

KINGS MOUNTAIN The Herald

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CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE CITY



Dance groups put a lot of spirit into Saturday's Kings Mountain Christmas parade. Over 100 units participated in the event and several thousand people watched it.

Warm weather brings out big crowd for KM parade

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Short-sleeve shirts and shorts - not ear muffs and overcoats - were in vogue at Saturday's annual Christmas parade in downtown Kings Mountain.

Temperatures in the low 70s brought out a huge crowd of participants and spectators for the 3 p.m. event.

City Activities Director Ellis Noell said over 100 units including hundreds of kids and grown-ups alike, marched and rode in the hour-long parade over Gold, Battleground and King Streets.

Mayor Rick Murphrey estimated "several thousand" people lined the streets. Spectators in the downtown area were lined six-to-ten deep with the smaller ones up front to gather the candy thrown by

the participants.

Except for a few antique cars and four-wheelers that stalled momentarily, the parade went off without a hitch.

Kings Mountain Police Chief Houston Corn, Fire Chief Frank Burns and KM Rescue Squad Captain Joni Blanton were the grand marshals. Noell said they were representing all of the city and area's emergency personnel.

"We thought after what happened on September 11 people have a much higher respect and admiration for people in the front lines of protecting us," he said. "It was a tribute to all of them."

Most of the comments he's received from spectators have been positive, Noell said, but he did say that the city will

See KM Parade, 3A



Santa Claus waves to the huge crowd attending Saturday's Kings Mountain Christmas parade.

Grover parade draws big crowd

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

People lined the streets of Grover for its annual Christmas parade Saturday. Weather for Saturday's parade was sunny, and around 70 degrees.

Kings Mountain High School's band, dance groups, church groups, and county businesses made appearances in the annual holiday parade.

For Grover Elementary's Angela Dowling, a fourth grade teachers assistant, "watching the school floats go by" was the best part of the parade.

While lots of people riding in entries in the parade waved to the people on the street, some threw out candy.

See Grover, 3A



BEN LEDBETTER/THE HERALD
Participants in Grover's Christmas Parade Saturday wave to onlookers.

City of KM gas employee burned in fire

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

A Kings Mountain gas department employee who was burned in a flash fire while installing a tap Thursday afternoon will probably be released from the hospital by the end of the week.

According to City Manager Jimmy Maney, Chris Hughes, 26, and other city employees had finished putting a service line into a home in the Gold Run subdivision and were connecting it to the main line when a spark ignited leaking gas.

Hughes was air-lifted to the Burn Center in Chapel Hill. Another employee, Daryl Philbeck, was treated and released at Kings Mountain Hospital.

The incident is being investigated by the Safety Division of the State of NC and the federal Office of Pipeline Safety. Both of those offices are scheduled to release their report within 10 days.

"It wasn't an explosion," Maney noted. "I compare it to an open flame on a cook stove, except to magnify that to the point that you have 30 pounds

of pressure coming out of a 2-inch line."

Maney said the flame reached about 10 feet. Gas service was interrupted to some nearby homes for most of the night while the main line was repaired.

Hughes was in the hole at the time of the fire. Philbeck and another city employee were outside the hole.

"The main line was a 2-inch plastic line and once it ignited it very quickly melted the plastic and you had a full 2-inch open flow with gas coming out of it," Maney explained.

"This was a routine job pass that they probably do 10 or 12 times a week," he added. "It requires no direct supervision. It's just a simple job task that they've been trained to do. We just have to wait and find out what went wrong and see that it doesn't happen again."

"We're certainly blessed, and so is the employee," he added. "I've done these same kind of gas taps hundreds of times over the years. You can do something a hundred times but it's the one time that could make a differ

See fire, 3A

Commissioners approve Harry's proposal to merge EDC and CC Chamber

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

A proposal to merge the Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission was approved at Tuesday's Cleveland County Commissioners meeting.

The idea, which included an implementation committee, was suggested by Commissioner Charlie Harry last week in a memo.

"By combining our economic development efforts, I think we will reduce duplications and create synergies that will make the process more efficient," Harry said last night.

The implementation committee will consist of two county commissioners, two members of the Cleveland County Chamber Board, two members from the Economic Development commission, two members from the Shelby and Kings Mountain City Councils, and members of the Cleveland Association of Government Officials, Boiling Springs Town Council, and the Upper Cleveland Chamber.

Kings Mountain City Manager Jimmy Maney, Shelby City Manager Grant Goings, County Manager Lane Alexander, EDC Director Steve Nye, and Chamber President Rob Youngblood would serve as non-voting members of the committee.

Youngblood said the idea needs to be given quick consideration.

"We urge the Board of Commissioners to press forward with this bold and important initiative thoughtfully and expeditiously," he said.

Commissioner Ronnie Hawkins, who supported Harry's idea, said the memo was not distributed in a timely manner.

"If we communicate better, we can make things happen for Cleveland County," Hawkins said.

While Harry's idea received prompt consideration Tuesday, Hawkins said it would have a tougher time with other government entities in the county.

"I think it would be a hard

See Harry, 3B

County seeks public input on recruiting industry

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

After gathering input from state and local leaders earlier this month, the Cleveland County Economic Development Commission wanted to seek ideas from the public.

With a small crowd sitting in a circle last Wednesday in Kings Mountain City Hall, county leaders sought more ideas for bringing additional industry to Cleveland County to help combat the high jobless rate.

According to the October figures released by the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, Cleveland County has the state's second highest unemployment rate at 11.6 percent.

Economic Development Director Steve Nye said a lot of the jobs that were lost will not be coming back.

However, Nye said he was still talking with Case Farms and Hickory-based cable maker CommScope.

CommScope has started construction on a Kings Mountain office, but

stopped citing slow demand for its product.

In a report issued by the EDC, Nye said once demand picks up for cable products, then up to 150 employees will be hired for the Kings Mountain plant. The North Carolina Department of Transportation is constructing a roadway into the park and making additional upgrades. Nye's report said the state is expected to spend approximately \$800,000 on the project.

Nye mentioned several prospective clients have looked at the Cardinal-

Binkley building in the Cleveland County Industrial Park on Shelby Road.

A medical products distributor is looking at the building and plans to invest at least \$1.5 million in machinery and equipment. The EDC report said the company plans to hire 50 people when fully operational.

A manufacturer that began its search in October is expected to invest at least \$20 million and hire over 100 people. The company, which is expected to make a decision in six to nine months,

is investigating other buildings in North Carolina and at least two other states.

An aircraft components manufacturer which began its search in September, is expected to invest at least \$4.5 million and hire over 150 people when the plant is at full strength. The company is expected to present a proposal to its Board of Directors in December.

Nye said during last Wednesday's work session that the multiple clients

See County, 3A



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