

# Success in Cleveland classrooms in 2010

By EMILY WEAVER  
Editor

Although budget issues lurk in the shadows of the near future, the path Cleveland County Schools has taken over the past year has seemed pretty bright.

CCS has worked to improve its communications, expand its use of technology, construct a new middle school and excel in academics. The district has been able to do all of these things, while still holding on to the No. 1 rank in the nation in per capita giving to the United Way.

Although the same can't be said for the fiscal year it faces, CCS has been able to even save teachers' jobs, implement the beginnings of a uniform salary scale and offer teacher supplements this year.

While other area school systems were scrambling to avoid teacher layoffs, the Cleveland County Board of Education applauded Supt. Dr. Bruce Boyles in April for a \$161 million budget without cuts and with a 10 percent increase in supplement scales for certified staff. The budget was also packed with a uniform classified salary scale to take the non-certified staff to an equitable pay scale level

across the system. "We're trying to fix the inequities in our non-teacher salaries that existed since merger between Kings Mountain, Shelby and Cleveland County," Dr. Boyles said. "We had three really different salary schedules. We're trying to do some salary adjustments this year to fix that."

"It's kind of unusual to be doing that at a time when we are facing cuts, but that's a commitment the board made and the (county) commissioners have encouraged us to fix those salaries," he added.

Funding constraints had prevented the implementation of this initiative previously.

Although some teachers and staff were asked to take on more responsibility last year after a round of budget cuts eliminated positions through attrition, retirement and resignations, classrooms have continued to make the grade.

## Academic successes

"We've done well academically this year," Dr. Boyles said. "We again had no federal sanctions under the No Child Left Behind program, which I think is an accomplishment."

He also noted that East was rec-

ognized among the top 20 elementary schools in the state. East Elementary ranked 15th in performance for the whole state at 95.6, outscoring schools in other cities in the ABC's of Public Education, the North Carolina improvement/accountability program of the N.C. Department of Instruction.

"Eighty-eight percent of our schools achieved growth on the ABC's, which I think is just phenomenal," Boyles added. "We had the highest percentage of National Board Certified teachers in the region again this year."

He also noted the graduation rate in schools appears to be improving.

"The state has not released the drop-out rate numbers yet, but we're doing much better," he said. "This past year, the graduation rate improved at least five percent in all of our schools. We had as much as 10 percent in a school."

But he cautioned that those stats have to be verified and released by the state.

"I think with the strategies that we've put in place and things like the Freshman Academy, those kinds of things are starting to pay dividends now. And we knew when

we started those that it would take a couple of years before we started seeing it. But we're seeing across the district now, our graduation rate is improving significantly," he said.

Dr. Boyles credits programs like the Freshman Academy, Turning Point Academy (the district's alternative school), the Cleveland Early College High School, teachers and graduation coaches for working together to make a difference in the graduation rate.

"There's a lot of things that have made a difference there," he said.

Kings Mountain High, Crest High and Burns High have housed Freshman Academies for two-and-a-half years now. Shelby High is into year four. Dr. Boyles, whose son attends the academy at KMHS has noticed firsthand the successes in the program. "We're seeing fewer discipline referrals, higher grades, less absenteeism, so all of the indicators of student success are there and they're making a difference," he said.

## Good times with PBS

Another program in schools that seems to be doing well is Positive Behavior Support (PBS). "(It) really has worked to help focus on positive behavior rather than nega-

tive behavior," Dr. Boyles said. "It encourages and teaches kids good behavior as opposed to always punishing them for bad behavior."

He added that they are seeing the benefits of the program in the schools where it is being implemented. Kings Mountain Intermediate has noted success with the program. Students are encouraged to earn points through good behavior and meeting goals. Points can later be cashed in on rewards days and special activities.

Another accomplishment, Dr. Boyles added, is the construction of the new Shelby Middle School.

"That is well underway. It's about half done. We're shooting to be in it by the fall," he said.

The current Shelby Middle School will house the district's central offices and the Turning Point Academy, once students and teachers settle into the new building.

The LeGrand Center that will one day house the Early College High School across from the Bailey Building on the campus of Cleveland Community College is also under construction. In this joint project between CCS, CCC and the county, the LeGrand Center is set to open in Spring of 2012.

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## 2010

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After winning the primary, Democrat Alan Norman won the election, went back to work and later was fired from the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office while interviewing officers for his transition team. He and three other officers also shown the door were gracefully hired by Gaston County. Six days before Norman was to be sworn into office as sheriff of Cleveland County, Hamrick resigned from his post, leaving the role of high sheriff to County Coroner Dwight Tessen, who rehired, swore-in and deputized Norman and the others.

Hamrick's salary was \$92,000 a year and his retirement benefit of \$4,200 monthly started Dec. 1 (the day after he retired).

In a primarily Democrat-strong county, Republicans now hold the majority in the chamber of county commissioners. They took the chair and vice chair of the board and four out of five of the commissioners now hail from Kings Mountain.

### 3. City Welcomes New Industry

In spite of a sluggish economy, industrial announcements of new companies moving in and new grants to bring them in have come as welcome news and have hit the headlines at least 18 times this year. Kings Mountain and Cleveland County welcomed Solaris Industries, an international steel tubing company based in Canada, to its first U.S. home on Industrial Drive, after hammering out incentive deals for the company codenamed "Project Bonjour" (with 40-50 jobs).

In March, the city received an \$82,678 grant to renovate a former manufacturing building on Quality Lane for reuse by the new Qual-Tech Industries, which opened with five jobs for skilled laborers with hopes of adding 25-30 more.

Duke Energy broke ground on its new 188,000-square-foot training center, the Kings Mountain Generation Support Facility, in the Cleveland Industrial Park in August. The site is set to host thousands of workers in training.

A couple of months after sources confirmed that In-

focrossing, Inc., a division of India-based technology giant Wipro Ltd., had chosen to locate its new flagship data center in KM's former Chris Craft boat factory, the Governor came to announce it officially. The data center (also known as a server farm where instead of assembly lines and hundreds of workers, thousands of computers work to compute and transmit needs for clients) are popping up across the state and region.

In October, construction was underway at the 275-acre site of Southern Power's proposed \$400 million Cleveland County Generating Facility between Kings Mountain and Grover. Construction was also getting underway for the new lithium plant at the existing Chemetall Foote Kings Mountain production site. The lithium expansion is funded partly by a \$28.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy for advanced transportation batteries.

Martin-Marietta purchased a city building permit for a \$1.2 million expansion of its Kings Mountain quarry.

### 4. Downtown Developments

This has also been a busy year downtown. In January, representatives of the city and Mountaineer Partnership Inc. traveled to New Bern to collect their official award as a "Main Street City" from the North Carolina Main Street Program.

The city and MPI have secured nearly three-quarters-of-a-million dollars in grant money for downtown businesses in 2010 with more to come. Three new restaurants are on the horizon:

- Old Stone Steakhouse and Battleground Bar, 220 Railroad Avenue; a nearly million dollar project of father and son restaurateurs Nick and Rich LaVecchia, who have partnered with downtown property owners Scott Campbell and Bobby Home. \$204,000 in grants.

- JAX Backstreet Tavern, 218 Railroad Avenue; another project of the LaVecchias. \$185,000 grant (including upstairs office space for Sparrow Eye Creative, SG6 Enterprises, and Campbell & Campbell of NC, LLC).

- Center Street Tavern and Smokehouse, 238

Cherokee Street; project of Kathleen Hover (owner of Center Street Tavern in Cramerton), set to open Jan. 15.

A \$250,000 grant was approved by the state to help Majors Wellness Center, AFAB Promotions, and Hometown Hardware and Garden Center expand and improve their businesses downtown.

Officials from the NC Main Street Center toured the city in July, meeting with downtown property owners and merchants and looking for strengths and weaknesses in the downtown. Helping MPI and the city chart a path to growth, the Main Street team revealed their findings, including a list of things KM is doing well and things to work on.

### 5. National News Hits Home

Kings Mountain is not immune to the outside world and headlines this year proved it. After a 7.0 earthquake rocked Haiti to its core, local churches, missionaries and schools rallied to its aid. Students at Grace Christian Academy raised money for the relief effort wearing "Hats for Haiti." Grover Elementary classrooms held "Penny Wars" for Haiti. Kings Mountain's Family Worship Center sent truckloads of relief items to Port-au-Prince in a mission nicknamed "Operation Compassion".

KMHS teacher Dan Potter and students raised money for a Haitian family that had ties to Kings Mountain, hoping to bring them...or at least the children back to the city they once called a safe home. A woman who lived through the earthquake, Michelle Remy, came to speak about the terrible experience at local churches.

On March 21, after much debate, Congress passed health care reform into law (219-212 with all Republicans and 34 Democrat holdouts voting "no"). And in Kings Mountain members of both parties and two insurance agents sounded off on the bill's passing.

As reported in The Herald on Dec. 8, a national decision on gay pastors split one local congregation with Advent Lutheran Church becoming the third active worshiping Lutheran congregation in the city.

Sixty members of Resurrection Lutheran decided to

leave and join the newly-formed North American Lutheran Church Synod, after the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted "to allow practicing homosexuals in committed relationships to be ordained as pastors."

### 6. Reaching Out to Those in Need

From planting potatoes to feed the hungry and bringing the "Billy Graham of the streets" to save our youth to Hospice and the rescue squad opening new doors in Kings Mountain, community members continue to make a difference. Roger Goins and Councilman Mike Butler collected enough coats to help East Elementary keep 30 families warm last winter. The Kings Mountain Police Department's Training Room was filled with enough treasures last Dec. to assist 58 families for Christmas.

A group of compassionate citizens from different churches and backgrounds joined forces throughout the county planting Irish and sweet potatoes for the hungry. Crops were given to organizations like the Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry for distribution. Youth groups at Christian Freedom Baptist and Patterson Grove Baptist churches fasted in 30-hour famines and slept outside the comfort of home to raise money, food and awareness for those who have to go without food and shelter.

Local pastors banned together to bring Nicky Cruz, former gang leader turned evangelist, to talk to the youth in a rally attended by thousands that packed the stands at an arena on the Cleveland County Fairgrounds. Cruz, the author of "Run Baby Run" and who was nicknamed the "Billy Graham of the Streets," shared a powerful message with crowds in three local events.

On May 6, Hospice Cleveland County opened the doors to its new facility in Kings Mountain. Within a week, the eight-bed facility was full to capacity with patients and loved ones. On Sept. 21, the Kings Mountain Rescue Squad broke ground for their new 6,000-square-foot facility on Shelby Road, a project 20 years in the making.

### 7. Talk About the Weather

The weather has garnered some headlines this year with colder-than-usual winters and a hotter-than-hoped-for summer. A snow-threatening cold snap in early January was noted as the first one the region had seen since January 1977. A double punch of snow and ice at the end of January closed churches and schools after a four-inch snowfall kept residents inside. Another winter snow storm carrying about three inches of snow blanketed Kings Mountain in mid-February.

But then in August, a summer heat wave fueled more calls to the KM Crisis Ministry for assistance with power bills.

Winter came early this December as snow and freezing rain entered the forecasts before the official day of winter on Dec. 21st, and this weekend the state saw its first Christmas snow in over 60 years. The storm dumped a foot of snow in western North Carolina, a couple of inches in the Piedmont and then transformed into a blizzard as it moved north up the east coast.

### 8. Missing Man Found in Quarry

It was a sad ending to an open case of a mother waiting for her son to return. Dustin Miller went missing in August 2009. In September, two young men stumbled across bones in an abandoned quarry on the property of Chemetall Foote Corporation's production site. The remains were identified to be those of Miller.

No homicide was suspected.

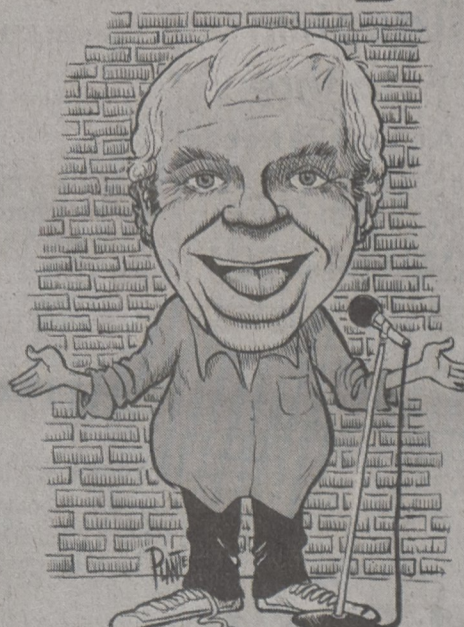
### 9. Legionnaires Fight for Home

Legionnaires told Post 155 club officers and management that their home is not for sale after a "for sale" sign was staked in the front yard without general membership approval. An option was offered to lease part of the building, but was also rejected. After months of alleged limited profits and use of the facility, Post Commander Howard Kieser said that the "Post is struggling". On Dec. 9, Legionnaires voted 13-12 to keep the Post's home open, but with new management.

### 10. A Light in a Dark Economy

In the midst of this economy with unemployment numbers bobbing in the teens (percentage wise) for much of the year, there was some good news. Cleveland County Schools saved jobs and even offered supplemental pay to certified staff in its 2010-11 budget. Goodwill Job Industries was helping people learn new skills, polish resumes and get back to work this year. They helped Sally Adolf, of Kings Mountain, who went from unemployed to on-the-payroll at Goodwill's Gaston County Job Connection. And with help from private financial counseling agencies like the Cleveland County Community Development Corporation, folks who have lost their jobs or have had hours cut have been able to keep their homes.

## James Gregory



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