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# The Herald

of Kings Creek  
 at City Stadium

3A



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## City, four video poker operators reach agreement, three other cases go to trial

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
 Staff Writer

Seven area video poker operators owe the City of Kings Mountain over \$500,000 in civil fines with over \$300,000 being levied against one operator. Of that amount, \$64,572 is due in 15 days. In Cleveland County Superior Court last week, four of those operators reached agreements with the city avoiding a civil trial. Superior Court Judge James W. Morgan presided. The American Legion's agreement is unique. The non-profit veteran's organization was fined \$23,000 but only had to come up

with \$3,000. The Legion agreed to make \$20,000 in volunteer work, cash donations and in-kind donations to the city over a five year period. The Legion has 15 days to remove its poker machines. The \$3,000 fine also is due within 15 days. Mike Heath was fined \$23,312.50 for having the machines illegally at Mike's Fireworks. He was fined the same amount for having machines at Lynn's Gameroom. Of that fine, \$23,312.50 will be due in 10 days. The city will also have a judgment for the remaining \$23,312.50 which it will hold without proceeding on, pending any

appeals. Danny Goforth must pay \$23,685 to the city within 10 days for having the machines at Little Dan's. Dennis Goins of Friendly Billiards was fined a total of \$20,650 but has already paid \$6,075 to the city. That leaves a balance of \$14,575 due within 10 days. Heath, Goforth and Goins have 75 days to move the machines outside the city and its two-mile extra territorial jurisdiction. The fines levied against the Legion and the three men were settled at 50 percent of the original fine. Cases against AmVets, the VFW and Don Johnson went to trial.

The city was awarded a \$47,725 judgment against AmVets. A \$95,450 judgment was ordered against the VFW. Judgments against Johnson reached \$304,375. Both Johnson and the two organizations must remove the machines within five days. The penalties against Johnson were levied over video poker machines at K&R Billiards, Soap'N Sud, Bessemer City Express, Pete's #1&#2, Pete's Gulf and K&M Games. Johnson may be able to keep the machines at K&M Games if the Kings Mountain Board of Adjustment approves a conditional use permit during its January meeting.

Johnson has publicly spoken out against the city. He calls the actions against him unconstitutional. After South Carolina outlawed video poker machines, truckloads came across the state line into Kings Mountain, according to Mayor Rick Murphrey. The machines created an environment conducive to criminal activity, officials say. According to Murphrey, family members of people who were gambling away entire paychecks approached the city asking for help. "Kings Mountain had to take a stand," Murphrey said. State laws prohibit any one See Poker, 3A

### MERRY CHRISTMAS



GARY STEWART/HERALD

The annual Christmas light display at the home of Grady and Katie Costner of Midpines is one of the most unique in the area. More pictures are on page 2B.

## City accomplished much during year

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
 Staff Writer

Revised industrial incentive grants and a successful fight against illegal video poker games are among the accomplishments city officials are proud of looking back on 2003. Industrial incentive grants requirements were loosened to allow companies easier access to the money which is used to attract and retain them. Both Gibson Industries and MRA Industries were recruited to the area and STI and Tube Enterprises made major upgrades, Mayor Rick Murphrey said. Last week, fines totaling over \$500,000 were levied against seven video poker operators. The civil trial came after police raided several businesses last year after complaints from residents. Under the Homeland Security banner, the Kings Mountain Police and Fire departments formalized communications with county, state and federal agencies in the event of a threat to domestic security. The police department also made over 130 drug related arrests during Operation Sleigh Ride. The police department was awarded over \$300,000 in Governor's Highway Safety funds to purchase a new vehicle and hire more officers. Murphrey praised both the police and fire departments for fundrais-

ing. "They're great at finding and securing those grants," he said. City utility workers moved gas, water and sewer lines to accommodate the widening of I-85 to six lanes. "They worked real hard," he said. A sewer pumping station was upgraded in Northwoods. The first phase of sewer line extension was completed along West Gold Street. Work is now underway on the second phase, Murphrey said. The electric department added 300 customers. The fire department continues to host the state's rural internet access program in its classroom. The public may use the internet at no charge. The department also replaced a 1972 pumper truck. A sidewalk was built in front of Patriot's Park along Gold Street. Another sidewalk was created along King Street from Kings Mountain Hospital to CVS. In special events, the city paid extra attention to soldiers serving in the war in Iraq. The city held a support the troops rally, a welcome home ceremony for the 505th National Guard unit and sent a signed banner to soldiers serving in Iraq. The soldiers signed and returned the banner. It is now at the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. The city held a National Night Out for the first time See City, 3A

## Budget balance pleases mayor

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
 Staff Writer

The City of Kings Mountain came in \$775,909 under budget on its fiscal year 2002-2003 audit, leaving the town's mayor smiling. "That's something to be excited about in this economy while still maintaining services," Mayor Rick Murphrey said last week. The general fund is at \$8,411,949, that's \$775,909 under budget.

Murphrey said the town has not had to impose new taxes. Sewer fees did go up due to an increase from the City of Gastonia which treats part of the town's waste. The general fund is at 19.2 percent. The Local Government Commission only requires city's keep it at eight percent. The general fund grew \$87,779 over last year. The town has a total debt of \$5.2 million with \$400,000 of that being short term. In November, the city finished

paying off \$75,000 in equipment. In November, the N.C. 161 peak shavings electric plant will be paid off. "Overall the finances of the city are in good shape," Murphrey said. He credited city employees, citizens, and the city council for the budget. He credited the financial situation partially to programs employees suggested. The city saved \$400,000 by self insuring itself on health coverage. The peak shaving plants are another See Budget, 3A

## Churches give 400 food boxes, 9,000 toys to needy families

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
 Staff Writer

Several area churches are making Christmas brighter for area residents affected by the down turn in the economy. The Earthen Vessels program gave away 400 food boxes and 9,000 toys Saturday morning. Started by the Pastor's Prayer Group, the program also sponsors a monthly food distribution which serves around 200. Numbers were up due to the holiday. The nine-member group held the first holiday giveaway last year. The monthly distributions began in June. The group uses an old Phifer Road warehouse owned by Kings Mountain District Schools. Recipients are given vouchers through the churches, schools and the City of Kings Mountain. There are no church membership require-

ments to receive help. "We're trying to let the love of God be the testimony, not be preachy," Rev. Roger Woodard said. The assistance supplements the work of Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry serving clients beyond Kings Mountain and Grover. Much of the food given away during the monthly distribution is donated by local churches. The group spent \$4,000 on Saturday's give away. Most of that food is purchased through the national Operation Compassion. That ministry enables local food banks to purchase food below retail value. Woodard estimates that without Operation Compassion it would have cost \$8,000 to purchase Saturday's food. Locally, Harris Teeter donated grocery bags and McDonalds provided breakfast for See Churches, 3A



JOEY BRYMER / HERALD  
 Eleven-year-old Deshun Dawson, right, and Derice Byers of People's Baptist Church pack food during Saturday's Christmas distribution to needy families in the Kings Mountain area.

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