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Local woman who aided in manhunt says heart goes out to victims

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The attention of a shocked nation was focused briefly on Cleveland County late last week as authorities closed in on a man suspected of a horrendous mass shooting that left nine dead in a Charleston church.

At the center of that focus was Debbie Dills, an unassuming office manager for a Kings Mountain florist who spotted 21-year-old Dylann Roof on her way to work Thursday morning. She quickly notified authorities and Roof was apprehended without incident in neighboring Shelby around 11 a.m.

As the national media descended on both Shelby and Kings Mountain in the aftermath of the exciting capture, Dills quickly found herself in front of CNN, NBC and Fox News televi-

sion cameras and a sought-after interview subject, including a live satellite interview with ABC's "Good Morning America" Friday.

Dills, for her part, was used to watching the news – not being the news.

"It was a little overwhelming ... it was awkward," Dills said while standing behind Frady's Florist reception desk Monday morning. "It was something I've never been through before."

By Friday afternoon, calls were still pouring in to the King Street florist owned by Todd and Rhonda Frady. Members of the press were looking for interviews



DYLAN STORM ROOF

and some both in the Charleston area and locally were calling to congratulate Dills, send her flowers, or both. (Dills and Frady are requesting that any flowers or other gifts be instead be directed to Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston). She has also spoken briefly with a nephew of one of the victims.

After an exhausting 24 hours, Dills said that by that point she was making herself scarce. Besides, her biggest concern was for those killed and wounded in the



DYLAN STORM ROOF ..arrested in Shelby

attack at the AME church, one of the oldest black churches in the country. She said her heart was going out to the lives shattered in what appears to be a racially motivated attack by a Columbia, S.C., native with white supremacist leanings.

"Really, the whole time the news people were here I was thinking 'this isn't about me,'" Dills said. "The focus should be down there. This was about nine people sitting in a bible study. I understand he needed to be caught, but my thoughts were always with the victims. It was such a terrible tragedy."

Roof was charged Friday with killing nine people during a prayer meeting at the iconic Charleston church on Wednesday night. A Charleston judge set his bond at \$1 million.

According to police, he toted a .45 caliber handgun



Debbie Dills, right, poses for a photo with her boss, Todd Frady, at Frady's Florist in Kings Mountain. . Dills and Frady made the initial call Thursday morning to KMPD Officer Shane Davis who relayed to Shelby police that the suspect's black Hyundai was traveling on US Highway 74 west. Shelby police arrested Roof without incident and on Thursday evening took him to the Shelby Municipal Airport and flown back to Charleston, SC.
 Photo by DAVE BLANTON

to the church that evening and quietly participated in bible study for about an hour before opening fire on

churchgoers. One survivor – uninjured in the attack – said the gunmen was

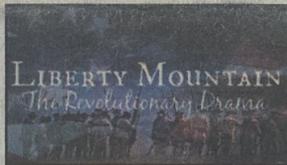
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Revolutionary drama opens Friday night

By Caleb Ryan Sigmon

The costumes have gotten their last few stitches. The lights have been programmed. The stage has been swept. The weapons are loaded and ready for battle. It is time for "Liberty Mountain" to have a triumphant Opening Weekend!

Playwright Robert Inman (former newscaster on Charlotte's WBTV and author of numerous books, movies and plays) has skillfully crafted this captivating



story about the Battle of Kings Mountain. It features live onstage fighting, a wide-ranging scope of settings, adrenaline-rushing music and a story that will yank on your heartstrings. Even few new surprises and special effects that weren't in last year's premiere!

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Revolutionary drama a larger, powerful show

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Returning audiences to the Revolutionary drama "Liberty Mountain" should expect a larger, more powerful show with a few new twists. The story features new additions by playwright Bob Inman that were not in last Fall's pre-

miere. Half of the cast is 100 percent new and the other half is from last year but all are in new roles with the exception of a few. Jeremy Homesley is reprising his role as Major Patrick Ferguson. A few \$100 tickets are available for Friday night's opening which is an event mostly

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Second Baptist pastor retiring

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Personable and popular Rev. James Thaddeus Lochridge Jr., 66, is retiring June 30 from Second Baptist Church and returning to what he calls his roots.

"I grew up in the Tropics with the Filipinos as a son of missionary parents and the old saying 'what goes around comes around,' could apply to me," said Lochridge, who will be a pensioner (the name for retirees) in Aruba, an island 19 miles long and six miles wide, 15 miles from Vene-

zuela, and a nearly four hour flight from Atlanta.

Lochridge said he had been praying about retirement for at least two years and his brother, Billy, called from Atlanta one day with the news that he believed God was calling James and Belinda to Aruba. Billy said he needed his brother to supervise his property there and the building of an apartment complex.

"Billy said he was sitting at his sewing machine (he's a well known dress designer who fashions wedding dresses, etc.) and said that he wanted his brother

and sister-in-law to retire in Aruba. For 27 years their parents, Mary and the Rev. James Lochridge Sr., were missionaries to the Philippines.

The Kings Mountain Lochridges are advertising their spacious home for sale and disposing of furnishings. Then, they will pack their clothes and head for the airport.

"We're getting excited," said Preacher Lochridge who said he will miss the congregation he has served nine years, the longest tenure during his ministry.

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Rev. JAMES T. LOCHRIDGE JR. – "My best today is acceptable unto the Lord, but my best tomorrow should be better than it was today because I should have learned something"

City Council adopts \$39.3 M budget

Without comment from the public, Kings Mountain City Council last Tuesday unanimously adopted a \$39.3 M budget for fiscal year 2015-16.

"This is a tight, lean budget which focuses on infrastructure upgrades and also expansion to meet future



Marilyn Sellers
 City Manager

economic development needs that will bring additional revenues to the city along with job creation," said City Manager Marilyn Sellers.

The only addition from the original budget proposed by Sellers at a work session with council recently was

her announcement of a 2% cost of living raise to city employees.

This the third and last fiscal year that Kings Mountain residents will pay a 7 1/2% increase in water and sewer to pay back the state for the interest free \$33 M loan the city borrowed for major improvements, in-

cluding running a water line from Moss Lake to town. There are no increases in property tax, electric base rate, natural gas rate, landfill, recycling or storm water services.

"I'm really excited about the economic growth we will be experiencing in the

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"Let freedom sing" at El Bethel Sunday

El Bethel United Methodist Church will present "Let Freedom Sing," a patriotic gospel/inspirational singing open to the public on Sunday, June 28, at 5 p.m.

A love offering will be ac-

cepted on behalf of the mission team's work, a safe water project, for Medio Queso, Costa Rica. Those attending are invited to take their favorite food pick-up to share with everyone after the program.

Professional art handlers, above, move the Depression-era painting, a Revolutionary War scene of the Battle of Kings Mountain, back to its original home, the old US Post Office, now the home of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum.
 Photo by DAVE BLANTON



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