

**BUSINESS**

# New Raymond James building will help downtown revitalization effort

By BEN LEDBETTER  
Staff Writer

After about two years of planning, Raymond James Financial Services has moved into its new downtown Kings Mountain location.

The new offices have been open for about two weeks.

The office, previously on Regal Drive, has moved to 227-A S. Battleground Ave., which was the previous home of Mountaineer Video.

Raymond James Branch manager Bill Marcellino said both owner John McGinnis and the tenants were ready to accommodate

him. Marcellino bought the property from McGinnis, and said he believed the new location would help the visibility of his business and with downtown revitalization of Kings Mountain.

But a new office for Raymond James is not the only thing Marcellino has worked on.

Rental office space and two residential condominiums were part of his downtown effort.

"I'm trying to help copy other cities downtown revitalization," Marcellino said. He said Shelby and Asheville have also

implemented revitalization efforts for their downtown.

Marcellino said he has received positive feedback on the move.

"It's been well received," Marcellino said. "My clients have certainly been impressed by their building."

This is not the first time Marcellino has worked downtown, he was previously with Edward Jones, and he hopes he can do more for downtown.

"If I am successful doing this, I hope I can do it again," Marcellino said.

The business hosted a reception for its grand opening recently.



**BEN LEDBETTER / THE HERALD**  
Financial Advisor Jason Miller, left, and Branch Manager Bill Marcellino chat during Raymond James Financial Services grand opening last week.

# County looking for state, federal assistance to ease jobs situation

By BEN LEDBETTER  
Staff Writer

Cleveland County no longer has the state's top spot in unemployment rates for December, according to figures released from the North Carolina Employment Security Commission.

While it has slipped from 13.1 to 12.5 percent, Cleveland is one of 14 counties in the state that have jobless rates of 10 percent and above.

Swain County has the state's highest jobless rate at 15.7 percent.

Antwon Keith, Office manager of the two ESC offices in the county said factors such as temporary employment and a drop in attached claims contributed to the county's decline in unemployment.

Keith said employees in temporary positions help jobless numbers.

"The more people we can have that are working, the more people that we have getting their regular pay," he said.

Jobs are expected to come to the area when Kings Mountain companies Encompass and NVR companies continue hiring. Wal-Mart will also have a need for employees when the Arkansas-based chain

opens its Shelby distribution center. Sara Lee announced it will be moving 250 jobs to its Kings Mountain plant by the end of the year.

But more layoffs could come to the county since Kmart, one of the nation's largest retailers has filed for bankruptcy this month. There has been no word on the status of the chain's Shelby store and its employees.

Although more jobs are expected to come to Cleveland County, Keith said the potential employment had no effect on December jobless rates.

"Any hiring is good hiring," Keith said. "I can't say a massive hiring has taken effect."

County commissioners have started looking for state and federal assistance for Cleveland County's jobless woes.

Earlier this month, commissioners sent a letter to Rep. Sue Myrick, Rep. Cass Ballenger, Sen. Jesse Helms, Sen. John Edwards, and Gov. Mike Easley.

Edwards made a stop in Shelby recently. Officials have met with federal officials that serve Cleveland County to discuss possible assistance.

Commissioners also sent letters to grocery store chains that operate stores in the county.

While officials are looking for assistance

to get people back to work, there is a new way checks will be arriving from the ESC offices.

Keith said everyone who has filed for unemployment will have the option of using direct deposit, which would allow the money to go straight to a bank account.

Keith said people will not have to checks being stolen, and the direct deposit will be a great security measure.

"In the future it's probably going to be the way people get their checks," Keith said.

On the state level, a status report on the depleting Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund will be one of the prime items for the Employment Security Commission's meeting today in Raleigh.

ESC officials said payouts to unemployed NC workers from the fund have been surpassing \$100 million per month. The fund, which had a \$500 million balance, is being drawn faster than employer taxes and interest can replenish it.

At its November meeting, ESC Commissioners voted to recommend protecting current benefit levels for the state's unemployed workers, and also voted to begin tapping a \$200 million reserve fund when the trust fund goes below \$400 million.

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ALLISON KILLIAN

## Killian named to Chancellor's List

Allison Logan Killian of Lucia has been named to the Chancellor's List at UNC Charlotte for the fall semester.

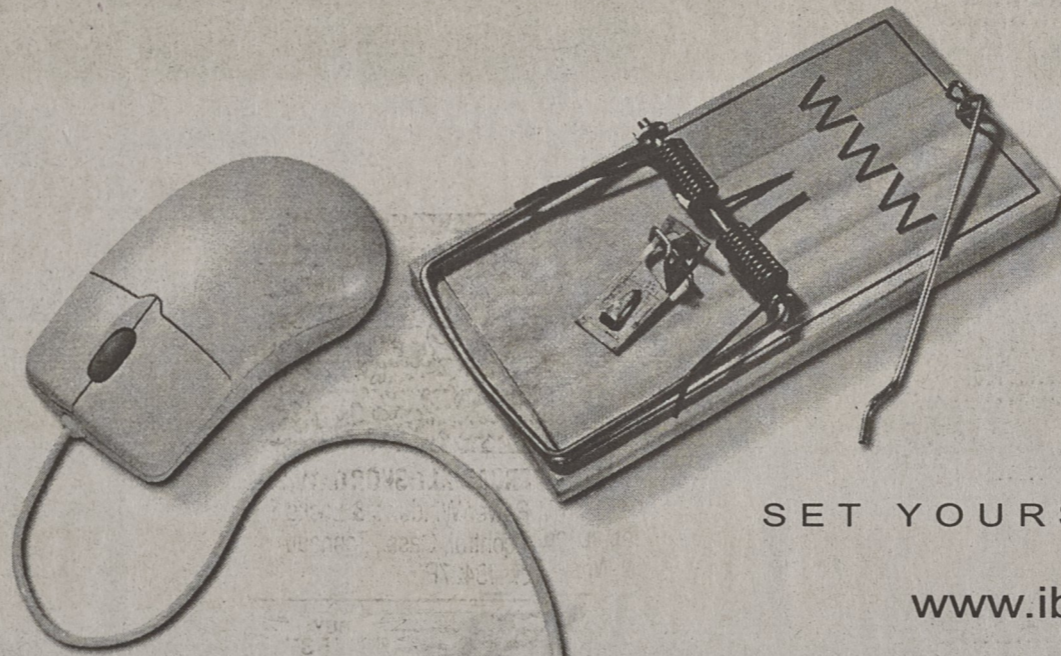
Allison, a senior, is the daughter of Charles and Barbara Killian of Lucia. Mrs. Killian is a Kings Mountain native and a graduate of Kings Mountain High School.

Allison, an honor graduate of East Gaston High School, is majoring in elementary education. To qualify for the Chancellor's List, a student must complete at least 12 semester hours with a grade point average of at least 3.8 out of 4.0.

## KM FIRE REPORT

The Kings Mountain Fire Department responded to the following calls for the week of Jan. 28-Feb. 3.

- 1/29 - 301 South Battleground Ave., smoke investigation.
- 1/29 - 100 East Mountain Street, smoke investigation.
- 1/31 - 122 Brothers Lane, structure fire.
- 2/1 - 710 Hillside Drive, carbon monoxide investigation.
- 2/2 - 101 Church Street, smoke investigation.
- 2/3 - 603 Princeton Drive, carbon monoxide investigation.



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