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Only one pharmacy still open

Homi retires because of poor health, Vicklund filling all prescriptions

by Tom Burkindine

One of two pharmacies in Thermopolis is unable to fill prescriptions after the retirement of a longtime community fixture, leading to some confusion among customers.

Veteran Don's IGA pharmacist Mitch Homi recently decided to retire because of health reasons, leaving only Vicklund Pharmacy to process orders in town. Vicklund pharmacist Tony Deromedi said he has the capability to fill the new orders, although the extra need has caused some delays.

"We've had quite a few new prescriptions," Deromedi said earlier this week. "We've got all the doctors' orders from (Don's IGA Pharmacy), but it will probably take about a month before things are back to normal."

Deromedi said the pharmacy is able to fill prescriptions even with the added demand, but it may take up to three hours to complete the orders.

Customers of the pharmacy are accustomed to a wait of about 30 minutes, he said, but can still expect to receive their prescriptions within one day.

Homi moved to Thermopolis in 1977, operating and serving as pharmacist for Corner Drug until 2000 when he sold the store. He then went to work at Don's IGA Pharmacy and has continued to help fulfill the town's pharmaceutical needs until earlier this month.

Because of medical concerns, Homi decided to retire from the business after 40 years as a pharmacist.

Homi originally is from Red Lodge, Mont., and is a graduate of the University of Montana.

He and his wife, Georgia, have been married for 40 years and have three sons, Travis, Toby and Tyler. They also have one grandson, Skyler.

Don's IGA owner Greg Kraske said earlier this week he could not comment on the matter.

Home on the range



Buck Braten of Meeteetse assists in moving cattle belonging to the LU Ranch on a cold, wintery afternoon near the in-

tersection of Wyoming Highways 120 and 431 west of Thermopolis earlier this month. -- Lara Love photo

Another Mortimore takes over as county's coroner

by Cindy Glasson

A new Hot Springs County coroner was appointed by the commissioners during a special meeting Monday morning.

Mike Mortimore, son of recently retired coroner Clark Mortimore, was sworn in after his appointment and will assume his duties immediately.

"This really wasn't a hard decision," Mortimore said. "I was born into this, and we're very cognizant of what families go

through.

"We always handle things very delicately."

Mortimore and his younger brother, Mark, were both on the list for the coroner's position. Early Monday, Mark withdrew his name from the running. Mark will continue as deputy coroner for the county.

Mortimore said he intends to run for the position in the November elections.



Mike Mortimore takes the oath of office as administered by county clerk Hans Odde on Monday.

Pennies collected for Haiti

by Cindy Glasson

Third-graders at Ralph Witters Elementary School have spearheaded a project to help people thousands of miles from their hometown.

"Pennies for Haiti" has the elementary pupils gathering pennies and bringing them to school. In turn, the pennies will be turned into larger denominations of cash and sent to the American Red Cross to help the victims of the Haitian earthquakes.

Third-grade teacher Deb Law said one of the paraprofessionals had heard a couple of pupils talking about the earthquake after they had watched news coverage on television, and suggested it might be a good project.

Law said the third-graders had been studying money and giving to good causes in class, so it fit right in with their reading unit.

"It was a teachable moment," she said.

The youngsters have been really excited about participating in the schoolwide project, collecting their pennies at home and bringing them to class.

"This will help them get supplies to build stores and houses," pupil Noah Schwal-



Third-grader Jolie Nicodemus counts the pennies being collected at Ralph Witters Elementary School to help the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. The school will be collecting pennies through Feb. 5. --Cindy Glasson photo

Van Antwerp pleads no contest to nepotism

Hot Springs County school board member Clay Van Antwerp pleaded no contest to a charge of nepotism by a public official on Friday in circuit court.

Circuit Court Judge Tom Harrington ordered Van Antwerp to pay a \$170 fine, \$10 in costs and \$20 automation fee.

"Getting this behind me, the board and the community was part of my decision to plead no contest," Van Antwerp said.

Another reason Van Antwerp cited for not going to trial is because Harrington assured him he was not going to remove him from his school board position.

The charges stemmed from a vote taken during a school board meeting in April 2009 when Van Antwerp refused to recuse himself from a vote on whether to continue food ser-

vice to the schools in-house or contract it out.

Van Antwerp joined the board in a unanimous vote for food service to remain in-house even though his mother worked in the food service department. He had been advised by the school district's attorney not to cast a vote, and had been asked by several school board members to recuse himself.

According to a previous article in the Independent Record, board chairman Liz Mahoney relayed "concern" to police officer Mike Chimenti about Van Antwerp's vote. County Attorney Jerry Williams filed a charge of nepotism by a public official against Van Antwerp in May.

"I still don't believe I did anything wrong, but I am glad it is over," Van Antwerp said.

Year gets off to dry start

by Keith E. Domke

All major basins across western and central Wyoming, including Big Horn, had below to well-below normal precipitation totals during December, National Weather Service data showed. Snowpack and snow water equivalent totals also were below normal.

In the Big Horn Basin, NWS statistics from the Riverton office showed snow water equivalents in the 70th percentile in December. By early January, almost all of the major basins in western and central Wyoming had below to well-below average SWEs. In December, Thermopolis only recorded .21-inch of moisture,

bringing the annual 2009 total to 10.48 inches. So far this month, 0.15-inch of precipitation has been recorded. The 2009 moisture total was the third consecutive year of double-digit precipitation in inches, easing and eliminating drought conditions that existed earlier in the decade.

Statewide, according to the NWS, abnormally dry conditions across portions of the Upper Yellowstone Watershed have caused moderate hydrologic drought to show up in extreme northwest Wyoming. The long-range outlook, through April, indicates that the moderate drought in that part of the state will persist.