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The Herald

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A Costner Christmas



Grady and Katie Costner of Midpines have been working for months to get their yard ready for their annual Christmas light display which will begin Thanksgiving night.

ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD

Lights go on Thursday at 5:30

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Katie and Grady Costner's annual Christmas light show has spilled over into neighbors' yards.

This year, Santa and his sleigh, a new addition, will be parked behind the Midpines Pantry. Another new piece, an eight-foot Santa with a waving arm, will sit across Margrace Road in Fran Johnson's yard.

The Costners are locally known for their elaborate holiday decorations. The Midpines couple began the tradition over a decade ago.

"We just started with a little bit. The next thing I know, it has gotten out of hand," Katie Costner said.

"People expect it." The lights make their debut Thanksgiving night. Before that magical moment can occur, it takes months of preparation.

"We work at it all the time," Katie Costner said.

Grady, a welder, builds the frames

from pictures in children's books. Katie strings the lights.

"I've always been able to weld. Give me a picture and I can make it," he said. "I make them and she puts the lights on."

After the lights are all strung, Katie works to keep them burning.

"You can imagine how hard it is. If you have ever messed with Christmas lights you know," she said.

Grady's brother-in-law Carl Bledsoe visits daily to help out with the lights.

Some of the illuminated designs include a nativity, trains, stagecoach, soldiers, a carousel, candles, snowflakes and Christmas trees.

This year, Katie has engineered the lights to make the soldiers appear as if they are marching.

Atop the couple's home, Santa appears to walk across the roof toward the chimney.

Lights across the archways across the two driveways spell out "happy holidays" and "peace on earth."

A Geico Insurance commercial inspired the Costners to create a scene with playful squirrels causing antique cars to wreck.

They have also built a temporary shelter for Santa Clause who will give candy out to children from 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. nightly.

The couple say the lights are a lot of work but the display is their gift to the community.

"It's fun. The kids really enjoy it and a lot of old people do to," Katie said.

Located at the corner of Margrace and Mail roads, the house attracts motorists nightly.

"Some nights it's bumper to bumper," Katie said.

After motorists leave the Costner's yard, they'll be treated to more displays around the neighborhood.

"We're not the only ones who light up," Grady said. "It's not just us."

Many visitors make a donation which helps the Costners offset their electric bill.

Tax District looks to hire first director

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

The Mountaineer Partnership downtown revitalization committee announced plans during its Wednesday meeting to hire a part time downtown manager.

The position will be filled as soon as possible, according to Bill Marcellino, committee chairman.

That person will work on economic restructuring, promotion, design and regulations affecting downtown merchants. One of the manager's initial tasks will be to conduct a marketing survey.

The position and survey will be funded by a municipal service district tax levied on downtown businesses and from the city's general fund, Marcellino said.

MSD tax bills went out last week and are already falling under some scrutiny. The bill not only taxed the property but personal and business property inside the building.

"It's not exactly what we asked for," Marcellino said.

He called it unequitable and plans to ask city council to limit the tax to property.

City council unanimously approved the tax in June after Marcellino and other business owners requested it.

The MSD includes 123 properties, 93 of which are commercial.

The Main Street USA plan recommends MSD's. The plan attempts to revitalize small and medium sized cities and is largely considered a success.

KM to turn its attention to Christmas

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas in Kings Mountain and Grover.

Kings Mountain will light its Christmas tree Monday, Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. The tree is located on the Mauney Memorial Library lawn.

The Kings Mountain Hospital Auxiliary will light its "tree of love" on Wednesday, Dec. 3. A program begins at 4:45 with Edie Bridges playing holiday music on the organ.

Rev. Jody Griffin, pastor at David Baptist Church and hospital chaplain, will give the devotion. Billie Hicklin will sing. A hospital employee and auxiliary member will be honored during the ceremony.

Crystal angels decorate the tree. Those may be purchased in honor or memory of an individual with a \$10 contribution. The names will be recorded in a book adjacent to the tree.

To make a contribution, call Jessie Collins at 704-739-5503.

The Grover Women's Club will sponsor a parade Dec. 6. The line up begins at

11 a.m. at Spring Acres. The parade begins at noon. The route goes up Main Street, right on Laurel, right on Mulberry, left on Cleveland to First Baptist where the parade ends.

There is no application fee or theme. Participants should call Evelyn Willis at 704-937-9047 to let her know how many spaces their entry will require. Participants are allowed to throw candy to spectators.

The Grover Fire Department and Rescue Squad are assisting with the parade.

The Kings Mountain parade takes place on the same day at 3 p.m. There is no application fee. Any non-street licensed vehicle including go-carts and dirt bikes must have a safety crew if exhibition tricks are performed. All horses must be diaper bagged.

Registration information is available by calling 704-730-2103 or by visiting city hall.

Line up begins at 2 p.m. on Gold Street. The parade starts at 3 p.m. and runs from Gold St. to Battleground Ave. to King St. The parade ends at KFC.

Hayley Flynn is KM's Carrousel Princess

Hayley Krista Flynn will represent Kings Mountain High School in the 56th annual Carolinas' Carrousel Thanksgiving Day Parade November 27 at 1 p.m. in uptown Charlotte.

The parade, which is the largest Thanksgiving Day parade in the southeast, will be telecast live on WBTV-Channel 3.

The Marching Husky Vanguard from Ashe County High School in West

Jefferson will lead the parade as the 2003 Honor Band.

This year's Grand Marshall position has been awarded to MEDIC - Mecklenburg EMS Agency. Riding in the position of honor will be several MEDIC employees who have recently completed 25 years of service. The agency is also celebrating its silver anniversary, having begun responding to emergency

calls on November 1, 1978.

Flynn and the other 56 representatives will be presented at the Pepsi Coronation and Awards Ceremony Wednesday at 7:45 p.m. at the Omni Charlotte Hotel. At that time, the Carrousel Queen will be crowned and winners of the marching bands scholarship program and matching grants will be announced.

Keynote speaker will be

Sharon Allred Decker, President of Tanner Companies. Entertainment will be by the Ashe County Husky Vanguard Marching Band and Yours Truly, a women's a cappella quartet.

Flynn, 17, is a senior at Kings Mountain High School where she participates in numerous academic and extra-curricular activities.

She has attended Tar Heel Girls State and the

Governor's Page program. She was a Junior Marshal, sophomore class secretary, KMAE Good Citizen, Shelby Exchange Club Good Citizen, Best Female Athlete, vice-president of the National Honor Society, and member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

She plans to attend a four-year university and major in special education with a minor in Spanish. She plans to teach special education.



HAYLEY FLYNN



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