

Summer Camp at the YMCA Firefighter King retiring July 19 not ready to turn in his gear yet



Volunteer Robert Wingo gets a hand from daughter and YMCA employee Ranata Wingo dishing out hot dogs at the YMCA Friday to help kick off the Y's Summer Camp. Camp runs from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays.



Kids and counselors brave the sultry heat to partake in a dance game Friday on the first day of the YMCA's summer camp. Over 80 were already registered on day one and registration remains opens.



Campers get in a frenzied game of Minnows and Sharks at YMCA baseball field on the first day of camp Friday. The Y has partnered with Cleveland County Schools to provide healthy meals every day. Camp also includes swimming, daily devotion, arts and crafts, plenty of exercise and family fun time.



Kings Mountain YMCA Senior Program Director Amanda Little

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A firefighter all his adult life, Captain Bobby King is retiring July 10 after 40 years with the Kings Mountain Fire Department but he won't turn in his turnout gear yet.

"The Fire Department has been his life and he plans to come back as a volunteer and work some part time," said Chief Frank Burns.

In fact the name King has been synonymous with the Fire Department and the Police Department in Kings Mountain.

At one time Bobby and three of his brothers, Tommy, the late David King, the late Jimmy King and Joe King all volunteered at the fire department. His father, Ellis, was active in the police department and fire department, Tommy King was a Sergeant in KMPD and retired as a county magistrate, and Joe King, also a former KM policeman, retired as a deputy in the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department. In later years Bobby saw his nephew, T. J. King, become a full-time fireman with KMFD.

"I have learned a lot from my uncle and the history of the fire department," said T. J. King.

Bobby's late sister Barbara Wright was a secretary in the Gaston County Police Department and his other two sisters, Janelle Wood of Bessemer City



CAPTAIN BOBBY KING

and Susan King of Kings Mountain followed other careers.

King said that he will always remember fires that happened during Christmas holidays. Back in the late 1980s fireman were called to a home on Branch Street where the mother tried to save two children. The Christmas tree fell in the living room, adding to the disaster, where an 8-year-old child had run from the bedroom in an attempt to get out of the burning house.

The St. Matthew's Lutheran Church fire happened on Christmas and other fires he recalled were the Margrace Mill fire, Comfort Inn fire, Pine Manor Apartments fire at Christmas and the Pauline Mill fire.

The late Gene Tignor hired Bobby King at the old fire department beside the old city hall on Piedmont Avenue (the site of the current police department.) His gear: boots, a rubber raincoat, a helmet

and orange rubber gloves. "We had a time trying to maneuver a fire truck in that bay," he recalled.

KMFD had no smoke detectors until 1980 and since then firemen have installed over 4,000 in homes in the community.

"Everything has changed, all for the best," says King who graduated from Kings Mountain High in 1972 and went to work for the city electric department for 18 months. In 1975 he and Jerry White helped build the Kings Mountain Fire Museum which holds the oldest fire trucks and much more memorabilia. Fire Station No. 1 was constructed beside City Hall in 1979 and a satellite station went up in the western section of the city in September 2002.

"We used to call those old uniforms we wore shrink wraps," laughed Bobby, who said they were made of cotton duck back in 1977-78.

King started volunteering at the fire department in 1975. Before becoming a full time fireman, he worked for the late city councilman Corbet Nicholson at City Heating & Air, and later at Eaton Corporation. He was also a reserve deputy sheriff for five years.

Officer of the Year, Firefighter of the Year twice, and KM Jaycees Firefighter of the Year, King rose through the ranks in KMFD from

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July 4 in KM: Music, merriment, militia battles and fireworks



Kings Mountain will celebrate the 4th of July with a "Revolutionary 4th" celebration at the Walking Track Park in Kings Mountain. This year the festival will feature a concert and the largest fireworks show

between Charlotte and Asheville. This Independence Day event begins Saturday, July 4, at 2 p.m. with the opening of the Colonial Era Living History Encampment next to the Mayor Rick Murphrey Children's Park on Cleveland Avenue (Hwy 161), near the YMCA.

Local Revolutionary War militias will gather at the historic encampment and participate with musket and cannon fire demonstrations, a children's militia muster, and games. Visitors are invited to learn and sign the Declaration of Independence. Colonial craft-making skills will be shared throughout the encampment with opportunities to talk to all the re-enactment groups. The encampment will also be open Sunday from 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.

At 6 p.m., "The Chris Marks Band" will perform at the Neisler Stage at the park with a concert featuring country and southern rock hits.

Beginning at 9 p.m., there will be a patriotic opening ceremony with a parade featuring the Loch Norman Pipe Band and the colonial militias led by Mayor Rick Murphrey. Cannon nightfire will signal a mock battle between the British and the patriot militias fighting up the "mountain". The Patriot's victory signal will start the "Revolutionary 4th" fireworks show.

Visitors are encouraged to bring a blanket or folding chairs to the field within the walking track at the park. Relax and enjoy the live music with fireworks beginning at 9:30 p.m. Sponsors for the "Revolutionary 4th" include the City of Kings Mountain and Tourism Development Authority, 238 Cherokee Grill, Bojangle's, and Gaston Rentals.

Check out next week's Herald for details about the fireworks extravaganza orchestrated by longtime pyrotechnician Scott Neisler.

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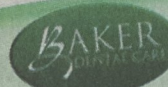
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