

Panning for gold? You can...right here in Kings Mountain!

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Could Kings Mountain be the site of another gold rush?

Probably not, but Ted Ford nevertheless hopes to get kids excited about rocks, gems and history by letting them pan for gold at his King Street business. Ford, the longtime owner and operator of KM Pools, said the new venture represents a lifelong interest in precious metals and gemstones like quartz, garnet and ruby.

K.M. Pools and Gem Mining opened about six weeks ago and by April 1 he

and his staff will have a panning trough up and running. Folks of all ages can buy a small or large bucket of unsorted earth and learn how to pan for treasures in raised wooden structure supplied with sanitized water.

He's also offering classes on gems, gem mining and jewelry-making.

The location is already a popular hangout for local geologists and hobbyists. Many of them will be on hand to instruct patrons about panning technique.

Mining and precious metals culture runs deep in the history of Kings Mountain. A

gold rush in the early 1800s brought boom and prosperity to this section of the Piedmont for more than two generations until textile manufacturing eventually began to dominate the economy around the time of the Civil War.

Ford says he buying the raw material for his panning operation from local mining outfits like Foote Mineral and Martin Marietta.

Which kinds of gems are likely to come out of the sifting in this area? Topaz, citrine and amethyst, which are all types of quartzes. And of course mica, which is still mined in the area and is used industrially in such products as paint, cosmetics and computer chips.

The Carolina gold rush may have come and gone more than 150 years ago, but that doesn't mean there aren't small deposits in the rivers and creek beds that dot the area, Ford says. He and other hobbyists have a passion for finding treasures hidden just under the surface and he wants to encourage young folks to learn about gems and precious metals in their backyards and nearby creeks.

"I think it really represents a wonderful opportu-

nity to learn about the world and about local history," he said.

Jack Eaker, a retired geologist at Foote Mineral, visited Ford at his shop last week and the two talked rocks and history. Together they inspected a large brick of mica called book mica that

Eaker said was found north of Shelby.

"I think it will be a lot of fun - there's a lot of interesting finds in the ground in this area," he said.

For Kenneth Cash, who helps Ford manage both the pool and gem businesses, he sees the gem mining store as

kind of a free museum where people can look at fluorite, petrified rocks and even trilobite (an ancient arthropod) fossils.

Cash will also teach a free gemstones class. His wife, Robin, will be teaching a jewelry making class for \$20, which includes all materials.



Jack Stacey, 12, examines a sample of smoky quartz under a magnifying glass at K.M. Pools and Gem Mining.

Photo by DAVE BLANTON

CAUSBY: Director of Elections



Causby's eight year old son Jimmy, pictured above, enjoys taking part in bull riding competitions.

From page 1A

whether bulls or horses.

Dayna's love of horseback riding is how she met her husband, Jack, an experienced farrier, shod her horse.

The family is active in Walls Baptist Church in Bostic. "Ours is a close knit family and we love to do things together, rain or shine," said Dayna. On a recent rainy weekend young Causby couldn't ride bulls, so the family got together for movie night.

SCHOOL BOARD: hears input on superintendent search

From page 1A

For others, the next superintendent should work hard with other administrators too ensure high academic standards for student athletes.

"There's too much focus on sports," said Roy Lockhart, Jr. "The academic expectations we place athletes should be higher."

The public comments served as prelude to a discussion about the results of a recent community survey that sought to find out what folks in Cleveland County were looking for in their next school leader. Superintendent Dr. Bruce Boyles is set to retire June 30.

Scott Murray, a representative from the N.C. School Boards Association (NCSBA), which wrote the survey and is consulting in the candidate search, led the presentation and explained the survey results.

More than 1,100 people took the survey, which consisted of five questions, plus a comment section. The survey was taken by members of the community and

Cleveland County Schools personnel - and the breakdown of their answers was given in the survey results.

"Excellent teachers and staff" topped the list of possible answers from both groups to the question "Please select the FIVE most significant strengths of the Cleveland County Schools." That was followed by "Student achievement" (for the community) and "Supportive community" (for staff).

Community and staff responses were identical when ranking "the FIVE most important areas of skill or expertise that the next superintendent should possess."

"Communication with parents and community," "Educational leadership" and "Interpersonal and public relations skills" topped the list from the both groups.

"This was a high turnout for the surveys, given the size of the community," Murray said. "It's a short survey, but hopefully very effective (in helping you make a choice) down the road."



Carolyn Barringer addresses the Cleveland County Board of Education Monday night. She and others said it was important that the next school leader be able to close the gap between low-achieving and high-achieving students.

The survey results also indicated that members of the community ranked "Experience as a classroom teacher," "Experience in finance, budgets, and acquiring outside funding" as the three most important qualifications of the next school leader. The staff response results mostly mirrored those sentiments.

The survey and the public comments are designed to help the board create a "candidate profile" ahead of consideration of any indi-

vidual application, Murray said.

He said that several have applied for the position, but those applications are being held by the NCSBA until the April 9 deadline has passed. At the point the board will begin the process of vetting attractive candidates for the school system's top job.

Murray also solicited feedback from board members directly and wrote down their individual recommendations.

PATTERSON: Pastor, husband is now KM's new HR director

From page 1A

to 2005.

The City of Kings Mountain is one of the largest employers in town, but Patterson said he's grateful that its workers tend to stay on the job longer than average.

"We're blessed not to have a tremendous turnover rate," he said. "We found

great people for the positions and we've seen them stay in the jobs for a long time."

Those in city government are taking the opportunity to welcome Patterson on board, calling him a "true professional" with a surplus of experience in his field.

"I've known him for many years in the private sector," said Kings Moun-

tain Mayor Rick Murphrey. "We're proud to have him on the staff. He'll do a great job for the city."

Patterson, 61 and soft-spoken, has long been active with local churches, whether it be singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school or serving as a youth coordinator. In fact, he said he was drawn to churches from early age.

"My parents weren't big churchgoers... but my sister and I liked going. We would go to whichever ones were within walking distance," he said. "I got to where I went to any church that had a youth group and would let me sing."

Patterson was a longtime member of First Presbyterian Church until about 12

years ago when he decided he would do what he always knew he should do and become a pastor himself. He enrolled in a commissioned lay pastor program and soon took the reins of Dixon Presbyterian Church on Dixon School Rd. There, he presides over a congregation of about 80 people.

Outside of his busy schedule as a city administrator and a pastor, Patterson said he and his wife enjoy reading, movies and spending time with their grandchildren, who live in Lawndale and Shelby. He's partial to James Patterson mysteries and to inspirational books.

"Faith is a huge part of my life," he said.

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