

The Herald

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The Birthplace



Gaston Memorial Hospital dedicated its new Birthplace (above) Thursday. In top photo, nurse Stephanie Johnson demonstrates a ventilator for babies.

Gaston Memorial women's center called the 'nicest in the country'

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Gaston Memorial's The Birthplace is attracting attention from around the world.

Locally, the hospital showed off its newest addition Sunday with a public open house and a VIP reception Thursday. A delegation from the Netherlands will visit in the spring. The European nation will use The Birthplace as the standard for its 100 hospitals. For the past two years, the design has been used as a model at engineering, architecture and facilities conferences.

"This is the nicest women's center I've ever done, nicest in the country," said architect Scott Rawlings.

With 52 single care rooms, Gaston is

now the largest in the nation. All care including labor, delivery, recovery and postpartum happen in the same room with single care.

"We think that's important," said Jean Waters, a hospital spokeswoman. Couches in every room unfold into beds for family members. Sinks were designed to accommodate baby's first bath. All rooms have a television, DVD player and refrigerator. The hospital and a hot tub manufacturer worked together to design a whirlpool style tub which could be completely sanitized between patients.

Nurse Alice Edwards has watched labor and delivery change during her 35 years at Gaston Memorial. When she started work in 1969, dads only saw their newborns through the nursery window. Today, dads are part of

the delivery team and babies stay in their moms' rooms.

"It's wonderful to get the daddies involved in the care," Edwards said. The Birthplace does have a four-bed nursery for babies needing extra monitoring.

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit has 16 private beds. Each soundproof room has a pull-out bed for family. Prior to the private rooms, parents could not be present when doctors examined their babies due to confidentiality rules. Now, parents and physicians can concur during the exam.

"We want to include them as part of our team," said Nurse Stephanie Johnson.

The rooms are designed with break-away walls to accommodate up to

See Gaston, 8A

Roxanne Brown's a Top Cat



Dwayne Woodard Photo
ROXANNE BROWN

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Over 15 years of dance lessons have earned a Kings Mountain woman a spot on the Carolina Panther's Top Cat team.

Roxanne Brown and over 300 other women first auditioned March 15. The field of competitors had to demonstrate a side kick, leap and chenne turn. For the second round of competition, the women were expected to learn in 30 minutes a dance routine to "I Like The Way You Move" by Outcast.

"It was difficult," Brown said.

For the March 29 finals the now much narrowed field performed a routine with one week's practice time. They also had to answer two questions about the team. The next day Brown found out she made it.

"I was excited, very excited," she said. "The competition was really stiff. There were a lot of talented girls."

Top Cat veterans told Brown this year's audition was one of the most competitive probably because the

Panthers made it to the Super Bowl.

Brown also earned a spot on the Top Cats traveling show team with a tap and jazz routine she calls Old School. A salute to the 1970s, she wore an afro wig, oversized hoop earrings and fishnet hose.

Susan Goodson of Dance Reflections was Brown's first instructor. Today Brown works with her sister Brandy Tate who owns International Gates of Dance. The Kings Mountain dance school uses contem-

See Brown, 3A

School board told tuition has divided community

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Cleveland County Schools board members were given compact discs filled with photos of students and families affected by the \$1,414 out-of-county tuition.

Speaking at Monday night's meeting, former Kings Mountain District Schools board member Mike Smith told the board that the City of Kings Mountain has been divided. The tuition is too high for many living in the Gaston County portion of the city. Smith also said the tuition has emotionally devastated families and caused a drop in prop-

See Tuition, 3A

New board has no policy on schools' fund raising

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

The Cleveland County Schools board has not set a policy on fundraising by students, but at least one member would like to see that happen.

Several years ago Cleveland County Commissioners allowed the former Kings Mountain District Schools to add one cent per \$100 valuation to the property tax residents within the school district paid. The income from the increase then went to the schools so students would not have to raise funds.

See Board, 3A

Mayor breaks tie to close Hawthorne RR crossing

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

The Department of Transportation will barricade Hawthorne railroad crossing "immediately," DOT engineer Mike Shumsky told Kings Mountain City Council Tuesday night.

In the absence of Councilman Carl DeVane, Mayor Rick Murphrey cast the tie breaking vote to close the crossing when the council split three to three. Council members Houston Corn, Kay Hambricht and Jerry Mullinax voted to close the crossing with Rick Moore, Brenda Ross and Howard Shipp casting the dissenting votes. DeVane is recovering from surgery.

During the public hearing, approximately seven local residents, including the president of Patrick Yarns, asked that the crossing remain open while four residents asked council to close the crossing.

Patrick Yarns President Gilbert Patrick told council that the company has experienced 30 percent job growth since 2001, has an annual payroll of \$4 million and upped its utility usage by 30 percent over the last three years.

Commenting on Patrick's remarks, Joni Smith, a Kings Mountain attorney in private practice, said she would not address the "loosely veiled threat of financial blackmail I thought I heard." Smith said she grew up on Hawthorne Road and along with her neighbors was not allowed to use the crossing.

"My mother still won't let me cross on Hawthorne," she said.

Smith told the council that if they fail to close the crossing after the DOT and Norfolk-Southern have made the request, not only would the city as a whole be liable, but individual council members could incur litigation. She also said that Patrick Yarn owners could be personally responsible.

"It would pierce the corporate veil and assign liability to all," Smith said.

David Posage, sales manager for Patrick's two Kings Mountain plants, called the company a "gem in our area." He said that if the crossing is closed he would have to either direct clients down a dirt road past competitor Parkdale Mills or down Cansler Street with its view of the back of a plant. According to Posage, representatives of several Fortune 500 companies including Corning and Sunbeam visit the company's research and development facility on Hawthorne.

"We're trying to impress them," he said.

Sam Tessneer, a Patrick Yarns retiree, blamed accidents on speeding and drunk drivers. Tessneer, who said he crosses the track four times daily, said the closure could create a bottleneck downtown.

Dennis Conner told council members that the closure would redirect traffic to Gold Street where the Rotary Club plans to enhance Patriots Park creating potential for accidents and lawsuits.

Wendell Bunch said he had used the crossing for 17 years. He gave a brief history of Patrick Yarns and praised it as one of the largest tax payers in the city.

See Mayor, 3A

HOMEcoming QUEEN



GARY STEWART / HERALD
Kara Fujita was crowned KMHS homecoming queen during halftime of Friday's game between the Mountaineers and Fred T. Foard at John Gamble Stadium.