

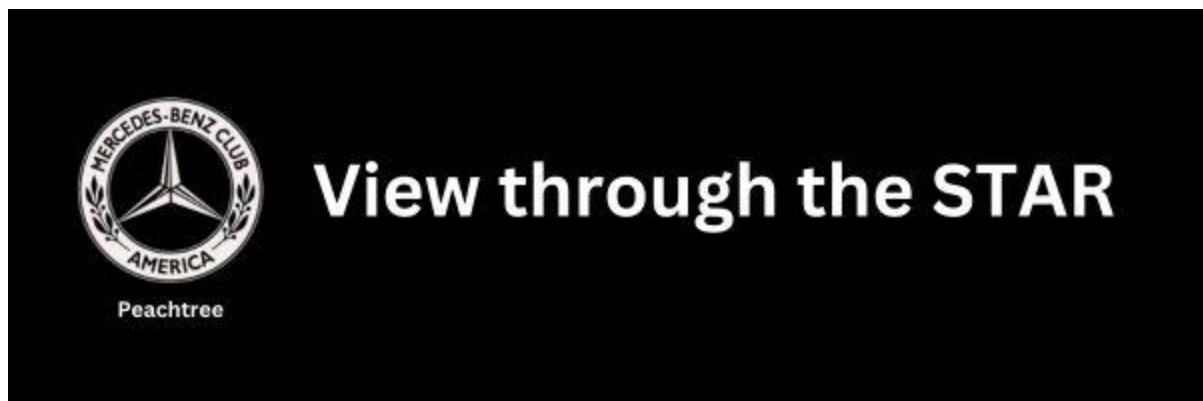
STARS IN GEORGIA

February 2026



Graphic By
Doug Geganto

Volume 48 - Vol 1 | February 2026





View Through The Star

by Rusty Duncan, President

Happy New Year to everyone! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and are feeling energized for what's ahead. I am excited about what's coming up for our chapter in the year ahead, and grateful to be part of such an engaged and enthusiastic group. What follows is just a small preview of our 2026 calendar, with much more to be announced in the months ahead.

We have a couple of updates to share regarding our Board. Marisa Hegyesi will be stepping into the role of Vice-President, concluding her term as Secretary to take on this new position. Sam Kamber has needed to step back from the Vice-President role for personal reasons, but I'm pleased to share that he will continue to plan and oversee our Concours events. We thank Sam sincerely for his leadership and are grateful for his continued involvement. [Read More](#)

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Member Spotlight Alan Smith

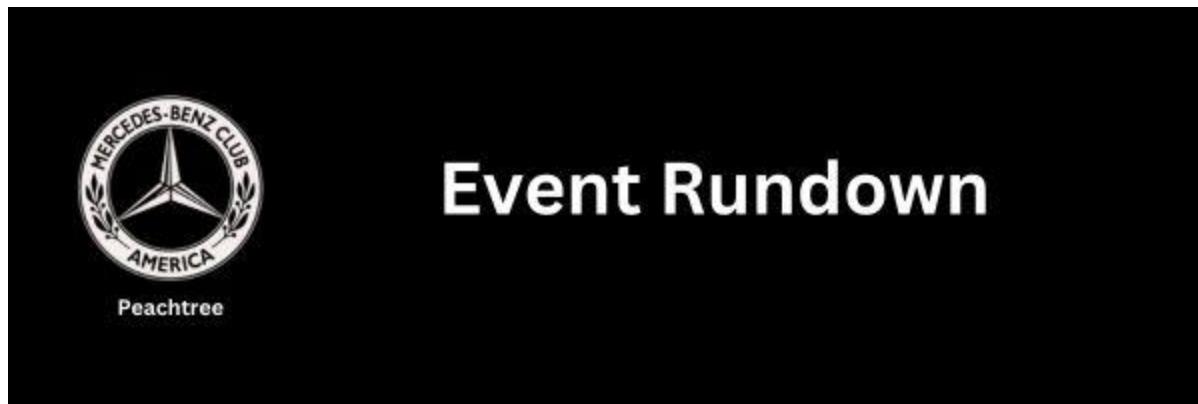


Lieutenant Colonel ALAN SMITH, Retired

Born in Hawaii, Alan has been married to his wife, Betsy, for 50 years. Being married for 50 years is exceptional. They have two sons, two daughters, a Grandson, and six Granddaughters. His oldest son was a Special Ops officer for 30 years, and his grandson is presently a Green Beret.

Alan obtained a Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of South Carolina and a Masters Management from Central Michigan University.

His first job was joining the U.S. Army. His father was a Marine Corps pilot in WW2 and the Korean War. His father died in a 1954 training accident. Alan is a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel. He did two tours flying in Vietnam. Alan flew small, fixed wing airplanes in Vietnam, such as the O-1 Birddog. During the Vietnam War, the Bird Dog performed reconnaissance, target acquisitions, artillery adjustments, radio relays, convoy escorts, and the FAC of tactical aircraft, including bombers operating in a tactical role. Over two years (1968 & 1971), Alan logged about 1,700 flight hours. He retired from the Army in 1986. [Read More](#)



February and March

2/7 | STARS and Coffee (Mardi Gras) | [register](#) | [map](#)

3/7 | STARS and Coffee | [register](#) | [map](#)

3/14 | German Shepard Rescue Drive and Fundraiser | *watch for details*

3/21 | Wolf Mountain Winery Drive to Karl's Garage | [register](#) | [map](#)

3/22 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

3/27 | Mercedes-Benz Stadium Tour | [register](#) | [map](#)

April and May

4/11 | McDaniel Techenor House Tour - Monroe GA | [register](#) | [map](#)

4/15 | MBCA Peachtree Board Meeting | [Contact President](#)

4/18 | STARS and Coffee | [register](#) | [map](#)
4/18-19 | PCA HPDE at Barber | [register](#) | [map](#)
4/26 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

5/2 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
5/16 | Mountain Drive | *watch for details*
5/24 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

June and July

6/6 - 6/7 | Alabama Drive & Dinner | *watch for details*
6/6 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
6/8 | Performance Driving at TGPR | [register](#) | [map](#)
6/20-21 | PCA HPDE at Barber | [register](#) | [map](#)
6/28 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

7/4 | MBCA 4th of July Parade | *watch for details*
7/8 | MBCA Peachtree Board Meeting | [Contact President](#)
7/11 | BBQ Progressive Rally-Duex | [register](#) | [map](#)
7/25 | Members Appreciation Lunch | *watch for details*
7/28 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

August and September

8/1 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
8/8 | Mountain Drive | *watch for details*
8/23 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)
9/5 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
9/12 | MBCA Driving Academy | [register](#) | [map](#)
9/16 | Concours Judging School | *watch for details* | ZOOM
9/19 | Mountain Drive | *watch for details*
9/26 | Peachtree Concours | *watch for details*
9/27 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)

October, November, and December

10/4 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
10/10 | MBCA Peachtree Board Meeting | [Contact President](#)
10/24 | Deutsche Car Show | *watch for details*
10/25 | GAS ATL Meetup Noon-3pm | [map](#)
11/1 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)
11/28 | Holiday Lights Drive | *watch for details*

12/5 | Holiday Luncheon | *watch for details*
12/6 | STARS and Coffee | *watch for details* | [map](#)

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Peachtree

Membership

Welcome NEW and Rejoining Members

- Shaun Barbeau
- Thomas Brumbeloe
- David Collier-Porter
- Richard Denny
- John Dimmerling

THANK YOU RENEWING MEMBERS!

- Charles Achuff
- Michael Balk
- Doug Chaffins
- Jason Cherkas
- Eldon Collier
- Peter Eisemann
- Allen Farlow
- James Fekete
- Rex Foster

by Reijo Haarla, Membership Director

New year gives new opportunities for MBCA members to participate events Peachtree Chapter is organizing. The Peachtree Chapter has again scheduled exciting events throughout the whole year. Please check the event calendar in this Newsletter and register to attend for an upcoming event. Attending club events is the best way to meet members that share your interest in Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

Membership Renewal is Easy!

When it is time to renew your membership, you have several convenient options:

- Logging into the MBCA website at mbca.org and renewing from your membership profile.
- Renew from the renewal reminder email from MBCA.

- David Garcia
- Pete Garcia
- Otto Gogolin
- Roger Hensley
- Mark Loftin
- Kirk Maassen
- Thomas Minner
- James Mitchell
- John Sparling
- Alan Smith
- Christoph Von Der Osten

- Call the MBCA National Business Office at 719.633.6427, Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm MST
- Mail a check to: MBCA National Business Office, 3472 Research Pkwy Ste 104 PMB 464, Colorado Springs, CO 80920

Membership Benefits

Benefits members of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America can take an advantage:

The Star Magazine – The 6-yearly issues of the award winning The Star Magazine®

Chapter Newsletter – Chapter newsletter, “Stars in Georgia” for the Peachtree Chapter is published six times a year. It contents articles on events and other timely articles, technical information, the event calendar and membership information of the Peachtree Chapter.

Local and National Events – Mercedes-Benz Club of America members are invited to participate in a wide range of events and activities near your neighborhood and in destinations across the U.S.

Member Rebate Program – If you are planning to purchase or lease a new Mercedes-Benz vehicle, you should consider participating in the MBCA Member Rebate Incentive program. Rebates of up to \$11,000 on the purchase of new Mercedes-Benz vehicles.

Discount on Parts and Service – Parts & Service discounts from participating dealers.

Hagerty – MBCA members receive 5% off Hagerty Insurance.

Club Trips to Germany – Opportunity to participate in exclusive trip to Stuttgart Germany and enjoy captivating tours of AMG Factory in Affalterbach, Mercedes-Benz Museum & Brand Center, Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, Mechatronic Factory, & more!

Mecum Auctions – Exclusive member-only access with participating auction houses.

The MBCA Raffle – Opportunity to participate in annual MBCA Raffle. Please visit online [**Member Benefits**](#) to see the complete description of the updated Benefits.

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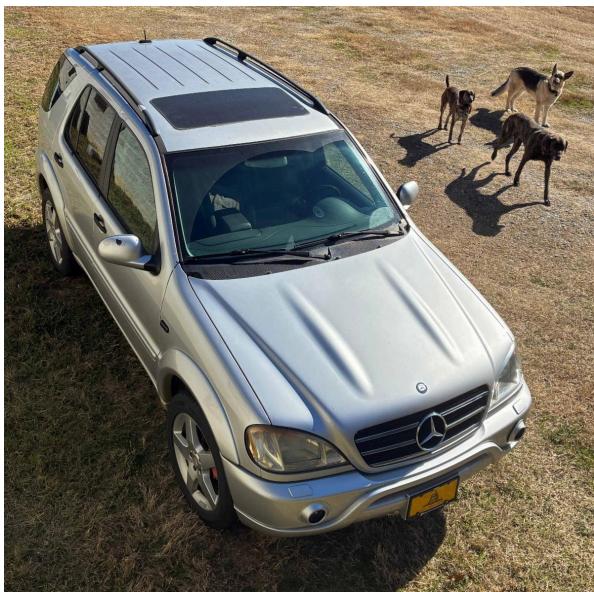
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Technical Digest

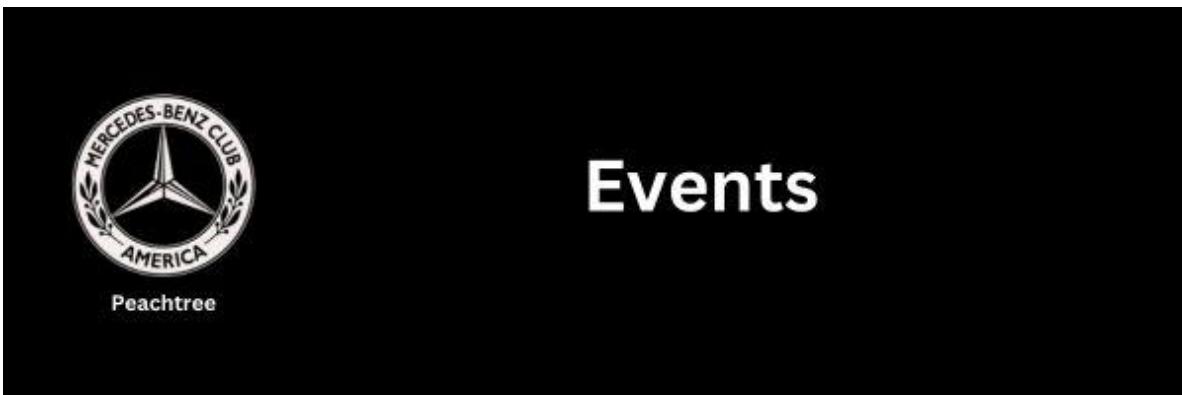


The ML "Journey" by Gary Edwards, Technical Advisor

I bought this needy 2000 ML55 from Rubin Howard, fully knowledgeable of its issues. Rubin's acquisition story was unusual; he had posted about how great a car the ML55 was and immediately got a contrary response from someone who absolutely hated his ML55. Rubin got in touch with him and eventually bought the car for a very low price. He sent it to DC Motorwerks where they repaired a big oil leak from the oil cooler and many other items. I eventually bought it from him with full disclosure of all known problems, as if I needed another car.

It did appeal to me, though. The ML55 is historically significant in that it was the first high performance SUV. What got into Mercedes to build an AMG version of the ML is a mystery to me, but now most car companies have performance versions of their SUVs (including Cadillac). It was, however, a long path to getting this ML to be a usable vehicle.

[Read More](#)



Wolf Mountain Drive to Karl's Garage
Sat, March 21, 2026 8:30 am



Mar 21 | Wolf Mountain Drive to Karl's Garage

Join us for a drive to Wolf Mountain Winery to visit and tour Peachtree Member Karl Boegner's collection of cars and his recently completed collection of rock-n-roll guitars.

We will begin our drive from DC Motorwerks in Alpharetta at 8:30 am, leaving for Wolf Mountain at 9:30 am. The tour of Karl's garage will begin at 11:00 am.

After the tour of his garage, there will be wine tasting, appetizers, and flat bread pizzas for lunch. Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to see this private collection.

Registration deadline is March 14, 2026

Wolf Mountain



The Enthusiasts' Service Center



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Admin@DCMotorWerks.com



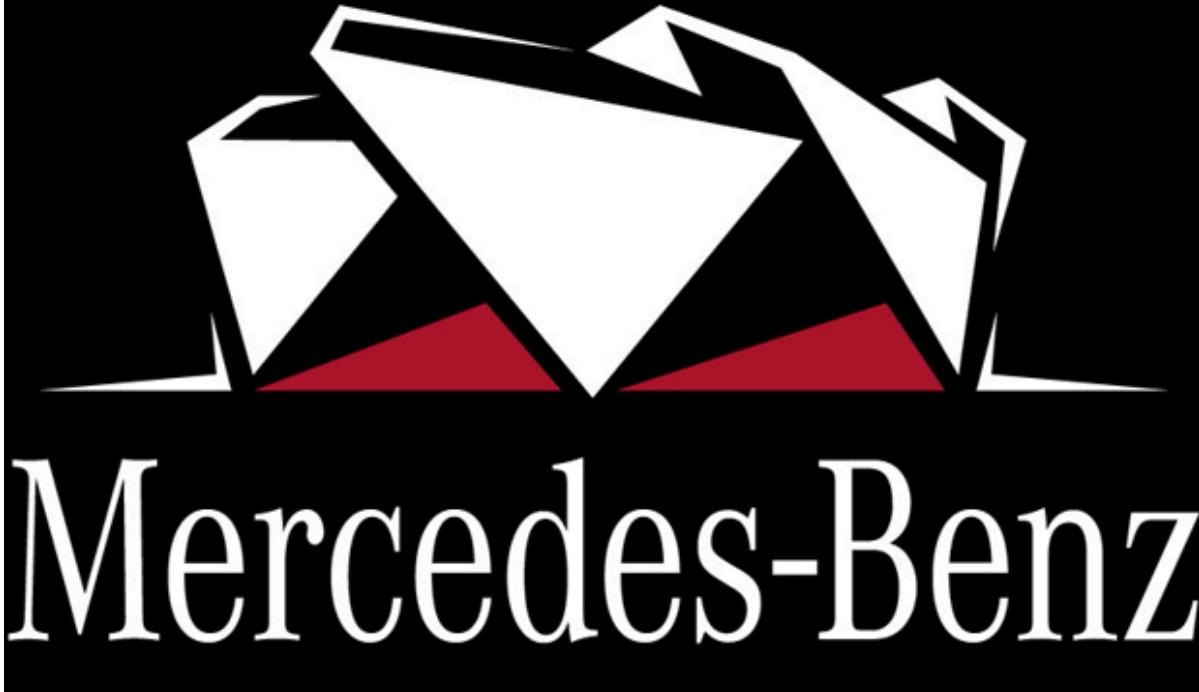
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**Mercedes-Benz Stadium Tour
Friday, March 27, 2026 1:00 pm**



Diana Quinn, Event Planner

We will tour the new [Mercedes-Benz Stadium](#) located in downtown Atlanta ([1414 Andrew Young International Blvd. Atlanta, GA 30313](#)) on **Friday, March 27 at 1:00 p.m.** Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before our tour located at the Front Porch (nearest Gate 2). A private group tour has been arranged for our group to tour this beautiful stadium. The tour will be approximately 90-minutes long and possible areas that we will tour will be:

- Locker Rooms (Falcons and Atlanta United)
- Window to the City
- Skybridges
- Clubs
- Field

The tour will require a fair amount of walking so wear your comfortable shoes. Various areas of the stadium do have stairs, but there are elevators available for those who may have trouble navigating staircases.

Parking at Mercedes-Benz Stadium is available in the [Silver Deck](#). You will be given a \$10/discount parking pass.

Registration fee is \$22.00 per person. **Tickets are limited to the first 15. Registration deadline is March 12, 2026.**

[Mercedes-Benz Stadium Tour](#)

McDaniel-Tichenor House
Sat, April 11, 2026 11:00 am



Geri Whaley-Ewers, Event Planner

Please join us to visit the beautiful McDaniel-Tichenor House in Monroe, which is part of the National Register of Historic Places in Georgia. The house was built for Governor Henry D. McDaniel in 1887, and part of its charm is that, unlike many house museums, the McDaniel-Tichenor House remained occupied by the same family until 1990.

After the tour we will go to [Le Gabrielle](#) in Monroe for brunch. Admission price is \$18/per person. Tickets are limited to the first 20. Registration deadline is [April 4, 2026](#).

[McDaniel-Tichenor House](#)



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June 6-7
Alabama Drive & Dinner

June 8
HPDE Performance Driving



Star Summit has evolved into a weekend trip to Birmingham during the first weekend in June. We are planning on such things that may include a Barber Museum Tour, fun mountain drives, dinners on Saturday and Sunday evenings and maybe even a factory tour on the previous Friday.

Watch for details to be forth coming.

July 11 - BBQ Progressive Rally-Dux



Ernie Smallman, Event Planner

The rally will take us on a journey to the following famous BBQ joints:

- **JDs BBQ**, Acworth, GA
- **Williamson Brothers BBQ**, Canton GA
- **Big Easy BBQ**, Canton GA
- **Rally Point Grille**, Woodstock GA

Each stop along the way you eat your way some through some delicious BBQ, sides and dessert at



Gary Edwards, Event Planner

We will have a MBCA Performance Driving Academy at Talladega Gran Prix Raceway. The price is only \$250.

Sign up now for June 8th MBCA Performance Driving Academy.

HPDE Driving

Sept 12 - Driving Academy



Gary Edwards, Event Planner

We will we'll be conducting another MBCA Driving Academy at the Colombia County Sheriff's Driver Training Facility. The cost will be only \$100.

It will be a great day of learning car control with ABS braking, Emergency Lane Changes, a Wet Skidpad, a low speed autocross course and slow speed parking and maneuvering. Most insurance

the final stop along the route. Come enjoy a day of driving and some fabulous BBQ. Just \$15/per car + pay your way at each stop.

Progressive BBQ

companies give a discount for completion of this course.

I could use some instructors and other volunteers to help out with this event, contact me at edwardsgw@nu-z.net

HPDE Driving



Event News



Peachtree Holiday Luncheon December 13, 2025

by Ernie Smallman, Event Planner

Thirty-five Peachtree members and guests enjoyed a tastefully presented and delicious Italian holiday luncheon at Osteria Mattone restaurant located in the busy Canton Road area of the Roswell entertainment district. Entrees ranged from scallops and salmon to beef short rib stuffed pasta. The event planner awarded President Rusty Duncan the past President's 2025-2026 plaque. As Rusty had yet to complete his 2026 tenure the year 2026 was covered with duct tape until Rusty earns the privilege of uncovering the year date on the past president's plaque.

The 2025-Member of the Year award was presented by President Duncan to Geri Whaley-Ewers for her event planner organization of 2025 unique events.

The coveted Partain Award given in memory of the Peachtree founder Jim Partain, was awarded to Marisa Hegyesi in recognition and appreciation of

her contribution as an active board members who assisted the President in managing special projects. Festivities included door prizes of four bottles of wine and nine to go packaged Osteria Mattone entrees with an appetizer.

Many thanks to Diana Quinn for assistance with the door prizes and technical support to the Motor Sports challenged event planner. Special thanks to attendees who were generous in providing toys for Peachtree to contribute to the Marine Corp Toys for Tots Christmas drive.



Mercedes-Benz News

Mercedes-Benz USA Reports 2025 Year-Over-Year Retail Sales Growth

January 12, 2026 - Atlanta

Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) reported annual retail sales of 303,200 passenger cars, which represents **an increase of 1% compared to 2024**. Mercedes-Benz Vans reported 40,000 units retailed in 2025, resulting in a combined total of 343,200 units sold. Significant demand across the entire Mercedes-Benz SUV model portfolio, as well as continued robust interest in the awe-inspiring Mercedes-AMG performance luxury models, were key factors that contributed to this growth.

[Read More](#)

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Peachtree Section, MBCA Officers and Board of Directors and Leadership Support Members

Rusty Duncan

president@mbcapeachtree.com

Committees

Reijo Haarla - Membership

membership@mbcapeachtree.com

Diana Quinn - Newsletter

newsletter@mbcapeachtree.com

Rusty Duncan - Sponsors

sponsor@mbcapeachtree.com

Marisa Hegyesi

vicepresident@mbcapeachtree.com

Brett Butler

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Diana Quinn

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Directors

directors@mbcapeachtree.com

Reijo Haarla

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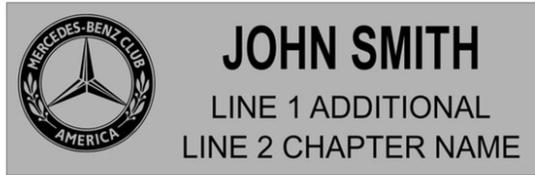
Gary Edwards - Technical

technical@mbcapeachtree.com

Diana Quinn - Webmaster

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For information or questions about the Peachtree Section, please contact us at 770-376-0669.

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