

# Firefighters get special training with federal, state agents, three houses demolished

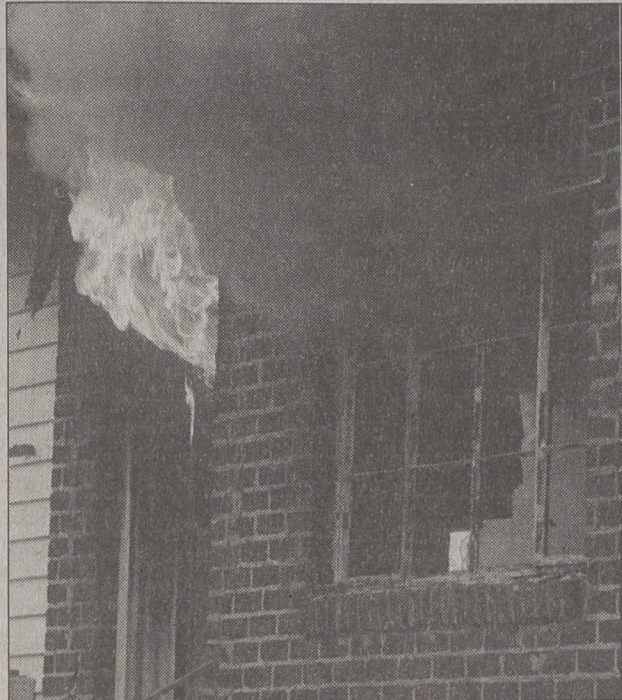
By EMILY WEAVER  
Editor

Three houses up for demolition in the city last week paved the way for firefighters to participate in a special course on fire studies with federal and state agents.

Arson investigators and technicians with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, State Bureau of Investigation and Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms forces used special equipment to give firefighters a better understanding of the true "dragon" they are often up against. In addition to other items discussed during the three-day course, firefighters from multiple jurisdictions learned about arson fire modeling, fire scene reconstruction and data analysis.

Assistant Fire Chief Jamie Black said that they really enjoyed the opportunity to "cross train with numerous departments."

The course, which is rarely available in the region, was sponsored by Cleveland Community College and the Kings Mountain Fire Department,



which hosted the agents.

Inside the first practice burn location at 504 N. Watterson Street, SBI and ATF agents began to set up their equipment on Tuesday afternoon. A thermocouple tree hung from the ceiling of a room next to the one where the fire would be set. The "tree" is a term used to describe a group of thermocouple wires, which are used to measure the heat and smoke at different levels of the room.

Each thermocouple (sensor on the wire) has a number that corresponds to the data it collects and sends to a DAQ (Data Acquisition) device which was stationed outside of the house. The DAQ then records and calculates the data, allowing investigators to see the levels of heat in comparison to the progression of the fire.

Three small cameras were set up in various locations inside the burn-site. The cameras, which were later destroyed in

the fire, sent real-time images back to a monitor that was stationed next to the DAQ book outside. The monitors, showing a four-split screen, received and recorded the images and allowed firefighters and agents outside to see the fire progress to the point of no return - flashover.

One of the SBI agents said that although she has heard some firefighters say that they have been in a flashover, to survive such a situation is highly unlikely. A flashover occurs when the temperature inside a room on fire becomes so hot that everything ignites at once, sparking unrestrained fire growth and complete destruction. The goal on Tuesday was to get the room to flash over.

An old firefighter suit donated by the KMFD sat stoically in a chair inside the room to be burned. "We want them to see how much their equipment will withstand," said one of the SBI agents. "These suits aren't fire-resistant."

KMFD will finish de-

molishing the house in another practice burn on a later date. The practice burn gave firefighters a chance to hone their skills. Two other houses, one on Sims Street, which was owned and up for demolition upon request by Kings Mountain Hospital, and the other on W. Mountain Street, which was owned and up for demolition upon request by First Baptist Church, offered two more opportunities for lessons and

practice.

Black said that they would like to thank the Bethlehem and No. Three volunteer fire departments for their help with suppression in the practice burns and the neighbors "for putting up with the smoke and smells" that resulted from the fires.

The course ended on Thursday with the final demolition on W. Mountain Street.

## Battling change

In a struggling school economy

By EMILY WEAVER  
Editor

Part II of a series

**Ed's note:** In last week's Herald, the decision of five-year-old autistic child Trevor Walker's transportation to and from school was made by an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) team, not Cleveland County Schools. IEP teams generally consist of a school administrator, the child's teacher, support staff and the child's parent or legal guardian. The team is supposed to work together to come up with an IEP that will best suit the child's needs. Trevor's aunt Robin Crisp, however, felt that some decisions, like his transportation, were made before she came to the meeting.

It was also noted in last week's story that the "pot of money" used to fund children with special needs in the school system was allegedly "running dry." After further inspection of this year's budget that doesn't seem to be the case. The instructional department "taking a big hit" as quoted by Assistant Supt. Dr. Martha Hill, who is over curriculum and instruction, isn't shown in the budget either...

Most, if not all, seem to be wavering in the winds of the current economy. Cleveland County Schools has felt the chill of this breeze. And young students with special needs like Trevor Walker seem to be blown away by some of the changes swirling around them.

Trevor is autistic. Change is very hard for him and, being autistic, expressing what he needs to say can be even harder. After losing his parents in a fatal car wreck a couple of years ago, he looks to his aunt Robin Crisp to help him speak the words he has not been able to say - "help."

Trevor is trying to adjust to a new class, new teachers and a new environment this year. These were changes that would have had to have been made any way, since he turned five and aged out of the special SKATES pre-K program at Bethware. The program he was in, which was the same one Crisp's 13-year-old autistic son also attended, has since moved and changed. It is no longer called "SKATES," an outdated acronym whose meaning even Paula Sutherland, CCS' director of exceptional children, could not remember.

"It was simply a preschool program, which we have many of all over our system," she said, adding that the program serves Head Start, Smart Start, More-at-Four, EC (exceptional children), and Title I kids from age three up until kindergarten.

"SKATES was a specific program for children with developmental delays," Crisp said. But when the class moved to Jefferson Elementary, it began to serve a conglomerate of pre-K students.

"One of the really wonderful things in Cleveland County, and we sort of lead the pack in doing this, (is) we took all of the preschool entities the More-at-Four, the Smart Start, the Head Start, the Title I (and) we have blended all of those under one umbrella. Cindy Borders is the director of the Office of School Readiness, which houses all of these

See BATTLE, Page 11

## Belts buckle down for luminary service

by ELIZABETH STEWART  
staff writer

The 12th annual Christmas Eve luminary service in Kings Mountain's Mountain Rest Cemetery is shaping up to be the most impressive ever.

Organizers Jim and Brenda Belt, who started the project in 1997 by placing luminaries on 40 graves of friends and relatives, expect over 5,000 luminaries to be lit this year.

The Belts need 60 volunteers to help them begin lighting the candles at 2 p.m. next Wednesday, Christmas Eve. Two Scout troops from Crouse and Gastonia and Tonya Jack-

son will start filling the milk jugs this week with sand and lining the entrance with jugs and placing one on each grave. The public is invited to drive or walk through the cemetery beginning at 6 p.m. entering the Main gate on Dilling Street and exiting the cemetery on Deal Street. The service will go on rain or shine from 6 p.m. until midnight.

There is no admission charge, however donations are welcome to contribute to the cost of candles for next year.

"We try to include something special each

year and this year a message will be spelled out with candles and music will be played from the magnificent bell tower, the Carillon, said Belt. He said some added costs of stainless steel have escalated the tower costs and the project is \$15,000 over budget. Kings Mountain area people have purchased brick pavers in memory or honor of loved ones and so far 300 names have been placed on the markers, with 140 remaining to be placed, he said. Still to be placed on top of the tower is a glittering crown.

The luminary show of

candles this Christmas Eve will be nearly triple what it was last year.

"We are all giving back to the community by supporting this project which has exceeded all our expectations," said Belt, who said the original idea started at the death of his mother, Christine Belt, when Jim's wife wanted to place a luminary on her grave and they added 39 more luminaries to honor friends and loved ones.

Talk about the gift that keeps on giving. That's how the Belts feel about the bell tower realized through the generosity of many people.

## Woodbridge to hold annual lawnmower parade

The Woodbridge community's 15th annual Lawnmower Christmas Parade will be held on Sunday, December 21, 2008 at 2 p.m.

The parade is held in memory of Charlie Gane, one of the procession's founders and supporters who passed away a couple of years ago with multiple sclerosis. When the idea of a lawnmower parade was mentioned during one summer over 15 years ago, Gane began to look forward to this new way of celebrating Christmas. He reminded parade organizer Doug Sharp of their idea about a week

before December 25, 1993 and after some last minute scrounging and rallying, Woodbridge's Lawnmower Parade was brought to life.

But decked-out grasscutters are not the only sights to be seen in this procession. All types of decorated lawnmowers, tractors, pick-up trucks, cars, bikes, golf carts, a fire truck or two and people on foot join in the fun. Sharp said that the people are encouraged to fall in line and join the procession, which will make a few stops along the way to sing Christmas carols for some of the commu-

nity's shut-ins.

Homemade cookies and hot cider will be served to carolers and paraders. And, just like in years passed, Santa will make a special appearance offering his lap for last minute requests.

The procession will

start lining up about 1:30 p.m. and will step off on Dunes Drive in North Woodbridge, off of Stony Point Road near Moss Lake. The parade will continue about a mile.

There is no cost or registration required to enter the parade.

### Worried About What to Get Her For Christmas?

Surprise her by updating her diamond with a new Diamond mounting.

And don't worry, with over 800 in stock, we'll help you pick the perfect one. Prices ranging from \$250 to \$7,500.

We'll also have your diamond professionally set, on site, by our goldsmith with 30+ years of experience.

Hurry in now for best selection. Layaway available.

"Trusted for 117 Years"

**DELLINGER'S**  
JEWEL SHOP, INC.

112 WEST MOUNTAIN STREET  
KINGS MOUNTAIN, NC 28086  
(704) 739-8031  
MON-SAT 9A-5:30P



### Summit Place of Kings Mountain's Parade of Trees 2008 December 8<sup>th</sup> - January 2<sup>nd</sup>

Everyone is cordially invited to visit our home and join us in our celebration of Christmas. This year we have 15 trees throughout our community. Be sure to vote for your favorite tree! There are eight categories this year. Visit us 7 days a week from 8am-7:30pm.

Voting ends on December 28th, but trees will remain on display through January 2nd.

Winners will be announced in the New Year's Day edition of the Shelby Star and in the January 7th edition of the Kings Mountain Herald.

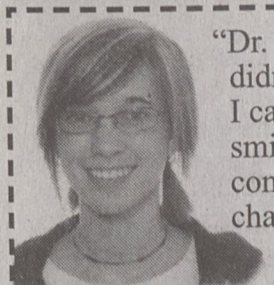
This is an annual event for us. Come see what all of the fuss is about!

WE ARE EASY TO FIND!

1001 Phifer Road, Kings Mountain, NC  
704-739-6772

A Bell Senior Living Community  
Visit us on our new website!

www.summitplaceofkingsmountain.com



"Dr. Hannon, before braces I didn't laugh much, but now, I can't stop laughing and smiling! Thanks for this confidence booster. It has changed my world!"

~Cynthia, Grade 9

### Hannon Orthodontics

Gaston County's Premier Invisalign Provider

Ask about Invisalign® for Teens  
The Clear Alternative to Braces

704.865.8521

Gastonia & Shelby Offices

Give someone you love a Smile of Confidence!

Holiday Gift Certificates

Call TODAY for a FREE Orthodontic Exam (\$265 Value) Expires 12-19-08

No-Money-Down for Invisalign® Teen • 24-Month Interest Free Affordable Payments • Insurance Accepted