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Thermopolis
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Special Valentines greeting



Tori Barnes of Risen Son Christian School smiles as she looks into the eyes of Pioneer Home resident Jackie Marcott after she and the other school children delivered valentines there last Thursday. — Keith E. Domke photo

Chamber eyes revamping of dues structure

by Tom Burkindine

The Thermopolis Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce board of directors is reviewing a proposal to change the way in which membership dues are structured.

The proposed five-tier membership program would designate levels of association with higher-tier members receiving greater benefits such as advertisement and sponsorship of chamber events.

In the past, members have purchased sponsorship of chamber events before the individual events throughout the year. Under the proposed program, an annual fee would be assigned to each level of membership and the business' involvement in the year's events would be predetermined based on its membership level.

Vice president Rick Ridenour presented the proposal during last week's board meeting and said the program would set out benefits that are more tangible for chamber members. Rather than members paying an annual fee and then budgeting for individual events throughout the year, the program would allow business owners to see exactly what their membership would include for one lump-sum yearly fee.

"I've seen a positive response from the business owners I've shown this to," Ridenour said. "They're excited because they can see the value."

The five tiers of the program would include basic, silver, gold, platinum and diamond memberships with opportunities for out-of-town businesses to purchase associate memberships at higher rates. Discounted rates would be offered to individuals, home-based businesses and not-for-

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It's a very viable program, and we have the opportunity to sell memberships like we never have before.

RICK RIDENOUR
chamber board
vice president

profit organizations.

Several areas of the proposed membership campaign need to be clarified before the board will approve the program. The board discussed the possibility of having a more flexible plan to allow members to shift sponsorship away from areas in which they did not want to participate. In addition, the question of whether or not members who owned multiple businesses would be charged for each entity was raised. It was suggested businesses with separate tax license numbers would be viewed as separate.

Board members plan to circulate the proposal to local businesses before their next meeting on March 10 when a decision on the proposal could be reached. If the plan were to be finalized and passed, it would become effective on July 1 for the chamber's yearly membership drive.

"This is a preliminary outline," Ridenour said. "We haven't put polish on it yet."

Board members agreed the proposal would allow the chamber to provide improved benefits for chamber members while also providing opportunity for increased membership numbers.

"It's a very viable program, and we have the opportunity to sell memberships like we never have before," Ridenour said

Quarberg: Legislation progressing

by Tom Burkindine

As the Wyoming Legislature progresses through its second week of the budgetary session, local representative Lorraine Quarberg said two bills she has personally sponsored are moving forward.

Last Friday was the final day for bills to be introduced in the Wyoming Senate and House of Representatives to pass the two-thirds vote necessary to move to committee readings.

"That was a good milestone to get behind us," Quarberg said. "I thought it was very efficient how we managed our time."

All bills must be out of committee by Friday or they will die on general file. Quarberg, who sits on the House Judiciary Committee, said she expects a big push by the committee to deal with as many house bills as possible before the deadline.

Quarberg, a Republican, is the House Majority Whip and the representative for Hot Springs County, South Big Horn County and Southeast Park County. She is personally sponsoring two specific bills.

House Bill 113 would allow Wyoming residents to carry concealed firearms without a permit. The bill passed introduction 52-6 with two abstentions. It was scheduled to be heard by the House Judiciary Committee Tuesday.

See "Quarberg," page 12

Lack of snowpack to hurt runoff

by Keith E. Domke

The National Weather Service Riverton office and the Wyoming Area Office of the Bureau of Reclamation in Mills have indicated there is a below normal mountain snowpack across Wyoming so far this winter which will lead to below normal runoff forecasts.

"Mountain snowpack across Wyoming is generally below normal at 62 to 81 percent of normal," a report from the NWS Riverton office stated. "Major watersheds across western and central Wyoming, to include the Snake, the Upper Yellowstone,

the Wind and the Big Horn basins, are expected to see below average spring snowmelt streamflow volumes."

The NWS report said mountain snowpack numbers in this area are at 62 to 75 percent of normal. In southeast Wyoming, the figure is 80 to 85 percent of normal, the highest in the state.

According to the Bureau of Reclamation, February snowmelt runoff forecasts for the Shoshone and Wind rivers of the Bighorn River Basin for from April to July indicate below-average amounts.

The National Weather Service's water

supply outlook map indicated the Bighorn River flowing through Thermopolis northward is at less than 75 percent of capacity as is every river in the state with the exception of the southeast corner.

Boysen Reservoir currently is 95 percent full. The Bureau of Reclamation predicted inflow into Boysen for April through July at 400,000 acre-feet, which is 72 percent of average, compared to a 30-year average of 553,000 acre-feet.

The Wyoming area office uses the most recent 30-year period — 1980-2009 — to determine averages.

Law enforcement personnel stay about as busy last year

by Keith E. Domke

If numbers don't lie, then town and county law enforcement personnel remained about as busy last year as the year before.

Overall incident calls within Thermopolis and Hot Springs borders remained basically the same from 2008 to 2009 for police and sheriff's personnel, figures showed.

According to data received by the two agencies, there were 4,548 calls and/or responses to the local agencies last year compared to 4,580 in 2008. In 2007, the total was 4,505.

As far as individual category figures, vehicle serial number inspections were the runaway winner for the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office with 350 calls in 2009, statistics provided to the Independent Record showed. Animal problem calls were next at 85. Citizen assists totaled 74, concealed weapon permit applications numbered 64, and non-sufficient funds checks calls also numbered 64.

For the Thermopolis Police Department, animal problem calls topped the 2009 list with 491. Citizen assists were next at 298, followed by suspicion calls at 135, traffic offenses at 117, agency assists at 115 and lost or found property calls at 113.

Combined in the two departments, animal problems accounted for 12.7 percent of all calls last year.

Most fire calls to accidents, grass fires

by Keith E. Domke

The Thermopolis Fire Department responded to a variety of calls in 2009, the majority of which were accidents or grass fires, statistics showed.

Last year, the volunteers dealt with 112 calls, chief Mark Collins said. Almost half were to the abovementioned accidents or grass fires, with 27 responses to both. The grass fires totaled 510 acres burned, Collins said.

False alarms were next on the list with 20, followed by 14 "good intent" or service calls. There were seven structure fires, seven Hazmat responses, five vehicle fires, two calls for Dumpster fires and downed power lines and one call for a river/lake rescue.

Collins also announced that new officers were elected for 2010. Bob Butchart is the assistant chief, Dale Andreen is captain, Dion Roberts is lieutenant, Mark Brawley is treasurer and Chris Paris is secretary.

A.J. Helm is the county fire warden while Jay Duvall is the deputy fire warden.

As far as fire and ambulance calls, the 2009 numbers were 74 and 277, respectively.

County

The Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office handled 1,419 total calls in 2009 with the leading category vehicle serial number inspections adding up to 7 percent of that total.

As far as some crime-related statistics, there were 40 calls relating to traffic accidents with property damage, 25 for reported theft, 12 calls for controlled substance possession, nine for fraud, seven for assault, seven for de-

struction/damage/vandalism on property, seven for DUI, six for weapons offenses, four for minor in possession of drugs or alcohol, four for disorderly conduct, four for sexual offenses or rape, four for hit-and run accidents, four for property damage, three for dead bodies and two for counterfeiting/forgery.

In 2008, there also were 40 property damage accidents the sheriff's office handled, 29 calls for theft, five for possession of controlled substances, 12 for fraud, four for assault, 11 for vandalism, nine for DUI, eight

See "Numbers," page 12

Cheering on the 'Cats



Thermopolis freshman Chancey Bauer cheers on the Lady Bobcats during last Saturday's home game. For details, see sports, pages 6-8. — Keith E. Domke photo