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Donkey baseball coming to Grover

GROVER - No foolin! Donkey baseball is coming to Grover Municipal Park Saturday at 6 p.m. for the benefit of a woman suffering with cancer.

As the name of the game suggests, it's baseball played while riding a donkey and a dozen or more donkeys will be supplied by Southeastern Rodeo Association.



The game will be hard to predict but should evoke fun for spectators as players run or attempt to run the bases and play ball on the backs of donkeys who could care less about "rounding third".

"It's a fun event," says Joey Guffey, who rides for the rodeo group. He is sponsoring the benefit for his mother-in-law, Connie Wilson, and all proceeds will help defray her medical costs. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$5 for children.

Guffey said the games will start promptly at 6 p.m. on the baseball field at the park.

GROVER

Mayor to file for re-election

ELIZABETH STEWART
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GROVER - Before filing ends Friday at noon for county offices, Mayor J. D. Leford plans to file for election for a first four year term.



LEDFORD

"I'm running," said the former councilman who was appointed several months ago to fill Robert Sides' unexpired term.

Three seats on the board are up for grabs on election day in November but incumbents Jackie Bennett and Cobia

indicated Monday at a work session that they may offer as write-in candidates. The third seat open is Leford's former council seat. No wannabes were mentioned.

Four years ago no one filed for office in Grover with the county board of elections. But voters turned out at the polls at Grover Town Hall and wrote the names of their choices on the ballot.

Why do candidates take the risk of a write-in?

See LEDFORD, 5A

Brown seeks to turn abandoned mill into recreational campground



This 57.52-acre tract of land on S. Battleground Ave., where Park Yarn Mill once stood, may one day be the site of a campground.

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Kings Mountain developer Michael Brown and his wife, Cynthia G. Brown, have purchased 57.522 acres at 114 Raven Drive, commonly called the old Park Yarn Mill (Glen Raven Mills, Inc.) property, from the Kings Mountain Consortium for Progress.

The Kings Mountain Planning & Zoning Board was meeting Tuesday night to consider Brown's request to rezone the back portion of the property from residential to conditional use R-20 to construct a campground. The campground would have 25 initial sites with the possibility of a total of 143 and may border the Gateway Trails.

The Consortium was founded some years ago by the late former mayor John Henry Moss as president with its goal to draw new industry and business to the area. Officers of the Consortium are vice-presidents Tony Ruppe and Jim Childers and M.C. Pruetta.

See CAMPGROUND, 5A

Grand Finale Explosion

Less bang for audience, BIG bang for technicians



Photo by KYRA A. TURNER

EMILY WEAVER
Editor

The grand finale at this year's fireworks show fell a little short for the crowds watching below, but for the pyrotechnicians shooting the fireworks from a YMCA ball field the last fuse they lit went off with a bang...a BIG bang.

A combination of the evening's earlier torrential rains and a different than old school arrangement of the fireworks in launch position resulted in a massive explosion on the launch pad.

Mortars, tubes and wooden two-by-fours used as props were reduced to shards of rubble and shrapnel that littered the fields and the YMCA's swimming pool several hundred yards away. A couple of small craters were found on the baseball diamond and smoke filled the air.

"The best thing is that nobody got hurt," said Scott Neisler, who puts on the fireworks show each year with his team of pyrotechnicians.

This year his son Garrett Neisler led the show. Garrett has been a part of his father's fireworks production team for years. When gigs fall on the same night or around the same time the Neislers will often split up with Garrett and company handling one event and Scott and company the other.

Scott was putting on a fireworks show

in Banner Elk on the night of July 4th when he heard what happened. Oddly enough, for the first time in Scott's 22 years of shooting fireworks, a mortar had exploded on him too that very same night.

"The sobering thing is you always got to really be careful with fireworks," Scott said.

He guessed that rain probably played a factor in both explosions. Only one shell exploded pre-flight on Scott and his team. There were no injuries.

Their finale went off without a hitch - 100 big bangs in a spectacular salute to American independence. The sky over the Banner Elk golf club was painted with beautiful streaks of red, white, blue and other hues. But in Kings Mountain the 100 big bangs happened all at once...on the ball field. To some in the crowd below it was a puzzling end. No more fireworks, just music.

To those on the ball field it was a close escape. The shell-shocked technicians observed the "war zone".

Rain in one of the tubes had saturated a lift charge on the bottom of the shell. Once lit, the shell refused to leave its rack even when the timing fuse started to burn. It exploded pre-flight and set off a chain reaction among the other shells tucked beside it.

See FIREWORKS, 5A

Deputies seize nearly 7 lbs. of cocaine on I-85

EMILY WEAVER
Editor

Deputies of the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department seized 6.6 lbs. of cocaine and \$3,000 in U.S. currency from a "suspicious" Chrysler traveling down I-85 around lunchtime Monday.

Sheriff Alan Norman said that Dep. Dwight Fitch spotted the vehicle and noticed the passengers were acting "in a suspicious manner". In a traffic stop on I-85 North, deputies discovered cocaine in a modified secret compartment inside the vehicle.

Norman said that the cocaine was in its purest form worth about \$100,000.

"Once divided among dealers," he said, its value would have grown. "Each

time it passes thru a dealer's hands a substance like baking powder is usually added to it to give more weight."

The street value of this amount of cocaine, he said, can exceed \$250,000. Deputies also seized currency and the vehicle the suspects were using to "transport the narcotics".

Sheriff Norman suspects this seizure will have a far-reaching, even if it's only temporary, impact on the war on drugs in the areas this substance was destined for. Whether this drug would have ended up on the streets of New York or in Cleveland County its existence is no longer a threat, he added.

Deputies arrested Elvis Peguero Pena, 23, of Allentown, Penn., for two counts of trafficking a

See DEPUTIES, 5A

Mead found not guilty in murder of KM nurse



JOHNSON

A Mecklenburg County jury Tuesday at 3:40 p.m. found Micheal Mead, 42, of Gastonia, not guilty of first degree murder and arson in the July 2008 death of Kings Mountain Hospital Emergency Room nurse Lucy Dye Johnson.

The jury began its deliberations

Monday morning.

The 31-year-old mother of two was found dead in her burning home on the morning of July 16, 2008. She was nearly four months pregnant when she was murdered. An autopsy report revealed that she had been shot twice in the back of her head. Investigators at the scene also noticed her engagement ring was missing.



See MEAD, 5A

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