

Pain at the pump

By KYRA ALEXANDER
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This news article today has been brought to you by the letter E...Everybody, Eventually, Experiences, Empty. E-gads! It's time for another fill up.

Exasperated, John Cass headed to the pumps Monday morning, March 30th, for just that.

Pumping his gas at the Marathon station on Cleveland Avenue, where gas was \$3.64 per regular gallon, Cass said that the gas prices are "too high".

Within a week the average price for a gallon of regular gas in the state had climbed to \$3.72, according to AAA Fuel Gauge Report. Larger increases are foreseen on the horizon.

The national current average is \$3.79 per gallon of regular gas, up 24 cents from last month's average and nearly a dollar from last year. In 2009 the world's oil consumption was over 84 million barrels a day, according to the National Association of Convenience Stores. Oil prices have risen 133% in the last three years and gas prices have climbed 70.4%.

The public has felt it. Many individuals are modifying their own travel because of the prices. Governmental agencies that are on fixed budgets are also recalculating their gas expenses.

According to Cleveland County Manager David Dear, "The County is trying to be more cautious and diligent but we cannot do much different since most of our vehicles are (for) public safety and have to (be used to) respond immediately, although we have coordinated and lined up our expectations to have no wasted miles."

In also talking with Donna Carpenter, spokeswoman for Cleveland County Schools, she explained that, "The schools check the price of gas daily to find the lowest prices as well as keep a supply. Some things we are doing, since the buses have to run 180-days a year, twice a day, are making the bus routes as efficient as possible and combining bus stops but not sacrificing safety."

Many experts say the reason for this continual increase in price is the unrest in the Middle East from where a lot of oil flows. Unrest in the Middle East matters because the price of crude oil rises with the uncertainties and anxieties in those countries, according to AAA Carolinas spokesman for the Charlotte region, Brendan Byrnes.

Even though the top five exporters of oil to the United States are Canada, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and



KYRA ALEXANDER/HERALD
John Cass pumps gasoline at the Kings Mountain Marathon station Monday.

Venezuela, what happens in the Middle East can influence prices everywhere.

"There is nothing anyone can do in the United States to help lower the price. This is not a supply and demand issue. Everything has to rest in the Middle East," Byrnes explained.

More and more people are feeling that the best way for Americans to become independent of foreign oil, is for the government to allow us to drill in the abundant oil reserves that are found in the United States.

As Cass filled up his tank he had the same suggestion. "Drill baby drill," he exclaimed while shaking a finger at his high total.

Many Americans are wondering why our country allows other countries to drill off our coasts but our own country cannot.

They point out that being able to drill in the mountains of North Dakota and Montana as well as Alaska could immediately begin reducing oil prices (in addition to providing a much-needed boost to job formation). Studies indicate there may be more than one trillion barrels of oil sedimentary rock found in Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado's Western Slope. That is nearly three times the reserves in Saudi Arabia.

Another idea some have is the oil made from corn, biofuel. Experts have said that biofuels would be a part of the answer toward independence from foreign oil and toward a cleaner environment, but rising corn costs have all but eradicated the financial difference between biofuels and gasoline. Recent scientific testing shows biofuels actually do not reduce emissions into the environment, as once thought.

Byrnes predicts a rise of 10 to 15 cents per gallon in the coming weeks because

the refineries are switching to cleaner gas.

"The price may start coming down in the summer," Byrnes said. "The annual day of the highest gas prices is May 31st. This year it may peak sooner. However, the gasoline prices always do bump up on July 4th weekend and Memorial Day weekend."

"It's pretty unlikely we'll hit \$5 per gallon in 2012," said Jessica Brady with AAA Auto Club South. "Worst-case scenario, we're probably going to get back to the \$4 range like we saw in 2008"...only this time the rise comes without a hurricane.

Electric cars sound like a great idea but limited supply, high price, short battery life, and a long charging time are detractors to the average consumer. However, technology is improving and more electric cars (with stronger batteries) are set to roll off the assembly lines, and tax breaks through the federal government are chipping away at the prices.

Byrnes did give some tips to help consumers conserve gasoline for the coming weeks:

Use public transportation; Do not slam on your brakes and push on the accelerator so often, it will consume your fuel more rapidly; Drive the speed limit; Keep your RPM under 3000.

A website to access if you are trying to find the cheapest gas around is gasbuddy.com. As of Tuesday the lowest price in town was recorded as \$3.69 per gallon at the Marathon Station on Cleveland Ave. Just across the state line in Blacksburg, SC, a gallon of regular gasoline was \$3.55 on Tuesday.

The simple fact is that for the present we are totally dependent on gas as the primary way to keep the wheels rolling in America.

Libraries; it's about making a difference

It's National Library Week. Tuesday is National Library Workers Day. Making a difference is important to me. I wrote that statement when writing my essay for entrance to the University of Alabama School of Library Science for my Master's program. It has become my personal mission statement and is as relevant today as when I wrote it 17 years ago.

As a library director in a small library, the work is a series of switching tasks. From crawling around on the floor to find the model number of a battery back up in need of replacement; to guiding staff in their program planning; to the professional tasks of book selection/purchasing/cataloging and deselection; to facility maintenance; working with trustees, Friends of the Library and other community groups; the work is an endless variety of hats to wear. What fun!

And yet, as these decisions are collectively made with input from the community and its citizens, the end result is a place where citizens feel welcome, and library services are a positive reflection of answering their needs.

Libraries have been meeting those needs for years. In fact, in 2012, the State Library of North Carolina will celebrate 200 years of library services in North Carolina.

In Kings Mountain, the city and its citizens have supported library services for nearly 75 years. Pat Plonk, former library trustee, recently told me, "I believe in public libraries." That belief continues to translate into the volunteer hours of the Library Board of trustees and the



Sharon Stack
Guest Columnist
Mauney Memorial Library

Friends of the Library. These volunteers help to guide the services and direction of what the library offers as we cement ourselves into the 21st century.

For me, it is the thoughtful guidance and the passion to serve the civic good that reinforces the power of the public library to make meaningful change in a person's life.

In my work, the power to make a difference is compelling. I remember opening the newly renovated Rockwood Branch of Multnomah County, Oregon. That branch served a dense Eastern European immigrant population. Imagine these new immigrants' delight at using the computers to read the newspapers of 'home' in their own language.

In Kings Mountain, the pull of the public library takes many forms.

The power of a gathering place, I first met Ebony Wingo sitting on the floor in the corner of the non-fiction room studying for the MCAT test. She's now a future doctor in the making.

The power of a good book, Landon Hulsey, our li-

brary shelve stated that it was three years before she shelved a "Twilight" book, and James Patterson just can't write fast enough for Kings Mountain readers.

The power of community, Inni and her one and a half year old daughter, Frances come to the library to use the computers and the children's room, as well as talk to staff. Frances comes to take a nap in her mother's arms sometimes.

The power to change a life, Beth Sellers, Kings Mountain media specialist at East Elementary School teaches the library computer classes. She sees the difference these classes make in people's lives. In fact, she was so excited about teaching adults she returned to library school for her master's program and graduated Summa Cum Laude from East Carolina in December, 2010.

It's the individual and collective work that makes the work of public library work so exciting. In the next few months, our library along with the Cleveland County Library and the Asheville-Buncombe County Library will be part of the initial stages of a project called, NCCARD. These initial steps will form the building blocks for a potential statewide library card in a few years. Imagine that!

The opportunities that await the next 75 or 100 years of service in libraries is yet to be determined, especially with the new tools of reading, i.e. digital readers, etc. Yet, as I consider National Library Week and the work as a library director, the opportunity to make a difference sustains.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:
First, please allow me to thank Lib Stewart and the Herald for the article that appeared in the newspaper two weeks ago concerning my attempts to help Mark McDaniel win his release from prison.

However I must say that I was somewhat disappointed that Ms. Stewart never got back with me concerning the article before it was published. Had she done so, I would have tried to clear up some of the statements made in the article as well as to the reason why I am trying to help Mark.

Some may ask, "Why are you trying to help someone who was responsible for the death of your own nephew?"

Unlike others who would like to consider Mark's case closed, I have taken the time and spent thousands of dollars of my own money looking for the truth concerning what happened the night my nephew was killed at Mark's house.

The following are just a few of the things that I have found:

- I have found, in my opinion, that Mark did not receive a fair trial. His own public defender admitted to him that he had not done all that he could do to win Mark's case and wished him luck in his appeals.

- I found out that in Mark's first appeal the trial judge stated in open court that he had no recourse but to remand Mark's case back to

the courts. Yet, when his official ruling came out, he had ruled against Mark.

- I found out that when Mark appealed to the South Carolina State Supreme Court that they too stated that Mark had a right to have his case heard, but they later ruled that they had providentially misspoke.

- It is my opinion that the state pathologist twisted the truth so that the state could convict Mark as a brutal murderer. In the trial transcript he repeatedly testified that "all shots were distant shots, and that it was the shot to the back of the head that killed Allen."

When in truth, the SLED reports contradict almost his entire testimony. Those reports indicated that the fatal shot entered under the left ear and exited under the right ear. They also indicate that there was powder residue on my nephew's hands which would indicate that his hands were either on or very close to the gun when it discharged as Mark has always claimed. The pathologist's own report stated that my nephew had powder abrasions on his body. Yet in his testimony he said that there was no such thing as powder abrasions, and that he meant to say a partial abrasion.

Mark and I have never wanted to have his case retried. Not because we feel he would be convicted again, but because of the emotional stress it would be for all

individuals concerned.

We are asking that mercy be shown to him and his mother, and that the state release him for time served. He has been incarcerated for 20 years for something that happened in his own home. He has always expressed sincere remorse for his part in my nephew's death. I am convinced that his remorse is sincere since he has served his entire prison sentence without having had one disciplinary write-up.

Mark is well thought of by all who know him in the prison system from the staff and other prison officials to the inmates. His mother is 87 years old and is in desperate need of his support at home. Unlike many who are released from prison every day, Mark has a home and a job waiting for him when he is released.

He has plans to bless his family and our local community by becoming involved in a ministry called Miracle Workers which will encourage others to use their talents and skills to bless the poor and those who are less fortunate. We also want to help prevent young people from making poor decisions that will result in them having to spend almost their entire life behind bars as Mark has done.

If you know Mark and/or his family I urge you to sign our petition and/or write a letter supporting his release.

Thank you,
Michael S. Smith
Kings Mountain, NC

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Just the 'Hard'ware Facts Growing a lush, green lawn is easy!



With all the rain and warm weather we've had recently, many of you will want to improve your lawn's appearance by fertilizing. Most lawns in our area are Tall Fescue or an improved turf-type fescue. This type of lawn responds best to slow release fertilizers containing high Nitrogen applied in early Spring.

A few tips to remember:
Measure your lawn's square footage to insure the right amount of fertilizer.

Refer to the fertilizer manufacturer's information regarding spreader types and settings.

Unless you're using a Weed and Feed product, always fertilize over a dry lawn, then water in.

For a lush, healthy lawn that will discourage weeds and attract compliments from your neighbors, use Green Thumb fertilizers.

And that is the Tim's tip of the week from Bridges True Value Hardware.

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