

The Herald

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HOME COMING SPIRIT



There are a lot of strange things going on this week at Kings Mountain High as the students and staff get ready for Friday's big homecoming football game. Tuesday was Wacky Day and students and teachers dressed...well, wacky. Some of the students having fun Tuesday were, front row, left to right, Angelica Adams, Tasha McAfee and Megan Neely. Back, Aaron Pullen, Brittiany Smith and Amanda Edwards.

GARY STEWART / HERALD

Public hearing slated Tuesday on closing RR crossing

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain residents will have a chance to speak out Tuesday night on whether Hawthorne Road Railroad Crossing should be closed. Kings Mountain City Council will hold a public hearing during its 7 p.m. monthly meeting.

State Department of Transportation officials asked the city to close the crossing during the July 27 council meeting. Council voted five to two to accept the recommendation with council members Rick Moore and Howard Shipp casting the dissenting votes.

Moore said during the meeting that he had received calls from several residents opposed to the closing.

The state is offering the city \$7,500 in highway safety money to close the crossing.

Norfolk-Southern Railway is offering an additional \$40,000 of unrestricted money. The state also will pay to close the crossing and to landscape the area.

Some local residents have suggested Norfolk-Southern offered the city over \$100,000 to close Hawthorne Crossing in the 1990s, though the city nor Norfolk-Southern say they can find any documentation.

Local police and fire officials say closing the crossing would not impact emergency service delivery.

Parkdale Mill, Patrick Yarn Mills and Tire Corp are located near the crossing. Spokespersons for Parkdale and Tire Corp say the proposed closing would have no effect on their industries.

Some residents living on Crescent Circle and the surrounding neighborhood use the crossing. Oak Street crossing, less than a half mile north, is another option. According to a December 2003 DOT study, Hawthorne Crossing is used on average 1,100 times daily; Oak, 1,300 times daily; Gold, 2,300 times daily and Mountain, 1,800 times daily.

DOT engineer Michael Shumsky calls Hawthorne Crossing "low volume." He also said it is "one of the most dangerous in the state." Since 1976, 18 wrecks have occurred there. Shumsky is particularly concerned because six vehicles have collided with trains since 1993 when crossing signals and gates were installed. Daily, 24 freight trains pass through the crossing and two Amtrack passenger trains at a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour, Shumsky said.

See Hearing, 3A

“
There is significant accident history at this crossing.
”

Michael Shumsky
DOT Engineer

Tube Enterprises shuts down

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

A plant that had once expressed interest in an economic incentive initiative has closed its doors. Tube Enterprises shut down its Kings Mountain plant June 30.

Last September Tube officials were enthusiastic about the Kings Mountain location. They announced an expansion. Three employees were brought in from a Pelham, TN plant and two local workers were hired. Human Resources Director Tracy Baker said that number would climb if the market cooperated.

The anticipated cooperation apparently did not materialize. Located in the Kings Mountain Commerce Park off N.C. 161, Tube let go approximately 30 workers, according to Kim Knotts, a company spokeswoman.

Tube, a division of Commonwealth Aluminum, fabricated its product for wheelchairs, antenna, conveyors and high grade furniture. The company also used a radiation process to cure paint.

Commonwealth, headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, shut the plant down to concentrate on its core competencies, Knotts said.

"It has nothing to do with the location," she said.

Some of the employees were secured through a temporary service, though Knotts did not have an exact number.

Employees working through a temporary service can file for unemployment benefits if the agency does not have another job for them, according to Antwon Keith, manager of Cleveland County Employment Security Commission.

Typically unemployment benefits last up to 26 months, however workers at Tube will receive benefits for up to a year, Knotts said. The company participated in the state Trade Adjustment Assistance program. The program also pays for workers to return to school and provides career counseling.

This is Commonwealth's first plant closing, according to Knotts.

"It's never an easy decision," Knotts said.

The time frame depends on how long an individual has worked in the last 12 months before the first full quarter preceding the lay-off. Benefits are typically half of an employee's gross pay, Keith said.

Tube had worked toward a city industrial incentive grant before having to close its operation here. The City
See Tube, 3A

Crowders gets \$1.5 million for entrance

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

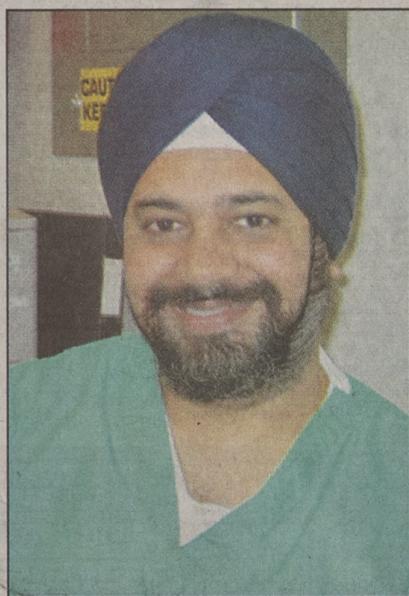
Crowders Mountain State Park has received \$1.5 million from the state Parks and Recreation Trust fund to build a new entrance to 2,000 acres it acquired in 2000.

"It was very obvious we needed new access to this land," said Joe Sox, park superintendent.

The new entrance will be off Van Dyke Road close to the intersection with Love Valley Road near the South Carolina state line.

With the additional 2,000 acres, the southern end of the park is six miles from the existing entrances, Sox said.

A visitors center, parking lot, small picnic shelter, maintenance facility and ranger residence will be built at the area named Boulders Access. The project is in the design phase now. Sox is hopeful the work will be ready for bid
See Park, 3A



DR. INDERJEET SINGH

TURBAN COWBOY

Dr. Singh has always felt accepted in U.S.

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

When he was growing up in Louisiana, Inderjeet Singh was known as the turban cowboy. Today most people call the Kings Mountain surgeon Dr. Singh.

Singh, the son of an Indian ophthalmologist, spent most of his childhood in a small town. Despite the stereotypes of the deep south, Singh says that people accepted him turban and all. He hunted and fished with other boys his age. Singh earned his nickname from wearing cowboy boots with the religious head wear.

Today some younger patients assume he is a Moslem.

However, World War II veterans recognize him as a Sikh. Some 20 percent of the British military fighting in WWII were Sikh, meaning U.S. soldiers often met these men.

When the Sikh faith was formed approximately 500 years ago, the turban was adopted as a way of showing equality among all people. At that time, only high ranking Islamic clerics and upper caste Hindus wore similar head covering. According to Singh, the turban was a protest against the classism of that period in India's history.

"No one is above anybody else," Singh said.

Sikhs believe they should not cut their hair. Singh twists his

hair beneath the turban and rolls his long beard close to his chin.

"(We believe) God gave you this, don't distort it," he said.

Beneath Singh's shirt a small silver sword is strapped to his waist, another religious requirement.

"It's always used as a defense. You never pull it out to fight unless attacked," he said.

Singh wears his sword everywhere except on an airplane. He must put it inside his checked baggage.

The sword was required centuries ago after Moslem invaders attempted to force conversions under the threat of death, Singh said.

See Singh, 3A

KM Hospital gets good review

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain Hospital got a good prognosis Tuesday morning from Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations' surveyors. A JCAHO team spent two days at KMH and

three days at Cleveland Regional Medical Center.

The surveyor who met with officials at the conclusion of the survey commended the healthcare system for "delivering excellent care," according to Dotty Leatherwood, a hospital vice-president.

"He was very complimentary,"

Leatherwood said.

Kings Mountain Hospital was praised for the staff's commitment to patient care and for meeting safety goals. Documentation was noted as an area for improvement for both hospitals.

Staff have told Leatherwood this was the most intense survey ever.

JCAHO has changed the way it conducts surveys, focusing more on direct care providers.

"These were excellent surveyors. They gave us good things to work on," Leatherwood said.

Kings Mountain's building program also got accolades from JCAHO.