



All-Stars get ready for state championship

SPORTS 1B

City approves budget **3A**

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ANNIVERSARIES

Big E looks back on first year

From death of friend and business manager to struggles in slow economy to taking top honors in cookoff - what a year

By **ELIZABETH STEWART**
Staff writer

"A heck of a year" is how Eric Pardo, 41, describes his first year as proprietor and "Eric of all trades" at Big E's Barbeque at 717 York.



"I thought about quitting a couple times when the going got so rough but Kings Mountain is my home and I'm not going anywhere," he said this week.

ERIC "Big E" PARDO

Eric struggled to run the new business after the sudden death of his partner four months after Big E's opened last year, in the midst of other challenges for a restaurant in a slow economy. Last weekend, this father of five, celebrated Big E's first anniversary with a special 2-1/2 day treat for Dads on Fathers Day - symbolizing a sort of triumph over tribulations. Barbecue sandwiches were advertised for 99 cents apiece and before the weekend was over, on Sunday, a total of 2,000 sandwiches were sold. For the first time since opening Eric got to go home early Saturday.

"We sold out of ribs and everything Saturday and closed at 8:30 p.m.," he said.

To say the restaurant has kept him busy this past year would be an understatement. But he enjoys his work.

Pardo's transition from a backyard barbecue man began when the late Mark

See **BIG E**, page 3A

Firestone celebrates 75 years

By **ELIZABETH STEWART**
Staff writer

Anniversary celebrations usually mean presents. But this time the gifts came from the host, Firestone Fibers and Textiles Co., LLC.

The company donated more than \$44,000 to 14 charitable organizations Friday as company and community leaders celebrated its diamond anniversary in Gaston County with a tree planting, plant tour, and picnic at the Kings Mountain plant.

"This is a great day for our company," said Tim Dunn, President, FSFT. "From achieving one million safe hours worked to donating tens of thousands of dollars to charitable organizations through the Bridgestone Americas Trust Fund, I am proud of all that our teammates have ac-

See **FIRESTONE**, page 4A

How does your garden grow?



EMILY WEAVER/HERALD

DeLoris Heppard spends a lot of time in her "secret garden". She has transformed the plot of land behind her house into an enchanting world of beautiful and fragrant flowers. Read story Page 5A.

A bit of the action

Young actors light up Joy stage at KMLT summer camp

By **EMILY WEAVER**
Editor

Kings Mountain Little Theatre's Summer Drama Camp kicked off last week inside of the Joy Performing Arts Center. The group of nearly 40 participants enjoyed a week's worth of games, polishing theatrical techniques and rehearsing for a big show they put on Friday evening in front of nearly 200 family members and friends.

The show, written each year by KMLT's own Wendy Walega, who leads the camp with young adult counselors, was full of thigh-slapping humor and playful interpretations of modern events with a fairy tale twist.

"The Tale of the Tacky (Fairytale TV) Telethon", incorporated many scenes from common shows, like the Bachelorette Dating Game Show - a blend of the Bachelorette and the Dating Game Show. The Bachelorette Dating Game Show featured Jeannie (from "I Dream of Jeannie"), Wonder Woman and Pippy Longstocking, who all vied for a date with the night's most eligible bachelor - the Frog Prince. Rapunzel hosted.

Snow White faced off against the Wicked Stepmother in a court show during the telethon, which was hosted by Mother Goose. Piggy Lee, like the Jazz singer Peggy Lee, also had an appearance along with the 6 Angry Pigs, a play on "Twelve Angry Men". Puss-N-Boots had his own cooking show and commercials during the telethon included an appearance from Beary King Live.

And the show wouldn't have been complete without a "whiff" of Stinky Balogna Man, who has appeared in past drama camp presentations.

Dan Walega, who plays the "Stinky Balogna Man", has been helping out with the drama camp since his mother, camp director Wendy Walega, started it about seven years ago.

Dan comes from a theatre-loving family. His mother not only runs the KMLT summer camp but has also directed and starred in several local plays, along with his father Jeff Walega.

The camp is "always fun", Dan said, but he laughs that it can be a challenge each year "trying to match the energy level of every kid".

"It teaches you a lot about becoming an adult," he said, including memorization, people skills and confidence.

See **DRAMA**, page 3A



Dan Walega, right, and Anna Rednour "make a scene" during rehearsal with the KMLT Drama Camp. More photos - 4A

The House always gets a cut

Senate okays ban, fate of sweepstakes up to House

By **ELIZABETH STEWART**
Staff writer

The Senate said "no". Now it's up to the House to decide.

Monday night the Senate resoundingly rejected the argument that sweepstakes parlors could be a cash generator for the state, voting by 47-1 to ban the industry.

Senator Debbie Clary (R-Cleveland County) said from her office in Raleigh, Tuesday that she voted for the ban "in keeping with the spirit of the video poker law passed in 2006."

The senator said she is for private business, but against gambling. If video sweepstakes should remain, Clary said they should be "heavily" taxed and regulated.

"It will be up next week to the House but I think they will vote to ban electronic sweepstakes also," she said. Clary added that she thinks, from talking to other legislators, that the North Carolina House will take up the bill as presented rather than amending it.

"There is not a caucus position in that vote, it's an individual decision," she said.

Sen. Julia Boseman, a Wilmington Democrat, voted against the bill because she supports legalizing the games and placing them under the wing of the state lottery. In the House, the Democrats control the chamber.

Many legislators have sounded off on the issue of electronic and computer-based devices that have popped up in various establishments, many of them "sweepstakes cafes" or "business centers", across the state. For the pur-

See **HOUSE**, page 7A



It's one of those unspoken laws in gambling: the house always gets a cut. But soon it will be up to the House to decide if the state will have a cut of the sweepstakes operations that have sprung up in the hundreds across North Carolina ...or if they will ban it like the Senate.

ALL SYSTEMS GO

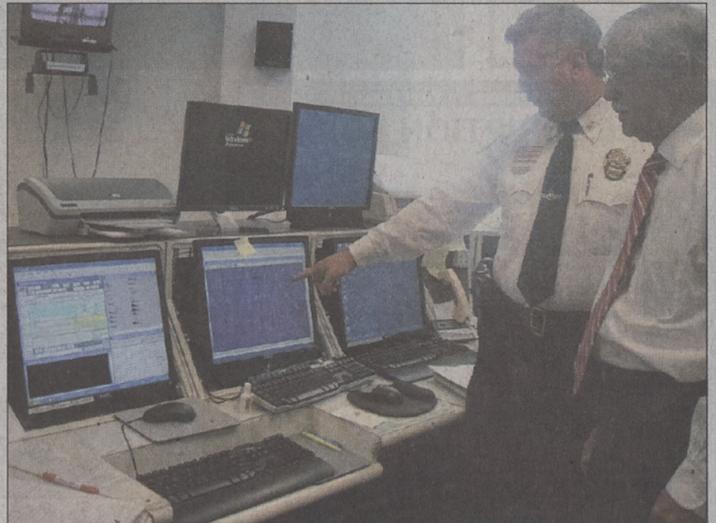


Photo by **LIB STEWART**

TURNING IT ON - The CAD (computer-aided dispatch) system, upgraded at the Kings Mountain Police Department and now fully operational, is among other services that narrows a location down for quicker response time in emergencies. Above, Police Chief Melvin Proctor and Mayor Rick Murphrey show off the equipment purchased with \$300,000 in federal money. The 911 amount listed on your telephone bill each month goes into a wireless fund that aids to the success of this big project.



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