

# Kings Mountain Herald

Vol. 111 No. 05

Thursday, February 4, 1999

Kings Mountain, NC • Since 1889 • 50¢

## Countdown to 2000

By Alan Hodge



## KM facing Y2K bug head on

By CAROL GEORGE

Depending on which news report you choose to listen to or read, the Y2K problem can turn out to be a major catastrophe or a minor nuisance. We seem to hear lots of arguments in favor of both scenarios. No wonder we sometimes feel like we're in the middle of a rock-and-a-hard-place dilemma.

I am often asked questions about the Year 2000 problem known as the Y2K bug. Having spent the past 20 years working as a computer programmer and consultant, I have worked on and written thousands of lines of programming language code that have the century portion of a date omitted (with "19" assumed) and only the last two digits stored. That is what the Y2K bug is all about, storing "99" as this year for example instead of "1999." Short cutting the date by assuming the century portion as "19" was embraced by the business and technology world as a smart and efficient coding technique for many years. However, since 1997 we have begun to hear concerns that some computers will not be able to handle storing a date when the century changes to "20" instead of "19." If the century cannot change, then a date stored for example as 01/01/05 would be interpreted as 01/01/1905 by the computer because it would assume "19" as the century instead of "20." Now you understand why I hear questions about this topic; it's something that lots of people want to know more about.

There are several possible solutions to the Y2K dilemma. The approach that the vast majority of businesses are taking is to go line-by-line through each computer program and see if the shortcut technique for omitting the century has been used in storing the date. If that technique has been coded in the program, then a programmer must re-write that line of code to store all four digits for the year instead of just the last two. This way, the century is actually stored with the last two digits of the year instead of being assumed. This has been a very costly process for many businesses as they have many, many programs and each line of the code must be looked at. While this approach is costly and time consuming, it appears to be one that will ensure a high percent of accuracy.

Other approaches being used by a smaller number of businesses include a method that will store the date according to a gregorian calendar or according to an encapsulation method which will group 28-year spans into "capsules." All of these methods are time-consuming and costly, but to ensure Y2K readiness there is not much other choice for existing programs.

For newer computer programs that have been written, the date storage problem has

See Y2K, 3A

## Learning the Language KM to look at pay hike for employees

### West School students teach English to native of Dominican Republic

By Alan HODGE  
of The Herald staff

Picture yourself as a child in a new country, in a new school, and unable to understand one word of the language everyone else was speaking. That's the situation third grader and Dominican Republic native Andres "Andy" Villar Samuel found himself in this year when he came to West Elementary School in Kings Mountain.

Hailing from Santo Domingo, Andy and the rest of his family recently joined his father who had been working in Kings Mountain for several years. A likeable chap and quick to learn, Andy soon made friends in Carla Bennett's class even though

Spanish was the only way he had to communicate.

"It has really benefitted the students to be able to relate to someone from a different culture," said Bennett. "It helps them understand and accept diversity."

Part of the diversity Andy has had to deal with is in the cafeteria.

"We sit with Andy in the cafeteria and name the foods to him," said classmate Laura Gaffney.

So far, Andy has taken a liking to American snacks and cheeseburgers, but still hasn't developed a taste for barbecue.

Sometimes a child's life can be tough on the playground, but Andy has found that to be

See English, 10A



**FRIEND FROM AFAR** - A native of the Dominican Republic, Andres "Andy" Villar Samuel is just learning to speak English. Helping Andy are his West Elementary School classmates (left) Anthony Hoppy and Haley Barrett.

## Happy Birthday, Kings Mountain



Mayor Scott Neisler, left, and City Councilman Phil Hager show off new city flag that will be unveiled at 125th birthday celebration at City Hall.

## City will be 125 years old February 11, big ceremony planned in front of City Hall

A 4 p.m. public ceremony next Thursday in front of City Hall will officially celebrate Kings Mountain's 125th birthday and mark the dedication of a new city flag.

The fanfare will include speeches, prayers and music. The public is invited.

A new black and yellow Kings Mountain flag will fly from the third flag pole. The 4x6 feet nylon acid-dyed flag was designed by Reg Alexander. A silhouette of Kings Mountain splits the flag in half and the Kings Mountain monument is prominently displayed. The sky portion of the flag is yellow. The bottom part of the flag is black with the wording: 1780-1874 Kings Mountain.

All mail stamped at the Kings Mountain Post Office will include a caricature of the new flag and commemorative stamp of February 11, 1999 at Kings Mountain with the inscription 1874-1999 125th Anniversary.

"We appreciate the efforts of Mr. Alexander

and of the Kings Mountain Post Office in helping us mark this important birthday," said the mayor.

"This new flag is certainly symbolic of our community and the pictorial cancellation of mail by the post office is a highlight of this day and the beginning of a year of celebration for Kings Mountain people," he said.

The mayor will distribute 250 small flags as mementos of the occasion and share some historical data and memorabilia of former celebrations.

Other events are planned this year to celebrate the city's birthday.

The Kings Mountain Business & Professional Association is putting up a gazebo downtown and the old cupola from the former police station will top it.

On October 7, the city will open the time capsule which was buried during the Kings Mountain Centennial celebration.

The city of Kings Mountain was incorporated February 11, 1874.

The city's personnel committee and City Manager Jimmy Maney will begin this week reviewing salaries of the 160-plus city employees with an eye to presenting a proposal for adjustments to city council February 27.

"We will be looking at each position and comparing each position with salaries of employees in comparable positions with 28 cities the size of Kings Mountain," said Maney. He said a five-year-old pay plan the city did not implement is outdated now and he will use guidelines from the North Carolina League of Municipalities.

Maney said the survey conducted by the League reveals that Kings Mountain ranks at the bottom of pay by other cities with 10,000 population. Kings Mountain, unlike a number of cities, operates four utilities.

The city is looking at an immediate budget amendment and the money would be taken out of the general fund budget. If salaries are adjusted before budget time July 1, no further pay increases would be considered until the 2000-2001 budget year, Maney said.

The expected salary hike came to the forefront at last week's city council meeting when Mayor Scott Neisler called for a standing ovation for electrical employees, praising them for their tireless effort during recent ice storms.

Neisler said that 95 percent of Kings Mountain was back on in less than 24 hours.

Councilmen Phil Hager and Gene White claimed accolades were not enough and Maney said the city has lost key qualified certified employees to higher paying jobs.

"We're down to two water plant operators and lost the building inspector and two others and at this rate we're going to run out of people," he told the council.

"There's no way to get Tiffany products on a Kmart budget," said Hager who called the pay issue his longtime soapbox topic. White said one way to minimize future electrical outages is to keep qualified employees on the payroll.

Councilwoman Norma Bridges, who serves on the personnel committee with Hager and Bob Hayes, agreed pay adjustments can't wait until budget time. So did councilman Rick Murphrey.

Maney said two water plant operators are working 12 hour shifts seven days a week to keep the plant running. "We can't recruit certified positions and the state says they have to be certified. People who apply are asking for \$12 an hour, not the going rate of \$9.50."

Maney said that the city is investing thousands of dollars to train and certify employees who then leave for more money. He said the police, codes and sanitation department are perfect examples.

"We can't promote from within and when we go outside for employees we can't compete," he said.

Maney pulled the city's five year pay classification study off the shelves this week but he said it was badly outdated now and he turned to the N. C. League of Municipalities for help.

The League published a new annual survey for municipal salaries containing every job description and the minimum, maximum and average salaries for the jobs.

Maney said out of 29 cities in the 10,000 to 25,000 category Kings Mountain ranks from 20th to 29th in its pay scale.

The disparity, Maney said, can be seen in many instances.

An automotive mechanic I earns \$19,801 in Kings Mountain but in 28 other cities of same population his minimum salary is \$10,690 and maximum is \$30,211 with average pay of \$23,646.

A patrolman on the Kings Mountain police force starts out with average salary of \$20,863 but in 18 other cities of like population the minimum is \$22,594, the maximum \$34,293 and the average yearly pay \$25,382.

Kings Mountain's Police Chief earns \$41,163 annually. In 30 other cities of like population he would receive a minimum of \$43,095, maximum \$63,186 and average pay of \$54,905.

A sanitation worker in Kings Mountain earns \$13,883 yearly. In 20 other cities he would earn a minimum of \$15,514, maximum of \$22,864 and average \$17,074.

Maney said that most of the cities of similar population operate several utilities and pay benefits similarly to Kings Mountain.

"This has become an emergency situation in several departments and we need to correct them and look at the total picture," he said.

Maney said the expected raises will not be distributed on a percentage basis. He said each position will be reviewed.

"We'll be spending dollars to raise salaries but when you consider the money we spend to certify people and the mandates and regularities of state and federal government it will pay off," he said.

First Carolina Federal

Kings Mountain  
300 W. Mountain St.  
739-4781

Gastonia  
529 S. New Hope Rd.  
865-1111

Shelby  
1238 E. Dixon Blvd.  
484-0222



Member FDIC