KINGS MOUNTAIN

The Herald

Thursday, April 6, 2000 | Vol. 112 No. 14 | Since 1889 | 50 Cents

*****CAR-RT SORT**C 002 10S
307 11-11-00 31OW
MAUNEY MEMORIAL AVE LIBRARY
100 S PIEDMONT 28P
KINGS MOUNTAIN NC 28086-3414

...ap Crew

Church youth spend Saturday clearing roadway

Merger plan approved, public hearing April 18

ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

Nearly 100 protesters picketed Tuesday before the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners voted to approve a draft plan for school merger. Motorists honked their horns in support of the marchers which included participants from all over the county.

Willie McIntosh casts lone dissenting vote

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 Tuesday night to approve merger of the Shelby City, Cleveland County and Kings Mountain District Schools systems. Willie McIntosh cast the sole "no" vote. If final approval comes April 18 when the public will be given their last say on the subject, merger will take place July 1 of this year.

The ballot came after several months of contentious argument between commissioners who declared they were merely studying the issue, school boards, and citizens- especially in Kings Mountain- who were vehemently opposed to merger. With merger now all but a reality, the complex business of sorting out just what will take place when combining three separate school systems into one will begin.

"It has been very frustrating and disheartening to see this take place," said Kings Mountain school board member Melony Bolin. "I can't see that the commissioners have done any more real investigating of options other than merger."

Another Kings Mountain school board member, Stella Putnam, expressed concern over the way that the commissioners hired their attorney Gil Middlebrooks with taxpayer's money.

"You get what you pay for," Putnam said. "They hired Middlebrooks and did it with our money to do something we don't want. They are going to do something in this county that hasn't worked elsewhere."

Middlebrooks' bill in January had hit $16,000. The bulk of his fee has yet to be turned in.

Putnam also questioned the commissioners' concern about their perceived disparity in the quality of education in the county and merger's ability to address it.

"Who will gauge the achievement difference?" said Putnam. "Will there be special teams appointed by the commissioners?"

Leader of several 1960s-style protest marches against merger, Kathy Falls of Kings Mountain didn't see the need to mince words in her contempt of merger. A mother of two children, Falls weighed in with both fists figuratively flying.

"They should change the name of Cleveland County to Communist County," Falls said. "Call the new school system 'Communist County Schools' too. I'm furious that at the so-called public meetings on merger, the public wasn't allowed to speak. We citizens have done our best to tell the commissioners that we are against merger."

"The commissioners think they are above the law," said Esther Muench of Kings Mountain. "They wanted merg-

See Merger, 3A

What will happen to proposed KM school?

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

In all the talk about school merger, one aspect that that has been overshadowed by what will happen to the schools and students is how the merger will influence, and be influenced, by tax monies.

With the current supplemental school tax set at 22 cents per $100 in Shelby, 19 cents per $100 in Kings Mountain, and 10 cents per $100 in the county, changes will come to those figures with merger. The proposed new countywide education tax will be set at 13 cents- but can be raised if needed according to provisions in the merger plan approved Tuesday night.

Current base county tax rate is .627 per $100 property value for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The rate for fiscal year 2000-2001 will be set in June. According to Cleveland County Tax Collector Brenda Gardner, no proposed base rate has yet been set. Though property revaluation will increase the amount of money available to the county, but without a clear knowledge of what a new base rate will be, there is at this time no way of knowing how much more money will be available for, among other things, schools in a merged system.

See School, 3A

Chamber votes to be neutral on merger

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

The Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce voted Friday to remain neutral on school merger. The vote came at the end of a three-hour closed meeting that saw over 20 interested parties voice their opinions on the merger subject. The voting was done by secret ballot, and the Chamber didn't announce the final count.

"The discussion was cordial, and everyone tried to respect the opinions of each other regarding the merger issue," said David Faunce of Kings Mountain. It was a genuine effort to make everyone's life a little easier."

Faunce also said that the Chamber wanted to take a leading role in being a "bridge builder" between the differing merger factions.

"No matter what the outcome on merger, there will be some people with hurt feelings," said Faunce. "We have worked too long and hard to let the Chamber be a divisive influence."

The debate was informal, but according to Faunce followed Parliamentary procedure as closely as possible.

"Everyone is concerned about doing the right thing for the children of Cleveland County," said Faunce.

Kings Mountain school board member Stella Putnam said the fact the Chamber decided to stray neutral indicated that the county commissioner's statements about the business community being behind them on merger didn't ring true.

"The vote should tell the commissioners that business is not behind them," Putnam said. "I've talked to several business leaders and none of them say that they are for merger."

KM Hall of Fame Tuesday at KMHS

The 13th annual Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame dinner and induction ceremony will be held Tuesday, April 11 at 6 p.m. at Kings Mountain High School.

The meal will be served in the cafeteria. The induction ceremony will follow at 7 p.m. in B.N. Barnes Auditorium.

Gil McGregor, commentator for the Charlotte Hornets radio network and former Wake Forest and NBA basketball great, will be the guest speaker.

Tickets are $10 each and can be purchased at The Kings Mountain Herald, McGinnis Department Store, or at the door.

Jay Rhodes, Treasurer of the Kings Mountain Sports Hall of Fame, will be the Master of Ceremonies.

The Hall of Fame will honor four inductees and a host of high school athletes for their special achievement during the past year.

This year's inductees include former City Recreation Director Roy Pearson, former KMHS and The Citadel baseball and football player Keith Layton, former KMHS wrestling coach Steve Moffitt, and former KMHS and Western Carolina University basketball and volleyball great Regina Brown.

Pearson served several years as City of Kings Mountain Recreation Director, and served the department in a volunteer capacity prior to joining it on a full-time basis. He was one of the coaches of the 1966 Teener All-Star team which won the State and Regional championships and finished third in the Teener World Series in Hershey, PA.

Brown was a volleyball, basketball and softball star at KMHS from 1983-86 and went on to play four years of volleyball and one year of basketball at Western Carolina University. She still holds 17 WCU school records in volleyball. She was Southern Conference Player of the Year in 1990.

Moffitt won 11 conference championships in 15 years as

See Hall, 3A

Joe Smith, one of KM's best, succumbs to prostate cancer

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain citizens mourned the loss of one of their best friends and civic leaders this week.

Joseph R. Smith, 65, died Monday at his home after a lengthy bout with prostate cancer.

But his memory lives on in the hearts of family and friends, who will never forget his strength and courage in a time of weakness.

A native of Florida, Smith moved to Kings Mountain 33 years ago to work at what was then Kings Mountain Savings and Loan. The last several years he had served as head of the Finance and Credit Department at Foust Textiles. He was active in a number of civic, church and community organizations.

Smith, who had become progressively weaker over the past several weeks, was honored at a retirement party Friday at Foust.

The news of his death, though not unexpected, saddened the multitude of friends he had made over the years here.

John Plonk of Foust said he was not just a co-worker, but a good friend.

"He was a first class gentleman in every way," Plonk said. "He was dedicated to the town and he wanted it to be right at the top all of the time, and he worked hard to make it that way."

"Joe Smith never met a stranger," noted Larry Hamrick Sr., a fellow Rotarian. "Joe was real active in his work, his church and his community. He loved people and engaged in all the activities that brought him close to people." Smith's daughter, Joni Smith-Wilson, said as soon as the family moved to Kings Mountain Joe fell in love with the town and its people, and at every opportunity he always did his best to promote the community.

"He helped get the canon that was originally brought in by the governor that was in front of the Joy Theater," she recalled. "He just always loved this town, so he's done whatever he could."

As a lad, Joseph Rivers Smith Jr. accompanied his father to town every Saturday morning. The two dressed in overalls and went from store to store talking with the merchants and fellow townspeople.

"Everything was so important to him," said Joni. "He just wanted everybody to know how much he loved this town and how wonderful it was. He felt like everybody ought to be able to love it as much as he did."

Smith was instrumental in the organization of the Kings

See Smith, 3A

ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

Four-year-old Natalie Fedysyn of Kings Mountain was trying to decide which Easter bunny was her favorite at the One Stop store on Shelby Road. Besides the rabbits, Fedysyn was also on the lookout for Easter eggs and a basket.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK
Celebrating 126 Years
YOUR HOMETOWN BANK

Kings Mountain
300 W. Mountain St.
739-4782

Gastonia
529 New Hope Rd.
865-1233

Shelby
106 S. Lafayette St.
484-6200

Bessemer City
1225 Gastonia Hwy.
629-3906

Member FDIC