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New businesses, jobs good news for 2014

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Expansion announcements by a half dozen industries and retail businesses during the old year ending at midnight Tuesday is good news for job seekers in 2014 – a prospect for 450 plus future industrial jobs, 95 retail jobs coming later and five new retail businesses up and running.

Whether the sluggish economy is improving depends on who you ask. But Kings Mountain City Manager Marilyn Sellers and Mayor Rick Murphrey say that expansions in the industrial community and in the business community are

sure to boost the unemployment rate in 2014. Both say the Number 1 goal for city leaders in 2014 is jobs, jobs, jobs.

“Kings Mountain will aggressively seek new industry and business in 2014 working with county and state economic development leaders,” says the mayor.

During 2013 expansions and high dollar investments were announced by Telerx, Greenheck (Kitchen Ventilation), STEAG, Badger Color Concentrates, T5 Data Center, Bali, TeXSource and in recent months the retail giant Walmart announced it would construct a 41,000 square foot Walmart Neighborhood Market, a small

scale grocery and pharmacy, in Kings Mountain Plaza and employ 95 people. New retail businesses are Flowers by Falls, Martin’s Electric, Southern Chew, Stout Brewing and Grapes In A Glass. Kings Clinic & Urgent Care started receiving patients in its newly constructed clinic.

Main Street Director Jan Harris said with the closing in 2013 of the landmark Fred Kiser’s Restaurant after 33 years downtown and the closing in 2012 of J. Oliver’s Coffee Shop, there are still empty store fronts and work to be done which city leaders will push aggressively in the new year. Kings Mountain Florist has been replaced by Flowers by the

Falls on Main Street.

Kings Mountain’s second largest employer, Telerx, will hire 160 new, full-time employees at its contact center by the end of January 2014. Job hiring will vary from position to position and all of that information is on the company website.

“We hope this shows our commitment to the people of Kings Mountain by replacing those 116 jobs that had to be eliminated in October 2012,” said Vice-President Do Lapo Erinkitola.

STEAG Energy Services, 304 Linwood Road, (the former Anvil Knitwear plant location) announced an expansion that will add

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City Manager Marilyn Sellers and Mayor Rick Murphrey talk about how expansions by industry and business have created job prospects and say jobs will be the No. 1 goal of city leaders in 2014.

Photo by LIB STEWART

Looking ahead: Schools tackle ‘ambitious’ goals



Seventh and eighth graders pour into the cafeteria during the year’s first class change in August at the Kings Mountain Middle School.

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It was almost a year ago that teachers, students, parents, school administrators and other members of the community got together to take a hard look at what direction they wanted the local public schools to take in the future.

They spent months and held a number of meetings to hash out what was good about the educational experience in Cleveland County and how it could become better.

Ideas abounded about the graduation rate, preparing students for life after high school, technology and computers in the classrooms, and teacher pay, among other topics.

In September, the Cleveland County Board of Education met with the large committee to hear its recommendations. The school board then acted to incorporate those ideas into its own long-term goals.

The result of that collaboration came to be called The Mission, Vision and 2013-2018 Strategic Plan for Cleveland County Schools. Ultimately, administrators developed a five-

part goals statement, with categories that include Globally Competitive Students, Innovative Leadership and 21st Century Professionals.

One of the major objectives within the goal set is to raise the graduation rate to at least 90 percent by 2018. The system currently has an 83.3 percent graduation rate.

“It’s a pretty ambitious goal,” said Cleveland County Schools spokesperson Greg Shull. “We want to be a top-ten school district in the state. To do that, you have to hit some big numbers and one of them is the 90 percent graduation rate.”

Administrators say one way they’re hoping to achieve that goal is by focusing on Turning Point Academy, the system’s so-called alternative school that serves students with behavioral problems or who are in other special circumstances. Another approach is to make use of faith-based programs that put mentors in places they’re needed the most.

Dovetailing with that graduation rate goal, administrators aim to provide a pathway for the future for all graduating students by 2017-18, whether it be to college, technical school, the military or the workforce.

As computers increasingly become a larger part of our work, family and personal lives, educators are eager to make them a more integral part of the way students learn.

See SCHOOLS, 8A

Blanton trades ballots for vines

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Politics is in her blood and it was natural that Debra Beaty Blanton worked in a profession she loved for 27 years.

She retired Dec. 31 as the first Director of Elections and only the third Supervisor of Elections in the county’s history.

County commissioners, who honored her recently with a resolution of appreciation, said, “She knows the answers or where to get them.” Organized and professional, the commissioners said she brings calm to what can be a stressful environment during election seasons.

Dayna Causby, Deputy Director, says her mentor has “big footprints.”

“I have truly loved my job and I will miss the many folks I have worked with over the years,” said Blanton who has had strong ties with local and state governments, precinct officials and the voting public. She has led the county in ever-changing laws as a certified state and national elections administrator.

Debra grew up on politics. Her father served in the South Dakota legislature, was Secretary of Finance under one governor and ran for Lieutenant Governor. Her sister was in the legislature for eight terms in South Dakota and worked for



Debra Blanton

one governor in an appointed position.

Blanton graduated from Vermillion High School and majored in Zoology at the University of South Dakota where she graduated in 1965. A member of the University’s rodeo team, she competed in barrel racing and goat tying and was voted Miss Congeniality in the Miss South Dakota Rodeo Contest in 1965. It was at Oklahoma State University that

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2013 saw many firsts

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As the strains of “Auld Lang Syne” ring out Dec. 31, the traditional harbinger of a new year, Kings Mountain citizens can look back over a year that included a number of firsts.

They included the introduction of fiber optics and smart meters and the first time in his 14 years as mayor Rick Murphrey signed off on a \$34 million state revolving loan to pay for major water and sewer infrastructure.

Engineering and permitting for the initial phase of the project is complete and rehabilitation of the water line is underway at cost of \$5.2 million. Water line rehabilitation covers West Mountain to Gaston; Gold Street from Phifer Road to Battleground Avenue; West King Street to Oriental Avenue. Expansion and rehabilitation of the water plant is expected to cost \$12 million. All water/sewer improvements including completion of a new 36-inch water line from Moss Lake to the city are targeted for completion in 2014 and 2015.

The city will repay the no interest loan within a 20-year period.

For the next three years Kings Mountain citizens will also help pay for the improvements. Council voted a 7 1/2% across the board water and sewer increase in July. The typical customer using 5,000 gallons of water per month will pay \$3.49 additionally, or 12 cents a day. City residents were hit with a state and federally mandated storm water utility fee recently. February utility bills will reflect a separate billing at a flat fee for residential customers of \$2.50 per month. Bills for industry

See 2013, 8A

MLK Day photo contest January 20

The City of Kings Mountain will host a Martin Luther King Day photography contest, January 20.

“This year’s competition is taking its cue from the Martin Luther King, Jr. quote ‘Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.’” said Ellis Noell, Special Events Director for the City. “We are encouraging young and old to share their vision of ‘Love’ and this subject matter will provide great latitude in artistic interpretation, he added. There will be cash prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in both adult and student divisions.

Photographic prints will be accepted or submissions can be made digitally through submission of a disk mailed or dropped off at City



Hall or e-mailed to ellisn@cityofkm.com. Deadline for submission is Friday, 5 p.m., Jan. 17. Applications are available at the City’s website, www.cityofkm.com or by calling Lynda Mattox at 704-734-0333.

The exhibit and reception with the entrants will open Jan. 20 at the Southern Arts



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