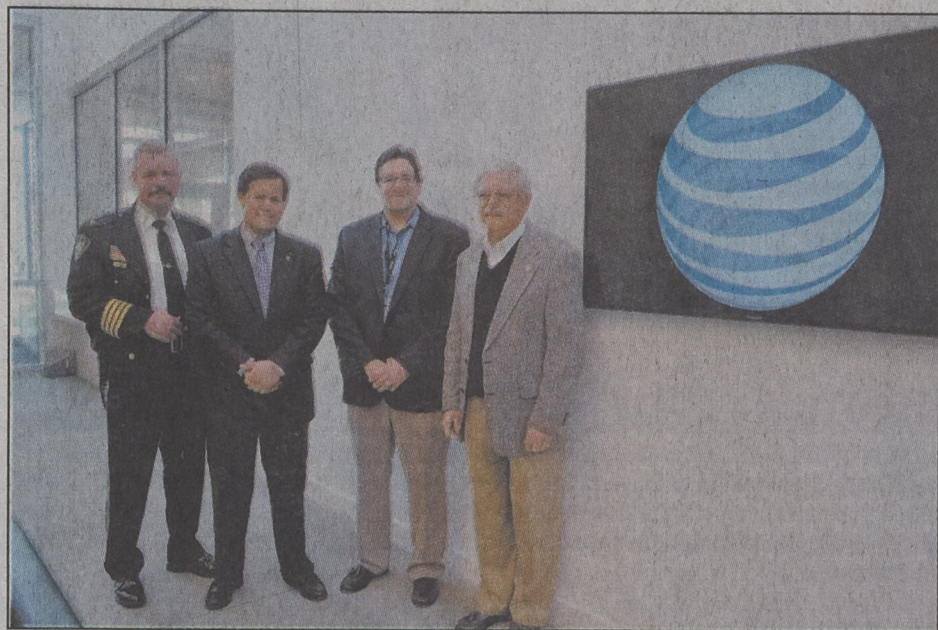


BUSINESS



TOUR AT&T DATA CENTER – Chief of Police Melvin Proctor, left, Carlos Sanchez and Marcus Hassen, AT&T officials, and Mayor Rick Murphrey tour the completed phase of an anticipated 14-year \$851M project in the Kings Mountain Data Center Park. Two years ago AT&T announced the projected 10-year economic impact of the development would be \$935M and the hiring of over 100 associates during a 12-14 year period.

photo by ELLIS NOELL

'Smoke Shop' hopes to tap into e-cig market



E-cigarette supplies line the shelves at "Smoke Shop" on York Rd.

photo by DAVE BLANTON

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Trupti Desai considers herself an "American success story." When she moved to New Jersey from her native India in 1997, she had to borrow \$50 to buy some clothes that were more suitable for her new country. Within a few years, though, she was thriving, having bought two convenience stores.

Desai said she didn't get tired of the retail world or of being an entrepreneur, but she did get tired of New Jersey.

"It was too much traffic," she said last week at her new KM business, which is called "Smoke Shop." "Too much hustle and bustle. This is a much nicer, quieter part of the country, I think." Desai is hoping to capitalize on a new kind of product that is seeing a surge in popularity these days: electronic cigarettes.

While not a smoker herself, she says she was careful in doing the research about that market in this area and found that there's not a standalone shop that focuses on e-cigarettes and other to-

bacco-related accoutrements within 10 miles of hers. She also says she's still learning about the rapidly expanding product line of gadgets, batteries and varying flavors that are used to help smokers transition from conventional cigarettes. Her store, which is located close to the corner of King St. and York Rd., sells flavors for e-cigs like juicy peach, pomegranate, strawberry, menthol, raspberry, mango and watermelon, among others. "Smoke Shop" also sells a big line of ornate pipes, loose tobacco, cigarette-making machines, incense, unique wallets, body jewelry and cigars, complete with a small walk-in humidifier.

Desai is also expecting to be set up as an N.C. Education Lottery retailer by Dec. 1. She said that business has been brisk and she's already planning to expand her line of e-cigarette devices, for which she's already installed new shelf space.

Desai also sells body oils with scents such as sage, coconut and soda pop, and burning oils in different scents like lavender, frankin-

cense and jasmine.

The store's hours at the moment are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 to 8 p.m. on Saturdays. Desai said she's still settling in and, based on traffic, may tighten her hours to 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on most days.

Wine shop toasts one-year anniversary

The popular Gold St. business also announces plans to partner with its restaurant neighbor Gentle Moon Café

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When Grapes in a Glass opened its doors a year ago, owner Kenny Richardson said he knew that many people never thought it would last.

A wine shop? In Kings Mountain?

But in that time it's done more than merely survive. The cozy shop on E. Gold St. has thrived under the strength of wine-tastings, beer-tastings and fun parties featuring live music, and has become a major weekend and evening destination for vino lovers in town. And last Thursday, less than a month after expanding into a neighboring space, Kenny capped off what he called a great first year by throwing a one-year anniversary party for his business.

So many of his customers turned out for the bash to nosh on wraps, cheese, grapes and dessert items that the store was filled close to capacity leading up to a big champagne toast, where Richardson thanked the city and its people for helping make his dream come true.

"I truly couldn't have done it without you," he told the big crowd.

It was a big week for Grapes in Glass. On Tuesday, it hosted a birthday party for former mayor Scott Neisler, which drew in more than 100 revelers. Then, on Saturday, another big bash as many came to surprise Richardson for his own birthday.

On the night of the business' one-year anniversary, Richardson announced another new development. He'll soon be tearing down a wall that separates the wine shop from its new neighbor to the left, the Gentle Moon Café, so the two can form a partnership. Gentle Moon Café, which is owned by Betsy and



Owner Kenny Richardson thanked his customers and Kings Mountain for his success in his first year of business in town.



A custom cake helped sweeten the wine shop's one-year anniversary party last week.

photo by DAVE BLANTON

Dan Kukulka and opened in October, specializes in soups, sandwiches, herbal teas and smoothies with an eye toward healthier options.

The restaurant is hosting a Tea Time and Talk on the first Tuesday of every month from 7 to 10 p.m. It will feature guest speakers each month chatting about becoming healthy. And every Thursday night from 6 to 8 p.m. it's hosting a knitting and crochet group. It's a group session open to all ages and all levels of learning.

The Kukulkas operated a pizzeria in the Buffalo, N.Y., area for 30 years before retiring and selling the business a few years ago. They moved to Kings Mountain to be near some family members a few years ago before jumping back into the restaurant business.

Parking just got a little friendlier for downtown

businesses along that stretch of Gold St. What was six parallel parking spaces were last week converted to 10 diagonal spaces. The transformation came about somewhat serendipitously when water line repairs shuttered the street for about a week this spring. One day during that time, "Grapes" owner Richardson parked in front his store diagonally. City employee Ellis Noell followed suit and had a brainstorm. He snapped a picture and pressed city administrators to carve out diagonal lines to replace the parallel spots.

The wine bar offers free wi-fi and an inventory of wines that span the globe and micro-brewed beer from Asheville to New York State. It also sells a host of accessories, like bottle stoppers, candles, mulling spices, gift baskets large and small and cordless wine openers.



Future home of O'Reilly Auto Parts

Workers toil on the future site of a new O'Reilly Auto Parts store on Shelby Rd. Creative Structures, out of Knoxville, Tenn., is the general contractor for the project, which got under way in late October. The job's superintendent Steve Holder said last week workers were prepping the slab floor so concrete could be poured. Holder, who has been

working with the construction company for 12 years, said that in that time period he's seen the auto parts store grow from 900 locations in the U.S. to 4,000. It also has two locations in Gastonia and one in Shelby. The job is scheduled to be finished in February, with a projected store opening date of around March.

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Classic Caesar Salad \$6.00 • w/Grilled Chicken \$8.00
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Mushroom Swiss 8 oz. Hamburger \$9.00
(All of the above come with choice of fries, deep fry chips, onion rings, fresh vegetables, coleslaw)

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New businesses getting a start in Kings Mountain

These corporations registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State this month: A New Beginning of Life Outreach Ministry, 412 Tate Terrace. Kenneth J. Pflieger, AIA, Architect, PLLC, 1004 Joanne Court. Smith Family Group, Inc., 118 Mill Creek Drive.