

# KM retailers: Christmas sales were solid in 2013

DAVE BLANTON

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Kings Mountain shoppers were in a spending mood this Christmas season, according to many local retailers who say business was at or above last year's levels.

"It was probably the best Christmas ever for us," said Ken Deal, who with his wife Virginia operates Ditto Consignments on Battleground Ave.

Deal said he saw a healthy spike in gift-oriented items right up to Christmas Eve. In the days following Christmas he reporting selling a higher than average volume of antique and used furniture.

At the Roses department store on Shelby Rd. toys were a big seller, topping last year's numbers in that category, according to employees there.

"We had some big sale days right around Christmas - just a lot of people with

shopping carts full of stuff," said a clerk at the discount retailer who didn't wish to be identified. She added that the sales of TVs and other big-ticket electric items were down slightly from last year.

"It was a lot of 'gift-y' merchandise," she said, adding that the store typically sees the largest volume of sales around certain holidays, like Mothers Day, Valentines Day and graduation time.

Suzy Beard, who owns Suzy B's, a gift and novelty company that recently began operating inside Ditto Consignments, said sales were mixed this season.

"We had a good Christmas, but it fell off a little from last year," Beard said, adding that candles were among her biggest movers.

ShopperTrak, which analyzes retail shopper traffic, said that in-store general merchandise sales fell by about three percent nation-

wide in the week before Christmas, compared to the same week in 2012. Traffic to retail stores - not including online establishments - was down more than 21 percent compared to the same period last year. Analysts said rainy, wet weather in large parts of the country was partly to blame.

Deal said his consignment store has been in its new location for five weeks and the new space, which is about 1,500 square feet larger than his former space on Railroad Ave., has given him more freedom and the ability to showcase more merchandise.

Residents reported long lines at area dollar stores during the Christmas shopping season, but representatives from the corporate offices of Dollar Tree and Dollar General would not comment on quarterly sales ahead of earning reports, which are released in March.

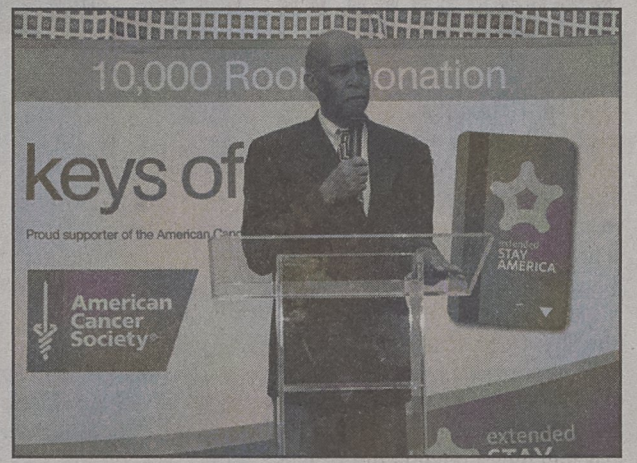
# Herndon spokesperson for hotel chain

Jimmie Herndon is fighting cancer and recently he was a spokesperson for Extended Stay America, the largest company-owned and operated hotel chain in the U.S. - and the American Cancer Society - the largest voluntary health organization in the U.S. - which announced an unprecedented multi-year partnership through which the hotel chain will provide 20,000 overnight stays to cancer patients who must travel from home to receive life-saving treatment.

"When you are sick with cancer and taking treatments, your time should be spent on the many things you need to do to get well," says Herndon, who stayed at the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge in Baltimore while undergoing cancer treatment. "Worrying and being in a negative state can hinder your ability to get well." Adds Herndon, "don't give up, help

is all around you."

In 2012 Hope Lodge provided more than 260,000 nights of free lodging to cancer patients, saving them an estimated \$26 million in hotel costs. To request an Extended Stay America room, cancer patients or their caregivers should contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.



Jimmie Herndon

# Don't let old tree become new kindling

Dry Christmas trees are a common fire hazard after the holidays. Here are some tips on disposing of the yuletide icon.

If it's well into January and you're still gazing upon a live Christmas tree in your living room it's probably time to clean house and rid yourself of what is a well-known fire hazard.

"When those trees get dry it's dangerous because the pine resin becomes flammable," said Kings Mountain Fire Department Chief Frank Burns. Burns said the time to toss the tree is when you notice the needles fall to the floor.

"We haven't had any Christmas tree fires this year,

but we have in the past," Burns said.

He remembers a few years back when a resident in the Bethlehem community kept her tree a little past its prime.

"She was lighting a candle with a stick match," he said. "A piece of the match caught the tree on fire and (she lost her home). It doesn't take much."

Looking to dispose of an old Christmas tree? There are several easy ways to do it, depending on your circumstances.

For most residents of the city, the easiest step is to put the old tree on the curb after, of course, stripping it of any lights and ornaments. City workers will treat it as yard

waste, haul it off to a central facility where it will chipped up for mulch.

The county dump also accepts yard waste, such as leaves, limbs and whole trees. For homeowners on large lots, officials say it's acceptable to just toss the tree into any wooded area.

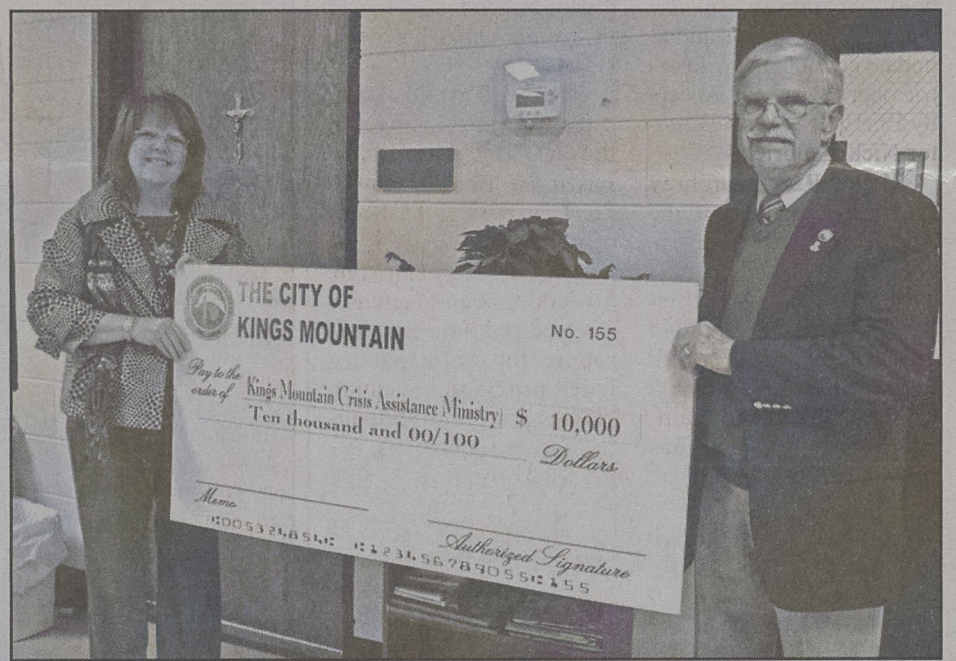
Those who have access to a private pond or lake may dispose of the tree by dumping it there. Trees can provide a good habitat for many species of fish. But dropping a tree into a public lake or pond is considered littering and may result in a citation.

For more information about disposal of old Christmas trees, contact the City of Kings Mountain at (704) 447-8201.

# 'Pleasant Memories' mural dedicated



Members of the Cleveland County Chamber gather for a ribbon cutting of "Pleasant Memories," a three-panel painting of nature scenes by artist Clive Hayes. The public art is a memorial to the late Mary "Alice" Armstrong, the owner of the popular Cup and Saucer Tea Room on King Street. Armstrong was struck and killed by a car in May 2011 at her home near Bessemer City. Joining them are donors to the mural project, members of her family and church friends from Bessemer City First Wesleyan and Long Shoals.



CRISIS MINISTRY GIFT - Mayor Rick Murphrey, right, presents the City of Kings Mountain's check for \$10,000 to the Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry. Iris Frady, Crisis Ministry Director, accepts a copy of the check representing money budgeted for the Ministry.

Photo by ELLIS NOELL

# Widowed Group events

The Widowed Group of Greater Gaston area will hold two events this month. Members and guests will dance to the music of Jim Patterson and "Swing South" of Charlotte who will be playing music from the 50's and 60's Saturday, Jan. 11. Doors open at the Gaston Senior Center at 6 p.m. and admission is \$8. Food will be served.

On Thursday, Jan. 16, nationally known and locally grown comedienne Denise Thomas, whose stage name is Gladys Friday, will perform at Gaston Senior Center at Dallas. There is no admission charge. A covered dish supper will be served and a love offering will be taken. Doors open at 6 p.m.

# Questions about elder care?

Are you caring for an adult? Need advice on what legal documents you need to complete for 2014? Join Attorney Greg McIntyre at the Life Enrichment Center, 110 Life Enrichment Blvd., Shelby on Tuesday, Jan. 21, at 5:30 p.m. To find out. This informational meeting is free of charge. A free sitter service is also available for individuals with dementia. Sitter service reservation is required by Jan 14. Call 704-484-0405.

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