January 1, 2004

### TOP TEN From 1A

Other top stories in Kings Mountain during the year ran the gamut from the longstanding school merger and economic issues to Kings Mountain people's involvement in the War in Iraq and a local story of heroism.

We placed the other nine stores of the top ten in this order:

#### 2 - Police heroes.

In July Kings Mountain police officers W.E. Ellis and Tony Walker were credited with saving the life of a Kings Mountain woman who was trapped inside a burning home in the

Country Creek subdivision. Ellis was patrolling in the area when the dispatcher's call went out, and the young officer hurried to the scene to learn that a woman who had to use a walker to get around was trapped inside.

Ellis entered the home and found the woman in the kitchen area. Shortly afterward, Walker arrived on the scene and helped Ellis pull the woman to safety.

3 - Explosives lab. Another police story turned out to be one of the biggest in town during 2003.

While putting out a fire on Morris Street, local fire fighters and police noticed some unusual looking items in the yard of a house across the street. Upon investigation, police found material that can be used to make explosives.

After weeks of investigation four men were charged.

#### 4 - Video poker.

There weren't many meetings of the Kings Mountain Board of Adjustments that did not involve requests from area business owners to obtain conditional use permits to allow video poker machines.

In most cases, they were denied but in one recent meeting the board approved a permit for Jim Testa to 11 operate three machines at as his Kings Mountain Travel Plaza that is located just outside the city in the two-mile ETJ.

That action brought sharp

Johnson, but that case and cases against AmVets and VFW went to trial. Four other operators reached an agreement with the city to pay reduced fines and remove their machines.

#### 5 - War

The war in Iraq touched almost every family in town because they had family and friends involved with the military.

Many local National Guardsmen were called into active duty for service in Iraq, including Kings Mountain police officers Brad Bumgardner and Lance Johnson.

Tensions had been building for several years over the United States' belief that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was stockpiling nuclear weapons and the U.N. eventually sent a weapons inspection team to Iraq.

In March President Bush gave an ultimatum to Hussein and his two sons to leave Iraq within 48 hours to avoid war.

After several months of fighting, the war was declared over but the U.S. has continued to suffer casualties. But about three weeks ago, Hussein was captured by U.S. troops hiding in a cellar near a farm house in his hometown.

Throughout the year the city held numerous patriotic rallies to support our troops, and also to welcome back a number of Kings Mountain National Guardsmen who had been called into active duty last year to serve at various military bases when regular military personnel were sent overseas.

#### 6 - Economy.

Kings Mountain had an up-and-down year economically, but it seemed like the down times were more numerous and devastating.

Several companies announced during the year that they would expand or locate here, thus providing some jobs for an area that has been hit hard by unemployment the last several years.

But several other companies went by the wayside, and many of them were big employers.

Anvil Knit announced in

#### The Kings Mountain Herald

The School Board voted to

Kings Mountain's new

KM schools again scored

Bethware, North, East, West

and KM Middle were named

schools of excellence, mean-

ing that over 90 percent of

The School Board

approved a 25 percent

plements and approved

The School Board

\$211,163 renovation of the

approved spending over \$1

ance for technology updates

and capital improvements.

Kings Mountain and

Cleveland County experi-

enced a major flu outbreak

late in the year that is con-

tinuing into the new year.

medical facilities had run

out of the flu vaccine and

ordered by health depart-

for the citizens at highest

The first week of

senior citizens.

students.

ments was being earmarked

risk, including children and

December, Kings Mountain

absences a day compared to

a typical absentee rate of 35

10 - New city manager.

After a search that saw

Council in April hired Phil

Ponder of Gaston County as

Ponder replaced Jimmy

Maney, who retired late last

year but agreed to stay in an

interim capacity until a new

city manager was found.

sion by Council in '03.

Hiring a city manager

wasn't the only major deci-

The city put into place a

number of homeland securi-

almost a hundred people

send in an application,

Kings Mountain City

its new city manager.

High School reported 175

most of what was being

By December most area

million from its fund bal-

cy standards.

KMHS cafeteria.

9 - Flu

their students met proficien-

increase in local teacher sup-

In 2002 Kings Mountain during the year. was experiencing the fifth straight year of drought. Wells, rivers and other water enter into a contract with supplies had either gone dry Energy Education Inc. to or were at dangerously low reduce energy costs in the levels. Kings Mountain supschools. plied water to Shelby when its water source, the Broad Intermediate School had to River, almost went dry. be evacuated when someone Kings Mountain officials working at the New Life were even talking about the Enrichment Center on Kings possibility of building Mountain Blvd. dug into a another lake near Moss Lake natural gas line. to take care of future water high in the State ABC tests. needs in the city and area.

But then the skies opened

In 2003 Kings Mountain received one of its biggest rainfall totals ever. Local weather tracker Kenneth Kitzmiller said almost 85 inches of rain fell during the calendar year, compared to only 35 the year before.

The few problems that the excessive rainfall brought were minor compared to the effects of the drought.

The large amount of rain was at least partly to blame for an algae problem at Moss Lake, which made drinking water smell and taste bad. Of course, it helped the sale of bottled water at local grocery stores. After about three weeks of treatment, the problem cleared up.

Heavy rains also contributed to some minor wrecks and storm drainage problems, and there were a couple of instances where it caused sewage overflows into area creeks, but none serious.

Kings Mountain experienced a pretty good snow storm in January, as well as a couple ice storms. A late January snow dumped 6 1/2 inches in the area, but the only major problems, according to police, were tractor trailers coming off the interstate and blocking roads.

The sub-freezing temperatures that accompanied the storm led to a lot of water pipes freezing and kept local plumbers as busy as they wanted to be.

8 - School merger. How many years has this been in the top ten? Three. Well, next year it will be four but it will probably be over.

Kings Mountain lost its last two chances at having news coming out of KMDS Howard Shipp the only supporters

Council approved a new incentives policy for industries, lowering the threshold to qualify for grants from a \$750,000 investment to a \$100,000 investment.

Ponder told Council in a work session that the city's general fund balance had declined from 46 percent in 1998-99 to 19 percent in 2002-03. The good news to that is that the 19 percent is still above the state recommended eight percent minimum

Council came under fire when it was pointed out that beer and wine was served at a Veteran's Day reception at the History Museum. City ordinances state that alcohol cannot be served on city property.

Councilman Carl DeVane requested that the matter be put on the agenda for the December meeting and intended to make a motion that consumption of alcohol be allowed at the Museum and Southern Arts Society but withdrew his request due to the "withdrawal of a commitment by an outgoing council member.'

Other notes of interest from 2003:

-David Allen Parker, 33, was electrocuted while attempting to trim a tree on Center St.

-Cleveland County Health Department received it first shipment of smallpox vaccinations in early February, part of the plan set forth by president Bush as part of Homeland Security.

-Kings Mountain mourned with the nation when the Columbia Space Shuttle disintegrated on its return to earth.

-Gas prices rose to an alltime high of \$1.62 per gallon in February. AAA Carolinas attributed the hike to the labor strikes in Venezuela. -A KM woman trying to smoke black window spiders out from under a kitchen cabinet accidentally set her house eon fire. -Price of natural gas jumped 38 percent in February.

-Mary Neisler received the KMBPA Gateway Award.

-The city received a \$40,000 capacity building grant from the NC rural Economic Development

before City Council to request an increase in funds from the city.

Spectrum was evacuated after a malfunction in a dye making area resulted in chemical fumes.

-Walkers weathered a terrible thunderstorm and wind gusts of up to 60 miles per hour to raise over \$85,000 at the annual Relay for Life.

The city adopted a \$26 million 2003-04 budget. -A.B. Snow, founding member of the Southern

Arts Society, died. -Dennis Edward Moore

died when he was struck by a train near Linwood Road.

-Duke Power crews rerouted electrical lines along NC 161, preparing for construction of a new bridge and access ramps onto I-85.

-Cleveland County Health Care announced acquisition of the practice of Dr. Philip Day in Grover and an \$8 million expansion project at Kings Mountain Hospital. Most of the money will be used in the emergency and surgery departments.

-9-month-old Christopher Broome underwent heart surgery.

-Grover Council passed a \$542,872 budget.

-John O. Plonk Jr., business and church leader, died. He started the lay person on call ministry, the community kitchen, and the annual preaching mission at Central United Methodist Church.

-An increase of approximately 140 students at Kings Mountain High has resulted in numerous mobile units being put n place.

-The Housing Finance Agency announced it will give Eagan Partners a \$391,557 construction tax credit for construction of a 56-unit apartment complex on Kings Mountain Blvd.

-KM Little Theatre announce plans to survey area residents to see if there is interest in an outdoor drama.

-Billy Biggers received a heart transplant August 3 at Carolinas Medical Center.

-Gas prices range from \$1.63 to \$1.73 per gallon in August, the highest ever here.

-Hazel Lee Gill, owner of J.W. Gill & Sons Funeral Home, died in September. He began his professional career working in a hardware store and later owned Hazel Lee Gill Trucking. He and Raleigh Brown formed Gill and Brown Funeral Home in 1954, and in 1969 he founded J.W. Gill & Sons.

criticism from Don Johnson, who has been involved in a court case with the city since Kings Mountain approved its strict video poker ordinance over two years ago. Johnson claimed the city was giving Testa special treatment because he intends to develop some land he owns along I-85 and Dixon School Road.

Johnson was issued a permit to operate machines in his business in the Silver Express shopping center.

And, just a couple of weeks ago the city was awarded over \$500,000 in negotiated fines in a court case involving seven area video poker operators. The biggest fine levied, over \$300,000 was against

May that it would totally close its Kings Mountain plant, cutting out 430 jobs. Harris Welco shut down in June, meaning the loss of approximately 150 more

jobs. Grover Industries scaled down its local operation late in the year.

Mayflower Vehicle Systems announced an \$882,000 expansion which would create 15 new jobs.

**Gibson Industrial Services** announced it would move its operation from Charlotte to Kings Mountain, though how many jobs it would create is uncertain.

7 - Water/weather. What a difference a year makes.

the Cleveland County School Merger Plan reversed as the NC Court of Appeals ruled against KM 3-0, and the State Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal. Thus, the issue is now in

the hands of the U.S. Justice Department and that body has indicated it will probably make its decision no later than January 12. If the DOJ rules that the plan does not violate the voting rights of persons who live in the city limits of Kings Mountain but also in Gaston County, the merger will go into effect unless Kings Mountain District Schools appeals the ruling to the Ú.S. District Court in Washington, DC.

ty measures in case of terrorist acts or natural disasters. It discussed designating the Patrick Center as an emergency shelter and purchase a \$40,000 generator, but put the plans on hold.

Council considered annexing approximately 600 acres on Highway 74, then backed off on it.

The city agreed to pay for renovation the old Southern Railway Depot and lease the building to the Southern Arts Society for one dollar a month.

Council held a public hearing on returning to fouryear terms for commissioners and the mayor. The only two people to speak at the meeting opposed the idea. Council later voted against it 5-2, with Rick Moore and

mad cow is not an infectious

disease instead he points to

phosmet organophosphate

as the cause. The chemical

farmers to treat warble flies.

has been used by British

Center to help plan for critically needed water and wastewater projects. KM said it would use the money to investigate creating another lake near Moss Lake

-Don Phifer received a new liver in transplant surgery at Duke Medical Center.

-Leaders of the Ebenezer community met with sheriff's office officials to discuss ways to rid the community of drug dealers.

-Rain didn't dampen the enthusiasm at the annual Firehouse Cook-off at the Walking Track. The Hickory Knoll Cookers of Franklin were crowned grand champion.

-The History Museum and Senior Center appeared

-KM electrical linemen Mike Houser, Josh Conrad and John Putnam helped restore power in eastern NC after two hurricanes ravaged the area.

-KM Rotary Club made a pitch to City Council to expand Patriots Park as part of the club's 100th birthday celebration.

-Keith Bradley of the Westover Community accused city council of using a legal loophole to avoid installing water and sewer in the neighborhood.

# MAD COW

do that at this time.

Yarbro doesn't think consumers should be concerned. The only cows identified as having mad cow have been Holstein dairy cows, he said. These make up one percent of the entire national beef market, Yarbro said.

According to Yarbro, the beef sold in grocery stores comes from 18-month-old calves which are younger than the three-year-old ban on by-products.

For 21 years, upper Cleveland cattle farmer Dot Houlditch has sold natural beef on the wholesale market. This fall she realized the niche market among local consumers concerned about beef safety.

Houlditch gave her farm a name - Red Feather Farm, printed brochures, took two calves to Forest City for slaughter and processing, then sold the meat to good reviews

Houlditch's cattle eat pesticide and herbicide free hay and grass.

"People are becoming

more and more aware," she said. She can be reached at 704-

538-3834. Harris Teeter has seen a small drop in meat purchased, though a manager credited that to the price going up. The price increase is due to the supply going down, he said.

A Food Lion manager reported no drop in sales.

Winn Dixie could not be reached for comment.

At Hallelujah Acres, a Shelby area health food store and educational center, interest continues to grow in vegetarian diets. Spokesperson Linda Vaughan did not credit this specifically to mad cow disease, instead, she says people are becoming more concerned about health overall.

Started by Rev. George Malkmus, the center bases its nutritional plan on Genesis 1:29 which he interprets to support a plant based diet.

Information on free seminars is available by calling 1-800-915-9355.

While mad cow has caused a stir in the United States, the United Kingdom

has been hardest hit. Cambridge University prion specialist David R. Brown doubts the commonly accepted theory on mad cow. Instead, he says that

The Herald				
Published every Thursday Periodicals postage at Kings Mountain, NC 28086 USPS 118-880 by Republic Newspapers, Inc. <i>Postmaster, send address changes to:</i> P. O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086 Phone (704) 739-7496 • Fax (704) 739-0611 Office: 824-1 East King Street • Kings Mountain, NC 28086 E-mail: kmhnews@aol.com				
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Payable in Advance. All Prices include 6% NC State Sales Tax.

Gaston & Cleveland County Other NC Counties Outside NC		<u>1 Year</u> \$27.00 \$28.50 \$33.50	<u>6 Months</u> \$17.50 \$19.25 \$21.25
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Merger wasn't the only