from metal shoreline kennels that were: 1) intended for cats and 2) intended for short-term stays instead of *months*. It is currently unknown if the county has allocated additional funding for staffing that would “allow” Lifeline to increase the number of dogs that can be humanely “serviced” to over 475, or if the Georgia Department of Agriculture would approve an increase. There are many factors influencing this. The term “right sizing” is often used when discussing the number of dogs that can be humanely serviced at the shelter. If “right sizing” were actually applied to the building as originally built in 2017, we would have less than 300 dogs at the shelter. As a result of this decision to manage 475 dogs, we have had to build

80 cleaning kennels in spaces that were intended as play yards and concrete yards intended as spaces for potential adopters to meet dogs. Less than 300 dogs is not advocated by anyone intimately involved with the shelter—some may remember the week we had 640 (!) dogs in the shelter, but it does illustrate the very large speed bumps/roadblocks that Lifeline has had to navigate in managing a relatively new, undersized, and underfunded facility. That said, the County, under the leadership of Lorraine Cochran-Johnson, and commitment of Commissioner Michele Long-Spears, has stepped up to relieve SOME of the pressure of managing the shelter. It is heartening to see this support from the new administration.

The Role of DeKalb County's Solicitor General.

The Solicitor General for DeKalb County, Georgia is Donna Coleman-Stribling (solicitorinfo@dekalbcounty-ga.gov; (404) 371-2201, website: dekalbsolicitorgeneral.com). She leads the Office of the Solicitor General, which prosecutes cases in DeKalb County. These cases include animal cruelty, neglect, tethering, and all other violations of the code related to animals. Her office also prosecutes misdemeanors related to domestic violence, elder abuse, cruelty to children, vehicular homicide,

Cont. on p. 13



A quiet moment before “I do” in Cator Woolford Gardens. Photo by Taryn Shultz Photos

Beauty With Mission: A Place Lake Claire Has Helped Sustain for Generations

by Dina Shadwell

If you’ve walked your dog through Frazer Forest on a quiet morning, waved to a teacher escorting a group of preschoolers, or paused beneath the trees to admire the sunlight filtering through the canopy, then you already know the Frazer campus. For many Lake Claire neighbors, it’s part of the rhythm of daily life—a place of calm, movement, and connection.

What’s less widely known is how deeply connected that familiar landscape is to Cator Woolford Gardens, and how both exist to support the mission of the Frazer Center.

Cator Woolford Gardens began as the 1920s’ estate of Cator Woolford, a co-founder of what is now Equifax. In the early 1950s, the property entered a new chapter when the founding mothers of the Frazer Center acquired the estate with a vision that was quietly radical for its time: to create a community where people with and without disabilities could learn, grow, and thrive together. The gardens, the house, the forest, and the buildings were all dedicated to sustaining that mission.

That purpose still guides the cam-

pus today. When people choose to host weddings and events at Cator Woolford Gardens—recently named *Decaturish Readers’ Choice Best Wedding Venue*—they aren’t just selecting a beautiful setting. Each celebration directly supports Frazer Center’s inclusive early education program and meaningful employment and community engagement opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities. Weddings held among the Italian-style gardens help fund classrooms where children of all abilities learn side by side, while also sustaining programs where adults with disabilities build skills, confidence, and connection. The joy of one celebration ripples outward, touching many lives across the campus.

In addition to the Gardens, the Frazer campus includes other thoughtfully designed gathering spaces. The sunlit atrium, filled with natural light and views of the surrounding landscape, is available for meetings, celebrations, and community events. The historic Cator Woolford house is also being prepared to host smaller gatherings, offering an intimate setting that

Traffic and Flows

Continued from page 3.

was expanded in 2012 to 14 lanes in spots with a carpool lane. Traffic congestion returned just a few years later. Curiously, when the road was closed entirely one weekend during construction, a much-ballyhooed “Carmageddon” of gridlock throughout the entire region failed to materialize. People opted to stay away from the entire corridor to avoid delays.

Removing a traffic bottleneck does no good for the bottlenecks that remain and may exacerbate the problem by tempting more drivers onto the roads, a phenomenon known as Induced Demand. This demonstrates the basic fallacy with treating traffic as if it were water: Water is not a rational actor. Water can’t be tempted. Likewise, if the flow is too great, water can’t opt to move its source closer to its destination. Nor, for that matter, can it move its destination closer to its source. Human beings do this all the time. That’s why home prices in close-in, walkable neighborhoods around large urban centers throughout the U.S. have seen their property values spike over the last quarter century. Destinations in such places are closer to residences than is typically the case in outer suburbs. Suburban real estate prices would be in trouble, if Covid hadn’t taught employers that work-from-home was a viable option.

The convenience of destinations close to residences plus the availabil-

continues the tradition of supporting inclusion for all.

Cator Woolford Gardens is often described as a sanctuary within the city. For Lake Claire neighbors, it is also something more: a shared place that reflects the values of care, inclusion, and connection that define this community. Seventy-seven years after the Frazer Center’s founding, the campus continues to thrive because neighbors notice it, walk it, respect it, and take pride in what it makes possible.

To learn more about the Gardens, event spaces, or the Frazer Center’s mission, visit CatorWoolfordGardens.org.



ity of high-density development means that more people can live, work, and so forth in a square mile of Midtown Atlanta than in the northeast suburb of Tucker. Midtown residents don’t have to drive as much, since shopping and employment destinations are much closer to where they live than for those in sprawling Tucker.

Dense, expensive, intown real estate is what one finds in the European Union, Japan, and China. The urban core is where transport links are the most robust. The low-income residential areas are typically located on the distant periphery, as in the case of Paris and its notorious *banlieue*.

Perhaps that’s the hidden story here. America’s urban development is resetting to what is the normal global pattern: popular cores with demand declining as one looks further out. This means that America’s planning paradigm is in need of a major reboot that drops road projects catering to far-flung communities far down the priority list.

Editor’s Note: Kevin posted this previously on the Better Atlanta Transit blog (11/30/2025). The website is betteratlantatransit.org. Kevin is a frequent Clarion contributor, a Lake Claire resident, and a writer, advocate, and consultant focused on advancing sustainability in transportation and urban development.

Happy
New Year
2026

Wild in Lake Claire

by Sara Gottlieb

This month's column will be a little different, as I'm featuring Eden J., a young budding naturalist in the neighborhood. I had the pleasure of meeting up with Eden recently in Frazer Forest on an unseasonably warm November day, though I suspect that colder weather would not have dissuaded her from wading right into the creek to look for critters in the shallow water. Eden was prepared for our meetup with a colorful dipnet and a clear bowl for temporarily holding critters for observation.

Eden (in her waders, below, and holding the variety of animals on the right) moved to Lake Claire about a year and a half ago from California and studies regularly with a professional naturalist from the Amphibian Foundation. These lessons are clearly paying off, as she almost immediately found several two-lined salamanders among the leaves in the creek and was quick to tell me which was male and which was female based on observing the facial protrusions called cirri on the male. We also observed 14 leopard frog tadpoles, several snails, and a snail egg sac attached to a leaf.

Before her move to Atlanta, in California Eden was first captivated by insect behavior and habitat, studying bees, beetles, and stick insects. Later,



Eden in her waders



DeKay's brownsnake

living on the central coast, she studied western fence lizards, newts, salamanders, eels, and sculpins in the tide pools, building the foundation for the observant naturalist she is today.

I asked Eden what she is interested in doing as an adult, and she enthusiastically explained that she'd like to be a reptile breeder. Having attended Repticon, gatherings attended by people who are interested in reptiles of all kinds, Eden has grown fascinated by genetic color variations in hognose snakes, especially albino morphs.

Unsurprisingly, Eden keeps quite a few pets. These have included aquatic snails, an African dwarf frog, two cats, a dog, six tetras, and duck weed. Occasionally, Eden will bring home an animal from the wild to observe for a while. This recently included a skink, but it was unwilling to eat the crickets Eden fed to it. She also raised some tadpoles to maturity, which took a lot longer than Eden thought it would. Frogs can take as long as four years to mature fully, depending on environmental conditions. Eden watched a praying mantis lay an egg sac (ootheca) a few weeks ago and has been caring for it since then. Eventually, Eden releases animals collected back into the wild.

In addition to the wildlife we observed in the Frazer Forest creek that day, Eden's mom shared these photos of Eden's other recent wildlife observations: a DeKay's brownsnake and ring-necked snake, an adult leopard frog, and a praying mantis feasting on a Joro spider. One of Eden's other favorite places to look for wildlife is Can-



Eden with ring-necked snake

dlar Park. Eden was surprised to learn about the beavers in the golf course, but she already knew about the snapping turtles that live under the pedestrian bridge on the north end.

I really enjoyed meeting and getting to know Eden and was very impressed with her enthusiasm for being outdoors, using all of her senses to observe wildlife and understand animal behaviors. Between what she is learning in school, private studies with professional naturalists, and her own explorations in natural areas in the neighborhood, this budding naturalist has a bright future filled with opportu-



Leopard frog

nities to inspire others to pay attention to the wild world all around us. In the words of Rachel Carson, "If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength." —*The Sense of Wonder: A Celebration of Nature for Parents and Children*

If you'd like to report a wildlife sighting for inclusion in a future column, please submit it here:

bit.ly/WildInLakeClaire



Mantis eating a Joro spider

Lake Claire Craft Fair



Cynthia Baer's booth, one of our sponsors who provided free hot cider and raffled off a solo stove!



Ian Mackenzie, singer-songwriter



December 6, 2025 (cont.)



Beth & Annsley, co-founders / co-organizers

Message from our Prez

Continued from page 3.

credible phenomenon, it would help to place it in the context of what made us human in the first place and what got us to where we are today. Simply put, it's technology itself, which allows us to alter the environment to suit our needs rather than just adapting to it. At the earliest stages of human development, we not only learned to shape stones into better cutting tools but also were able to transmit this knowledge to others through language, while developing culture and a history of ourselves. This was the origin of what we call thinking, resulting in ancient civilizations with structures and cultural achievements that still amaze us today. The Greeks were the first to describe the process by introducing logic and reason. Then came the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century based on reason and advanced mathematics while establishing the concept of evidence and proof for their experiments that provided an irrefutable format for thinking in general. Fast forward to today, this practice is under assault in many different directions with a lot of distorted information that goes unchecked.

Back to AI. There is no doubt it can provide an amazing synthesis of vast amounts of information. Used correctly, it has been described as sort of a tutor that can help us think better. But re-

gardless of the benefits, there is also the danger of diminishing our cognitive abilities. In other words, substituting the ability to think things out by letting AI do the work for us. A troubling example concerns education. Professors are now reporting that college students are opting for a nearly verbatim usage of AI instead of as a way to write better research papers. Looking toward the future, will humans become passive accessories of this new technology rather than being active participants in determining what is true or false and developing their own intelligence? Altman, who is not averse to showing the downside of AI, is optimistic that humans "will always make themselves the center of things" to keep it from overwhelming or even absorbing us, but I'm not so sure. The task will be to work with AI and humanize it as much as possible. Otherwise we may be in a constant struggle to maintain our basic sense of being human if we're not careful.

So now you can see the exciting things that might happen in Lake Claire if you just step out your front door to get the mail. And thanks to my neighbor who got this all started!

(P.S. I didn't use AI to write this. It's easy to tell because my writing isn't up to that level of perfection.)

~Joe Agee,

Lake Claire Neighbors, Inc.

Don Newby's MouseHouse

Continued from page 5.

of Don's expertise, stick-to-it-ness, and most of all, love of the project; I found his words to be inspirational:

"Beth, Sorry I haven't gotten back with you sooner, but I had to do repairs on the MouseHouse. I figured out how to make the MouseHouse work by pushing a button! That way it won't be running for so many hours during the times no one is watching it. I took the glass out of the shed tonight to make some adjustments to some characters. When I got the windowpane out, I looked at the fox on the mailbox and thought I

could make his arm move. Joe asked me why I would do that. I will try tomorrow, but the answer to "why" is that the MouseHouse is about doing something that has never been done before, about continuing to improve it. Merely to repair it would be boring; to improve it is exciting. I also did some lighting enhancement on the fox, as one side of his face was in the shadow. And the new wooden shutters decided they might want to warp. Such is a day in the life of a MouseHouse creator.

Don Newby, thank you for the hours

Mulberry Fields Community Garden and Greenspace

by Jesse Bathrick and Rhonda Cook

Have you heard about Mulberry Fields? It's a hidden magical oasis of community gardens with goats, chickens, Hobbit houses, and green space, tucked away in the middle of Candler Park.

But it almost wasn't. In 1992, developers were eyeing an acre of land tucked behind several houses and accessible only by a narrow gravel alley at 1301 Iverson Street. Then, neighbors stepped up with a vision that was different from the developers'. And seven years later, with a grant from the United Way and a little help from the Atlanta Food Bank, Mulberry Fields was born.

There were goats and chickens. Swings for the kids. And plots for any gardeners who didn't have a place to grow food. For 16 years, a group of neighbors managed the garden until the partnership with Wylde Center brought experience and resources to provide valuable upgrades (most recently, rain gardens to mitigate the flooding that was causing a great deal of damage).

Now it is time to revitalize our roots and return our focus to our own neighborhood. Neighbors and friends of the garden have stepped into creating a future vision for this hidden gem. First, the LLC Mulberry Fields Conservancy



was created to hold the deed, with the goal of upholding the conservation easement agreements and values in partnership with Georgia Piedmont Land Trust.

Who will manage all aspects of the garden, day-to-day operations, and upkeep plot-holders, events and rentals, fundraising, animals? Those responsibilities have fallen to the neighbors and volunteers who are the bedrock of the non-profit *Friends of Mulberry Fields*, a newly formed federal 501(c)(3). Friends of Mulberry Fields needs your support to step into this new Chapter in a long History. Tax deductible donations are appreciated and can be made at www.friendsmulberryfields.org/donate. In addition, Mulberry Fields needs more, to ensure the garden is a welcoming place for kids to play, friends to visit, and gardeners to work their vegetable plots. You can become a member of Friends of Mulberry Fields and join a committee. Attend a workday. Host or sponsor an event. And don't forget to visit the goats and chickens of Mulberry Fields.

Mulberry Fields runs on people power. Bring your skills, your talents, your enthusiasm to this hidden oasis. It will be a rewarding and exciting way to help to keep the Candler Park community (your close Lake Claire neighbor!) vibrant and strong. Please follow the link below to stay connected, receive updates and volunteer:

forms.gle/uVg8CTVRrRebFY4Y7. Thank you!



of work and commitment; it's an honor to have this amazing work-of-art in Lake Claire.

Pet Neighborhood

Continued from page 7.

driving under the influence, harassment and stalking, and trespassing. The majority of animal abuse and neglect cases in DeKalb County are in the misdemeanor category because charges are typically made by animal enforcement officers who cannot issue felony charges like police officers can. This does not mean that the crimes committed are simple or that the victims are only slightly harmed. On the contrary, by the time these animals are removed from the situations, **many** of them are maimed for life or close to death.

During the recent election (Nov. 2024 election, to begin her term in 2025) we asked Donna Coleman-Stribling to comment on her position on animal welfare. She did not respond to the request of Advocates For DeKalb Animals, unlike CEO and Commission candidates did. Prosecuting animal cruelty cases is a stated responsibility of the Solicitor General's office, but it is rarely charged by this office in either Magistrate or State Court.

The Solicitor General's cases are responsible for a majority of the dog victims that are left to languish in our shelter for months or years while these cases are poorly prosecuted, drag on, and are often dropped by the Solicitor General despite evidence to prove otherwise. DeKalb averages holding about 100 animals for court cases. DeKalb County has the dubious distinction of being the only jurisdiction in the metro area to have this issue. Other counties work hard to move cases along quickly and encourage the surrender of animals whose owners are charged with abuse. In DeKalb County, charges are also frequently reduced from a charge for which there is evidence to a lower

charge for which there is no evidence at all. Routinely, failure to vaccinate for rabies charges are dropped without concern as such does for public health. **It is a travesty!**

PLEASE EMAIL THE SOLICITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE EXPRESSING YOUR SUPPORT AND ADVOCATING FOR MORE APPROPRIATE, TIMELY, AND AGGRESSIVE PROSECUTION OF ANIMAL ABUSE IN DEKALB COUNTY!

Shelter Update

As of December 15, the shelter has only had to make that agonizing decision to euthanize for space reasons for two dogs in the past 16 weeks!

On December 14, there were 481 dogs in the shelter – six over humane capacity.

Editor's note: I just looked at the adoptable dogs on Lifeline's website – so many amazing new best friends at lifelineanimal.org. If only I didn't already have my hands full with my two. As I have noted before, and readers of Scott's columns here are aware, it is so sad for so many sweet and adoptable dogs to be in shelters for so long. If you cannot adopt, fostering makes a huge difference for doggies stuck in shelters. Or if not possible, please consider becoming a monthly donor to support the ongoing work and programs at the website above.

And PLEASE, in the spirit of "then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me," please advocate for these doggies; read the statement in all caps above the Shelter Update, and take the time to email the Solicitor General at solicitorinfo@dekalbcountyga.gov or call (404) 371-2201.

Neighborhood Dues for Lake Claire

Suggested annual dues have changed to \$25/year per household effective this month (see article Page 3); please pay at lakeclaire.org via the PayPal link, OR with the old-fashioned check in the mail, to Jay Severa, Treasurer, Lake Claire Neighbors, P.O. Box 5942, Atlanta Georgia, 31107. Please note any family members' names. We still have a great promotion — \$5.00 off the Lake Claire banner, when you buy a banner at the time you pay dues.

Hello – Safe Journey: Skiing in and around Lake Claire

Happy January Birthday to:

- 3 –Lisa Morris, Sutherland Place
- 5 –Dave Kaiser, Hardendorf
- 6 –Nancy Noland, Leonardo
- 8 –Sam Elalouf, McLendon Ave.
- 9 –Reese Kruskamp, Arizona Ave., turning 9—CLARION WINNER!
- 11 –Ezra Billinkoff, Harold Ave.
- 12 –Happy 18th to Elliott Bulloch, Casson St. (longtime Clarion deliverer)
- 12 –Tamar Williams, Harold Avenue; Tiffany Mawhinney, Howard Circle
- 15 –Sophie Oren, Leonardo, turning 10!
- 16 –Theo Emanuel, Marlbrook, turning 10!
- 18 –Happy birthday, Pat Del Rey, illustrious Clarion ad man[ager] and Jake Craney, Leonardo; Cynthia Baer, Gordon Avenue.
- 19 –Genise Spence, Arizona Avenue
- 21 –Amelia Stevens is turning 18! Harold Avenue
- 22 –Happy 15th birthday to Zoe Bulloch - Casson Street
- 28 –Tom McGill, Delaware – Happy birthday, Editor's friend who looks like Larry David – and Gus Fring!

Send us life cycle changes for the next issue—February – already??!

need YOUR help to make this series inclusive (editor@lakeclaire.org) by January 15–18)



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Lake Claire Craft Fair – December 6, 2025 (cont.)



Stephanie Voss

Continued from page 1.

learned, for example, how the contours of the violin have morphed over the centuries in response to the changing demands of players, composers, and performance settings. (The 1998 Carlo Cecchi movie, *The Red Violin*, “gets it right” about those transformations, Stephanie says.) I also learned—perhaps others knew this already—that the front and back arches are carved, not molded. Just as last month’s featured neighbor sculpted whole trees and forests, this one sculpts the delicate and exacting soundboxes of violins.

I asked Stephanie about the making of an instrument: “Oh, the process is pretty straightforward,” she began. What followed, however, was anything but! In the shop, Stephanie showed me a new violin she has nearly finished, another that is under repair, and the parts of an Italian cello circa 1742 (confirmed through dendrochronology) that is a long-term restoration project.

As a materials engineer, I learned the “leak before break” maxim: you want to design products and materials so that if they fail, they do so slowly and noticeably rather than rapidly and catastrophically. Stephanie described a similar principle in the choice of glues in violin-making. “We usually use a glue that has about 220-pound strength.



Stephanie displays a violin she is currently building.



Stephanie and one of her own hand-built violas

That is kind of a medium strength, by design,” she said. One restoration project she had was a cello that had been stored in a humid area. “It had literally popped apart; it was in all its original pieces. We painstakingly put it all back together how it was.” One can imagine that if the glue had withstood the humid environment better than the wood, the damage would have been irreparable.

Stephanie’s clients come from across the Southeast. They range from first-time violin students to professional musicians, and everything in between. Some entrust multimillion-dollar instruments to her care. Many are folks who studied violin for years, perhaps at-



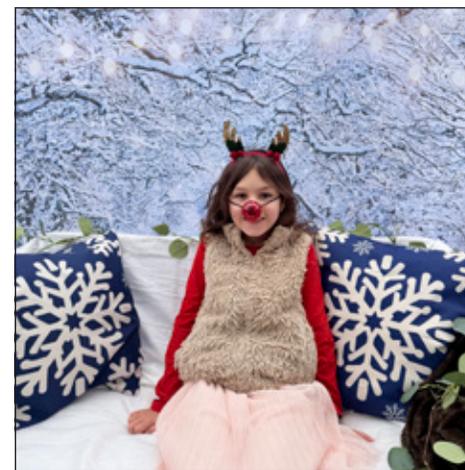
Parts of a 1742 Italian cello under restoration

Arts Fest Holiday Photo Booth

This year for the first time, Lake Claire neighbor Meghan Riley (one of our fair sponsors) started a new tradition to add to the fun at the Lake Claire Craft Fair—a holiday photo booth with a festive theme and a snowy backdrop, seven feet tall. We are excited about this new opportunity for the community. Here are some samples of the pictures Meghan took that day.



Wendy & Boyd, and their boss



tending music schools like Julliard, but chose a different professional direction.

One of her favorite customers was a 5-year-old girl who marched into the shop one day and announced imperiously, “OK, I need a violin.” Her perplexed parents confessed that no one

in the family played an instrument, yet their daughter had demanded to learn the violin from the age of three. They told her then, “You’re too little. You can learn violin when you’re five.” Stephanie laughed, “They thought it would go away, but it didn’t. She turned five, and by God, on her birthday, she was there at the shop with her parents.”

You can find out more about Stephanie’s work at VossViolins.com.



At her workbench at Voss Violins

Editor’s Note: I’m so pleased with the coincidence that I personally bought a new bow for my bass from Voss Violins a few years ago. I had no idea the owner was a Lake Claire resident—or what a geigenbaumeisterin is. All photos here are by Jane Branscomb. The article is part of her Lake Claire Creatives series about neighbors whom you might not know are talented individuals, whether accomplished amateurs or consummate professionals. To read about the other creative Lake Claire residents that Jane has featured, see lakeclaire.org/clarion/clarion-archives/, starting with February 2024.

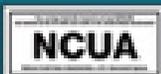


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Greetings Land Trust Lovers!

We are in the dead of Winter, and it's time to get out, commune with friends and family, and create some heat at our Annual Winter Dance! Put on your dancing shoes, and shuffle on down to the First E Church on **Saturday, January 31, 7-11 p.m.**

This is a pot-luck FUNdraiser, so bring your favorite dish to share, all your friends, and your dancing shoes. There will be drinks available for purchase. All of this for a suggested donation of \$20 at the door. Our Oasis in the city is a very special magical place, and without the support from you, none of it would be possible. Every neighborhood needs a Land Trust. Tell EVERYONE!

Love on all y'all's heads!
Lake Claire Community Land Trust



Land Trust Notes

- * **Workday Time Change:** Our Community Work Days switched from morning to afternoon hours. Cool-weather hours will continue until April.
- * **YOUR EVENT HERE!** If you have knowledge or skills to share in an outdoor setting, get in touch at info@LCCLT.org and let's discuss holding your class, workshop or presentation at the Land Trust!



Upcoming & Ongoing at the Land Trust

Sat., Jan. 3: Land Trust Drum Circle, 8-11 p.m. (and every month on the 1st Sat.), \$5 donation requested. No alcohol please. *Rain date: Jan. 17.*

Mon., Jan. 12, 19, 26: Monday Nature Play Group, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (and every Monday except the first Monday of the month). Join this informal gathering at no cost, or make a \$5 donation.

Sun., Jan. 11: Death Café with Denise Johnson, 3-4:30 p.m. in the Gorilla Grill (and every month on the 2nd Sunday). All are welcome for a monthly informal conversation about death and dying, with tea, coffee and cake. Free! Donations welcome.

Sun., Jan. 11: LCCLT board meeting, 5-6 p.m. (every month on the 2nd Sunday) in the Gorilla Grill. All are welcome to sit in and speak up. Come in person or contact us at info@LCCLT.org for Zoom link.

Sat., Jan. 17: Community Work Day, 1-4 p.m. (and every month on the 3rd Saturday). Bring drinking water and work gloves.

Sat., Jan. 17: Tarot Class with Chakura Kineard of Unfiltered Glitter, 2-3 p.m. Beginners, 3-4 Advanced, \$25/person (20% goes to LCCLT). Pay in advance via Venmo or CashApp; see LCCLT.org/new-events. Sliding scale available to women of color & LBGTQIA+ community if needed; contact info@LCCLT.org.

Sun., Jan. 18: The Medicine Cabinet Within, 9-11 a.m. Explore the body from a holistic view and share stories offering healing tough, growing awareness of relationships to disease and health building. Open to all. Donations accepted for the LCCLT. See flyer at left.

Sun., Jan. 18: Science for Georgia - Climate Survival Training Monthly Skillshare Meetup 3-5 p.m. Gathering to share skills and knowledge useful for community, climate resilience, and preparedness. Free! Donations welcome.

Wed., Jan. 28: Land Trust Open Mic 7-9 p.m. at the Land Trust Gorilla Grill. All acoustic and spoken word performers welcome, or just come to listen.

Sat., Jan. 31: Winter Dance, 7-11 p.m. at the First Existentialist Church. Dance the winter blues away at our Annual Winter Dance—a potluck FUNdraiser with music, community, drinks for purchase, and a suggested \$20 donation.

For details and updates, visit www.LCCLT.org/new-events.

Dear Dog Owners —

Some people have stopped bringing their children to the Land Trust because of loose dogs charging at them. Even a friendly dog can be frightening to little ones.

To keep this space open to everyone, keep dogs leashed at all times, & pick up after your pooch.



LAKE CLAIRE KIDS' CORNER



We hope this series is fun and a way for young Clarion writers and artists to participate in our 'hood. This month's featured writers are Lucca and Finn, "Wiz Kidz Magical Creations," who wanted to tell what they liked about having a booth at the an-

nual Lake Claire Craft Fair last month. Their mom, Trang Nguyen, noted that the kids appreciated the opportunity to share their experience; it appears they are both quite entrepreneurial! Lucca is eight years old, and Finn is four and a half years old.

Any Lake Claire child who wants to add your creativity to this page, send to editor@lakeclaire.org, by **January 18** for the **February issue**.



Lucca and Finn (L-R), photo by mom, Trang Nguyen

Our Experience at the LCCF this year

by the Wiz Kidz

Lucca: It was fun talking to customers, also, making money.

Finn: It was fun getting paid!

New Contest

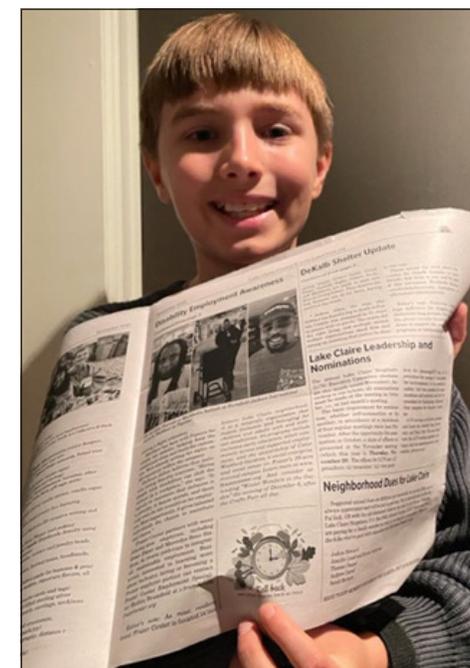
Who loves starting off a fresh new year? Find a New Year's graphic in this issue. The winner/winners who find it will have their pictures in the next Clarion (February). To win, write editor@lakeclaire.org, identifying the page number, and include your name, age, school, street, and grade, along with a photo. (Your parents should send large picture files, 1mb+.)

Any child from Lake Claire is eligible, *except that you cannot win*

two issues in a row. For extra credit, tell us your favorite way to celebrate New Year's or your favorite activity in January. The extra-credit prize is to be a featured writer/artist in a future Lake Claire Clarion with your original art, poetry, or writing. **The deadline is Jan. 18. Hurry and look; competition is always stiff for this HIGHLY coveted prize.**

Contest Winners

Hudson Williams is our first-place winner this month. Hudson is eleven years old and attends Mary Lin Elementary. He lives on Palifox. Reese Kruscamp was a close runner-up, winning the second-place spot this month. She is nine years old, in 4th grade at Mary Lin, and lives on Arizona. Reese won the special credit award, which was to tell your favorite thing about Thanksgiving & Christmas. She said, "I love to see all of my family and friends, and the foods are delicious!" For the prize, she gets to be featured in a future Clarion. Congrats, Hudson and Reese! Both of them are in first-place for the Clarion cuteness award.



1st place winner, Hudson

Important Editor Disclaimer to Parents:

If ever I miss a child who sent an entry, please let me know, I'll fix it in the NEXT issue. Also, please reach out if you need extra newspaper copies, for grandparents to post on refrigerators or otherwise to celebrate the winners' 30 seconds of fame, editor@lakeclaire.org. And of course, the paper is also available online, lakeclaire.org/clarion/clarion-archives/.

Kids: See our new contest here, and make your guess: it's your chance to be famous!



2nd place winner, Reese

