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COSTNER CHRISTMAS



Grady Costner works on his light display at his home in Midpines.

JOSEPH BRYMER / HERALD

Midpines couple to flip switch on 200,000 lights Thanksgiving night

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Grady and Katie Costner could change their names to Mr. and Mrs. Christmas and none of their neighbors would blink an eye.

The Margrace Road couple have once again outfitted their yard in one of the area's largest holiday lights displays. They'll flip the switch Thanksgiving night.

Katie Costner estimates there are 200,000 light bulbs in her yard. The couple stay home during the entire Christmas season to tend to the light-ed scenes.

Along with faithful friend Carl Bledsoe, the couple start putting out the lights in September.

Sponge Bob Square Pants and

"It kept getting bigger and bigger. I never thought it would get this big."

Grady Costner

Patrick, Cat in the Hat and elves scaling the side of a stocking are among the new displays.

Katie Costner said she started researching Sponge Bob after young visitors asked for the character last year. The Cleveland County native said she has always enjoyed holiday lights.

The seasonal decorations started

12 years ago with a few lights around the doors and windows.

"It kept getting bigger and bigger," Grady Costner said. "I never thought it would get this big."

After visiting Harold Harrelson's Forest City store to purchase reindeer lights, Grady Costner realized he could make the decorations himself.

Using his welding and electrical skills, he created illuminated angels, a carousel, poinsettias, peacocks, a nativity, Scooby Do and Shaggy, Mother Goose, carolers, Clifford the Big Red Dog, snowmen and snowflakes. Katie Costner designed the patterns.

Toy soldiers line the drive. Archways spell out "The Lord Is My See Costner, 3A

Reassignment will not affect KM students

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain area students appear to have escaped pupil reassignment for at least the next few years.

Cleveland County Schools Superintendent Dr. Gene Moore presented a proposal Monday night which would make Elizabeth Elementary a feeder school to Shelby High instead of the current Crest High. Under the plan, students living in the Elizabeth Elementary attendance area would switch schools at the beginning of sixth or ninth grades.

Seventh, eighth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders living in the Elizabeth attendance area who attend Crest Middle and High schools would now be required to submit a transfer request to remain at Crest schools. These students also would be required to provide their own transportation.

Moore told school board members that the plan was based on efficient use of buildings and on keeping students at the schools closest to their homes.

Moore said the plan was not "a forever solution."

"It buys us a few years," he said.

The plan does not take growth into consideration, Moore said.

The school board will hold a hearing in January and vote on the proposal probably in February. The complete plan is at clevelandcountyschools.org. Comments may be mailed to Proposal@clevelandcountyschools.org.

In other business, board members unanimously voted to ask the state for an exemption to a new law requiring school not start back before Aug. 25. Officials say that without the exemption exams would have to be given after winter break. This would increase the chance exams would be interrupted by inclement weather. Also, some educators believe students do better if tested before the holiday break.

State law also calls for a minimum of 180 days, 1,000 See Board, 5A

Local schools to be taught about MRSA

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

With an outbreak of MRSA in nearby Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Cleveland County Schools are putting together an education program.

MRSA or methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus occurs when staph bacteria found in the nose and skin of some individuals turns into a penicillin-resistant infection.

Cindy Borders, director of school health and early childhood, has ordered educational materials for athletic trainers and school nurses.

In Mecklenburg County, the bacterial infection has spread among athletes. No cases have been reported among Cleveland County students though some county athletic teams do play Charlotte area teams.

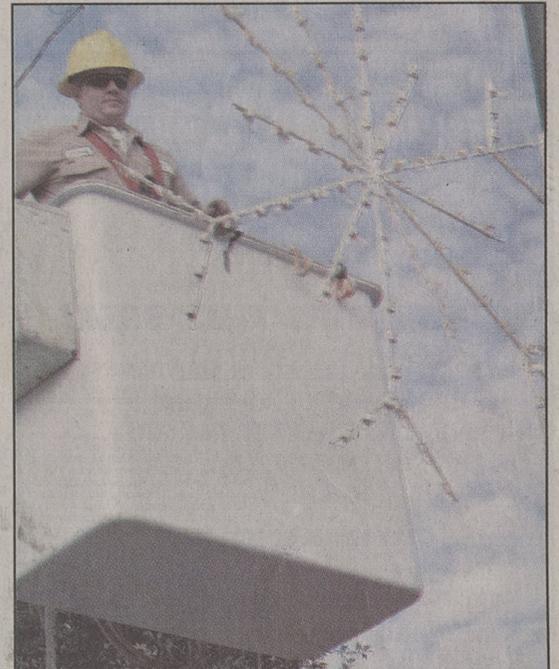
MRSA starts as a small, red bump. If untreated it will fill with pus and become painful. The longer MRSA goes without treatment, the harder it is to control. Extreme cases have necessitated amputation. MRSA can be fatal.

Borders recommends personal cleanliness and washing athletic equipment with antibacterial soap.

According to the Centers for Disease Control website, staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States, and are a common cause of pneumonia and bloodstream infections. Staph and MRSA infections are not routinely reported to public health

See MRSA, 3A

LIGHTING THE TOWN



GARY STEWART/HERALD
Kings Mountain Electric Lineman Rodney Bell helps ready the city for the Christmas holiday hanging lights on Friday afternoon.

De Shazo chief of operations for Kings Mountain Hospital

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Sheri De Shazo remembers as a three-year-old visiting the hospital where her mother worked as a registered nurse. Meeting doctors there ignited a dream of medical school.

By age 19 she was a registered nurse with an associate's degree from Bluefield State College in West Virginia. De Shazo took up to 22 hours a semester and tested out of some courses. She went to school on a scholarship from her father's work place, Consolidated Coal Company.

While her parents were proud, De Shazo's father remembered her dream of medical school. Hours before he died, the devoted father De Shazo describes as her friend and confidante encouraged her to do more.

"I assured him I would go as far as I could go," De Shazo said.



SHERI DE SHAZO

After working in nursing, De Shazo realized she no longer wanted to be a doctor. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Winston Salem State University and then masters degrees in both business administration and health care administration from Pfeiffer University.

Today De Shazo is the chief of operations for Kings Mountain Hospital.

"I've done what my father told me to do," De Shazo said.

Before De Shazo could enter graduate school her mother suffered a stroke. Ever the nurse, De Shazo managed her care from North Carolina. She says her parents' illnesses taught her about patient care.

"That's given me the passion for any patient who steps foot in a facility I work," De Shazo said. "It's my ministry, not my job, not my career."

Pointing to the construction taking See Chief, 3A

Axle gets 1,500 applications

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Without advertising, Kings Mountain's newest industry has received 1,500 applications from job seekers, officials there say.

Axle Alliance, which has been open one month, now employs 21 people on its assembly floor. Officials hope to have 250 people employed within two years.

The plant's capacity is 300 workers but officials say that additions could be built.

"If I find the right people here, there are no limits to growth," said Dr. Frank Dumeier, vice president of program management and manufacturing.

Base pay begins at \$14.50 an hour with an incentive package based on volume and quality of production and keeping the work area

clean.

"We want to share the profit and the success with the hourly guys," said Dr. Christof Traidl, president and CEO.

Three weeks ago workers unanimously voted to be part of the United Auto Workers. Axle Alliance, a wholly owned subsidiary of Daimler Chrysler, is headquartered in Detroit. Its

union contract requires workers at all plants have the option of unionizing.

Dumeier said the company has met with some resistance in North Carolina because of its unionized workforce.

"We're willing to set a new example in the Carolinas, management working with UAW," Traidl said. "What we do with the See Axle, 3A