

### MUSIC SERIES & FOOD TRUCK RODEO RETURNS

CONCERTS HELD AT CCNB AMPHITHEATRE THURSDAYS IN MAY, JUNE



Free Bird - The Ultimate Lynyrd Skynyrd Experience performs in the 2022 season of the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo. The band is set for a sophomore appearance in 2023.

The City of Simpsonville and Simpsonville Arts Foundation are partnering again to host the 2023 season of the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo in May and June. Free to the public, concerts will take place at the CCNB Amphitheatre at Heritage Park on Thursday nights at 7-9 p.m. with food trucks opening at 6 p.m.

Simpsonville Community Relations Specialist Justin Campbell said the City appreciates

its partnership with the Arts Foundation and support of the series from the community.

“Since the City and Arts Foundation teamed up in 2019 to start the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo, the concerts have grown in popularity and attracted talented musicians and singers and delicious food from dedicated food trucks,” Campbell said. “Making the series free to attend is an intentional choice to give Simp-

Music Series	1-2
Groundbreaking	3-4
City Hall	5
Parks & Rec	6-7
Public Works	8-9
Fire	10
Police	11-12
Arts Center	13-15

sonville residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy nine free family-friendly concerts in the spring.”

Funded by accommodations taxes that are collected by municipalities and then distributed by the state for tourism-related projects, the Music Series &

Food Truck Rodeo will feature nine musicians and bands and at least two food trucks per concert. Additional support is provided by stage sponsors Countybank, Founders Federal Credit Union and The TECHStore of Simpsonville. Simpsonville Arts Foundation Board of Directors Chair Tim Lincolnhol said the Arts Foundation is “pleased” to partner with the City to present the fifth season of the Simpsonville Music *(continued on Page 2)*

## Artist Lineup for the 2023 Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo

<b>Mac Arnold &amp; Plate Full O’ Blues</b>	<b>May 4</b>	<b>Away Team</b>	<b>June 1</b>
<b>American Elton</b>	<b>May 11</b>	<b>Kami Ocean &amp; The Rhythm</b>	<b>June 8</b>
<b>Time Pilots</b>	<b>May 18</b>	<b>Hot As a Pepper</b>	<b>June 15</b>
<b>Free Bird - Lynyrd Skynyrd Tribute Experience</b>	<b>May 25</b>	<b>The Abby Elmore Band</b>	<b>June 22</b>
		<b>Neon Arcadia</b>	<b>June 29</b>

(continued from Page 3) Series & Food Truck Rodeo, which Lincolnhol said provides the community with free quality music every week for all.

“The Music Series has a variety of artists and bands for families to enjoy,” Lincolnhol said. “We are proud to have been committed to providing this music before, throughout and following the pandemic. Music helps enrich our community, and coupled with the food truck rodeo, gives families in our community a fun evening out on the lawn.”

Lawn chairs and blankets are permitted in the CCNB Amphitheatre for the Music Series; outside food and beverages are

prohibited from the events. Except for service animals, pets are not allowed at Heritage Park.

Food and beverages will be available for purchase starting at 6 p.m. The full lineup of food trucks for the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo will be announced in early spring.



The Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo has grown in popularity since it began in 2019.



Mac Arnold (center) and Plate Full O’ Blues will open the Simpsonville Music Series May 4 | Courtesy of Mac Arnold

## Stage sponsors for the 2023 Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo



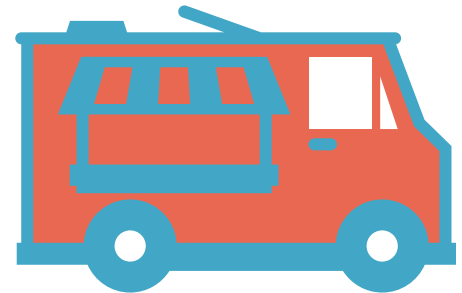
## FOOD TRUCK RODEO TO FEATURE MUSIC SERIES FAVORITES, NEWCOMERS

A concert series wouldn’t be complete without food trucks. The 2023 season of the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo will feature veterans of the series as well as newcomers.

Tacos & Bla Bla Bla, Choc’s Barbeque and Mac Attack GVL are returning, while Dos Bros Tacos and Chef on the Run will make their

Food Truck Rodeo debut.

“A diverse array of food options is one of the components of the Music Series that makes it so successful,” Simpsonville Community Relations Specialist Justin Campbell said. “The combination of talented bands and delicious food keeps fans of the Simpsonville Music Series & Food Truck Rodeo coming back for more.”



deco coming back for more.”

The complete 2023 Food Truck Rodeo lineup will be announced in the spring.





# 'THE CROWN JEWEL OF SIMPSONVILLE'



City of Simpsonville and Greenville County officials participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Simpsonville Municipal Complex and fire department headquarters in City Park on Feb. 23, 2023. Pictured are Simpsonville City Council members Aaron Rupe (Ward II) and Ken Cummings (Ward V), Fire Chief Wesley Williams, Administrator Dianna Graceley, Police Chief Mike Hanshaw, Mayor Paul Shewmaker, councilmembers Sherry Roche (Ward IV) and Lou Hutchings (Ward VI), Greenville County Administrator Joseph Kernel and Councilman Butch Kirven (District 27) | City of Simpsonville

## GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY HELD FOR MUNICIPAL COMPLEX

"Today is an historic day in our community," Simpsonville Mayor Paul Shewmaker said atop a stage in City Park on a cloudy but comfortable morning. "We're here to break ground on a new municipal complex, which makes this a momentous occasion. This ceremony represents a significant step for our city, and it's a symbol of our progress and the vitality that you find here."

The City of Simpsonville and Edifice

General Contractors held in February a groundbreaking ceremony on the new Simpsonville Municipal Complex and Fire Department headquarters. The municipal building will house a new city hall and police department totaling more than 27,000 sq. ft. Adjacent to the complex will be a new fire department headquarters and training center at almost 20,000 sq. ft., in addition to a joint municipal and summary court building. Surrounding

the state-of-the-art facilities will be a re-imagined Simpsonville City Park.

Mayor Shewmaker said Simpsonville has "come a long way" since its founding and even just in the last 10 years, which the city's facilities should accommodate and reflect.

"We continue to grow and expand," Mayor Shewmaker said before playfully asking Fire Chief Wesley Williams, Police Chief Mike Hanshaw and the attending judges if their respective new buildings were needed. All answered, "Yes."

The new city hall will include all administrative function areas for the City of Simpsonville, including Council Chambers (a.k.a. The Ellipse), offices, customer service space, conference space and training areas.

The new police department will consist of all police-related operations, including space for investigations, holding cells, booking, offices, conference rooms, training areas, fitness space, duty area, 911 dispatch and additional (continued on Page 4)



The rendering of the planned Simpsonville Municipal Complex shows the new city hall, which will house administrative offices, customer service space and Council Chambers, a.k.a. 'The Ellipse.' | Edifice

(continued from Page 3) police functions. At 19,145 sq. ft., the new Simpsonville Fire Department station will house headquarters and a training area. Providing full operational and administrative space for all Fire Department operations, the new station will house offices, living quarters, a kitchen, gear lockers, fitness and training areas, dayroom and duty room.

“These new buildings will serve our community for decades if not centuries to come,” Mayor Shewmaker said. “They’ll not only provide essential services and resources for our community, but they will also become a center of civic pride for us. With the simultaneous renovation of City Park, this place will be the crown jewel of Simpsonville.”

The new-and-improved Simpsonville City Park will feature new basketball and tennis courts, two new football fields, a refurbished dog park, new playground, walking paths, disc golf course, water wall feature, patio tables and chairs, restroom facilities, a “Great Lawn” area and other exciting amenities (see Page 6 to read ‘City Park to receive improvements’).

Held in City Park along East Curtis Street, the groundbreaking program included remarks by Greenville County Councilman Burtch Kirven of District 27 and Edifice Executive Vice President Mike Carlisto, plus the groundbreaking itself. Carlisto, Councilman Kirven and Mayor Shewmaker were joined by

Simpsonville City Council members Ken Cummings (Ward V), Lou Hutchings (Ward VI), Sherry Roche (Ward IV) and Aaron Rupe (Ward II), chiefs Hanshaw and Williams and City Administrator Dianna Gracely.

Mayor Shewmaker acknowledged and thanked all stakeholders in and collaborators on the project, including Bolton & Menk, DP3 Architects, Edifice, Greenville County and especially Administrator Gracely.

“[Gracely’s] the motor in this airplane, and we wouldn’t be flying this high without her,” Mayor Shewmaker said while gesturing to Ms. Gracely, who was seated next to Greenville County Administrator Joseph Kernel.

Administrator Gracely, whose experience includes administrator of the cities of Landrum and Travelers Rest, has been integral to making the municipal complex and City Park projects as well as the recently renovated and adjacent Simpsonville Arts Center even possible.



*Simpsonville Mayor Paul Shewmaker gives remarks at the groundbreaking ceremony in City Park for the new*



*Greenville County Councilman (District 27) Butch Kirven and Edifice Executive Vice President Mike Carlisto gave remarks at the municipal complex groundbreaking ceremony on Feb. 23, 2023.*

ing since I joined the city in March 2018,” Ms. Gracely said after the ceremony. “The public and city employees who help amplify what is great about the Simpsonville community deserve spaces that capture that vitality and foster continued progress to make Simpsonville feel for residents and visitors like simply home.”

The completion of the municipal complex project is expected for fall of 2024. Stay up to date on the project by bookmarking the City of Simpsonville’s online “town hall” platform at the following link: [Simpsonville Municipal Complex & Re-imagined City Park](#).

“The municipal complex groundbreaking is five years in the mak-



*Greenville County Administrator Joseph Kernel joins Simpsonville City Administrator Dianna Gracely at the municipal complex groundbreaking. Ms. Gracely, who became administrator in 2018,*



## Online portal streamlines FOIA requests

With a continued commitment to openness, accessibility and transparency, the City of Simpsonville has transitioned to an online portal for processing public records requests. The [Simpsonville Public Records Request Portal](#) improves requesters' and staff's experience.

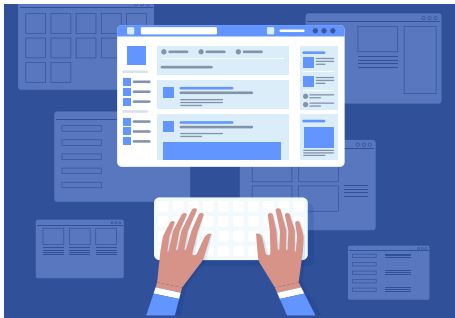
"The timely and accurate fulfillment of public record requests is a top priority for the City of Simpsonville because transparency is a top priority," said Community Relations Specialist Justin Campbell, who oversees

the processing of public record requests. "Simply put, the portal reduces the amount of work for staff to process a request and provides requesters greater accessibility."

Features of the portal include a short user-friendly online form, immediate access to uploaded records, direct messaging between requesters and staff, a timeline for the tracking of requests and their progress and availability of published records and requests for viewing by the general public. Given the frequency of public record requests submitted to the City, the process needed an overhaul. The workflow of processing a request prior to the transition involved lengthy email chains between requesters and multiple staff members and maintaining deadlines and due dates for numerous requests across cal-

endars. The portal centralizes the workflow for staff and requester in one place. Campbell said the online portal affords staff members more independence in processing requests, which enables him to see and manage the bigger picture.

"The bigger picture is whether public record requests are being processed quickly, efficiently and accurately by the City of Simpsonville," Campbell said. "Instead of relying on me to communicate back and forth with requesters or providing records to me for me to then provide to requesters, staff can streamline their work by sending messages directly to and uploading records for requesters through the portal in one centralized timeline of activity. Staff will work off one stream of activity and information, which ensures everyone's on the same page and working together."



"The timely and accurate fulfillment of public record requests is a top priority for the City of Simpsonville because transparency is a top priority."

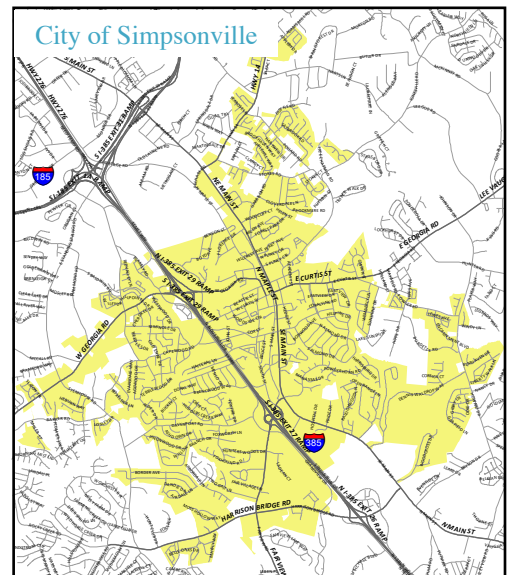
-Justin Campbell, Simpsonville Community Relations Specialist

# DO I LIVE IN THE CITY LIMITS?

## How to know if you live inside or outside Simpsonville city limits

Living at a Simpsonville address does not necessarily mean you live in the city limits of Simpsonville. You can have a Simpsonville address and live in Greenville County or even the City of Mauldin! Here are a few ways to determine where you reside in relation to the Simpsonville city limits:

- ◆ **Tax District 898 or 899:** If your Greenville County tax bill indicates your tax district is 898 or 899, you live in Simpsonville city limits.
- ◆ **Sanitation Collection:** If you have a black Simpsonville trash can and Simpsonville Public Works collects your trash, you live in Simpsonville city limits. If a different service provider collects your trash, then you likely live outside city limits.
- ◆ **GCGIS:** A useful tool to determine whether an address is inside Simpsonville city limits is Greenville County Geographic Information Systems ([gcgis.org](http://gcgis.org)). Visit the site and select "Advanced Internet Mapping System," search an address and see if the little red dot falls within the outline of the city limits.
- ◆ **Call City Hall:** If you need help finding out whether you live in Simpsonville city limits or have any other questions, feel free to call Simpsonville City Hall at 864-967-9526.



### Activity Center receives first improvements in 25 years Improvements include expanded outdoor space, kitchen upgrades for seniors

The City of Simpsonville held a ribbon cutting ceremony for recent improvements to the Simpsonville Activity & Senior Center in December. Included in the improvements are renovations to kitchen upgrades and expanded outdoor space that will allow Senior Center staff to provide more social programming for seniors.

Simpsonville Parks & Recreation Director Robbie Davis said the ribbon cutting ceremony was really a celebration for the seniors.

“Our seniors are the heart and soul of the Activity & Senior Center, and they deserve the best Senior Center that we can provide them,” Davis said. “The expanded outdoor

space means more opportunities for socializing and fellowship, which are essential to quality of life.”

The renovations to the Senior Center (which are the first improvements in 25 years) were made possible by the awarding of a Senior Center Permanent Improvement Grant by the S.C. Office on Aging.

Involved in the project were Simpsonville Parks & Recreation, Greenville County Redevelop-



Improvements to the Simpsonville Activity & Senior Center include expanded outdoor space | City of Simpsonville

ment Authority and the S.C. Office on Aging. Simpsonville Mayor Paul Shewmaker, GCRA Project Manager Joe Smith and S.C. Office on Aging Director Connie Munn spoke at the ribbon cutting.

### Parks & Rec partners with The Little White House to provide recreation opportunities to students



The Simpsonville Parks & Recreation Department and with [The Little White House](#) are partnering to provide leisure and activity opportunities to adults on the autism spectrum. Every second Thursday of March, April, May, June and August, Parks & Rec pickleball courts will be reserved for students from The Little White House for two hours. Director of Friends of The Little

White House Lu Grant said pickleball is good for the adult students.

“Pickleball is perfect for our students because it allows them the physical activity they need in a sport that provides a social outlet as well,” Grant said. “We believe this initiative will provide other opportunities for long-term benefits outside of this program.”

Simpsonville Parks & Rec and The Little White House have worked closely since 2020 to keep the Golden Strip Pumpkin Patch a staple of Simpson-

ville in the fall. When the City started building new pickleball courts, Grant worked with Parks & Rec Director Robbie Davis to connect students with activities within the community. Davis said Parks & Rec is “honored and thrilled” to reserve the courts for The Little White House students.

“The mission of Simpsonville Parks & Rec is to provide opportunities to people of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and personal experiences,” Davis said. “Our partnership with The Little White House is a great example of our commitment to recreation for all.”

Archery is the next planned activity for the adult students after pickleball.

# CITY PARK TO RECEIVE IMPROVEMENTS

“All of our parks are special, but the close proximity of City Park to downtown makes it that much more special,” Simpsonville Parks & Recreation Director Robbie Davis said. “City Park is deserving of improvements because those improvements are in turn an investment into downtown.”

Construction on City Park begins this spring. The improvements include the creation of a “great lawn” for gathering, stage pavilion, fountain feature, patios and tables, new playground, two youth football fields, basketball and tennis courts, disc golf course, dog park, historic library and even a real Christmas tree for the Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony. An entrance from East Curtis leads to a drive between the Great Lawn and rest of the park to

a parking lot adjacent to the Simpsonville Municipal Cemetery. The drive, which can be closed to motorists for an event, will loop behind the new magistrate court, police department, city hall and Simpsonville Arts Center.

Davis said the enhancements to City Park will enhance quality of life.

“City Park has served the public well for nearly half a century, and its popularity among residents and visitors is a testament to the value of the space to the Simpsonville community and beyond,” Davis said. “What we are doing is adding improvements to the park to increase that value by making it more inviting, accessible and useable for all in the Upstate.”



**“All of our parks are special, but the close proximity of City Park to downtown makes it that much more special.”**

**-Robbie Davis, Parks & Rec Director**

[Click here to see a larger rendering of the new City Park if viewing online](#)

## City Park, including dog park, temporarily closed for safety due to construction | Park Drive closed, cemetery remains open to public



*Park Drive is closed to the public due to construction without entry or exit to and from Academy and East Curtis streets.*



*The Municipal Cemetery will be closed to all vehicles except vehicles with prior authorization or permission.*

With construction on City Park improvements beginning this spring, City Park, including The Dog Spot, playgrounds and Park Drive will be temporarily closed for the safety of the public.

Water and power to the park and its facilities were disconnected Feb. 20, and barricades were placed to prevent entry Feb. 28. Park Drive will also be closed without entry or exit to and from Academy and East Curtis streets. The City Park parking lot, all parking spots on Academy Street except for handicap ones

and the grassy area behind the Arts Center will be inaccessible.

Community Relations Specialist Justin Campbell said the City appreciates the patience and understanding of residents and visitors.

“While the journey to a new and improved City Park and downtown is exciting, we all may experience some inconvenience throughout the process,” Campbell said. “The public should know the Simpsonville Municipal Cemetery will remain open to the public, and construction will wrap as quickly as possible. The City believes the end result of a new and improved City Park will be well worth the wait.”

**While City Park is closed, the public is invited to visit the City’s other four parks:  
Alder Park | College Park | Heritage Park**



# Leaf it be

3 ways to make leaves work for you instead of the other way around

With more than 1 million pounds of leaves collected, Simpsonville Public Works will continue collecting leaves from residences until April 1. However, homeowners can make leaves work for them while reducing the amount of leaves headed to the landfill:



1. **Compost your leaves to use in your garden.** Be sure to mix in the right amount of green organic material with the brown leaves.
2. **Mulch your leaves with your lawn mower to return nutrients to the soil.** Keep a check on your soil pH.
3. **Let the leaves mold to become a stand-alone soil conditioner.**

**The above options may not keep all your leaves off the curb, but reducing and reusing is a great practice that can improve gardens and make way for beneficial organisms.**

## A new after-hours line for events that happen when you least expect them to

The Simpsonville Public Works Department may close at 5 p.m. every weekday and on the weekends, but that doesn't mean an unexpected event like sewer system issues or downed trees won't happen. To assist residents during certain emergencies, call Public Works for its after-hours line at 864-967-9533.

### Issues that Public Works can address after-hours

Sewer-related issues

Emergency utility locate

Missing street signs

Potholes

Downed trees

### Issues that Public Works cannot address after-hours

Water-related issues  
(Greenville Water: 864-241-6000)

Natural gas-related issues  
(Piedmont Natural Gas: 800-752-7504  
Fountain Inn: 864-862-0042)

Power  
(Duke Energy: 800-769-3766)

**Public Works is happy to assist in reporting dangerous situations but cannot help with specific accounts.**



# Trash collection day to change for 1 out of 10 households

Change for 6 neighborhoods effective March 3



Neighborhoods   Day Change   Start Date	
<b>Monday to Friday</b> <b>Start: March 3</b> Chancellors Park Powderhorn West Circle	<b>Monday to Tuesday</b> <b>Start: March 7</b> Gwinn Meadows Howards Subdivision Wagon Creek

While most trash collection routes will remain the same, routes for about 10 percent of households in Simpsonville will change effective March 3, 2023 to ensure continued safe, efficient and accurate sanitation service.

“The adjustment of sanitation routes will reduce late hours and spread out workloads evenly to accommodate the recent and future growth in the City of Simpsonville,” Simpsonville Public Works Director Andy West said. “Making these changes in routes for only one

out of 10 households will further improve trash collection for the entire city.”

Trash collection day for residents in the following neighborhoods will change from Monday to Friday; the first day of the new route’s service will be March 3, 2023: Chancellors Park, Powderhorn and West Circle. Trash collection day for residents in the following neighborhoods will change from Monday to Tuesday; the first day of the new route’s service will be March 7, 2023: Gwinn Meadows,

Howards Subdivision (Bell Drive and Howard Circle) and Wagon Creek.

Residents can double check their trash day by visiting [simpsonville.com/publicworks](http://simpsonville.com/publicworks).

“The Public Works Department appreciates the patience and understanding of Simpsonville households as this adjustment is made to better serve the residents of the City of Simpsonville and make sure Simpsonville Public Works is always simply dependable,” West said.

## Simpsonville continues sewer rehab near downtown in spring

Rehab made possible by funding from SC Rural Infrastructure Authority grant

The Simpsonville Public Works Department will continue rehabilitation of the sewer system around the downtown area in the spring. Funded by a grant from the S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority, the project has already lined more than one mile of sewer mains with cured-in-place fiberglass liner, which is used in the rehabilitation method of lining existing pipe with jointless seamless pipe; resin in the liner is exposed to a curing element to make it attach to the inner walls of the pipe.

with a hardened fiberglass sleeve. This technique has a lifespan that will outlast us and our kids. We also use a cementitious product to effectively seal old brick manholes that leak or older precast manholes that didn’t seal properly. Reducing the I&I is required by ReWa. We operate under a permit with ReWa that requires this reduction so their waste treatment plants can operate efficiently.”

The City of Simpsonville owns and operates about 106 miles of sewer line and 3,000 manholes, and the number of line miles and manholes will grow as Public Works surveys the entire system and incorporates an interactive capacity tracking option via GPS.

Simpsonville Public Works Director Andy West said Public Works crews are rehabilitating some of the oldest mains and manholes holding a lot of groundwater seeping into the sewer system. The technical term for the problem is inflow and infiltration or I&I.

“More unwanted water in the system decreases the capacity of our system,” West said. “The main method of attacking this problem is by lining the mains internally



## SIMPSONVILLE FIRE TOP GIVER TO MUSC BURNED CHILDREN'S FUND FOR 2022

### Money raised from can donations by the public to fire stations

The Simpsonville Fire Department was the top giver to the Medical University of South Carolina's Burned Children's Fund for 2022. At \$7,459.27, the donation by Simpsonville Fire was double the second top giver.

The money for the Burned Children's Fund is raised by exchanging cans donated by members of the public for cash, which fire departments across the state give to the Fund to benefit pediatric burn patients. Simpsonville Fire Chief Wesley Williams said all credit for being the No. 1 giver is due to the public.

"Without the public and their can donations, raising nearly \$7,500 for the more-than-worthy cause of the S.C. Burned Children's Fund would not have been possible," Chief Williams said. "The Simpsonville community has been overwhelmingly impressive with their can donations, which will directly and positively impact kids."

All six Simpsonville fire stations in Simpsonville city limits and Greenville County keep a trailer out front for collecting cans from the public. People are encouraged to donate their cans by dropping them off in a bag next to the trailer, and the firefighters will do the rest. Anyone in need of assistance at the fire station can call the [fire station phone number](#) ([simpsonville.com/fire](http://simpsonville.com/fire)).



*Simpsonville Fire Chief Wesley Williams and Deputy Fire Marshal Jamal Mack hold a check representing the 2022 donation by the Fire Department to the MUSC Burned Children's Fund with money raised from can donation and recycling.*



*The Simpsonville Fire Department collects cans at each fire station to exchange for cash that will be donated to the Medical University of South Carolina Burned Children's Fund.*

Deputy Fire Marshal Jamal Mack and Lt. Robert Hurst oversee the Burned Children's Fund for the Simpsonville Fire Department. Marshal Mack said the Burned Children's Fund allows pediatric burn patients to attend Camp "Can" Do at Camp St. Christopher on Seabrook Island, a free five-day camp exclusively for children who have suffered a burn injury.

"Lt. Hurst and I are honored to oversee this initiative because Camp 'Can' Do is a special place for both the campers and firefighters who run the camp," Mack said. "Socializing with other burn patients and talking with firefighters who can understand some of what they're going through is crucial for their recovery and self-confidence."



**‘To the best of my ability’**

**Simpsonville native hired as new victim’s advocate**

At 26 years old, Emily Smith has more life experience than many people twice or even three times her age. Smith is a College of Charleston alum, Peace Corps veteran, trained masseuse, mental health professional and now the new victim’s advocate for the Simpsonville Police Department.

“I’ve always been passionate about mental health and general wellness, so I pursued jobs in those fields,” said Smith, who earned a public health degree from the College of Charleston.

After graduating college, Smith—who has a passion for traveling and learning about new cultures—put her degree and Spanish language skills to work as a Healthy School Coordinator in Guatemala,

**“Overall, I want to build upon the community presence the last victim’s advocate had and do the best to provide victim’s with the assistance they deserve.”**

**-Emily Smith, Victim’s Advocate**

where she worked with local community members to improve the hygiene of schools, build school gardens and lead fitness programs.

“After my Peace Corps time came to an end, I felt compelled to work directly with mental health and found a job as an AmeriCorps VISTA for the National Alliance on Mental

Health and Mental Health America,” Smith said. “With NAMI, I was able to build partnerships with other local behavioral health organizations, organize community events, conduct training for the Greenville Police Department and enhance services for Spanish-speaking communities.”

Smith worked as a trained crisis intervention specialist on the Suicide Hotline at Mental Health America, answering phone calls from people who were experiencing a mental health crisis, which ranged from suicidal ideations to a desperate need for local resources or to “someone who just needs to feel heard.” Following her experience as a mental health professional, Smith studied at and graduated from the Western North Carolina School of Massage with specialized skills in multiple massage techniques, including Swedish, neuromuscular, reiki, hospice and oncology.

“I realized I wanted to have more technical skills to help people with anxiety and depression,” Smith said regarding her motivation to attend massage school.

Then in February, the City of Simpsonville hired Smith to fill the open victim’s advocate position. Smith said another opportunity to help people and create com-



*Emily Smith is the new victim’s advocate for the Simpsonville Police Department | Courtesy of Emily Smith*  
community attracted her to the role.

“During my professional experience, I felt the most fulfilled when I was working in crisis intervention and networking with the community,” Smith said. “The victim’s advocate position gives me a chance to build upon both of these skills. I’ll be working one-on-one with victims, whether by providing empathy, walking them through the legal process, connecting them with resources or using active listening skills for someone going through a crisis. It also gives me a chance to network and partner with organizations and community members to bring the best resources to victims of crime in Simpsonville.”

Smith’s plans for the victim’s advocate position include expanding resources for victim’s by working with criminal justice or social service agencies; giving victims the most up-to-date accurate information about their case and resources and participating in community outreach to provide *(continued on Page 12)*

(continued from Page II) education about crime prevention and the cycle of abuse that victims find themselves in.

“Overall, I want to build upon the community presence the last victim’s advocate had and do the best to provide victims with the assistance they deserve,” Smith said. “I plan on doing this by working closely with other victim’s advocates in Greenville, building more community connections and advocating for victims to the best of my ability.”



When Smith is not working to make the world a better place, she enjoys running outdoors, salsa dancing or playing soccer.

*Newly hired Victim’s Advocate for the Simpsonville Police Department Emily Smith participated in the Peace Corps as a Healthy School Coordinator in Guatemala. Smith has a passion for traveling and intends to visit at least one new country every year | Courtesy of Emily Smith*

## **COURT: IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO KNOW**

**Q: How do I pay a traffic ticket issued by a Simpsonville police officer?**

A: Traffic tickets can be paid online by visiting [simpsonville.com/court](http://simpsonville.com/court) and selecting Court Fines or in person at Simpsonville City Hall on Monday - Friday at 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Acceptable forms of payment at City Hall include credit card, debit card, cash, certified check and money order. There will be a surcharge on all credit and debit card payments.

**Q: What is the difference between Simpsonville Municipal Court and Fairview-Austin Summary Court? Are they the same?**

A: Simpsonville Municipal Court at 118 N.E. Main St. and Fairview-Austin Summary Court at 205 N. Maple St. are not the same court. Municipal Court addresses cases that happened inside Simpsonville city limits and originated with an officer with the Simpsonville Police Department. Summary Court is a part of the magistrate courts system of Greenville County and addresses cases that happened in Greenville County or originated with a trooper from the S.C. Highway Patrol or a deputy from the Greenville County Sheriff’s Office.



**Q: What do I do if I have a court date?**

A: Anyone with a Simpsonville Municipal Court date should check their ticket for the date and time (in [military time](#)) of their court appearance and verify the address is 118 N.E. Main St. Members of the public should use the rear entrance of City Hall and must wait in the parking lot until a police officer unlocks and opens the door.

**Q: When is court held?**

A: Court is held the second and third weeks of the month; check your ticket for which day of the week your court date falls on. Night court is held at 5 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Questions can be directed to Assistant Clerk of Court Ariel Rogers at 864-967-9526 ext. 104.



**‘A PRESTIGIOUS HONOR THAT MARKS A SPECIAL CHAPTER’  
CITY RECEIVES JOSEPH P. RILEY AWARD FOR ECONOMIC IMPACT BY ARTS CENTER**

The Simpsonville Arts Center has been recognized by the Municipal Association of South Carolina for its impact on economic development in the state.

The City of Simpsonville received the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award for the Arts Center renovation project as part of the Municipal Association 2023 Achievement Awards. Arts Center Manager Melissa Sturgis said the award is “an honor,” especially since it was earned in the Arts Center’s first year of new life.

“It truly validates our mission of being the source for a vibrant performing and visual arts scene and great venue for art education and exploration - all under one roof,” said Sturgis, who was hired in May 2022 to manage the Arts Center and oversee its programming. “I am so grateful I could be part of the fulfillment of that mission.”

After nearly two decades of remaining largely empty and unused, the building on Academy Street in downtown that once housed Simpsonville Elementary School was renovated in 2021. Renovations included an updated auditorium with a new stage and seating; brand new lighting and sound systems, including a state-of-the-art sound board; green room, windows and doors. The project totaled \$2.5 million.

City Administrator Dianna Gracely said the statewide recognition of the Arts Center and its economic impact on the city is gratifying.

“We knew that the time, effort and resources that the City invested would be returned tenfold,” Gracely said. “The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award is a prestigious honor that marks a special chapter in the continuing story of the revitalization of downtown Simpsonville.”

Held annually in late winter, the Achievement Awards program by MASC has three objectives: recognize innovative projects, share innovative projects with other municipalities and demonstrate the value of cities and towns. City staff believed the Arts Center renovation to be innovative and demonstrative of a city’s value.

The granting of the award followed the submission of an application by the City and presentation by Gracely and Sturgis in Columbia. In their presentation, Gracely and Sturgis focused on the economic impact by the Arts Center plus its programming. Pulling from the duo’s winning presentation, the arts result in an annual economic impact of \$9.7 billion and 115,000 jobs in South Carolina, according to the S.C. Arts Commission.



*Renovations of the Simpsonville Arts Center included creating a lobby and concessions area that acts as the Lobby Art Gallery.*

Additionally, the expected annual economic impact by the Arts Center on Simpsonville is an estimated \$1 million based on projected ticket sales by Mill Town Players, the in-residence theatre group.

On top of high-quality affordable performances by Mill Town Players, the Arts Center boasts art exhibitions and openings, classes for kids and adults, ballet performances, appearances by historical figures from Greenville Chautauqua and six studio artists.

Simpsonville Community Relations Specialist Justin Campbell said the Arts Center renovation project is representative of the City’s grand vision for Simpsonville.

“The City of Simpsonville is committed to providing public services to residents and visitors that both improve quality of life and drive economic development, and the Arts Center is one of those services,” Campbell said. “Transforming an underutilized but beloved building into a thriving hub for arts and culture in the Upstate is the exact kind of project that local governments should be pursuing to better their cities.”



# Art classes featured at the Simpsonville Arts Center

## Cat or Dog “Neriage Block” Fired Clay Bowls

**March 14 at 6-7 p.m.**

Taught by expert ceramic guest artist Kate Krause, the gorgeous clay project originates in Japan. Color is mixed into clay before inlaying the colored clay and combining it to make designs. The clay is rolled into a slab and draped over a form, creating clay feet for the bottom. Choose what shape you would like your bowl! Each bowl is bisque fired, clear glazed and fired again. These unique bowls will last for many years to come. *Special Note: Ages 8 through adult may attend*



Monthly adult painting classes by  
Jessica Brush

hosted by *Make & Believe Artists*

“Colorful Trees” on March 24

“Colorful Umbrella” on April 28



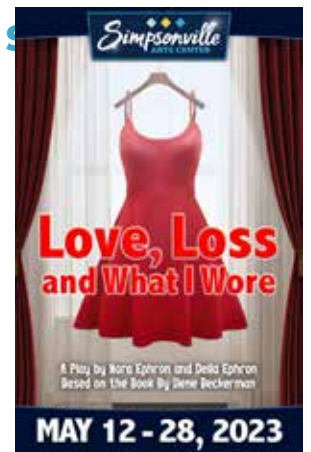
*Alan Shuptrine: a full-day painting class by nationally recognized watercolorist Alan Shuptrine on June 3 at 10 a.m. - 4p.m. - [www.alanshuptrine.com](http://www.alanshuptrine.com)*



Visit

[milltownplayers.org](http://milltownplayers.org)

for tickets!



## Arts Center Lobby Gallery regularly features art exhibits

“X3 Art Exhibition” by Gayle Miller, MJ King and Lee Ann Zirbes runs through April 3

Art student showcase by  
*Make & Believe Artists*  
April 10 - April 28



Art from the “Some of Our Favorites” art exhibit in 2022.



# Melissa gets (another) fresh start

## Arts Center manager featured in Couric newsletter

Simpsonville Arts Center Manager Melissa Sturgis was drinking coffee on her back deck on New Year's Eve when she read an email informing her that her story would be featured in **Wake-Up Call**, a newsletter by Katie Couric Media - yes, the former **Today** co-host **CBS Evening News** Katie Couric.

"I screamed, and then I started to cry," Sturgis said.

Sturgis's submission was one of 10 accepted out of thousands.

"My parents, both journalists and now deceased, would be so proud."

The story that Sturgis submitted to **Wake-Up Call** was in response to the prompt "Fresh Start." As the spouse of a geologist who worked across the globe for 30 years in the oil and gas industry, Sturgis had a fresh start every two to three years when her husband Doug and she had to pick up and move.

"Every time we moved, I had the opportunity to reinvent myself," Sturgis said.

When living in rural Malaysia where there weren't schools, Sturgis had to homeschool her children via a California program that worked with child actors and athletes and kids who travel, prompting Sturgis to obtain her teaching certification upon moving back to the States. No longer interested in succumbing to societal pressure, Sturgis stopped dying her hair when Doug and she were transferred to Russia in 2013.

"I was tired of dying my hair, and I decided to let it go grey since no one knew me over there," Sturgis said. "I finally embraced the curly grey hair."

Fast forward to spring of 2022 when Sturgis applied for and accepted the Arts Center manager position with the City. Forty years after getting her graduate degree, Sturgis went for her dream job that she always wanted.



*The Simpsonville Arts Center is managed by Melissa Sturgis, who was hired by the City in 2022 | Ghost Marketing*

"There were times in my life when I was resentful of having to pack up the house and move to yet another location, giving up having roots and lifelong friends from one place," Sturgis said. "But I look at my life now and see how lucky I have been. I not only have my true dream job 40 years after getting my grad degree, but I have travel memories from some exotic locales and have friends in so many places."

Sturgis's entry "Get a new job" in the **Wake-Up Call** newsletter can be read at the following link: [www.katie-couric.com](http://www.katie-couric.com).



*Melissa Sturgis is the Simpsonville Arts Center manager | Ghost Marketing*