

Dino dinner Saturday

Dinosaur Center reports big year

by Cindy Glasson

The annual Dining With the Dinosaurs Gala is Saturday, and the Wyoming Dinosaur Center has a lot to celebrate.

Visitor numbers climbed again from June-September, reaching 18,000 in spite of a shaky economy.

“We were up 551 visitors over last summer,” WDC director Angie Guyon said.

She said the adult and children’s digs were well attended.

Work at the Warm Springs Ranch dig site closes during the winter months, but work still continues at the center. Bones are prepared for display during the winter and mapping of the quarries where the bones are found is done as well.

“We’re working on a traveling exhibit for the kids,” she said. “Hopefully it will be ready for next year.”

The WDC also works with the Big Horn Basin

Geological and Research Foundation on elderhostel programs during the off-season.

“I did notice a trend this summer that I hadn’t seen before,” she said. “People were traveling in larger groups, sharing expenses and staying at RV parks. They were shopping at grocery stores rather than eating out.”

Guyon’s observation of the trend mirrors what other businesses in Hot Springs County saw this summer.

“They’re spending money, just spending it differently,” she said.

Featured speaker at the gala will be Dr. Kelli Trujillo. Special guests include U.S. Sen. John Barrasso, Gov. Dave Freudenthal and University of Wyoming president Tom Buchanan.

There will be live music, auctions and raffles. Proceeds benefit the Big Horn Basin Geological and Research Foundation. Tickets may be purchased at the WDC.

Fiber optic project reaches 400 drops

The RT Communications project to replace copper telephone wiring in Thermopolis with fiber optic cables is on schedule.

Becky Dooley of the corporate RT office in Worland said contractors have completed about 400 “drops” to residential and commercial addresses.

“It’s been exceptional, even with the weather,” she said.

Dooley anticipates another month is needed to get the fiber in the ground.

The first phase of installation begins at the RT office in

the 300 block of Broadway and continues to the west edge of Thermopolis.

Final construction is expected to wrap up in 2012, but RT will be bringing customers onto the new service in eight to ten block groups, Dooley said.

Fiber optic cable supports greater data transmission speeds and capacities than traditional copper telephone cable. RT will be able to roll out other services besides telephone and internet access.

Dooley said packages and

pricing have not been finalized yet. She promised RT’s offerings would be competitive with other service providers in the area and said she has been considering how and when to offer some form of television service.

RT is also installing fiber optics in Worland and is engaged in upgrades around the state, she said. Many of those upgrades will be necessary to support the additional demands on the RT network caused by the traffic fiber optic infrastructure is expected to generate.

Wyoming Whiskey event set

by Jonathan Green

Several hundred people from across the state, including Gov. Dave Freudenthal, are expected to attend the Wyoming Whiskey grand opening Saturday.

So are you.

Tourism and public relations director Donna Nally said besides the public and the governor, several state legislators are expected.

The contractors who erected the facility will attend.

Mandatory Air from Jackson will provide live entertainment. The event will be catered by Gavin Fine, of Jackson.

The festivities begin at noon.

Nally said visitors will be welcome to “stroll through the distillery on their own, as employees will be explaining what they do to make bourbon the Wyoming Way.”



Jared Little as Jack visits with Alex Russell, portraying his cow, Milky White, during the elementary school performance of Jack and the Beanstalk on Saturday.

Wyoming Gas bills to drop

by Jonathan Green

Wyoming Gas customers will be in for a shock when they open their October bills.

Those bills will quite likely be lower, perhaps by 25%.

The Wyoming Public Service Commission approved a 24.97% rate decrease effective Oct. 1, although the decision remains subject to revision.

According to a public notice, Wyoming Gas an-

tipicates a \$2.4 million decrease in revenue and expense in its 2009-10 fiscal year, which runs Oct. 1-Sept. 30.

The rate cut should result in a \$29.27 reduction for “an average residential customer using 90 ccf per month,” according to the notice. “Actual bills will vary with usage.”

Anyone who objects to the rate decrease can file a protest with the commission before Nov. 3.



Bobcat receiver Chris Leyba is a blur as he hauls in one of his scoring passes and falls toward his shadow in the win at Burns during a blizzard Friday. —Jonathan Green photo

Bobcats aim at home game in state playoffs

by Pat Schmidt

With a win over Newcastle here Friday at 5 p.m., Thermopolis can all but wrap up a home game in the first round of the Class 2A State Football Playoffs.

The Bobcats, 4-1, 5-1, sit all alone in second place in the Class 2A East standings, while Newcastle is winless in six games. However, Newcastle has played better than its 0-5 record indicates, coming within 13 points of Wright and seven of Moorcroft and Tongue River.

Coach Chuck Syverson described Newcastle as a big, physical team that has had some moments where it played very well.

“There are no easy games,” he said. “We need to play every team hard, and that’s definitely the case this week.”

Undefeated Glenrock and Thermopolis have a

clear lead over the other six East teams, but even Newcastle still has a chance to be one of the four teams to make the playoffs.

The race is all but over in the West 2A, where Greybull, Lovell, Kemmerer and Big Piney have things wrapped up.

The playoff format this year has the quarterfinals on Oct. 30-31 at the first and second place winners from each conference, the semifinals on Nov. 6-7 and the state championships at the University of Wyoming on Nov. 14.

The Bobcat seniors that will be honored Friday at 4:30 p.m., include Colin Herold, Trevor Birdslley, Chris Leyba, Riley Sikes, Nate Thomas, Travis Cook and Brandon Robbins.

FFA students and parents will join RT Communications in holding a tailgate party starting at 4 p.m. before the game.

State, swimming pools try to hammer out new leases

by Cindy Glasson

Details have not been released regarding contract negotiations between the Star Plunge, TePee Pools and the State of Wyoming Department of Parks and Historic Sites.

Negotiations between the three entities were held Wednesday after press time in Thermopolis, in an attempt to create new 20-year leases for the two swimming pools.

The lease between the state and the Te-Pee Pool expired in 2007; however, there is a clause that provides for extensions of the lease agreement through 2026, according to Bill Moriarity.

The Star Plunge is operating on a year-to-year lease agreement after that lease contract expired in April 2008.

According to Gary Schoene, Cheyenne, public information officer for state parks, visitors to the park in Thermopolis comprise 40% of all visitors to Wyoming’s state parks.

Under their current contracts, the two pools pay 1% of their annual revenue to the state as concessionaires. The state is proposing raising that amount to 3%.

Schoene said the Plaza Hotel pays 2% of its annual revenue while the Days Inn has a flat-rate contract.

Other than the Thermopolis park there are only three other concessionaires in the Wyoming park system, Boysen Marina, Glendo Marina and Keyhole Marina.

Schoene said Boysen and Glendo contribute 2% of their income through their contract.

Keyhole is a new concessionaire for the year and will be giving 3% of their income.

All the monies go into the state enterprise fund.

“Other parks have user fees (entrance and camping) so it all equals out,” Schoene said.

A concern for both pool owners is talk of adding penalties to the contracts during renegotiation.

Schoene would not comment on what some of the penalties might consist of; however, he did indicate the state wants to be able to protect itself and see that concessionaires carry some accountability.

Although the pools carry private insurance, Schoene said in the event of an accident such as a slip and fall, “they’ll be going after the deep pockets,” dragging the state into litigation.

Schoene said the state would like to see similar penalties added to the contracts for the Days Inn and Plaza Hotel when the time comes to renegotiate their contracts.

When asked if the state had the authority to close down the facilities, Schoene said, “They are using our property and our water. We could just quit providing them.”

Could this open up the state to possible litigation from the owners?

“Not as long as it’s all covered in the contracts,” he said. “We can legally require concessionaires to correct problems if it’s written in the contract.”