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Sheriff's office vows to rid county of illegal gambling

KM business and club raided, 20 video poker machines confiscated

Three people have been charged with illegal gambling and other charges are pending following the raid of the Amvets Club, 712 Slater St., and Breakers Billiards, South Battleground Ave., Friday.

"We hope this sends a message," says Rocky Smith, narcotics officer with the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department.

Smith said arrest warrants have been issued for Jessie Heath of Plantation Drive, manager of the Amvets Club; Roger Philbeck, owner of Breakers Billiards; and Sammy Joe Jenkins of Clover, SC,

manager of Breakers Billiards. At least two other people are expected to be charged with misdemeanors on Thursday and will get a citation to court and a court date.

In addition to seizing 20 video poker machines, nine at Amvets and 11 at Breakers, and gambling records, officers seized illegal alcohol at the Amvets location.

"They have no license or permits for brown bagging or anything," said Smith. "They don't even have the license they need for a club. They weren't making any attempt to comply with the

"We're letting them know... we plan to enforce the law."

- Narcotics officer Rocky Smith

law."

In addition, a patron at Breakers will face drug charges.

Smith said the video poker machines cost from \$2,000 to \$5,000 each. The county will probably have them destroyed, he said.

About \$1200 was seized at Breakers and between \$600 and \$700 at the Amvets club, Smith said.

Smith said the two week investigation which resulted in the raids was spurred by complaints about both locations. "Mostly it was about people in there gambling and losing a substantial amount of money and not being able to pay their bills," he said.

Smith said wives and employees of patrons of the two establishments were among those who had complained.

Smith said defendants face possible fines, 45-day jail sentences and loss of the seized merchandise.

Smith issued a warning to other businesses or clubs in violation of the law.

"There's a lot more coming because Sheriff Dan Crawford has said we've got to clean them out of the county."

"People have to comply with the law and get rid of the gambling machines and we think we have a fair number of them to confiscate," said Smith.

Smith said letters will go out from the Sheriff's Department this week to about two dozen places from which complaints have been generated.

"We're letting them know they

must get into compliance and we plan to enforce the law," said Smith. Clubs, particularly military service clubs, need to comply with ALE permits

"One place voluntarily closed and left the county," said Smith. "We're not trying to close down social halls for veterans."

"The Sheriff and KM Chief of Police Richard Reynolds were on the scene when officers with the Sheriff's Department and Kings Mountain Police conducted the raids Friday and the sheriff personally delivered a message to one of the defendants," said Smith.

"This is an important issue that we will continue to address," he said.

Library campaign nears end

The Children First Campaign, the fund-raiser to build a new children's wing at J.S. Mauney Memorial Library, has reached 86% of its goal and is expected to achieve 100% within the next few weeks.

The campaign has confirmed \$455,000 in pledges toward a goal of \$524,000 from about 100 contributors. The fund drive is expected to meet or surpass its goal and be completed by June 17 as the campaign steering committee, chaired by Charles Mauney, Stella Putnam and Thad Roberts will hold the lat official campaign report session.

A final campaign push will be made to successfully complete the fund-raising by mid June, so that the architectural plans for the library expansion can be finalized before construction bids can be solicited for the project. Construction is expected to begin in the fall and the new wing will be completed by 1999.

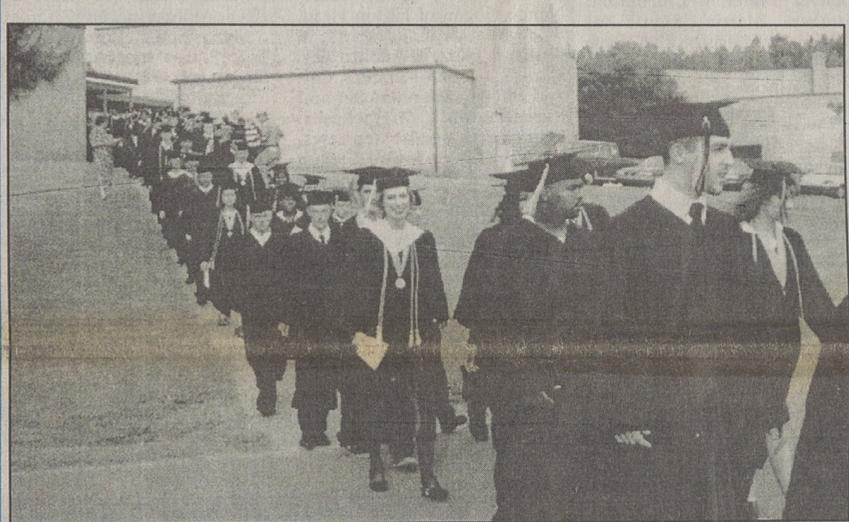
"The new children's wing is certainly needed just to keep up with the rapid growth in children's services over the last few years," said Library Board Chairman Jeff Mauney. "We are very pleased with the business, individual, and public sector support we have received. We think the new library addition is a project in which the whole community can share a great deal of pride. Our campaign steering committee has done a great job rallying support and getting out the word on this project."

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners is considering a \$125,000 request for the project. The commissioners are expected to make a decision on the request at its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m., Tuesday, June 2. Kings Mountain City Council approved a \$100,000 contribution at its January meeting.

Contributors will be recognized with their names inscribed on a plaque inside of the new children's wing. Contributors will be listed on the plaque in four categories: "Founders" will be recognized for contributions of \$12,000 and higher; "Benefactors" will be recognized for contributions of \$6,000 to \$11,999; "Patrons" will be recognized for contributions of \$3,000 to \$5,999; and "Sponsors" will be recognized for contributions from \$500 to \$2,999. Contributors have been encouraged to make three-year contributions.

The new library addition will be called the "Harris Children's Wing" in honor of the late Senator Ollie Harris, his wife of 62

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KMHS GRADUATION - Kings Mountain High's graduating seniors take the long walk down the hill from the high school to John Gamble Stadium for Friday's commencement ceremonies. Almost 200 received their diplomas.

Moss Lake user fees reduced in KM budget

Moss Lake property owners apparently won the battle with the City of Kings Mountain over user fees and will see reduced fees in the 1998-99 budget.

By vote of 4-2 City Council Tuesday approved user fees recommended by the newly resurrected Moss Lake Commission. Councilman Bob Hayes and Jerry Mullinax cast the dissenting votes. Councilman Rick Murphrey was out-of-town.

The resurrected family plan at \$250, dropped last year in the budget, will mean a savings of \$135 each for property owners. In 1997-98, the typical lease included the land lease, \$250; one boat, \$25; one pier, \$25; an occasional ramp, \$50; and one fishing permit, \$12, for a total of \$362. In the new plan,

two boat permits and four fishing permits are included to owner occupants.

The Northshores group facility permit for 1998-99 is \$1,250 because it has five lots fronting the lake which are associated with the group pier facility. In 1997-98 the same 20 users paid \$6,000, which means a huge reduction for these property owners.

Land lease fees were cut \$25, from \$50; boat permits went up \$20, from \$30 to \$50; fishing permits went up \$3, from \$12 to \$15; daily boating went up from \$5 to \$10; swimming annual permits, up to \$30 from \$15; daily swimming, \$5, was \$2; and group pier facility, from \$200, user, to \$250, lot. No charge was made for use

See LAKE FEES page 3A

City Council protests Election Board's plan

Saying it had no input in a recent decision by the county board of elections to move the Community Center voting precinct to Kings Mountain Hospital, City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to deliver a letter of protest to the Cleveland County Board of Elections.

Mayor Scott Neisler said the board ignored a letter from Council recently in which he asked for a public hearing in Kings Mountain before any more changes were made by the county board

regarding voter precincts.

"We had no say so when the board added two precincts and now they're asking preclearance from the U.S. Justice Department to move Precinct 2 from the Community Center to the Kings Mountain Hospital lobby," said Neisler.

This is the first year the county has run city elections.

By law, no public hearing is required to add precincts or change polling places but Neisler said it should be a matter of courtesy.

Recently Previously, the elections board added two precincts. The voting places are Second Baptist Church, The American Legion, The Armory and the Community Center.

Director of Elections Debra Blanton said the board of discussed the size of all precincts in the county during a public hearing last February. She said complaints of lack of election process security due to the flow of normal traffic through the Community Center brought on the recent

polling place change.

"The hospital will be more secure and closer for the West Kings Mountain voters and by changing we are sensitive also to the needs of precinct officials," she said.

Joyce Cashion, chairman of Kings Mountain No. 4, says the two new precincts weren't needed and Kings Mountain people should have been consulted about the changes.

Board members directed Neisler to hand deliver letters to Blanton and Ruth Wilson, secre-

tary, and Pat Spangler, chairman of the board.

City Attorney Mickey Corry said that since the new change by the county board requires preclearance by the Justice Department the city has time to state opposition to the plan if it acts quickly.

"I called Mrs. Blanton and told her we were quite upset about the election board's arbitrary decision and to give us the courtesy in the future of letting us know

See PROTEST page 7A

Triplett finding joys of reading

by ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

Eulis Triplett, 52, will never forget his 19th birthday when he tried to get his driver's license.

"I missed everything but I told the examiner that I didn't know how to read and I went home crying because I wanted my license," he said.

Now, instead of crying because he can't read, Eulis is all smiles. Reading fourth grade material after finishing three books, Eulis tries to forget the paddlings he got in school because he couldn't read.

"I stayed behind three years with shingles and was eight when I started school. I couldn't read and we moved around a lot and it just got so hard that I had to be made to go to school," said Triplett.

By the time he was in seventh grade at age 16 he dropped out of school. "I couldn't read and I was so much older and bigger than the other kids and I was afraid they would laugh at me

and I wouldn't belong," he said.

Life changed for Triplett when he started back to school in 1995.

Unable to do his ABC's, Triplett started reading with the Gaston Literacy Council with Cindy Wood of Kings Mountain, a former elementary teacher.

"I opened my book at work one day at the Gastonia Housing Authority where I have worked in maintenance for 11 years and read it from start to finish and people were wiping tears from their eyes," said Triplett, who said his co-workers had supported him in his adventure.

"They supported me in my reading and so did Cindi Wood. They're proud of me because as old as I am it takes a man to admit he never learned to read and is now doing something about it."

Triplett's passion for reading didn't go unnoticed by Wood who volunteers to tutor Triplett one day a week. Triplett goes to school at Gaston Literacy Council two days a week, after work on Tuesday and Thursday.

"You would not believe the

people I know who own businesses and can't read but I encourage them to start," said Triplett, who is proud of the reading awards he has on his bulletin board at his home on Goforth Road in Kings Mountain.

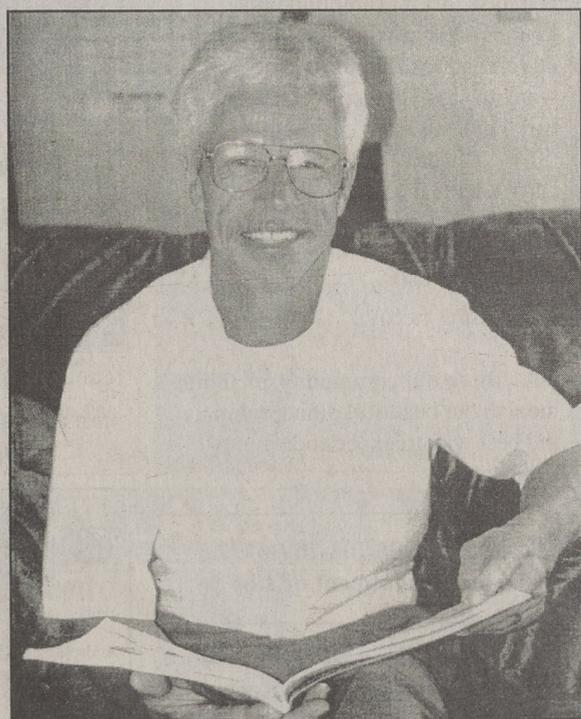
One of the awards is the coveted Celebrate Literacy Award by the Gaston Literacy Council in recognition of outstanding service and personal commitment to adult education.

Triplett said he always wanted to read the Bible, read to his grandchildren and read the work orders he receives on his job. Now, he says he can read stories to the grandchildren, some passages of the Bible and is able to read work orders that previously he had to depend on co-workers to do.

He credits his new life as a reader to Cindi Wood but says his inspiration was his wife, Stevon, who died six months ago. They were married 23 years.

"We need more tutors like Cindi," he says.

See TRIPLETT page 3A



EULIS TRIPLETT