

LOCAL NEWS

KM Police are saying no to gangs

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Gangs in Kings Mountain? Not if the Kings Mountain Police Department has anything to say about it.

KMPD officers have been to a handful of clinics and workshops to learn more about this new threat that is trickling into communities everywhere. Although the gangs may be coming, KMPD wants them to know that they won't find a happy home here.

A committee of specialized officers has been established to eradicate the appeal of gangs in KM. Manning the committee is Det. Sgt. Lisa Proctor, Ofc. Chris Graham, Ofc. George Gentry, C.O.P. (Community Oriented Policing) K-9 Ofc. Allen Emory, C.O.P. Ofc. Todd McDougal, Ofc. Stacy Hudspeth, Ofc. Keith Davis, Capt. Derek Johnson and Capt. Jerry Tessner. But the arms of the committee will reach far beyond this round table of crime fighters. Volunteers from all walks of life will walk together toward a common destination - no gangs.

KMPD hopes that one day, the youth here will have better things to do than get in trouble. "We're working on building something that's going to take the desire to get involved in negative activity away," Proctor said. "Give them something to do in their spare time instead of getting out here, being bored to death and getting in trouble."

The city already has a few things to offer with ball fields and the YMCA outreach pro-

gram, but more is needed. What about the kids who don't play ball and like to skateboard? City ordinances prevent them from skating along the streets and sidewalks of Kings Mountain and the nearest skate park, which isn't free, is in Shelby. Proctor fears that eventually the kids will get tired of being run off and turn to other activities and the negative experiences they have had with the cops will form a prejudice in their minds.

"The kids we need to reach more than likely don't have the funds or the transportation," Proctor said. "In this project that we're looking at doing, we're going to try to figure out a way to get the community involved and help provide what is needed, like transportation, volunteers, and mentors. It's not going to be just total law enforcement. There's no way that we could pull this off alone. We're hoping the community will step up to the plate and back us, because we can't do this alone."

She agreed that this project falls outside of the typical realm of law enforcement's duty. "But we're wanting to take a more proactive approach and do something more for the community than just answering calls for service," she said.

Committee members have toured various facilities, looking at what other cities are doing to keep gang activity at a low. They went to Martha Rivers in Gaston County, that offers a track, park, sand bar and water activities. They have toured the new swim-



KMPD's new elite task force plans to take a proactive approach to keep gangs out of Kings Mountain. Left to right: Capt. Derek Johnson, Det. Sgt. Lisa Proctor, Ofc. George Gentry, Ofc. Todd McDougal, and K-9 Ofc. Allen Emory are a few of the elite.

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ming facility in Bessemer City. "That place was jam packed," Proctor said. "We saw hispanics, asians, whites and blacks, and everyone was getting along and having a good time."

Soon, the committee will visit the river walk and small park at the suspension bridge in downtown Greenville, SC, which used to be a high crime area until the park was added.

"Most communities don't want to accept that they have problems coming or have problems there," Proctor said. "We're willing to accept that it's coming if we don't get a grip on it. We're

trying to get a grip on it before it gets here in this town." And when they do trickle in, KMPD will know their names thanks to new resources available to them through GangNet, a gang-tracking tool.

The department recognizes that Kings Mountain is growing and Proctor says "with good growth comes negative growth." She added that the community has to be ready to give youth something other than the streets to turn to. The process will involve a lot of research and

brainstorming. The committee is open to suggestions.

Although life in a gang can appear appealing to some on the surface, the green grass becomes quick sand. The "family" becomes the devil. Chief Melvin Proctor spoke of one former gang member awaiting trial for murder. He killed his best friend, compliments of gang life. The gang he killed for can't save him from jail and neither can his best friend. He doesn't want this to be the fate of Kings Mountain youth.

KM approves livestock ordinance

ELIZABETH STEWART

Herald Correspondent

A zoning text amendment and ordinance approved 6-1 by Kings Mountain City Council Tuesday night makes it clear the kinds and types of livestock for any proposed new agricultural production of swine and poultry, limiting to 24 animals and requiring a conditional use permit for as many as 25 pigs or chickens.

Councilman Jerry Mullinax cast the dissenting vote.

Councilman Keith Miller said after the meeting that the prior ordinance did not specify kinds and types. Specifically, the text

amendment makes certain livestock uses conditional uses to be approved by city council. It would result in any proposed agricultural production of swine and only those agricultural production of poultry whether they are free ranging poultry or confined in poultry houses be limited to 24 for a permitted use by right and if 25 subject to a conditional use permit.

The Planning & Zoning Board unanimously favored the change. City Planner Steve Killian said the change would be beneficial both to the owners of non agricultural lands in Residential 20 as well as those wanting to have modest livestock capability on modest size

pieces of land.

"You think this issue will go away," said Norman Bumgardner, of 1335 York Road, who said he wasn't for or against the zoning change but said it needed some improvement.

"How does a city of 9,778 people in an area of 9.7 miles and a governing board of seven people have so much control over an ETJ of 22.1 miles with a population of 5,150 people and how does it plan enforcement?" Bumgardner added. "Your action tonight affects a lot of people."

After the meeting Bumgardner said he felt it only proper that "I defend what is mine for 35 years."



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