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study, not a witch hunt." She said the participants were not going over every inch of the city to look for all of the problem areas. Instead, they sat down ahead of time and chose a few random places in each ward to examine. They examined small areas that consisted only of five or six blocks at a time.

They examined the areas by driving down the street and looking out the window. Three of the people in the car would examine the area from the window, while a fourth would time the effort and a fifth would drive. The three would then rank the area on a scale of 1-4. Level 1 means that one person could clean the area in a matter of minutes. Level 4 means that the area is likely used as an illegal dump and contains large items, like appliances and furniture. Many people, as well as machinery, would be needed to clean it up.

Litter is comprised of any items that are not disposed of properly. According to Keep America Beautiful, seven sources of litter exist: motorists, pedestrians, households, uncovered hauling loads, loading docks, dumpsters, and construction/demolition sites. Litter becomes lodged in fence lines, walls, curb, and other barriers after being moved by the wind, water, traffic, and animals.

All cities wishing to become a part of the Keep America Beautiful organization have to conduct a litter index. Once a litter index is done initially, the city concentrates on those areas for the year and then does the index again. Once those areas are clean, new areas are chosen. The initial areas are chosen simply as starting points for the organization.

"You've got to have some examples to start with," said Stultz.

Currently, Kings Mountain is striving to form its own branch of Keep America Beautiful, which will be called, Keep Kings Mountain Beautiful. To become certified, the Kings Mountain branch needs to develop a board of directors, mission statement, administrative structure (which includes a budget, executive director, and an office), and conduct a litter/solid waste survey, which is currently in progress in the public works and codes department.

Litter is a concern to the people who live in the area, said Ellis Noell, special events director for the city, as well as a member of Keep Kings Mountain Beautiful. To demonstrate the concern of litter in Cleveland County, Noell cited a recent poll that he said listed roadside litter fifth of the top 25 concerns for the county.

Keep America Beautiful workers strive to promote clean up in a positive way, said Stultz. She encouraged the Kings Mountain group to recognize people, organizations, and neighborhoods when they do a good job on a project. She also told them

to build some history and find some leaders in different areas before they go after problem areas by themselves. She said neighborhood watch is usually a good organization to work through since the people already know and look out for each other.

"Don't be a litter cleanup group. Don't perpetuate the idea that it's your job to clean up the area," she said. "Teach others to do it instead."

Stultz encouraged the volunteers to make the organization so big that everyone in the city will be involved in some way. She said to make the board of directors those members of the community who both have links to potential funding sources and are dedicated to the organization.

One of the main causes for litter is a lack of ownership felt by members of the community, said Stultz. If people become convinced that the litter is not their responsibility, they will do nothing to help clean it up, she said.

The national mission statement for Keep America Beautiful is: "To empower individuals to take greater responsibility for enhancing the community."

Stultz stressed that a Kings Mountain branch of Keep America Beautiful would be unlike any other organization in the city. To form a branch of an organization of the caliber of Keep America Beautiful requires work, she said. She told volunteers not to be discouraged during the group formation process.

"You look at it and think, 'This is a lot to do,'" she said.

Once the Kings Mountain branch of Keep America Beautiful is formed, Stultz will sit down with the board

of directors and help them form a one-year plan for the city. The board will break into committees, which will be made up of volunteers.

Initially, some debate took place as to whether the group should have a board of directors or be an advisory committee to the City Council. With a board of directors, the group would have a level of independence. Members could raise money independently and not be required to act at the pleasure of City Council, said Stultz. The Kings Mountain branch will, of course, have a board of directors.

The board should include members of citizen groups, local government, businesses, media, school representatives, Chamber of Commerce, law enforcement, and commercial waste haulers. The board should be made up of approximately 12-15 people.

"It's imperative that one group doesn't dominate the board. It needs to represent the entire community," she said.

With a board, the group will qualify for nonprofit status, so the members will be able to apply for grants from various agencies, she said. Plus the organization will qualify for some government funding as well, she said.

Once the organization gets going, the interest will grow and more people will be included as volunteers or members of committees, she said. In Gastonia, the organization has grown to be so large in the last 25 years that they occasionally have to turn people away from the board of directors, she said. Members attend every meeting and take active roles in the organization.

Jim Belt recognized by CC commissioners

BY ABIGAIL WOLFORD Staff Writer

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday evening to discuss the findings of a United Way survey of the county and to honor a local man for his work with Alzheimer's patients.

Dr. Steve Thornburg, chairman of the board of directors for United Way of Cleveland County, presented the group's findings in the Cleveland County Needs Assessment. He encouraged the commissioners to use the results in their future planning.

Thornburg said the information provided a "snapshot of the county at one point in time." The community was extremely involved in the process, through telephone and written key informant surveys. The information obtained in the process is "usable data," he said.

While the results tended to focus on the areas that need improvement throughout the county, Thornburg stressed that the county has many assets, as well, that make people want to live here. Thornburg said the fact that the county is willing to look at areas that need improvement shows that the county is a "desirable place to live." The study pointed out the challenges faced by the community, although coming up with solutions for the presented problems will be another matter, he said.

August and includes unedited comments from many of the people questioned. The survey was done during the height of the water crisis, causing many of the responses to reflect attitudes toward that problem.

"The information is there for interpretation, depending on how it needs to be used," said Thornburg. "The information reflects a snapshot in time, and you need to put it in that context."

The household survey showed that the top five concerns of those polled were: lack of jobs, unemployment, lack of affordable medical care, underemployment, and roadside litter. The key informants indicated that their top five concerns were: unemployment, lack of jobs, illiteracy, poverty, and child abuse and neglect.

Jim Belt was honored for his civic work. Belt has

spent many hours working with Alzheimer's patients in nursing homes. He is a musician and songwriter and has written a song, "Who's Forgotten," which was adopted by the Alzheimer's Association.

Founder of James Belt Ministries, Belt also raised money for the construction of the Kings Mountain senior center and for Hospice of Cleveland County. At Christmas time, Belt also helps with the luminaries at the Mountain Rest Cemetery.

Belt said his ministry began in 1991. In 1997, he wrote a song about the ministry, which reached number 10 on the Gospel charts in Europe. The accompanying video is now used as a training tool by a professor at Duke University and the psychiatric department at University of North Carolina.

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