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POWER OF PRAYER

God's hand, people's prayers gave KM family a miracle

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Nearly a year ago when two pound Dylan Shelton Blanton was born the doctors gave him little chance of survival.

"The Lord had a hand on our miracle child," said proud father Don Blanton. "Our little boy was a fighter and people all over Kings Mountain were praying that he would hang in there and beat the odds."

Dylan's mother, Melissa Eng Blanton, was rushed to Carolinas Medical Center from Cleveland Memorial Hospital January 12, 1992 where doctors worked to stop her labor.

The baby, born two months prematurely on January 23, 1992, weighed 2 pounds, 11 1/8 ounces. One lung was not fully developed and doctors said if the infant survived he would be hospitalized for at least four months.

When the call came early January 26 to come to the Charlotte hospital Don feared the worst for his child. "Come quickly," the caller told the father who said he didn't stop for a light on the 30 mile trip to the hospital. Robbie and Johnny Eng, Melissa's brothers, and Freida Grayson, Melissa's mother, rode with them and Blanton drove 85 to 90 miles per

hour on I-85 north. "We were the quietest five people. Robbie told me to turn on the emergency flashers and no one spoke a word until we reached the hospital," Blanton said.

Blanton said that he prayed for the Lord to "clear us a path" to Charlotte and he made the trip in 20-25 minutes.

What the parents saw in the Intensive Care Unit was a blue baby on a respirator with tubes hooked up to the tiny chest.

A week after the birth, the baby developed pneumonia. For weeks the young parents spent many anxious hours at his side.

The boy was in Intensive Care for three months and then was moved to a Progressive Nursery for another month.

May 28, 1992 was a red letter day for the whole family. The baby came home. By that time the light brown haired brown eyed boy weighed five pounds. He still required nursing care around the clock until September and special breathing treatments, including a heart monitor and oxygen.

"Every time the monitor went off and Dylan quit breathing we held our breath because we were afraid we were losing him," said Blanton.

Except for a slight cold in October, Dylan, who now tips the



Don and Melissa Blanton and their miracle baby Dylan plan a big birthday celebration on January 23. Dylan will be celebrating his first birthday.

scales at 17 pounds, is learning to walk, has said "Daddy" and is enjoying the tender loving care he gets from family and friends. His parents have nicknamed the boy "Jabber" because he "jabbers" and loves to play with them in the den of their comfortable home on Phifer Road.

From the pictures displayed in the house it's easy to see who's the pride and joy of the family. The

first tiny baby pictures are displayed along with the recent first Christmas photographs.

On his birthday next week the parents plan to take Dylan to Kabuto, a Japanese steak house. Dylan is fascinated with the way the food is prepared, according to his mother. A Mickey Mouse birthday cake will also be cut and

See Prayer, 9-A

Leaders tackle weapons issue

A police officer on the campus of KM High School and KM Middle School during lunch hours is the first step in a far-reaching program geared to prevent violence in the schools.

Education in the training of teachers on what to do in event of potential trouble is another goal of the Kings Mountain Police Department, says Chief Warren Goforth, who said the two incidents of guns on the Middle School campus recently have spurred both the Police and the KM District Schools Board of Education to initiate programs aimed to educate students, teachers and parents.

Supt. Dr. Bob McRae said the system is committed to working closely with the Police Department and that parents will be part of the education tools. "Parents need to put their weapons in better places at home where the kids can't get them and our parent education programs will focus on these types of problems and what we as parents can do about them."

Twelve representatives of local law enforcement and schools, including four members of the Board of Education, met at City Hall Tuesday afternoon to commit themselves to begin preparing a grant application which could raise

See Weapons, 9-A

Minor changes for Chill-Out

Kings Mountain High School made three minor changes in its tardy policy after meeting with a group of parents and students following last month's School Board meeting.

Several parents and students appeared at the December meeting to voice concerns over the policy, and especially the school's practice of not excusing tardies such as car trouble and other instances over which they felt students had no control.

The school didn't bend on that rule; however, the tardy policy was revised to allow reading material (provided by the school) in the Chill-Out room and Saturday detention, and also officially wrote into the policy that tardy counts begin anew at the start of each semester. Although that had been the practice in the past, it had not been a written part of the policy.

Tardy Committee Chairman Joel Rountree said the new policy was approved unanimously by KMHS teachers during a recent faculty meeting.

See Tardy, 9-A

Causby to speak at Chamber banquet

Gene Causby, Executive Director of the North Carolina School Boards Association, will be guest speaker at the annual Kings Mountain Chamber of Commerce banquet Monday, Jan. 25 at Kings Mountain Middle School.

The event will get under way with a reception at 6:30 p.m., and dinner will be served at 7 p.m.

Chamber members may make reservations by calling Lucille Williams at the Chamber of Commerce office, 739-4755. The cost is \$10 per person.

Wade Tyner, President of Wade Ford, will be installed as Chamber President for the coming year.

Ruby Alexander of Alexander Realty is outgoing President.

Causby, a native of Morganton, has been Executive Director of the North Carolina School Boards Association since 1980. He resides in Clayton. He and his wife, Mary Ellen, have four children.

Causby has been in education since 1957, when he began his career as a teacher and coach at Boyden High School in Salisbury. He later became head football coach and athletic director at Goldsboro High School and was a coach in the Shrine Bowl and East-West all-star games in 1964. He became principal of Goldsboro

Junior High in 1965.

He was an Administrative Assistant for Goldsboro City Schools from 1967-69, Associate Director of the Division of Human Relations of the N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction from 1969-71, and Assistant State Supt. for Personnel Relations and Public Affairs from 1971-80.

He has conducted seminars, workshops and presentations in 42 states, 143 local education agencies and actively assists educational and civic groups and organizations across the state.



GENE CAUSBY

School Board approves materials policy

The Kings Mountain Board of Education heard concerns from Myron George, chairman of Parents for Quality Education, about the schools' video policy and then unanimously approved the Selection of Instructional Materials policy presented by Asst. Supt. Jane King at Monday night's board meeting.

Most of the policy had been approved in November, but the board tabled the section on video materials after several parents, including those who are members of PQE,

voiced concerns over a video and some Channel 1 programs that were shown at Kings Mountain Middle School.

George and his group asked the board to name a parent to the materials advisory committee, but the board did not agree. The policy calls for the principal of each school to "organize a committee to serve in an advisory capacity in formulating orders for instructional materials and to review materials prior to purchase."

Jane Talbert of North School,

representing media specialists of all schools, urged the board to approve the policy as recommended. She pointed out that people's taste differ and "taste cannot be legislated."

George, who said he was objecting to the part of the policy dealing with video material brought to school by individual teachers and some Channel 1 programs and not pre-approved materials, said parents need to be able "to send our children to school and not have them watch things that they are not

allowed to watch at home."

George pointed out that Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the state's largest system, has had parents on its materials advisory board for over 20 years and its policy has worked well.

"We're letting one person make the decision about what our children see in the classroom, and we don't have any assurances that anything inappropriate will be screened out," he said.

See Policy, 9-A

Report Card back to par

Kings Mountain Schools' 1992 report card is "very promising" but there is still a lot of room for improvement, Supt. Bob McRae told the Board of Education at Monday night's monthly meeting at the Central Office.

Kings Mountain moved back to a "par" rating after scoring below par last year.

McRae pointed out that Kings Mountain made "some nice improvements" in a number of areas, but also slipped in a few. The overall score was better than last year because the state's expectation, or Index of Advancement, was not as great as last year.

Kings Mountain showed overall gains in mathematics and science, scored about the same in reading/language and scored slightly lower in social studies than in 1991.

California Achievement Test scores in reading and language in grades 3, 6 and 8, as well as the North Carolina English and writing tests in grades 6 and 8 are used in determining reading/language achievement. Kings Mountain improved slightly in grade 3 reading

and grade 6 reading and showed tremendous improvement in grade 6 writing, moving from the 48th to the 69th percentile.

Social studies scores improved in grades 3 and 8 but were down slightly in grade 6; science scores on the North Carolina test improved greatly in grades 3 and 8 but were down by two percentile in grade 6. Scores in biology, chemistry, physics and physical science showed good improvement.

Mathematics scores in the CAT were better in grades 3 and 6 and down by two percentage points in grade 8. Scores also improved slightly in Algebra I and II and improved significantly in geometry.

Kings Mountain's SAT scores improved to an average of 896 in 1992. That figure was 41 points better than the state average and just three points under the national average of 899.

"Overall, our achievement level has gone up from last year," Dr. McRae said. "We're in the best position we've been in in three years. We have a lot of work to do but it's encouraging to see our report card for this year."

KM's second Habitat house to be built on Tracy Street

"This is a raw day but wonderful," said Mayor Scott Neisler as he turned the first shovel of dirt Saturday for Kings Mountain's second Habitat for Humanity, the fourth project for eligible low income families in Cleveland County.

"God has blessed us," said Jose A. Espinales, Department of Transportation worker who will move in the four-room house on Tracy Street in Kings Mountain with his wife and son after it is completed. Their home will be built across the street from Kings Mountain's first Habitat house occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Brian Curry and two children.

Jose and Maria Espinales and Jose Espinales Jr., 15, came to the United States from Jinotega, Nicaragua five years and three months ago. They reside in Shelby at 623 Crow Road.

Nineteen volunteers from the Cleveland County affiliate of Habitat for Humanity stood in the rain on Tracy Street at 11 a.m. Saturday to break ground on a lot donated by the City of Kings Mountain for one dollar. The second house marks the first partnership between Habitat and the Kings Mountain Baptist Association.

"Habitat is about people who have giving to people who have not," said Neisler. The program offers affordable housing to families who agree to put up their own "sweat equity" into the project. The mayor said the first house here was built for \$19,000 because of volunteer laborers and donations.

"The ministry needs to be here for those who don't speak English," said Neisler.

Mickey Heyward gave the opening prayer in which he thanked God for being in the center of life and in a project "as diverse as we are." Leland Kerr, of the KM Baptist Association, praised the work of Habitat and volunteers. Neisler called the building of the first Habitat house in Kings Mountain "one of the best miracles of my life."

"The Lord makes rainy days too," said Neisler, welcoming the Nicaraguan family to Kings Mountain.

Jose Espinales speaks English fluently. "This will be our first real home in America and we have seen how God has worked to bring this about," he said.

The Espinales family are active participants in the Star of Bethlehem Hispanic Mission in Cleveland County.



Mayor Scott Neisler, left, and Jose Espinales, his wife Maria and their son, Jose Jr., break ground for Kings Mountain's second Habitat for Humanity house on Tracy Street.