

## LOCAL

# Chris Johnson wins Ukama Award n Hickory

Kings Mountain native Chris Johnson was recently honored with the Ukama Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Community at the African American Cultural Center Summer Gala in the Hickory Museum of Art.

After surviving tough struggles in his life, Johnson channeled his hard experiences into hope, founding the "Young Men of Integrity" initiative at Exodus Homes in Hickory. Seven of his "Young Men" served as ushers for the gala, which celebrated the evolution of the African American Cultural Center from the dream of a building, to a reality as a comprehensive online resource for the Greater Hickory Metro Region.

The "Young Men of Integrity" is an at-risk youth mentoring program serving 25 young men from the ages of 10-19 who do not have fathers in their homes. Founded in 2006, the Exodus Homes' United Way program pairs adult mentors with youth who need healthy male role models to learn about decision making, entrepreneurship, living drug free, treating women with respect, getting an education, preventing gang involvement, and avoiding teen pregnancy. One of the primary activities of the program is keeping the young men busy in community service projects such as Habitat for Humanity, the

Christmas Bureau, Charity Chase, and neighborhood block parties with healthy youth-centered themes. They also participate in cultural or leadership development events such as the Western Piedmont Symphony, Promise Keepers, and the Man to Man Conference.

Johnson, an Exodus Homes graduate and substance abuse counselor with The Cognitive Connection, is a polished and respected community activist who grew up without a father in his home. He knows how to motivate young men. He helps them believe that life holds great potential for them if they will make good choices that will help them reach their goals. He says, "Inside every man there is a boy, and inside every boy there is a man. It's up to mentors like us to reach inside a boy and find out how we can pull out the man inside."

Six Young Men of Integrity have been designated Heroes of Hickory, African American leaders of tomorrow from Hickory High: John Smith, Michael Boyce, Jamil Johnson, Marlon Williamson, T.J. Middlebrooks and Troy Wright. Five are going to college this year: Smith - Gardner Webb, Wright - Livingston College, Middlebrooks - Glenville State, Wilson - Alice Lloyd College, Johnson - Lincoln Memorial University.

## SPORTS

# Mace home from hospital

Short cuts from the world of sports:

■ Kings Mountain High's Sideline Manager Donnie Mace is home from the hospital and is itching to get back on the football field.

It may be a few weeks before he can resume his normal duties, but don't be surprised if you see him at this week's Cleveland County

Jamboree. He got home late Friday afternoon and actually talked about going to Saturday's Gaston County Jamboree at Gastonia Forestview, but realized he was much too weak to make the trip.

Donnie still has some infection in his shoulder and Home Health nurses are visiting about three days a week.

"I've had a lot of good people calling me and I really appreciate it," Donnie says. "I appreciate all the prayers, too. They really work."

Donnie will be seeing several doctors over the next couple of weeks, and when the infection

is cleared up he will be facing shoulder surgery again.

■ While Cleveland County teams will be playing in their annual Jamboree Friday night at Crest, several other schools across North Carolina will be opening their regular season.

Right off the bat, in this area you'll have the opportunity to watch some games that should let a lot of teams know how powerful they will be this year.

One of the best ones will be at Clover, SC, where the defending South Carolina state champions take on powerful Belmont South Point, a team that has state championship aspirations this year. These two teams should be among the best in the area this year.

In Gastonia, Ashbrook faces a formidable foe in its opener, West Charlotte. The Green Wave and Lions both hope to go far in the 4A playoffs and they'll showcase some of the best talent in Gaston and Mecklenburg counties.

Just five miles from KM, Bessemer City hosts R-S Central in a game that should be very exciting. Although neither of these teams is very deep, both of them have outstanding talent. The juniors on the BC team won the Gaston County Middle School championship three years ago and R-S Central has the most talented team it's had

in years. The Hilltoppers beat East Lincoln in the Rutherford County Jamboree last week and East Lincoln has most of the players back from last year's team that went to the Western 2A finals last year.

### From the colleges:

■ Lineman Desmond Thompson and linebacker Lamar Womic of Kings Mountain will be playing for Carolina Prep of Gastonia this season.

■ Marshia Meeks, a two-time Southwestern 3A Conference Player of the Year, begins her freshman year of volleyball at Catawba College when the Indians host their Catawba Invitational August 29-30. Meeks is a 5-8 hitter.

■ Kristin Batchler, a teammate of Meeks at KMHS, begins her freshman season at Limestone College in Gaffney, SC August 29-30 in the Limestone Labor Day Tournament. Kristin is a 5-9 side hitter and was a three-time All-SWC player at KM.

■ Former KMHS and Crest football players Jermaine Strong and Chris Williamson will be playing for Northwest Arkansas this fall. Both played on state championship teams at Crest and Strong was a starting defensive back at UNC last season.



Gary Stewart  
Sports Editor

# Local artists to perform with 'Elvis' in Grover Friday

Debra Jones, of Grover, and Chris Jackson, of Kings Mountain, will perform Country hits from their new CDs at a Southern Fever Productions concert 8 p.m.-until Friday, August 22, 2008 at the Grover Rescue Squad.

The show will be starring Casey James of the Southern Fever Band, who will be performing two big show tributes to the King of Rock-n-roll "Elvis." Tickets will be sold at the door for \$7 each or \$10 for couples. Tickets will be sold on a first come, first serve basis. Refreshments and food will be provided by the Grover Rescue Squad.

Jones' first two CDs, "Pure Country Vol. 1" and "Pure Country Vol. 2," featuring covers from artists such as Tammy Wynette and Patsy Cline, will be available at the show. Jackson's CD "Kicking Classic

Country" will also be available. James plans to release five of his CDs at the concert, "CJ's Southern Fever Live in Concert," "CJ's Tribute to Elvis Vol. 1," "CJ's Tribute to Elvis Vol. 2," "CJ's Tribute to Elvis Vol. 3" and "Heartfelt Collection of Gospel Music by Casey James."

James, who lives in Gastonia, said that he plans to start the show with about an hour-long tribute to the King. Jones will then perform about four songs from her new albums, followed by about four songs from Jackson. James will then perform another set of tribute classics, followed by about three songs each from Jones and Jackson.

Donations from Jones' and Jackson's CDs will go towards financing their careers in the independent entertaining market.

During Friday night's tribute, James said that he will be giving out scarves, just like the "King." People should come to the stage area to get their scarves.

"We intend on coming to Grover and putting on a good show and hope to come back to Grover soon," James said.

Jones started singing karaoke at the Country Café and BBQ in Grover, while she worked there, before it closed recently. Jackson

is relatively new to the music industry, having just recorded his first CD under the Southern Fever label with James.

James records and produces albums in his home in Gastonia

with the use of karaoke and professional sound equipment. For those interested in recording albums, contact James at [cjsouthernfever@carolina.rr.com](mailto:cjsouthernfever@carolina.rr.com) or call 704-691-1790.

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