

The Herald

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Megan Bledsoe, 14, facing cancer battle

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

When Megan Bledsoe volunteered with Relay for Life, she never imagined four months later she would be diagnosed with cancer.

The 14-year-old Kings Mountain High School freshman is battling Hodgkin's lymphoma. Megan and her parents, Gene and Tracy Bledsoe, were stunned when doctors told them a lump removed from Megan's neck was cancerous. They first thought it was an inflamed lymph node.

"I didn't know what to think,"

Megan said.

Thanks to early detection and Megan's age, she has a 95 percent chance of avoiding a recurrence.

"The earlier you catch it, the better off you are," Gene Bledsoe said.

Tracy Bledsoe says the experience demonstrates the importance of early detection, a strategy promoted by the American Cancer Society.

Despite all her Relay for Life training, Tracy Bledsoe says nothing could have prepared her for Megan's diagnosis.

"I never dreamed it would be this

See Megan, 3A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 Megan Bledsoe with her parents, Gene and Tracy Bledsoe, and dog Abby.

Crossing closed day after vote

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Barricades were up at Hawthorne railroad crossing less than 24 hours after the Kings Mountain City Council voted to close the crossing.

The council split 3-3 with Mayor Rick Murphrey casting the tie breaking vote during last Tuesday's meeting. The Department of Transportation ordered the closing immediately, though representatives of nearby Patrick Yarn wanted the crossing left open until the city could complete work on Railroad Avenue which ends at the plant.

The city has contracted with Parker and Sons Paving to make improvements to the avenue. Sunday's rain prevented workers from paving the road this week, according to Public Works Director Jackie Barnette. However, fresh gravel is on the avenue and it will be open during the Gateway Festival this weekend.

Barnette said all indications are the avenue will be widened and a curve straightened but he first had to meet with railroad officials.

Michael Shumsky, an engineer with the DOT's rail division, praised the city for being proactive.

"It was a matter of time before there was a fatality," Shumsky said. "This crossing was on borrowed time."

While at least one local resident questioned DOT figures which indicate 18 train-to-vehicle collisions since 1976 and five vehicle-to-vehicle accidents, Shumsky defended those numbers.

"I would be more than happy to provide them with all the details," he said.

Shumsky said DOT crews would landscape the barricaded crossing "as soon as possible." He said those crews are currently repairing flood damage in western North Carolina.

The city should get \$7,500 in a DOT crossing closure incentive by December, according to Shumsky. That money must be used for highway safety.

The city should receive an unrestricted \$40,000 incentive from Norfolk-Southern Railroad within a couple of weeks, according to Bill Barringer, director of grade crossing safety.

See Crossing, 3A

GATEWAY FESTIVAL



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 Raymond James and several other downtown businesses are decorating for this weekend's Gateway Festival. The City of Kings Mountain will announce winners OF its decorating contest Friday morning.

Annual event in downtown KM features crafts, music and more

Kings Mountain's three-day Gateway Festival promises a full line-up of events including music, crafts, antiques, worship, trains and crafts.

Fans of the steam engine can visit the senior citizens park on Mountain Street to watch as a 7 1/2 gauge steamer train is fired up. Mike Bumgardner will bring the engine he has had for the past six years to make its first non-train festival appearance. In addition to an engine, Bumgardner has a coal, gondola car which is flat with short sides and a caboose.

Crafters Alley will have at least 15 vendors. One crafter with a particularly large exhibit area will sell items made from aluminum drink containers.

"It sounds like it's going to be inter-

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS ON PAGE 2A

esting and make it fun," said Loretta Cozart, Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The DAR is managing crafter's alley in exchange for the registration fee. The organization will use the money for local projects like its scholarship program.

Other crafts will include woven household items like placemats, painted home furnishing by Melva Huffstetler, wood work and clocks. Several area merchants also will participate, including Scissors Smith who will do make-overs.

Cozart said the organization was excited about the number of crafters

and merchants participating.

The Carolina Raptor Center will bring birds of prey. The center, located in northern Mecklenburg County, is home to injured birds which could not be re-released.

Mike Williamson will lead the 15-member praise team from Faith Ablaze Four Square Gospel Church during a two-hour concert on Saturday from 2 to 4 p.m.

A DVD and three-piece rug will be given away between 3:50 and 4 p.m. Tickets will be available at a welcome table near the City Hall Amphitheater stage. There will be a kids table with balloons, candy and a clown. Kimbrell's of Gastonia donated the TV.

The Red Cross will have a first aid station at its office on 210 Piedmont See Gateway, 3A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 The Hawthorne Street railroad crossing was barricaded last Wednesday.

Rotary's centennial project underway at Patriots Park

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Work on a Kings Mountain Rotary Club project has begun at Patriots Park. Crews from T&L Grading began stripping grass Monday.

"We're doing the best we can as wet as it is," said Dennis Conner of Rotary.

Several mounds of dirt sat in the park for the last few months.

"Now we're trying to get things moving," Conner said.

After the grass is removed, the ground will be leveled and work will start on sidewalks. The city has installed sewer and water taps.

"The sewer is there in case years from now someone decides to put in a bathroom," said Ellis Noell, city special events coordinator and Rotary member.

The city is installing sidewalks along Gold Street from Railroad Avenue to Cansler Street. This will run beside the park.

Landscaping is planned for late fall. Benches and a splash pad probably will be installed in the spring, Conner said.

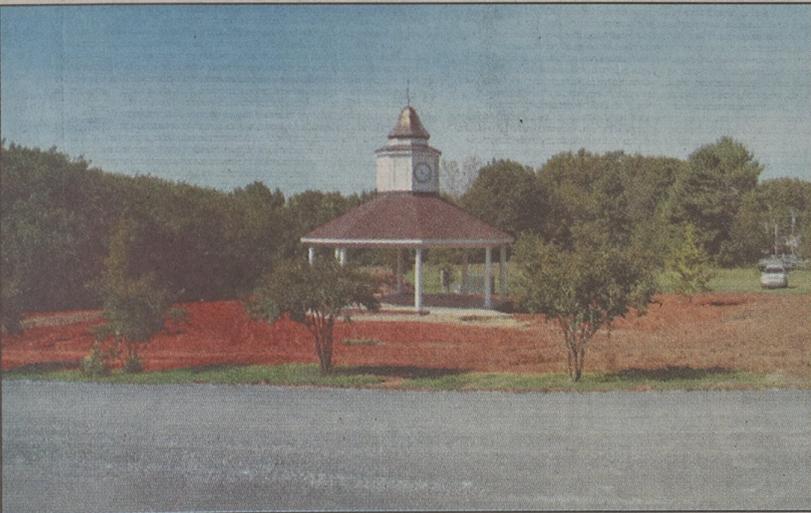
The splash pad spurts water which drains away. No water is left standing. Engineer Al Moretz said there are several in Atlanta.

"My daughter and kids went through it this summer and had a ball," Moretz said.

The local club had planned to have the project completed in February to celebrate the international organization's 100th birthday.

Rotary is launching a capital campaign next week to help pay for the improvements to the park.

"We're basically hitting the streets to talk to the corporate community and businesses," Noell said.



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 Patriots Park is undergoing a facelift, compliments of the Kings Mountain Rotary Club and the City. Rotary plans several additions to the park for its centennial project. Gravel has been laid by the city on Railroad Avenue. The street will be open during this weekend's Gateway Festival.