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Politics, train wrecks, loss, E. coli & more

Looking back at the top stories of 2012

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1- Economic development

Kings Mountain was a jobs powerhouse for economic development in 2012. AT&T's industrial announcement in early spring that it would construct a data center in Kings Mountain is the largest investment ever announced for Cleveland County. Gov. Beverly Perdue visited Kings Mountain in February to announce AT&T's plans to invest \$850 million into the county, the largest capital investment of the year, and create 100 jobs. Data Center construction continues in 2013 and area people are being employed in construction jobs.

Cleveland County had one of its biggest-ever years for economic development in 2012 with the investment of about \$1 billion by new and expanding businesses, many of them in the Kings Mountain area, and the creation of hundreds of new jobs.

Other biggies: Disney Data Center, Badger Color, Stout 21,

Baldor Electric, Strata Solar farm on Dixon Dairy Road and an early Christmas present was the start-up of Southern Power's new natural gas-fueled plant southwest of the city - revving up equipment capable of providing 350,000 residential customers throughout the region. The new power plant will pump electricity and money into the county.

Big expansions in this area included Rockford Lithium, which unveiled its new global headquarters in Kings Mountain recognized as the world leader in lithium technology developing materials for advanced transportation batteries in their new state of the art 56,000 square foot technical center, one of only two in the world; STI, Patrick Yarns, Kitchen Ventilations and STEAG Engineering.

2- County school scandal

An N. C. State Auditors Office report last year found improper use of school system money by maintenance department employees and brought changes in staff in that department. Now, the SBI is investigating possible misspent funds



Soldiers accompany the flag draped casket carrying the body of US Army Specialist James Justice after a procession to Kings Mountain, August 28, 2012.

Herald file photo

within the school system, an investigation continuing into 2013. During the past year the school system took steps to improve its financial accountability and reduced by half the number of credit cards to em-

ployees. However, questions still remain in the community of lack of documentation of some card purchases by school system employees. Some of the expenditures questioned in the 2011 state probe

went back several years. Citizens are also asking why the SBI investigation is taking so long, the scope of the investigation is not clear, and there has been no timetable for completion of the report.

3- E.coli outbreak in October

Cleveland County Fairgrounds remains shut down after an E.coli breakout linked by state health officials to a petting zoo at the October fair. A total of 106 people became sick and a two-year-old toddler died. The families of three E.coli victims filed civil law suits alleging negligence by the Cleveland County Fair Association and the out-of-state petting zoo owner.

4- Politics picks up steam

Politics picked up steam locally and all eyes were on the Queen City as Charlotte hosted the Democratic national convention where local people volunteered and Robin Smith, a delegate from Kings Mountain, was on the front row when President Obama made his acceptance speech. Local

See 2012, 6A

3 seats up for grabs in 2013

2013 will be an election year for three seats on Kings Mountain City Council.

Terms of Mike Butler, Ward 2, Tommy Hawkins, Ward 3, and At-large commissioner Dean Spears are up in November 2013.

Filing with the Cleveland County Board of Elections begins in May.

Kings Mountain council has staggered terms.

In November 2011 voters re-elected Mayor Rick Murphrey, Mayor pro tem Rodney Gordon, Ward 4; Howard Shipp, Ward 1; and Rick Moore, Ward 5.

Keith Miller was elected At-large commissioner succeeding the retiring Houston Corn in a hotly contested five-man race for the seat on the board.



Mike Butler



Dean Spears



Tommy Hawkins

The McCachrens... from Russia with love

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Alexander Sasha Pruette McCachren, 5, is a lively, healthy kindergarten student at Bethware School who adores his family, his home and his church.

"We are so blessed and can't imagine our lives without him," says Steve and Jennifer McCachren and his dotting Kings Mountain grandparents, Joanne and M. C. Pruette.

Four years ago this month Alex, born June 23, 2007 in Russia, became a Daddy's boy and everyone who knows him sees the resemblance - brown eyes, brown hair - all boy.

His parents went to Russia three times - November 2008, December 2008 and January 2009 to bring their beautiful son home to Kings Mountain. They learned on their first visit about 740,000 kids in the Soviet Union in orphanages.

It was love at first sight for the McCachrens and Alex, then 18 months old.

"It is so unfortunate that Russia President Vladimir Putin signed a law Dec. 28 that bans Americans from adopting Russian children," said Jennifer. "Those kids may never know the love of a family and they are really 'just caught in

the middle."

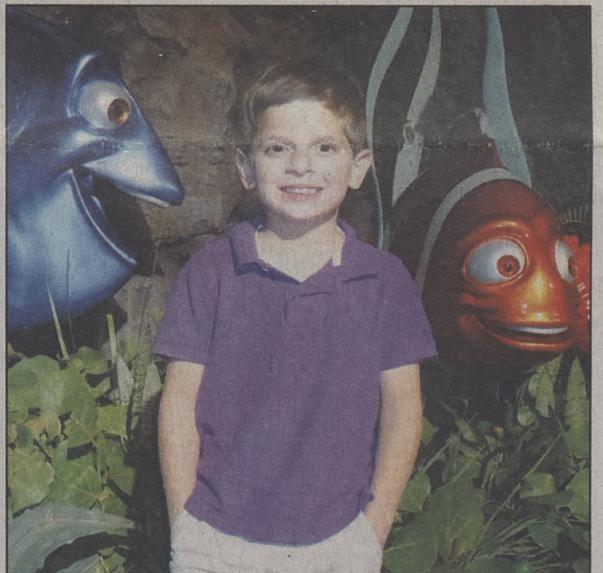
Putin's move came in retaliation for a U. S. law that sanctioned Russians who were thought to be violating human rights. The law became effective Jan. 1, 2013.

Says Steve, "It is hard to imagine that a government would use children needing a home as a political pawn. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the children that may never be able to experience a family or a loving home."

Steve and Jennifer McCachrens began their adoption process 18 months before they brought their son home. Mandola Agency in Hillsborough, where Steve's cousin had worked, referred them to Child of Hope, a non-profit licensed adoption agency in Mountain Pleasant, SC that specializes in placing children from Russia and Ukraine in loving homes in America.

Because the Russian adoption process is such a personal and intimate experience, the Kings Mountain couple quickly developed a special relationship with "Alana" and her Russian-born family and learned the human dimension of the process, what it cost emotionally and the rewards after they put their faith and trust in them.

Alana's mother, Eugenia, and



Alex McCachren in Disney World in November 2012

Alana's brother lived in Tula, Russia and speak the Russian language. They knew the Russian court system, contacted interpreters who were with the McCachrens throughout the process and met them at the airport when they got off the plane in Russia

When they held the baby boy

for the first time it was instant love.

He was the child of their dreams but they couldn't bring him home on their first trip. They held him in their arms for an hour.

Their trips to Russia were bitter

See ALEX, 6A

CUMC, volunteers work to feed the hungry in Kings Mountain

BETH BROCK
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How do hungry residents get a good meal when they have no money or transportation?

Central United Methodist Church, 113 S. Piedmont Ave., across from the police station, has the answer.

During 2012 a total of 33,800 people were in line on Mondays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. with an average of 300 meals prepared each of the two days. They start lining up early to eat in or take out and by calling 704-739-2471 on Monday or Thursday they can get free delivery thanks to volunteers from Second Baptist

Church as well as other volunteers.

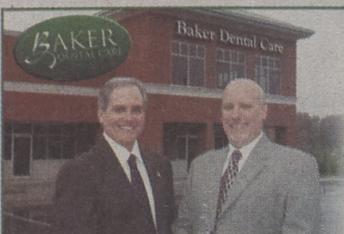
Jim Potter is heading the community program, in its 11th year in Kings Mountain. "We depend on volunteers who prepare all the food, serve the meals, and do the cleaning up afterwards," he said, adding that anyone wanting to help should come in the back door and say 'I'm ready to work.'

Volunteers are not limited to Methodists. Several area churches and volunteers from various organizations regularly assist with the meal program. On a recent Thursday, volunteers from Created to Praise Dance Academy



Volunteers from Created to Praise Dance Academy get ready to serve a hungry crowd. L-R: Nikki Brown, Alexis Moose, Mary Cameron Lowrance, Patyon Goforth, Kaia Putman, Missy Lowrance, and Kelli Putman.

See CUMC, 6A



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