

TRIBUTE
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he said. "He took what we wanted to do by the horns and went with it. He was a big influence on the other players and that made our job a lot easier."

Lloyd said there's no doubt that the leadership shown by Thompson in the new coaching staff's first year on the job helped this year's team achieve its goal of winning the conference championship.

"When we got here he was one that totally bought into what we were doing," Lloyd said. "He was totally on board and laid the ground work for what we accomplished this season. He was a total team player and just really helped us get going because of his good attitude."

Thompson was not only a good football player, but a good person, the coaches said.

"Desman was always a happy guy," Cruise said. "The first time I met him he was smiling and the last time I saw him before this tragedy he was smiling. He was a very happy young man and he wanted everyone around him to be happy. Not just football players, but all the kids just flocked around him and he used that to the good. He was a good leader, always trying to make everybody else happy."

Jiris Toney, a three-year starter at nose guard who made All-Conference this past season and was a finalist for the Charlotte Touchdown Club Defensive Player of the Year Award, said Thompson was a big part of his progress as an athlete.

"He played center, so the majority of the time we lined up against each other in practice," Toney said. "He made me a better football player. He would knock some heads and he got off the ball so fast for someone his size. He was a good guy. He talked a lot of junk but he made me try harder. He was a leader."

To assistant coach Amos Myles, Thompson was not only a good athlete but a close friend.

"He was my next door neighbor," he said. "He was a real fine young man and I consider him a part of my family. He was really a lovable, likeable guy. He was very special to me."

Myles said Thompson was the first student he bonded with when he came to KMHS as a teacher and coach.

"He would wash my car for me, but he'd charge me for it," Myles laughed. "He would come over and play with my kids. My four-year-old son Andrew had grown attached to him. Desman would play with him and when he washed my car Andrew would play in the water. Desman was a very special person."

Thompson's influence on other students reached far beyond the football field. He was a leader in the classroom as well.

"Desman was a real good student," said Principal Ronny Funderburke. "We talk a lot about test scores at Kings Mountain High School and he helped us a lot with good test scores. He was very efficient on exams. He was a good student and a good role model for younger kids."

"One reason minorities do so well here is that we have some leaders like Desman who have shown that it is cool to be successful in the classroom," Funderburke said. "Other kids looked up to him. They would say 'well, there's big Desman. He can do it in the classroom and on the football field, so we can too.'"

At the time of his death, Thompson was making plans to further his football career. Coach Myles said he had been working hard on running and lifting weights to enter Erie Community College in New York in the fall. He had trimmed down to 330 pounds. Thompson planned to spend his 19th birthday Monday helping Myles' KMHS track team with its opening practice session.

"He was a good athlete," Coach Lloyd said. "He was a good person and had a really good personality. He had a good heart and was real pleasant. He was a hard-working person... a good guy."

Thompson's funeral will be Friday at 2 p.m. at People's Baptist Church. It won't be an easy time for his family, friends and teammates.

"Adjusting to losing someone so young is never easy," said Coach Cruise, "but we can take comfort that Desman is in a better place than we are. That's the silver lining behind this cloud of tragedy."

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photo by EMILY WEAVER
Mayor Rick Murphrey, right, talks to the Boy Scouts about city government during Friday's annual Boy Scout Day with the city. Scouts, left to right, are Noah Bolin, Edward Blackburn, Dalton Haney, Corbin Berryman, Paul Pildado, Kirby Hullender, James Davis, and Keegan Sylvester.

SHADOWS
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minds of the future. Eight boy scouts from troops 39, 92, 93, and 95 assembled in the city's great hall at 8:30 a.m. to draw their target for the day from a large envelope.

Paul Pallado drew the Kings Mountain Fire Department. Kirby Hullender and Edward Blackburn got the police department. James Davis picked the codes department. Noah Bolin got public works, Dalton Naney - electric, and Corbin Berryman - gas. Keegan Sylvester was excited about being appointed the mayor's "shadow."

You're going to be mayor for the day, Mayor Rick Murphrey told Sylvester, who was delighted with the news, but seemed a little taken back by the Herald "paparazzi" snapping photos nearby - all apart of the job.

Before the scouts joined their leaders, Murphrey talked with them about the various operations of city government. He shared with them that he, too, was a scout in his youth.

Don Crawford, who has been with the Boy Scouts of America for 69 of the association's 99 years, said that the program has produced many leaders. Friday was just an example of some of the opportunities provided for a scout to learn and grow.

Police Capt. Derek Johnson stressed the importance of knowledge and making the right choices as Blackburn and Hullender followed him through headquarters at 9 a.m.

"There's a lot of bad things that goes and it's our job to catch them (the criminals)," he told his shadows. "They have a choice in what they do. We all have a choice in life and if you make the wrong choice, eventually, you'll have to pay."

He showed them the telecommunications office - the city's "first line of defense." When an emergency phone call comes into the station, the telecommunication officers have to get as much information as they

can to help the officers who respond to the scene. The information they gather not only gives the officer an idea of what to expect, but can save lives.

A telecommunication officer also has the opportunity to help diffuse a potential nightmare in their emergency conversations. They are indeed, officers with many hats.

Capt. Johnson showed the scouts the conference room, lined on one wall with shelves filled with law books, reference materials and high school annuals. A glass case stood in one corner of the room that holds some of the department's relics, like old radios about five times the size of today's equipment. "We used to call them 'boat anchors,'" he said, due to their size. He added that radios of the future will probably be even smaller.

As technology advances the size of equipment is not the only thing that changes. Capt. Johnson showed the scouts some of the department's wireless technology they can use for surveillance. He walked the scouts through the department's various offices, describing some of the processes officers have to follow to give justice an opportunity to be served.

Det. Todd McDougal, who was also once a scout, told the boys about "Police Explorers" - a co-ed branch of the boy scouts for those aged 14-21 who are interested in law enforcement.

While talking about criminals and the dangers in society, Johnson shared some great advice with Blackburn and Hullender. "Always be a leader. Don't be a follower," he said. If someone asks you to do something that you know is wrong "be a man, stand up and go the opposite direction."

As the scouts gathered back at the senior center for lunch, Blackburn said that they also got to be fingerprinted and to ride in one of the department's new fully-equipped Dodge Chargers. He said that they saw a lot of neat stuff in the KMPD evidence room, which is

full of the spoils of criminals foiled. Hullender and Blackburn were very excited about the morning's adventures with the police and said that they now have a greater understanding of these public servants.

Pallado also had a lot of fun with the fire department. He said that he toured the station, rode in a fire truck and learned all sorts of things about what it means to be a firefighter. He's considering being a fireman one day.

Davis learned about the city's various building codes as Director Holly Black showed him some of the books upstairs in her City Hall office.

Berryman toured the gas department, learned how to put pipes together, how to climb poles, how to find gas leaks with modern equipment, how to use a metal detector to find wires and where the gas lines run underneath the city's soil. He said that he had a very good time as he proudly donned a yellow hard hat given to him by his morning mentors.

Naney, who shadowed the electric department, said that they looked at electrical wires and he got to see which energy sources were Duke and which were Kings Mountain. He said that he was also shown how to climb poles, although he didn't climb any himself. "I had a good time," he said, adding that they have complicated jobs.

Bolin, who has participated in Scout Day for the second year in a row, got an inside look at public works. He said that they toured the facility and he saw the different sectors at work.

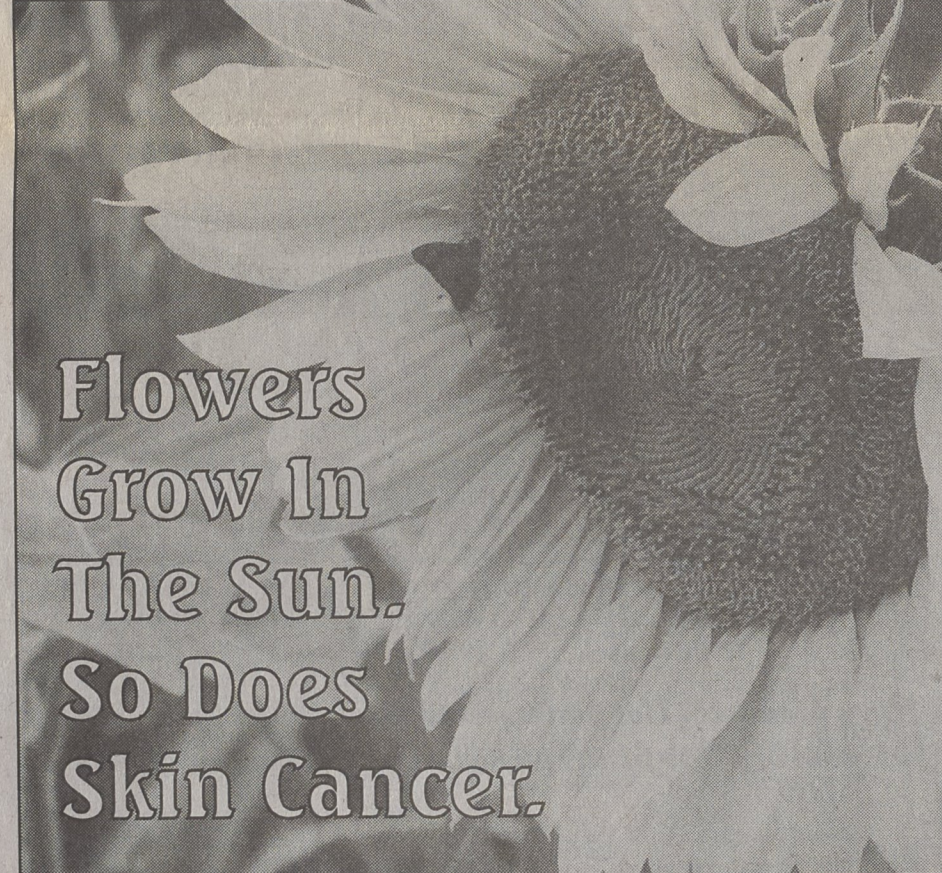
And what of Junior Mayor Keegan Sylvester? "We had fun today," he grinned. This honorable "shadow" went to the YMCA, the walking track, Patriot's Park, the fire department, the industrial plant, and Mountain Rest Cemetery, where he said he noticed many old graves and pondered the stories behind some of the headstones. There were a couple of graves of infants that died just days apart, he said.

Sylvester also learned a little about the jobs of City Manager Marilyn Sellers and City Clerk Ann Sessom. During his brief rule, he said that he did not raise taxes - to the voiced relief

BUSINESS
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and door prizes," says Brutko who said the showcase gives the public an opportunity to preview local business in the community and Greater Kings Mountain area.

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