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## Getting Fired Up at Hawk Hollow!



More than a hundred friends and neighbors made the second annual S'mores for All event on October 16 a big success. The fall gathering featured music, storytelling, and, of course, s'mores at this beautiful greenspace located at 2304 1st Avenue!

Hawk Hollow is also proud to announce that Monarchs Across Georgia, a committee of the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia, recognized the park as a "Certified Pollinator Habitat." Thank you to the many volunteers who helped to earn this distinction! The Emory School of Public Health, Hands on Atlanta, and Fulbright Foundation are just a few of the many organizations that volunteered to clear invasive plants, clean out the stream, and plant native plants.

## OPINION: Why Will I Vote "No" on Amendment 1?

by Jean-Jacques Credi

This is what you will read on the ballot: *Amendment #1 provides greater flexibility and state accountability to fix failing schools through increasing community involvement. Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended to allow the state to intervene in chronically failing public schools in order to improve student performance?*

There are so many places

to begin an analysis of this amendment. Direct inferences might yield the reader to say, "Sure! Why not! Of course we should!" After all, there are some high-leverage words in the amendment aimed at making it sound like a good idea: flexibility, accountability, increasing community involvement, intervene, chronically failing, and improve.

While this has the potential

to be a good idea, I question the plan.

### I Have Lots of Questions

What makes the state department believe it can do a better job at increasing

student performance than local leaders? What evidence does it have? Does the state department know something about helping chronically

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Kirkwood Neighbors' Organization (KNO) is a racially and economically diverse civic organization devoted to the revitalization of Atlanta's historic Kirkwood community.

KNO meets on the 10th of each month at 7 pm at the Turner Monumental A.M.E. Church, 66 Howard Street NE.

Everyone is welcome!

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**Comments? Story Ideas? Advertising Questions?**  
Your comments about this newsletter or story ideas are encouraged. Please contact the Editor.

Kirkwood Neighbor is published monthly by the Kirkwood Neighbors' Organization (KNO) and is distributed at all KNO and Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU-O) meetings, to Kirkwood's elected representatives, our fire and police stations, and to city and county officials. This newsletter is distributed free of charge at the locations listed on the right.

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## OPINION: Vote "No" on Amendment 1

*continued from page 1*

failing schools that we don't know? And if so, why aren't they sharing it? What exactly is "greater flexibility"?

State intervention is an idea that Louisiana and Tennessee are currently trying — as if they are beacons of educational advancement (sense the sarcasm). If it's such a great idea, how come the Harvard School for Education or Teachers' College at Columbia University haven't figured this out yet?

Maybe because there's no evidence to support the notion that state intervention can improve student performance. Call me crazy, but I like to believe in evidence-based decisions.

#### Obvious Paradoxes

Imagine: A "state school district" aptly named the Opportunity School District fostering greater community involvement.

So let me get this straight ... instead of the electorate voting for school board members who are then charged with hiring a superintendent — which is the current model for community involvement — we will have a governor-appointed superintendent oversee a random set of public schools across the state. How exactly will that increase community involvement?

Imagine a state representative

standing before a gathering of parents in DeKalb County, where a high number of "eligible" schools are located, to increase community involvement.

### *How exactly will that increase community involvement?*

I am just not sure where this will go. Who knows? Maybe this fictitious district will field the next state football champions, the Opportunity Ocelots!

The ultimate paradox is that this idea involves a state takeover under the presumption of increasing community involvement, which truthfully is nothing more than the elimination of the current method for community involvement. This is not worthy of a constitutional amendment.

#### Then There Is the Money

So the state department would essentially seize the funds allotted to the local school district in order to operate the school, hire and fire at will, yet still lean on the local district to provide maintenance and logistical support. If Governor Deal aims to punish districts for their failing schools by seizing their funds, then this is what the plan should convey.

I expect it will be quite an expensive proposition to fund a superintendent overlord and the bureaucratic

office that this amendment would require.

The hidden alternative is to hire a private contractor to manage the schools which would then just be another

way to siphon public funds to private sector entities. Albeit, the state Constitution forbids for-profit charter schools from operating in the state of Georgia, so this could just as easily be a back-door method for the public-to-private cash train.

Remember vouchers?

Remember "school choice"? These were previously failed methods to shuffle public funding into the private sector. No thank you.

Leaders in education across the state of Georgia aren't buying into this. The two leading education advocacy groups, the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), which represent hundreds of thousands of educators in Georgia, plus at least 48 local school districts, have publicly opposed the Opportunity School District — all for good reasons.



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## A Harvest of Good Outcomes from FATE

by Ashley Adamo & Jennifer Kraften

Fred Armon Toomer's gardening program is in full bloom thanks to the amazing support of SoulShine and Food Corps!

SoulShine generously committed to offering staff members and volunteers each Wednesday so that every child at FATE can have fun and developmentally appropriate outdoor experiences that meet Georgia science and health standards.

FATE also recently added the support of Food Corps' Ms. Dasia. She will help integrate the food produced in our garden into edible activities for students.

Mrs. Kraften, FATE's gifted and talent development

teacher, was recognized by the district as Atlanta Public Schools' Elementary Teacher of the Year! This top district honor is a testament to her hard work, dedication to FATE students and the community, and her passion for teaching. FATE is very pleased that the commitment and enthusiasm of its teachers is recognized inside and outside the district.

FATE had an awesome Fall Festival in early October! The PTA organized games, food, a delicious bake sale, pony rides, and other events for students and community members. Thank you to all who came out to celebrate!

During the week of October 24, FATE celebrated Red Ribbon Week. Students pledged to be alcohol- and drug-free while learning

about healthy choices through spirit dress, fun activities, and special projects.

October's students of the month were:

- PreK: James, Conrad, and Princess
- Kindergarten: Keelan, Kristy, and Finley
- 1st grade: Caiden, Eden, and Piper
- 2nd grade: Jakyla and Gabriella
- 3rd grade: Madison, Jayda, and Alison
- 4th grade: Skylar, Amira, and Destin
- 5th grade: Keyshawn and Gabriel
- Special education: Ryen and Shawn

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**November 4–11**  
**7:15 AM – 3:30 PM**

Scholastic Book Fair. Anyone is welcome to purchase books. You can also sign up to volunteer: contact Mr. Carpenter at [eric.carpenter@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:eric.carpenter@atlanta.k12.ga.us)

**Saturday, November 12**  
**5:00 – 8:00 PM**

Annual Spaghetti Dinner. The community is invited for food, fun and fundraising! Purchase tickets for \$5 at the door or at local Kirkwood businesses. Consider donating toys and items for auction, too.

Schedule a tour: **(404) 802-3450**

**[www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/Domain/1631](http://www.atlanta.k12.ga.us/Domain/1631)**

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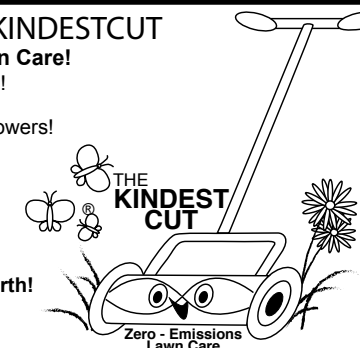
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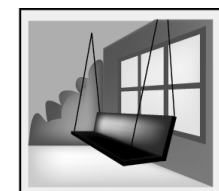
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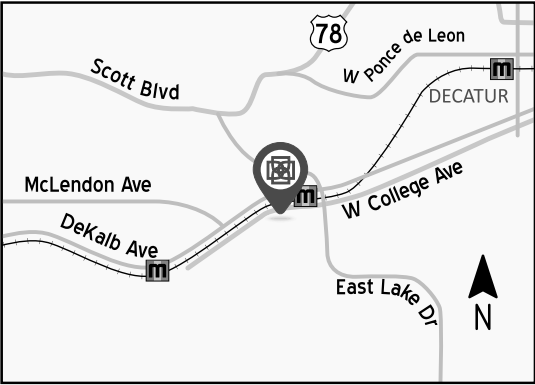


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## What One Parent Wants You to Know About Food Allergies

by Ronni-Lynn Lindeman

Last year my husband and I experienced what all parents worry about when introducing their baby to new foods. After feeding our 12-month-old son peanut butter for the first time, he immediately suffered a severe allergic reaction. Thankfully, the amount given was minimal. I can't handle the thought of what may have happened if I fed him more than just that.

As a peanut butter fanatic, I couldn't believe our son had a peanut allergy! I ate so much of it when I was pregnant and ate it around him for the first 12 months of his life — until, of course, he had his anaphylactic reaction.

Apparently, it didn't affect him until I "opened up a can of worms" by having him actually ingest it.

While we are so incredibly thankful, and on a daily basis count our blessings that he is a healthy boy, we constantly work to create a safe environment so that we protect him from his life-threatening allergy. It can be challenging on holidays like Halloween and for other fun events we want him to experience.

There's been a major increase in the number of people with all types of food allergies, from wheat to dairy, soy, nuts, and others, so more kids are being impacted, too.

Food allergies affect every individual differently, but for many it's not as easy as just avoiding the food that contains a particular allergen. For example, my son can't eat anything with peanuts or tree nuts or be around others eating food that has them or is possibly made in a facility or on equipment with them.

I know that maybe you're wondering why tree nuts if he's only allergic to peanuts, and why others can't eat nuts around him. Well, it's due to the possibility of cross contamination. If others eat nuts and touch him afterwards, or if he plays with the same toy a child just did that had some form of nuts, he may have a reaction.

Society is increasing awareness of the spike of food allergies. There are also multiple websites out there to view if you are interested in learning more about living with food allergies. We personally have a lot to learn on how to educate our son and continue to educate ourselves, and we're grateful to have these resources.

[www.kidswithfoodallergies.org](http://www.kidswithfoodallergies.org)

[www.tealpumpkinproject.org](http://www.tealpumpkinproject.org)

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# Amendment 3: Who Judges the Judges?

For more than 40 years in Georgia, the Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC) has acted as an independent watchdog tasked with overseeing complaints made against judges.

On Nov. 8, Georgia voters will decide whether to amend the state's Constitution to remove the independent JQC and replace it with a body appointed by politicians. No precise plan on how the new body will function, however, or even concrete assurances that one will even be implemented, has surfaced.

To read the wording of the

amendment, as shown on the ballot, one could think Amendment 3 is pure apple pie and freedom, showing no hint of the power struggle taking place.

Supporters of Amendment 3 say it's a sensible effort to gain control of a power-drunk Judicial Qualifications Commission that answers to no one and unfairly targets judges.

Opponents of the measure say it's a political power grab orchestrated by allies of judges accused of misconduct by the JQC.

Notably, one of the amendment's House sponsors, state

Rep. Johnnie Caldwell Jr. (R-Thomaston), was himself a Superior Court judge forced from office by the JQC after allegations surfaced of inappropriate sexual advances on female lawyers. In 2010, upon resigning, he pledged that he would "never seek or accept judicial office again."

Instead, he ran for the state House in 2012 and won. Caldwell then co-sponsored bills that would destroy the same independent body that saw his resignation from the bench.

Former JQC Chairman Lester Tate, who resigned in April, said the proposed amendment is all about revenge. Since 2007, the commission has removed almost six dozen judges, including Caldwell. Some resigned rather than be subjected to an investigation.

So where is the State Bar of Georgia in all this? At the time, the bar's president, Robert Kauffman, indicated that, although the bar had

"fought hard" to defeat the amendment, it was abandoning its opposition out of concern for direct attacks on the organization and other forms of retaliation.

The Georgia Association of Women Lawyers has come out against the amendment, saying it believes the restructuring would politicize the JQC by eliminating its independence.

The JQC has, of course, had some problems, but does that mean the Georgia legislature should gut the only independent body protecting the public from judicial misconduct?

On Oct. 21, the public radio program *This American Life* aired a 21-minute segment on Amendment 3 and the story behind this ballot initiative.

To hear "Judges With Grudges" visit

[www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/599/seriously?act=2](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/599/seriously?act=2)



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