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# Kings Mountain Herald

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108 S. Piedmont Ave.  
Kings Mountain, NC

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## Wal-Mart to begin building in March

DAVE BLANTON

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Wal-Mart and city officials say the retail giant is set to begin construction in March at the site of the old Winn Dixie building, the intersection of King St. and Phifer Rd.

In addition to bringing about 95 jobs to town, the new addition is expected to breathe fresh air into the Kings Mountain retail scene,

where dollar stores, grocery stores and small shops presently dominate. Wal-Mart is anticipating the store to open by late fall.

The Wal-Mart store will be a Neighborhood Market, a scaled down version of the chain's Supercenters, which will focus on groceries, produce and general merchandise, as well as offer a drive-through pharmacy.

Many in Kings Mountain said they've been excited about the popular retail chain's move because they're already loyal Wal-Mart shoppers and now they'll be saved a trip to Gastonia or Shelby.

"It's really a matter of convenience and (saving on) gas money for me," said Shonna McCree, a manager at the Kings Mountain Little Caesars location. "I'll definitely

do most of my basic shopping there."

Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey said city officials are excited that Wal-Mart is coming to town, adding that it will be a bonus to shoppers of all kinds.

"It will keep prices competitive – it will be good for the consumer," he said. "It will also bring a lot of jobs to the community."

While the fates of the Jackson-Hewitt tax preparers' office and the Asian Buffet, both of which currently lease space in the Winn Dixie building, were uncertain, Murphrey said the popular eatery Weiner Works will stay put in the strip mall's parking lot. He also said that the new Wal-Mart will be positioned to face Hwy. 74.

See WAL-MART, 7A



**FIRST KNIGHTS** – Riley Powers, a 2nd grader at East Elementary, is joined by Kings Mountain Rotary Club President Suzanne Amos and Knight of the Guild David Mesimer as students were recognized for exhibiting confidence and discipline. See the story on page 6B.

Photo by DAVE BLANTON

## No gas fee hike on the horizon

ELIZABETH STEWART

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No hike in natural gas fees is expected for city customers in the next two budget years, and possibly not after that, thanks to expansion of gas lines in the city and the recent settlement of a "rate case" involving the city, 16 other municipalities in the two Carolinas, and their supplier.

City council will not pass on the increase it will pay for gas transportation as the result of almost two years of negotiations, including a court case in which settlement discussions started at 28% initially, then got to 22% and then settled at 11%.

"We fought this increase hard," Mayor Rick Murphrey said Tuesday as Energy Director Nick Hendricks presented a progress report also of two major pilot projects – Smart Meters and Fiber Optics – two ambitious projects that Kings Mountain is among the first municipalities in the state to undertake with success.

Hendricks said that Transcontinental Pipeline filed a general rate increase with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

(FERC) Aug. 21, 2012 which would have equated to more than \$4.7 million to the Transco Municipal Group of municipalities who hired Miller, Balis & O'Neal of Washington, DC to represent them in court. The attorney fee was shared among all 17 municipalities and Kings Mountain's cost was \$5,294.19.

Transco filed the rate case due to under recovering on their rate of caused by additional infrastructure for ongoing additional load capacity needs, said Hendricks.

Kings Mountain, through the Williams (Transco) Municipal Group, protested the filing on Sept. 12, 2012 and on Sept. 28, 2012 a 22% rate increase to the city and group was approved with proposed rates subject to refund after a rate case hearing. Council did not increase rates to city customers and absorbed the increase, said Hendricks. Per the settlement, the increases to the city from its supplier will continue until March 2014 when the 11% rate will be effective.

"We did not increase the rate to Kings Mountain customers to account for our

See FEES, 7A

## Still time to enter MLK photo contest

Friday at 5 p.m. is the last day to take your photograph on the theme "Love" to City Hall as an entry in the Dr. Martin Luther King Day contest.

This year's competition is sponsored by the City of Kings Mountain and takes its cue from a quote by the slain civil rights leader: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that." Cash prizes will be awarded to first, second and third place winners in both adult and student divisions.

The winner in first place will win \$150 cash. The prizes will be awarded at a reception/exhibit on Jan. 20 at the Southern Arts Society at the Depot beginning at 6 p.m.

Photographic prints will be accepted as well as those digitally mailed or dropped off at the City Hall to Lynda Maddox or emailed to Ellis Noell, Special Events Director, at [www.cityofkm.com](http://www.cityofkm.com)

A feature of the Dr. Martin Luther King Day observance will be the 17th annual breakfast at 8 a.m. at Bynum Chapel AME Zion Church. The meal is a \$5 donation and the speaker will be Presiding Elder Andrew B. Smoke, Hendersonville District, Blue Ridge Conference.

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Utility customers who are paying late fees will be able to monitor their monthly bills – and save money – with new Smart Meters the city plans to install free to customers city-wide this summer.

The pilot program got underway nearly a year ago and is being tested by 50 residential customers in the Country Club area and by commercial and industrial users on Canterbury Road and Woodlake Parkway.

City of Kings Mountain Energy Services Director Nick Hendricks, in an update to city council, said the program is being well received in the community. By this fall the Smart Grid program will allow all residents to find out online how much water, electricity, and natural

gas they are using.

"Our goal is to be done with everything by fall but we have a few more hurdles

before I come to council with recommendation for a full implementation of the program," said Hendricks.

He began his presentation by saying, "This is the future, and we're cleaning up

See SMART METERS, 2A



City officials show off Smart Meters the city plans to install city-wide this summer. Pictured, left to right, are Dennis Wells, Holly Black, Nick Hendricks, Matthew Dull and Mayor Rick Murphrey.

File photo



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