

The Herald

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Snow Man pays early visit to KM

BY ALAN HODGE
 Staff Writer

Showing just how capricious Mother Nature can be, Cleveland County and most of the Piedmont got one of the earliest snows on record Sunday just a few weeks after a 40 day drought.

The fluffy flakes that drifted down nearly all day made the snowfall the third earliest on record. The other dates included a trace of snow on October 31, 1887 and an inch on November 11, 1968.

In Kings Mountain, amateur weatherman Kenneth Kitzmiller recorded one and three-quarters inches in his snow gauge. Kitzmiller also said he saw about seven-tenths inch of rain.

"It was a very wet snow," Kitzmiller said. "I've been living here for 20 years and haven't seen it snow this early."

The snow came about when a low pressure system from the Gulf of Mexico slid into the region on top of cold air already in place. When the moist air up top condensed and fell through the colder layer, it snowed.

Even though most places recorded around a couple of inches, roads remained relatively clear.

"The roads were generally in good condition with just a little slush in spots," said N.C. Highway Department supervi-

See Snow, 2A

Wilson KM Carrousel Princess

Erin Wilson will represent Kings Mountain High School in the 53rd annual Carolinas Carrousel parade Thanksgiving Day in Charlotte.



WILSON

The parade begins at 1 p.m. and will be televised on WBTV Channel 3. It will have 86 units, including 18 bands, 24 floats and a number of special celebrity guests.

The Carolinas Carrousel is the largest Thanksgiving Day in the southeast. Over a half million people are expected to view it in person and on TV.

Parade Grand Marshal is Dr. Robert L. Maddox, longtime band director in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The Carrousel has also established a new \$2,000 scholarship in his honor. It will go to a high school senior who plans to major in music and participates with his/her band in this year's parade.

The Marching Cavaliers from East Burke High School will lead the parade on its 1 1/2-mile route.

Crowning of the Carrousel Queen will take place Wednesday at 8:15 p.m. at the Pepsi Coronation Ball in the Bank of American Corporate Center's Founders Hall. Fifty-five high school seniors from the Metrolina area are competing and over \$8,100 in scholarships will be awarded.

Wilson, 17, ranks 17th in her senior class of 205 at KMHHS.

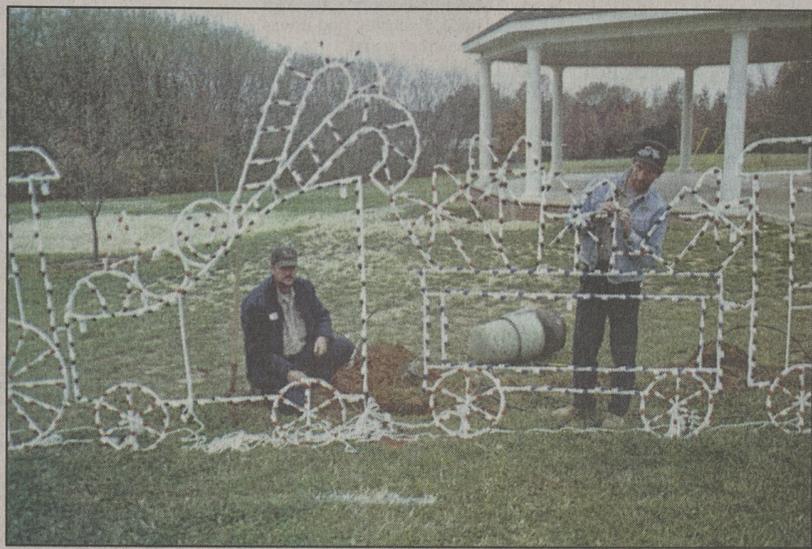
See Wilson, 3A

It's beginning to look alot like Christmas!



City of Kings Mountain utility crews were busy putting up decorations this week. John Houser (top left) hung banners while Bob Boles (left) and Johnny Putnam wired up a toy train at the Patriots Park Gazebo.

Alan Hodge Photos



Downtown KM getting its face on

Kings Mountain has several events lined up for the holiday season. Workers have been busy putting up over 20,000 lights to make the downtown area festive.

To get everyone in the spirit, the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony will take place at Mauney Memorial Library at 7 p.m., Thursday, November 30. The "N.E.W." Chorus, Stephanie Paysour directing, will give a special Christmas concert for everyone to enjoy. Mayor Rick Murphrey will also share his rendition of "The Night Before Christmas". Following Santa's spectacular arrival, the switch will be thrown and the tree illuminated.

The Hometown Christmas festivities will continue with the 54th annual Kings Mountain Christmas Parade at 3 p.m. on Saturday, December 2. The parade will feature everything

See Downtown, 2A

Costners to throw switch on 120,000 lights Thursday in Midpines Community

BY ALAN HODGE
 Staff Writer

Proving that creative genius comes in many forms, Beethoven wrote nine symphonies and Grady and Katie Costner decorate their yard for Christmas.

Actually, the word decorate is a mild term to use in describing the transformation that the Costner's give to their home in the Mid-Pines section near Kings Mountain.

After all, when you throw the switch and 120,000 bulbs come on, its obvious to even low flying aircraft that something special is on the ground at the Costner's.

"We've been putting up our Christmas decorations for about 10 years now," said Grady Costner. "We started with just a few and it kind of grew from there."

This year will see dozens of elaborate displays fill the Costner lawn, perch on top of their house and garage, and

even be installed on a gazebo, wooden manger, and a little hut where Santa greets kids and hands out candy.

"I wish we had a highway counter to see just how many people come by during the holidays to see our lights," said Katie Costner. "It's at least 10,000 each year. Sometimes they're lined up on the highway."

So many folks gaze at the Costner lights that the spot has come to be called "Little McAdenville" after the famous Gaston County village of lights.

Just what have the Costner's created in their yard that draws the crowds? Illuminated characters include Disney favorites Mickey Mouse and Goofy. Other figures include

Cinderella, a line of life size toy soldiers, alligators, turtles, Sylvester the Cat, Tweetie Bird, the Bible, A full size merry go round, gigantic poinsettias, a horse and carriage, antique cars, and a motorbike with

See Costner, 3A



ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

Standing between two rows of life size toy soldiers, Grady Costner ponders the work that goes into his annual Christmas light extravaganza. Grady and his wife Katie work year round to get their yard ready for the holidays.

KM School Board taking applications for Hawkins' seat

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain District Board of Education Thursday night officially accepted the resignation of Supt. Bob McRae and School Board member Ronnie Hawkins.

The Board did not discuss how it will deal with replacing McRae, who will take over as superintendent of Randolph County Schools on April 1.

But, it did lay out the procedure to replace Hawkins, who will be sworn in as a Cleveland County Commissioner on Monday, December 4.

Hawkins' resignation is effective noon December 4. The Board of Education plans to appoint someone to fill the remainder of his term (until next December) at its December 11 meeting.

The Board will accept applications for the position through 12 noon November 30 at the District Office on East Ridge Street. The Board will hold a special meeting on December 5 at 6 p.m. to go over the applications and schedule interviews, if necessary.

Persons who live inside the Kings Mountain School District but outside the city limits of Kings Mountain may apply.

Hawkins is completing 11 years on the Board of Education, including six as chairman. He recently filed to run for Cleveland County Commissioner in opposition of the current County Board's vote to merge the county's three school systems.

He said he would not have left the School Board otherwise, but felt if merger does come about the county will need a "champion" for education on the County Board.

"All I ever wanted to do was be a member of the Board of Education," Hawkins told the Board in giving his formal announcement.

"A lot of people helped me get a commissioner's seat," he said. "I hope to be able to continue to be an advocate for our children. I will challenge all of the county commissioners to get involved in our schools and see what is happening."

"I've enjoyed serving on the Board and wish I didn't have to stop," he added, "but what has taken place this year has been traumatic for the whole county, and especially our Board of Education. I hope to be in a po-

See McRae, 3A

McRae may request funds for new school

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain District Schools Supt. Bob McRae has requested to be placed on the agenda for the Cleveland County Commissioners' second meeting in December, possibly to request financial assistance in building a new school to house the system's fifth and sixth grades.

McRae told the KM Board of Education Thursday night that bids will be opened on Thursday, Dec. 7 at 2:30 p.m. at the District Office on East Ridge Street.

The school is expected to cost around \$11.5 million. KM hopes to award contracts in December, break ground in January and have the school ready for occupancy by the start of the 2002 fall term.

By that time, the system should have slightly over \$9 million in reserve.

Earlier this year, McRae had asked the County Commissioners to approve a loan for the remaining funds, but they declined to take action. Kings Mountain is hopeful the new County Board, which will have three of its five representatives from the Greater Kings Mountain area, will be more willing to advance the money and pay itself back by keeping Kings Mountain's share of future state sales tax redistribution funds.

McRae said Architect Roger Holland was to meet with potential contractors in a pre-bid conference yesterday. The project is expected to attract interest from all over the state, which would hopefully result in competitive bids.

Bids will be accepted for the general contract, plumbing, heating/air conditioning, and electrical. The system must receive at least three bids in each area to open them.

"We're cautiously optimistic about construction bids at this time," McRae said. "This will give us a firm hold on how our existing funds compare with the price. There's no way to accurately estimate the total cost."

"We're hopeful this will go very well," McRae added. "Roger's done his very best to

See Hawkins, 3A

CommScope breaking ground, but not ready to commit to KM

BY ALAN HODGE
 Staff Writer

Though clearing of a 50 acre plot on Countryside Road near Kings Mountain is underway, Hickory-based CommScope is still not 100 percent certain it will be building a new plant there. If the deal does go through, however, the facility would bring a \$30 million investment over five years and 150 full time jobs.

"We are doing preliminary site preparation," said CommScope spokesperson Betsy Lambert. "The land is being cleared to cut our lead time if we decide to choose that location."

Lambert said that CommScope was looking at other potential locations for

their new plant. She said "several factors" would determine where the facility would eventually be built. If the Kings Mountain site is not chosen, Lambert said CommScope would restore the landscape. The property in question is owned by the Plonk and Elam families and is zoned Light Industrial. It is also in the newly expanded Kings Mountain Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

CommScope is a world leader in the design of high performance bandwidth cables for telecommunications applications. CommScope is the world's largest maker of coaxial cable for cable TV use. It is also a leading supplier of electronic

See CommScope, 3A

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