

## LOCAL

# Wells leaves Sunday for national convention

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Betsy Wells, the past chair of the Cleveland County Democratic Party, of Kings Mountain, is leaving at 6 a.m. Sunday morning to catch a flight for the national democratic convention in Colorado at the Pepsi Convention Center.

Earlier this year, she was voted to attend the convention as a district delegate. On Tuesday morning she reveled in the opportunity to represent her home and to be in the midst of history in the making. This will be her third year at the national convention.

In 2000 she was a member of the credentials convention, checking the credentials of those such as Bill Clinton. She said that North Carolina was seated so far back at that convention that when the balloons were released they never came close to getting one. But in 2004, she was elected as a state delegate in her campaign for John Edwards and was delighted by the fact that she was close enough to the stage "to see the sweat" beading on party officials.

This year, she ran for a spot on the district level and received 85% of the vote, among 10 counties. She thanks Cleveland County for this momentous opportunity. Although she began rooting for Edwards, a North Carolina man, whom she had become well acquainted with in his run for Senate, she switched her vote to Hillary Clinton after he dismissed himself from the race before her delegate election.

She said that she was called by the Barack Obama party several times on Tuesday to make sure that, even though she had supported Clinton, that she would support the "decided Democrat ticket-holder" Obama in the running for president.

Dressed in her red, white and blue attire, she wore both Clinton and Obama buttons on Tuesday. Although she admitted anything could happen at the convention, anything being the possibility that Clinton could refuse to give up her support of delegates to Obama in hopes that she would get enough super delegates to take the party, she said that she expects Clinton to officially secede and ask for those who supported her to turn their support to the new party leader. But she said that Clinton has asked them to remain as a group at the

convention. When asked whether or not she thinks Obama will choose Clinton as her running mate, she said that it would cement the party, but wasn't sure if it would happen.

"It's so exciting to be in a convention that's not cut and dry," Wells said.

She added that the most exciting moments about the conventions are the roll call of the states, the nomination speeches of the candidates and the vice presidents and, like the Kentucky Derby, seeing the different ensembles of red, white and blue that the delegates wear.

The main issues are the economy, health care and Iraq, she said, agreeing with Obama's stand that America needs a change.

Wells was the party chair for Cleveland County in 1998-2007. She said that she stepped down to pass the torch on to the younger generation of democrat leaders. But in her more free time today, she still feels the passion of the party that she felt years ago.

She grew up in Ashe County, 15 miles from Tennessee and 10 miles from Virginia state lines. Back then, there were little options for women in the professional sector. She said that she could either have been a stewardess, a nurse, a teacher or a secretary. Since she didn't care too much for flying or treating patients and didn't have the typing skills of a secretary, she chose to teach.

While attending Appalachian State University to obtain a degree in teaching English, she decided to come and see her brother play football for Gardner-Webb University. "I fell in love with Cleveland County," she said.

But that wasn't all she fell in love with. While she was a student teacher at Central School in Kings Mountain, she ran into her present husband Steve Wells at the Cleveland County Fair. He had ties with ASU himself, but their paths had never crossed until that day. He asked her out on a date and she said they went to see the movie "Midnight Cowboy" in Shelby. They fell in love.

Both ended up teaching at Central School and married, bringing Betsy to her home in Kings Mountain. She got into politics because of her profession. She said that the states of Ohio and North Carolina, unlike other



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neighboring states, set the pay rates of teachers via politics, so it was only natural for teachers, like herself, to become involved in politics – choosing to back the candidate that would determine your salary.

In 1994 or '95 she said that she was voted into office as the first vice chair of the democratic party. She officially retired from education, after teaching for nearly 33 years in KM schools as both an English and Drama teacher, in 2003.

## LIFESTYLES



Justina Carpenter, of Kings Mountain, recently competed at Starpower, a dance competition in Spartanburg, SC, with her dance team, La Petite Dance Studio. Afterwards, she went on to Starpower Nationals in Myrtle Beach, SC, in July. She came home from both competitions with four first place trophies, one second place trophy, four gold ribbons, three elite ribbons, two first place ribbons (from the national talent competition) and six gold medals. Carpenter has been dancing with La Petite Dance Studio for four years. Her dance instructor is Jennifer Wright.



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The Kings Mountain Herald