

KMLT kicks off drive for new seats in Joy

By ELIZABETH STEWART
Staff writer

Kings Mountain Little Theatre is bringing "comfort to the Joy" in a big fund drive kicking off this week to replace the existing 60-year-old Joy Theatre seats with 266 plush seats, the first phase of a major renovation project.

Alliance Bank & Trust got the campaign rolling this week as the first downtown business to contribute to the drive. Executive Vice-President Dan Ayscue made the presentation to KMLT President Jim Champion and Treasurer Andy Neisler.

"Alliance has been a community bank in downtown Kings Mountain for two years and we are supporting the Little Theatre because we feel it is an example of revitalization downtown," said Ayscue. He said the theatre will draw more people to the downtown area and he encourages other businesses to support the project.

Champion sees the Joy as "a downtown treasure." He said the new seats and other planned renovations will ensure that the Joy will continue to grow and attract more visitors and attractions

in the years to come. "On behalf of our officers and directors we appreciate the support of Alliance Bank and welcome them as our first downtown corporate sponsor in this project we hope will jumpstart more activity in coming attractions," said Champion.

A commemorative plaque will be attached to the arm of each chair purchased at \$350. The chairs are described as being "more upright and comfortable" of plush foam with pleasing fabric cover, wooden backs and wooden armrest, same sized seats but with narrowing of the wide aisles means more rows of seats in the main auditorium. Champion said that a master design plan for the theatre is in the works including not only refurbishing of the inside, but the facade of the building as well.

Currently Joy Performance Center offers four plays per season along with a summer drama camp for children, provides a venue for art performances, and rents the building to pay for utilities and other expenses of running the shows. Outside season events have included piano recitals, two weddings and receptions, class re-

unions, birthday parties and school groups. The Reel Film Festival is a popular four day event in July and—because of rain—several city-wide celebrations have been held inside the theatre, Veteran's Day and Martin Luther King Day, and others. Free movies, popcorn and drinks are offered fourth Saturdays at 10 a.m. by KMLT and Central United Methodist Church. Champion said the theatre is equipped with projectors and screen for seminars and civic groups are welcome for meetings and programs.

Two performances recently by comedian James Gregory drew sell-out crowds of over 500 people. In January 2011 Gregory returns to the Joy and The Woods Tea Company, also a crowd pleaser, returns to the Joy in March 2011. One of the long-range goals of KMLT is to present a historical drama about Kings Mountain at the Joy.

The late Charlie and David Cash opened the Joy in 1949, a state-of-the-art movie theatre on Railroad Avenue which they operated until the late 1980s.

In 2001 the Kings Mountain Little Theatre acquired the property from The



LIB STEWART photo
Andy Neisler, KMLT Treasurer, Dan Ayscue, Alliance Bank & Trust Executive Officer, KMLT President Jim Champion, and Ronnie Franks, Alliance VP and Marketing Director, left to right are pictured presenting a check from Alliance, the first downtown business to purchase a seat in KMLT's Joy Theatre refurbishing project.

Gospel Assembly Church and conducted a \$300,000 fund drive culminating in the present day Joy Performance Center. KMLT began as a reader theatre in the 1940s.

Champion joined KMLT in 1971, worked behind the scenes for three years and got his first role on stage as the sheriff in "Bus Stop". A "Jim of all trades" in the theatre, he has served as president a number of times,

directed numerous plays, and starred in a number of roles, including his favorite as Elwood P. Dowd in "Harvey."

"Our members were vagabonds for a while, rehearsing and performing on many stages in the community," said Champion who encourages more volunteers, more members and more people to try out for the shows. He said he joins the

membership in the joy they have in finding a home at the Joy, the first real home of KMLT he envisions as a community showplace.

Contributions may be mailed to KMLT, PO Box 1022, Kings Mountain, NC 28086. Record specific dedication wording, using 30 spaces (characters) for each of three lines for each seat donated.

Library needs volunteers to help 'Make a Splash' this summer

Attention all 8th-12th graders: Mauney Memorial Library needs your help.

The library is seeking young volunteers to help them "Make a Splash" with this year's summer reading program. The program is designed to encourage children to continue reading during summer break so that valuable reading skills won't be lost.

Mauney Memorial hopes to offer a variety of activities for children this year. Programs for youth are scheduled on weekdays in the morning hours.

This year's summer reading program is titled "Make a Splash - READ!"

If you are interested in helping the library, and will be a rising eighth-12th grader this summer, complete an application and return to the library no later than April 30th.

Volunteer applications are available at Kings Mountain Middle School, Kings Mountain High School and the Mauney Memorial Library. All applicants will be interviewed before being scheduled to volunteer. For more information, call 704-739-2371 ext. 2.

Rameys inducted into Bluegrass Hall of Fame

By ELIZABETH STEWART
Staff writer

Like father like son! That's what avid bluegrass fans say about James Ramey, Sr., 83, and his son, Keith Ramey.

The Kings Mountain musicians were recently inducted in the Carolinas Country Bluegrass and Gospel Hall of Fame. Keith Ramey also received the 2009 Legends award and the band he co-founded, Timberidge, received 2009 Band of the Year.

"I started picking and singing in the 1940s," said James Ramey, who organized his own band, Melody Drifters-Country and Mountain Drifters-Bluegrass. Now, he operates the sound system for Timberidge and leaves the mandolin picking to his son and other musicians in the five-member group.

Keith and Roger Owens organized Timberidge in 1994. Keith also builds mandolins and dobros, similar to a steel guitar. His daughter, Kayla, 15, accompanies the band to various fundraising, July 4th and other events they play and is in charge of CD sales. Their next concert is April 17 at the Jerry Johnson Bluegrass Festival at Cross Country Campground.

Keith Ramsey formerly worked at Parker Hydraulics before suffering a bout with cancer. But music is his love and his



TIMBERIDGE BAND - Pictured are members of the Timberidge Band. From left, Keith Ramey, Robert Wells, Roger Owens, Jerome Carson and Don Armstrong.

life, he said.

"Keith is the only one of my five children who got hooked on bluegrass and country," said James. Other members of the family are James Jr., Dennis, Brenda Childers and Teresa Camp; eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. James Ramey's wife, Evelyn Thrift Ramey, died in 1994. The Timberidge players are Keith Ramey, on mandolin; Robert Wells, bass; Roger Owens, dobro; Jerome Carson, banjo; and Don Armstrong, guitar.

"In 1947 my band was the first bluegrass band on the air at WLTC, Gastonia, and we also played WGNC in Gastonia and WOHS in Shelby," said the senior Ramey. His

band could be heard every Saturday on WGNC, he said, and he also played on three radio stations in Rock Hill, SC. He recalled that well-known musician Jimmy Wayne's grandfather, Colford Stewart, played in his band at one time during the early years. James Ramey is a retired employee of Burlington Industries.

"We love to play and sing and have been in demand at several special events in Kings Mountain and the surrounding areas," said Keith.

With arthritis in his fingers, James Ramey put up his instruments but he remembers the good ole days of picking and singing and he's a valuable member of the five-piece band since he handles the



photo by LIB STEWART
James Ramey, Sr. and his son, Keith, like bluegrass music and are a popular picking duo recently inducted in the Carolinas Country Bluegrass Gospel Hall of Fame.

sound. "Have bus, will travel," that's us," he says with a grin.

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GROVER

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council members mentioned they would like to see and will get the information to Corry to help draft the new ordinance.

By choice

Councilman J.D. Ledford, who heads the town's Beautification Committee, passed around a mock-up design he created that showed how the Main Street business sector might look with a few facade improvements.

Ledford, a graphic designer, showed the council what a little color or a few layers of paint might do to revive downtown's appearance.

"That makes a big difference," Bennett said, looking at the design.

He asked the council if they would consider making some facade improvements with some of the money budgeted for the beautification committee.

Corry advised members that they also might consider starting a facade grant program, through which funds might be offered to help offset the costs to downtown property owners interested in reviving storefront appearance.

Ledford also announced that, last week, he had attended

a meeting of the NC Small Main Street Program, required of those who plan to apply. The town applied last year and Ledford said that he plans to apply this year for the program that will provide guidance in reviving downtown.

The state's Small Main Street Program, focuses on municipalities with populations of 7,500 or fewer. Unlike the larger-city Main Street Program that Kings Mountain is enrolled in, this one will not provide financial support, but can provide guidance (for up to two years) on how to grow and revive downtowns.

Ledford said that representatives from 15-16 different towns attended the meeting.

"It's going to be a very competitive process," he said. "They're only taking two for this year."

But Ledford added that if they could show more community support, it may help.

In other action, the council voted to amend the town's ordinance to include the license fees and taxes for the sale of malt beverage, unfortified and fortified wine, as mandated by state law. The sale and consumption of beer and wine in the town were approved by majority votes in last November's general election.

The council also talked about selling a plot of land, the old Gene Putnam Lane well site, the town owns but currently does not use.