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cancer stop her from
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The hidden costs of drinking and driving



DYLAN LLOYD/ HERALD

(First of a 3-part series)

DYLAN LLOYD

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You've had a long, hard week at work and now you're ready to go out on the town and have some fun? Think what that \$4.99 six pack or \$15 bottle of liquor may cost you if you get behind the wheel of a car and get pulled over for driving drunk. There were 82 arrests made in Kings Mountain last year for driving under the influence. The minimum fine for a first time DWI is \$200, but that's not including insurance hikes, lawyer fees and lost wages. In fact, the whole ordeal may end up costing you over \$3,000 for a first-time offense. If injury or death is involved, the cost can be astronomical, financially and emotionally, to you and others. Drinking and driving has grown increasingly intolerable in the United States, not to mention in the state of North Carolina. While fines have increased and license revocations have lengthened, there are many latent consequences of a DWI conviction. Those whom have experienced a DWI sentencing know that the penalties of the law are only the beginning. North Carolina DWI laws are some of the toughest in the country. Under the "Booze it and Lose it" campaign, you will lose your license for a period of ten days or more on your first

offense. Even worse, you will go to jail for a period of 24 hours to 60 days. The fines for first time DWI start at \$200 and can increase based upon what North Carolina statute refers to as "the five levels of punishment." The five levels are a sort of tier-based system that holds five as the least serious in nature and one as the most serious. If it is your first DWI, you will likely be charged under the fifth level, which calls for a 24-hour jail sentence and a \$200 fine. However, you can receive a stiffer penalty for your first offense based on "aggravating factors." An aggravating factor is anything from extreme intoxication, reckless driving, causing over \$500 in damage to passing a stopped school bus or even causing personal injury. The extent to which you are punished for these aggravating factors are up to the discretion of the judge. Bearing in mind that aggravating factors can bump your sentence up a level, the punishment for a second DWI includes up to 12 months in jail, a six month revocation of your license and a fine of up to \$2,000. For a third conviction, a drunk driver could face anywhere from 30 days to 24 months in jail as well as a fine of up to \$4,000. "Every case is different, but I can say that if you are convicted of a DWI, I hope you have some money saved up," says Attorney Mickey Corry of Kings Mountain. On top of the court fines and lost

wages from doing time in jail, there are also the fees for your lawyer. In the state of North Carolina a public defender will charge you \$100 for a DWI if you lose your case. In Cleveland County, representation for a DWI charge can range from \$500 to \$3,000. Drunk driving affects more than just those who are convicted. It also affects the general public. A study conducted in 2004 by Allstate Insurance found that DWI costs taxpayers \$24 billion per year in law enforcement man-hours and property damage. Beyond the legal troubles, driving after drinking alcohol also presents dangerous safety consequences, not for just the driver, but for those who may be in their path as well. According to the Alcohol and Drug Council of North Carolina there were 364 deaths attributed to drunk driving in 2005. "Losing your license and paying a fine is the easy part, and you're lucky if you're still alive," said local resident David Stone. "I drove drunk, and now I can't walk without a cane." For anyone that has been through a DWI, they understand that the sentence handed down by the judge is only the beginning. Driving while intoxicated has lasting consequences such as loss of wages, loss of your freedom, and tragically sometimes, loss of a life. Next week: After Shock

Public's help needed in fight against drugs

ELIZABETH STEWART
 Herald Correspondent

John Q. Public is calling the police more often to report criminal activity and that's reflected in the number of drug arrests in Kings Mountain in 2005. Sgt. Lisa C. Proctor, who heads the Narcotics Vice Division, said police have a rapport with the public who in recent years were wary of calling police because they felt their names would be revealed. That's a no-no with police, who never give out names of informants. Statistical data for the period Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2005 notes that of 226 complaints filed with the Narcotics Division, a total of 165 were arrested. The break-down includes: 3 alcohol/tobacco complaints; 4 gambling/video poker complaints; 2 prostitution complaints; 14 estimated number of knock-n-talks; 10 estimated number of persons charged in federal court assisted by KMPD assisting other jurisdictions; 14 estimated alcohol related charges from ABC/gambling sting with A. L. E.; 15 individuals charged with ABC violations not counting the Sting operation; and 119 people charged with drug violations. "Community Watch programs in Kings Mountain are working," says Mayor Rick Murphrey. He said several new



"We've seen a complete turnaround because police have built a trust and a bond with the community."

Police Chief Melvin Proctor

Election filing opens Monday

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Filing for various state and local offices begins Monday at noon at the Cleveland County Board of Elections in Shelby. Filing ends at noon on February 28. Filing hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The only local filing that is not handled by the Cleveland County Board of Elections are the races for District Attorney and District Court judges. Candidates in those races must file with the State Board of Elections. D.A. Bill Young is not seeking re-election. Numerous local and at least one state office are drawing heavy attention. A number of well-known Cleveland County residents have already announced their intention to seek office. The primary election is Tuesday, May 2. If a second primary is necessary, it will be held on May 30. Democrats and Republicans who survive their primaries will oppose each other in the general election on November 7. While "off-year" elections do not normally draw big turnouts, Elections Board Director Debra Blanton believes

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Joni Smith's mission: Revitalize downtown

ELIZABETH STEWART
 Herald Correspondent

Kings Mountain lawyer Joni Smith is on a challenging mission - to revitalize downtown Kings Mountain. "My Dad Joe Smith loved Kings Mountain and he started working for Kings Mountain the day we moved here in 1968," said Smith. She said he set an example and was the epitome of a good citizen. She wants to see Kings Mountain flourish as a testament to her father's strong leadership. "I am excited," said Smith, who became active in Mountaineer Partnership Inc. three years ago and is presently president and chairman of the board of the non-profit organization. The group meets the second Wednesday of each month at 12:30 p.m. at First National Bank's conference room and invites the interested public to give input.

Mountaineer Partnership Inc. is a support group which offers assistance, not only to newcomers to Kings Mountain but those already established property owners who want ideas on revitalization. Currently the organization's goal is to adopt Main Street USA, a national organization which utilizes a four-point plan to achieve revitalization. Committees are being appointed to head organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring. Another goal is to steer property owners toward incentive programs and ways to get grants plus help with historic designation and work with the city of Kings Mountain in promoting downtown business. "We want to be a resource to local people who want to upgrade their facilities and put people in the right buildings with new ideas on how to make Kings Mountain a vital downtown," Smith says. See Joni, 5A



JONI SMITH

ELECTION SCHEDULE

- Filing period for primary - 12 noon Mon., Feb. 13 through 12 noon Tues., Feb. 28 at the Cleveland County Board of Elections.
- Filing period for the non-partisan Cleveland County Soil & Water District Commissioner offices - 12 noon Mon., June 12 through 12 noon Fri., July 7 at the Cleveland County Board of Elections.
- Candidates for District Attorney and District Court Judge must file with the North Carolina State Board of Elections.
- Primary election - Tues., May 2.
- Second primary, if necessary - Tues., May 30.
- Voter registration deadline - Fri., April 7.
- Voter registration deadline for second primary - Fri., April 7.
- General election - November 7.
- Voter registration deadline - October 13.