

Pride of Kinston, Inc.

2008-2009 Report to the Board of Directors

As Pride of Kinston neared the end of its 2008-2009 fiscal year, Kinston became one of 10 United States towns and cities to be named a 2009 All-America City. It was a great honor and a welcomed shot in the arm for a city "on the way."

The written application submitted to National Civic League judges in March 2009 contained references to Pride of Kinston's work in the downtown. Our organization was cited as a ... "*stellar example of including all citizens in its mission....*" noting that Pride has a board of 22 members, but has included another 28 citizens, non-board members on its various committees. "*Pride is making huge strides to help develop our economy, "Rebuild the Hope," bring jobs to Kinston, improve our appearance and overall quality of life for all citizens.*"

It was also during this year that Pride of Kinston celebrated its 25th anniversary. It came into existence April 1984 and has worked hard ever since to enliven and enrich the center business district of Kinston. Pride's birthday party was held April 2, 2009 in Neuseway Park attended by hundreds of partisans who wished us well.

As in the past, Pride of Kinston lived within its budget during the year, spending less than had been budgeted. The approved 2008-2009 budget was set at \$485,147. As of June 30, 2009, the expenditures were at the \$460,697 level. Those savings plus carry over funds in the four main program budgets gave us a 22% fund balance ratio as we began the 2009-2010 year with an approved budget of \$381,505.

In addition, Pride had accumulated some \$71,000 in special project/restricted funds to support a South Queen Street re-development initiative, funds for a pedestrian bridge project and funds collected through a special Round Up program devoted to downtown development projects within the Façade Grant program.

Downtown Business Development

Early in the year (2008-2009), Pride conducted a survey to document the level of construction and renovation projects underway in the downtown...and revealed no fewer than 16 projects in progress at that time, indicating a substantial investment in Kinston's future.

The September 2008 survey was a follow-up to a similar survey conducted by Pride in August 2007 which documented 17 projects in construction reflecting some \$3 million over a two-year period in renovations and new inventories. And when one adds the \$3.5 million appropriated for the new Civil War Museum on Queen Street, it is clear that downtown Kinston is on the path of a true recovery.

Included in the list of projects was Pride's construction of new parking facilities (312-314 N. Queen) to serve the Community Health Center and area businesses, a new florist (130 W. North), expansion of a photography studio and business (127 W. Gordon), two new antique stores (304 & 306 N. Herritage), three new restaurants (212-214 N. Herritage, 100 S. Queen and 115 W. North), two new salons (108 E. Gordon & 127 N. Queen), a new television studio (203 N. Queen), and an automobile dealership (418 N. Queen).

Subsequent to the Fall review, other new businesses were opened: a women's clothing consignment and jewelry company at 218 N. Herritage, a psychological services clinic at 304 N. Queen, a new salon at 107 W. Gordon and the blockbuster Mother Earth Brewing Company.

Mother Earth President and CEO Trent Mooring announced Feb. 16, 2009 that he and business partner Stephen Hill would be renovating a former grocery store and drive-in drug store at North and Herritage Street to establish a new microbrewery. The initial estimate was for a \$1.6 million project. (Currently the project is expanded to four buildings on North Street occupying half the block between Herritage and Queen Street, making it one of the largest downtown renovation projects in recent history.)

Downtown Promotion

In 2007 Pride coordinated a unifying strategy involving a number of partners to promote downtown Kinston as the place for Christmas holiday shopping. It was and is called Holly Day Celebration and begins with the lighting of a community Christmas tree on the lawn of the Lenoir County Courthouse. Regional television personalities have served as emcees for the tree lighting event.

The second annual Holly Day Celebration was held Dec. 2, 2008 and drew a large crowd of adults and children participants...including four Walt Disney princesses. Many shops and restaurants remained open for the 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm street party. Childrens activities were provided by Parks and Recreation, Queen Street Methodist Church, the Neuse Regional Library and the Community Council for the Arts. Pride purchased radio advertising to urge regional listeners to do their Christmas shopping in Kinston.

Partners with Pride were the Kinston-Lenoir Chamber of Commerce, the Community Council for the Arts, the Neuse Regional Library, the Gordon Street Christian Church, the Queen Street Methodist Church, the City of Kinston and Lenoir County.

Holly Day on the Neuse will continue Dec. 1, 2009 for the Christmas season.

Through a partnership with Fairway outdoor billboard company, we also promote downtown shopping and events on colorful boards located strategically in and around Kinston.

South Queen Initiative

With the enthusiastic help of Kinston Mayor O.A. (Buddy) Ritch and a number of private donors, Pride continued to push for a refurbished South Queen Street corridor, one of the major entrances into Kinston.

The first phase of the project is to create a new and dramatic entrance into historic Maplewood-Cedar Grove-Hebrew cemeteries off Queen Street. A major step in that goal was taken when a stretch of vacant and dilapidated buildings on the east side of Queen Street, beginning at the intersection with South Street, were removed.

This opened up a view of the historic cemeteries from Queen Street for the first time in nearly 100 years. Efforts to acquire the remaining structure at the corner of Shine and Queen Streets to complete the vista and to make way for further planning are underway.

Earlier in the summer, a Pride intern Brooke Jones, student at NCSU's School of Design, led a group of student volunteers in the Erasing the Lines program to install new landscaping in portions of the cemeteries.

Further down at the intersection of Springhill and Queen Streets, 300 truckloads of earth, donated to Pride by Spirit AeroSystems, were distributed atop an empty lot in order to design and build a new All America City park at the entrance into the downtown. The project continues under the auspices of Pride's Design Committee.

The Pedestrian Bridge Project

Pride and the Kinston Waterfront – Now! task force were poised to unveil a public subscription campaign in the Fall of 2008 to help raise funds for a pedestrian bridge over the Neuse River connecting Neuseway Nature Center to Kinston's shops and restaurants.

When the financial markets nearly collapsed, sending the US economy into a tailspin, it was decided that the timing was not right for such a drive. Original paintings of the Neuse by Kinston artist Juliet Barrus are planned as emblems for the campaign.

As noted in earlier communications, artists and the engineering firm of Kinley-Horn & Associates have been selected to manage the first phases of the project. A pedestrian bridge connecting two popular spots in Kinston is seen as an economic driver for downtown, and makes for easier access to the nature center which now attracts 80,000 or more visitors each year.

Announcements will be made in the near future regarding continuation of the project.

Other Highlights of the Year:

- **Sand in the Streets outdoor concerts**

Probably no other single project has earned as much community support as Pride’s Sand in the Streets outdoor summer concerts. The series has grown from two single concerts in 2004 and 2005 to a series of multiple events each year attracting throngs of music fans from throughout the region to downtown Kinston and the newly named Allen Pearson Park.

The events have become known as “Kinston’s front porch.” Not only do the fans, many with young children, show up to listen to the music, but they also come to mingle and chat with friends and neighbors, often acquaintances they haven’t seen in some time.

Sand in the Streets now serves as a platform for other community issues: the 2005 concert donated its sales proceeds to the Lenoir County chapter of the American Red Cross to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina. The concerts have hosted military appreciation nights, honored Pride board of directors, Kinston Rotarians, held an Off to School night and for three years, the concerts were used to launch the annual United Way campaign in the community.

For the past two years, Pride has hosted a Thursday night concert to help kick off the annual Festival on the Neuse produced by the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce.

Local and regional businesses and corporations, the Kinston – Lenoir County Tourism Development Authority, and volunteers, stepped forward to help make these concerts available to the public free of charge.

The 2008 concert line-up (which straddled two fiscal years) was as follows:

- April 25 The Hip Pocket Band
- June 12 Chairman of the Board
- June 26 Jackie Gore & Legends of Beach
- July 10 Liquid Pleasure
- July 24 The Grass Cats
- July 31 The Embers
- Aug. 14 Band of Oz

•
Kinston 8000: Run for the River
March 28, 2009

Another event which attracted large crowds – runners from throughout North Carolina, volunteers, sponsors and bystanders – was the fourth annual Run for the River, held March 28, 2009.

It was a repeat performance for the top two male runners in the 4.97 mile race: Devin Swann of Raleigh came in first with a hot time of 24:18; and Ryan Woods of Boone came in second with a time of 25:43. Swann and Woods were the top two runners in the 2008 race. The top female runner, Heather Lee—member of the Campbell University faculty—was another two-time winner. She ran this years race at 31:54, and she was the top female racer in the 2008 Run for the River.

Like Sand in the Streets, Run for the River relies on sponsorships and volunteers, the ingredients which make for success.

Appearance of Downtown

The appearance of downtown Kinston is a primary concern for Pride and our Design Committee: the natural appearance as well as the physical appearance of downtown buildings. In that regards, Pride undertook the following initiatives:

During 2008-2009, Pride awarded nine façade grants totaling \$17,360.60. Recipients were:

• Bunch's Grill	\$2,962.52
• The Gate	1,556.44
• Photographic Expressions	2,000.00
• The Folded Napkin	2,000.00
• The Briary	1,425.00
• Our Picnic Basket	2,000.00
• Bobby Davis Shop	2,000.00
• The Clothing Warehouse	1,416.64
• The Right Angle	2,000.00

Concerning our natural environment, Pride purchased, planted with the help of Kinston's 2009 Master Gardeners Class, and then paid the City of Kinston to install 12 hanging baskets to line Herritage Street's shopping district. The lush foliage in the baskets adds a measure of beauty to the street. As the fiscal year ended, the committee voted to purchase 12 more for installation during 2009-2010.

The committee also refurbished with new plants the entrance to the newly-named Allen Pearson Park, as well as installed plantings around the new stage erected in the park to host Sand in the Streets and other outdoor events. On Arbor Day, the committee oversaw the planting of two new trees in the park, donated by Wheat Swamp Landscaping service.

The Home Gardeners garden club members joined with Pride to refurbish planters along Queen Street and Herritage Street during the year.

On April 25, 2009, Pride joined forces with hundreds of volunteers to host a major Downtown Clean Up Day. The event was given a major boost by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, celebrating its denomination's community service day. Members of the congregation joined with hundreds of other volunteers to mow grass, pick up debris and remove underbrush along the Neuse River bank.

Clean Up Day activities ranged from the Mitchelltown neighborhood, to the downtown business district, to the Martin Luther King Boulevard, making the event the most ambitious of all the Clean Up days hosted by Pride.

Another volunteer clean up project of note occurred when North Lenoir High School students belonging to AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) spent several October 2008 weekends with Pride to clean out several overgrown and cluttered alleys in downtown.

Summary

This report by no means includes all activities and services provided in Pride of Kinston's 2008-2009 fiscal year. We have attempted, however, to pinpoint many of the key items in the year's work plan.

As the reader can see, the year was a full and productive one. The organization's potential as a promoter of downtown business, as a community advocate, as a reliable convenor, as an agency devoted to the promotion of high aspirations—all came into play during the fiscal year covered by this report.

The magic which guides Pride on its path for quality springs from the 22 members of its Board of Directors, from the 28 other citizens who serve on our committees, from the huge numbers of volunteers and advocates who cheerfully show up to help, from the corporations who share their resources and from the political leaders of our community who provide financial and emotional sustenance.

We are especially grateful to the professional staffs within Kinston City Government and in the Kinston-Lenoir County Parks and Recreation Department. Our colleagues and allies in these two arenas provide immeasurable support and assistance, without which our efforts would be crippled.

Pride thanks all those who supported us in 2008-2009.

Adrian King
Executive Director
October 1, 2009