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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

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SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Wildfire west of town

by Jonathan Green

Several agencies continued fighting a wildfire on the Arapahoe Ranch Tuesday in a steep canyon above the North Fork of Mud Creek.

The site is southwest of Wyo. highways 170 and 174 (Owl Creek and Hamilton Dome roads). At one point the fire burned over the top onto Riley Flat, where it was halted.

The fire was reported Sunday, when Thermopolis firefighters responded. Chief Mark Collins said the department had three fire trucks and nine firefighters on-scene at one point Sunday.

By Monday, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management and Wyoming Department of Corrections crews were fighting the Duncan Fire, as the Cody Interagency Dispatch Center took command.

A dispatcher at the center said the 426-acre fire was 50% contained Monday night. A BIA he-

licopter crew was working with one Hot Shot crew, a type-two crew, three engines, one water tender and a nine-person Wrangler crew from the Department of Corrections.

Collins said no personal property is threatened by the fire, which was started by lightning. Difficult access conditions have slowed firefighting efforts.

A second lightning-caused fire, near Twin Lakes on upper Grass Creek, was knocked down by a Thermopolis firefighter who was fortuitously camping in the area Saturday.

Collins said Opie Love spotted the fire Saturday evening. He rode a four-wheeler to the area and worked to contain a fire Collins described as 50-60 feet in diameter.

Sunday morning Love called for a Thermopolis Fire Department vehicle to finish the job and ensure there were no remaining hot spots.



Inside a dinosaur vertebrae

Bill Wahl and Tristan Birkemeier, above, of the Wyoming Dinosaur Center examine the CAT scan of a vertebrae of a Camarasaurus dinosaur recently discovered southeast of Thermopolis in an effort to determine if the fused vertebrae is a result of a congenital defect, disease or an accident.

Wahl, right, points to a crack in the vertebrae as it rests in the highly sensitive Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital CAT scan for the study.

Wahl said WDC specialists still have not determined the cause of the fusion of the third vertebrae up from the sacrum. The examination kept personnel from both facilities gasping as one fact after another was revealed.



Local barbed wire collection lost to a museum in Arizona

by Cindy Glasson

A significant historical collection of barbed wire has been moved from Thermopolis to a museum in Arizona.

According to Phyllis Capen at the Old West Wax Museum, Joe Lawrence packed up the barbed wire display over the weekend.

The fate of the wax figures at the museum is still unknown

even as surrounding displays are being dismantled.

Capen said some items, like the trains, some antique bottles, display cases and a display of miniature horses owned by Eric Kay will be going to the Hot Springs County Historical Museum.

Anyone who made a donation to the wax museum for display

purposes is asked to pick their items up.

Employees have been trying to contact people who have items on display, but Capen said that is sometimes difficult.

"Some people made donations and have moved over the last 10 years," she said. "We're having a hard time tracking them down."

Alternative school opening soon in RE/MAX building; CWC shares space

by Jonathan Green

An alternative school should open in Thermopolis within the month, according to Hot Springs County School District superintendent Marty Kobza.

The program is designed to help students in difficult or challenging circumstances. Students can apply for the program or be referred by school staff.

The school will share a space with a Central Wyoming College outreach center in the RE/MAX building at Sixth and Broadway. CWC is paying the rent for the space, while the district is paying the building utilities and providing technology resources, Kobza said.

Remodeling of the space began over the Labor Day weekend. CWC volunteers painted. Local district employees will install walls and carpeting.

The alternative school can serve up to 12 students annually in that space, but high school principal Dustin Hunt anticipates far fewer will enroll in the first year.

In describing the alternative school program, Kobza said, "The traditional school environment isn't for everybody."

Students with discipline issues who would otherwise be facing long-term suspension or expulsion

may be referred to the program. Students may also apply to attend, for such reasons as being behind or to avoid bullying.

Kobza emphasized the program will not let students off the hook but will focus on academic progress rather than seat time. Students will be held to a higher standard than those in traditional school, he said.

Students will be given a list of material to study, depending upon their circumstances. (These lists are not to be confused with individual education plans used in special education, Kobza said.)

Students will advance as quickly as they learn the material. Unlike their peers in traditional school, they will be required to achieve a proficiency score of 80% or better before moving from item to item. Most students must average 60% over the course of a semester.

Kobza said the alternative school will be about revenue neutral because keeping students on the verge of dropping out in the district raises enrollments, which in turn increases funding.

Tom Olsen and Bill Ricketts are scheduled to each work in the facility about half-time. They will be overseen by special services director Al McClelland, who helped design a similar system in Lander, Kobza said.

Governor here on Friday

by Jonathan Green

Governor Dave Freudenthal will visit Hot Springs County Friday.

At 10 a.m. he is scheduled to speak at the state AFL-CIO convention at the Days Inn Hot Springs

Convention Center.

In addition, Gov. Freudenthal, a local graduate, will give a brief Wyoming history lecture to fourth grade students at Ralph Witters Elementary School at 1 p.m.



Brian Piper with Construction Concepts rides a power trowel, the modern way of smoothing concrete at the site of the new Government Annex building on Tuesday. At right, other workers spread and leveled the cement after

it was pumped overhead. Canyon Concrete delivered the redi-mix and the pumper was owned by Munday. In the background are the courthouse, left, and the county library, right.

--Pat Schmidt photo

Jobless total dips in county

Employment in Hot Springs County is up from 93.9% in June to 94.4% in July, according to estimates from the Wyoming Department of Employment.

There were an estimated 138 people out of work in July, down from 148 the month before.

A year ago the employment was at 96.8% with 79 people out of work.

The work force here was estimated at 2,449 people, up from 2,426 in June and down from 2,498 a year before.

Employment rates in July for neighboring counties were Fremont 92.3%, Park 95.3%, Washakie 94.1% and Big Horn 92.1%.

The estimates for the state were 94.1% of 296,728 workers employed.

The Wyoming rate was 94.3% in June and 96.8% a year ago.