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Casino project leaders tout impact as positive



PROJECT LEADERS – David Dear, left, a leader in county economic development for many years, and Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey endorse the casino/resort complex proposed by the Catawba Indian Nation.

Photo by LIB STEWART

Cite potential increased jobs, utilities revenue to city

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Project Schoolhouse – that was the original tag for a major economic development project that began in January 2013 by the Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership working in collaboration with other county and city officials and announced last November as the Catawba Indian casino and resort complex.

City and county officials embraced the project's potential impact on a county with a 7.9

percent seasonally adjusted unemployment rate. The developers promised 4,000 jobs, a new revenue source for a cash-strapped state and no incentives from the county or from Kings Mountain, where the Catawba Nation is eyeing a site for a resort destination on Dixon School Road off I-85.

"Neither the county or Kings Mountain will pay any incentives if the project is successful and in 35 plus years in county government and economic development I had never heard that statement from a developer,"



This artist rendering of the proposed casino shows what the project may look like when completed.

said former county manager David Dear. The developers will also pay for road improvements, the widening and on and off ramps, and the project would

See CASINO SUPPORT, 7A

Opponents seek support



OPPOSITION – Cynthia and Adam Forcade, seen here addressing a crowd at East Gold St. Wesleyan Church on Thursday evening, have been outspoken opponents of a proposed casino complex slated to be built just south of Kings Mountain. Photo by DAVE BLANTON

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A group that aims to stop a Catawba Indian casino from coming to Kings Mountain gathered Thursday in hopes of garnering more public support for its cause.

The information session, held at East Gold Street Wesleyan Church, drew about 60 people, who heard claims by members of the Kings Mountain Awareness Group that casinos strangle local economies and are an affront to Christian values.

"Gambling is a taxation on the poor," said Wes Brown, pastor of Bessemer City's First Wesleyan Church. "Gambling undermines philanthropy. The mere act of gambling flies in the face of the values of hard work. It's wanting to get something for nothing."

Brown also said that more and more people in this country are gambling and paying moral and financial cost for it.

"It's a \$550 billion a year obsession in America," he said.

Since its founding in February, the Kings Mountain Awareness Group has sought to reach the community with data and research that they say are evidence of the detrimental effects a casino would bring to Kings Mountain and the people

See CASINO OPPONENTS, 7A



Danica and Wesley Smith, along with their parents Calista and Rodney, and their cousin Jacob Grier, were among a group of 30,000 that enjoyed the Easter egg roll on the White House lawn in Washington D.C. recently. Read all about it on page 4B.

Barrett beat the odds Set to graduate June 7

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Alec Barrett, 18, beat the odds and on June 7 he will grin from ear to ear when he walks across the stage at John Gamble Stadium to receive his high school diploma.

At the age of 18 months Alec had not said the two words every new mother and father want to hear – "mama" or "daddy."

His mother knew something was wrong.

Robin Crisp had taken him to several doctors and finally at the age of 3 at Duke University Medical Center she got the devastating diagnosis that no parent wants to hear.

The toddler was diagnosed with Pervasive Development Disorder: Not Otherwise Specified (PDD: NOS). In other words, he was autistic. Doctors said he would never mature mentally or physically beyond the age of 6 and would surely never get a full high school education.

Sixteen years ago autism was not a common household word as it is today with 1 in every 68 children – mostly boys – being diagnosed each year.

"We've all learned a lot since 1998 when Alec was 1 of 300 chil-

dren diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder," said Mrs. Crisp. The number of children with autism spectrum disorder has grown to disturbing levels which has changed diagnostic practices and increased public awareness. Graduation is always a big deal for students but even a bigger deal for Alec Barrett.

He is full of surprises.

It took eight tries for Alec to get his learner's permit recently but he mastered that test too and his Mom is teaching him to drive a Honda Civic. He works an hour after school each day weighing bulk candy and restocking vegetables at Rhodesdale Farms and the icing on the cake is that he has a date for the senior prom with Miss KM 2012 Kristin Boone.

Robin enrolled Alec in the SCATES program at Bethware School at age 3. The program was

See BARRETT, 8A



Alec Barrett

Voters to hit the polls May 6

Kings Mountain voters will join their Cleveland County neighbors at the polls Tuesday, May 6, to vote in Democratic and Republican Primaries and choose nominees for the general election in November.

The polls are already open for early voting in Kings Mountain at the Jacob S. Mauney Memorial Library, Kings Mountain North Precinct, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday – April 30, May 1, and May 2 from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. and on Saturday, May 3, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

The polls will open at 6:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 6, close at 7:30 p.m. at KM North Precinct at Mauney Library (enter from Harris Funeral Home back parking lot) and KM South Precinct at the H. Lawrence Patrick Senior Life & Conference Center, E. King Street.

Grover citizens will vote Tuesday at Grover Town Hall, 207 Mulberry Road; Bethware voters will cast ballots at Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1017 Bethlehem Road; Oak Grove area voters will vote at Oak Grove Baptist Church fellowship hall, 1022 Oak Grove Road, and Waco community voters will cast ballots at Waco Community Building, 200 S. Main Street, Waco.

Kings Mountain voters will help nominate the GOP contender for US Senator where former Shelby mayor Ted Alexander is running in a field of eight candidates including Thom Tillis, Jim Snyder, Edward Karin, Mark Harris, Heather Grant, Alex Lee Bradshaw, and Greg Brannon. Incumbent Democrat Kay Hagan is opposed by William Curtis Stewart Jr. and Ernest Reeves.

In the US House of Representatives, District 10 incumbent Republican Patrick McHenry is challenged by Richard Lynch. Libertarian candidates for the District 10 House seat are Sean Haugh and Tim D'Annunzio. Tate MacQueen is the Democrat contender in November.

Democrats Colin McWhirter and John Robert Bridges

See VOTERS, 7A

Drop-out rate down; graduation dates set

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The Cleveland County Board of Education heard a report Monday night that indicates the county's schools are making improvements in both their drop-out numbers and discipline incidents.

Dr. Stephen Fisher, the school system's assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, presented the results of the 145-page report, which is compiled annually by the North Carolina Department of Instruction. He explained that administrators are looking for correlation between school crime and violence, suspensions and dropouts to academic performance.

System-wide, there were 2,964 short-term suspen-

sions in 2012-13. That number fell by 548 from the previous year. Long-term suspensions also fell, from 34 to 26 during the same time span. In fact, the number of short-term suspensions has been falling consistently since the 2006-2007 school year, which saw 4,557 short-term suspensions.

Meanwhile the drop-out rate fell by about one percent from 2011-12 to 2012-2013.

Fisher also explained that administrators have put in place a number of strategies to continue to improve the aggregate numbers, including increased mentoring, a pre-K through 12 priority of student graduation, high

See SCHOOL BOARD, 7A



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