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OverTones Show Choir a hit



The Hot Springs County School District fall concert Oct. 25 included performances by the high school and middle school bands and choirs at the school auditorium. Featured was the OverTones Show Choir, a new group this school year. Pictured are OverTones choir members, from left, Megan Mortimore, Hallie Harvey and Sierra Schmidt. The OverTones are already working on songs for the Christmas concert next month. — Joe Sovo photo

Veterans Day activities

Celebrate our vets

Residents will have an opportunity to attend several activities commemorating Veterans Day in Thermopolis, when community members gather for the holiday.

Friday, Nov. 11

■ Museum Free Admission: The Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center will have free admission for the public in honor of Veterans Day.

■ TMS Assembly: 9 a.m. at the middle school commons. Features a PowerPoint presentation and several special songs by TMS students. Sponsored by the TMS Student Council.

■ HSCHS 11/11/11 Assembly: 11:11 a.m. at the auditorium. High school choir to sing "God Bless the USA" and the band will play "Armed Forces on Parade." Both conducted by Dustin Olsen. Sponsored by Thermopolis FFA.

■ Memorial Service: Veterans Day service will be at 11 a.m. at VFW Post 2281.

■ VFW Veterans Day Dinner: A dinner for veterans and their families will be at 6 p.m. Mixed music to follow.

Fundraiser for Return the Favor

VFW Post 2281 in Thermopolis is hosting two events this weekend to commemorate Veterans Day and recognize the Return the Favor veterans program.

A Veterans Day dinner is set for 6 p.m. Friday at the VFW. All veterans are welcome to attend. Mixed music will follow dinner.

A pig roast and cookie jar and baked good auction are featured Saturday at the VFW. Dinner begins at 6 p.m. and the live auction starts around 7 p.m. There will also be a silent auction during the evening. Cost for the pig roast is \$7.50 per person.

John Holm and John Gerrells are donating their time for the live auction. Everyone is welcome to attend the dinner and auction.

Net proceeds from the pig

roast and auction will go to the VFW Foundation.

"We felt it was time to do one (an auction) for our troops and their families," said John Huckman, past VFW state commander, speaking about the Return the Favor veterans program.

Anyone who would like to donate baskets or baked goods, such as cookies, for the auction is urged to drop the items off at the VFW during business hours. You can also mail donated items to VFW Post 2281, 302 Broadway, Thermopolis, WY 82443 to the attention of John Hausauer.

Local Scouts will provide some of the baked goods.

For further information, contact VFW Post 2281 Commander Ken Harvey, 921-0011 or Gerrells, 921-1219.

School accreditation 'upbeat'

by Joe Sovo

Every five years, it is determined if public school districts in Wyoming are "making the grade" in providing a comprehensive educational experience for students.

In early October, AdvancED paid an accreditation visit to Hot Springs County School District No. 1, representing the State of Wyoming. The seven-person accreditation team spent three-and-a-half days in Thermopolis; the visit was capped by an exit meeting with district administrators.

"As a district, we felt extremely comfortable going into the report," Superintendent Dustin Hunt said. "What we heard is the things that we do."

By that, Hunt meant the district is right on track for nearly all seven of the standards in the assessment by the accreditation team. He said that number would be reduced to five standards for the next accreditation in 2016.

Hunt said school districts submit reports based on "focus" questions so the team can utilize its time during the visit most efficiently.

"This go-round, accreditation has changed," Hunt said, explaining there was accreditation of each building in the district in 2006. Now, the district is accredited, if it meets the state standards, as a whole. "There is a real check for alignment of practice."

The superintendent indicated the district was well-prepared for the accreditation process. There were many administrative team

and school improvement team meetings and work sessions. Organizing artifacts into a viewable format was a huge chore.

"There was a tremendous amount of work by the staff and community," Hunt said, adding stakeholder meetings (with district patrons) going into the process.

“

They were extremely impressed with our systems, our PLC work, our CLI."

Superintendent
Dustin Hunt

"We tried to make sure we only told them (the accreditation team) what we're doing. It's 'what you see is what you get,'" he said, explaining the straightforward approach in the process.

Seven standards evaluated

Hunt said the team came to the district and reviewed artifacts, based on the seven standards. "There was a determination on each building (elementary, middle school and high school) and they looked for align-

ment," he said.

"They were extremely impressed with our systems, our PLC work, our CLI," Hunt said. PLC is Professional Learning Community and CLI is the acronym for Curriculum Learning Institute. The district received commendations for PLC and CLI, according to Hunt, as well as use of technology in the classroom. The district was also commended for its facilities and the maintenance of buildings.

The visiting team held a closed visit with the board of trustees and shared its recommendations. The team spoke about Standard 1, Mission and Vision, recommending a mission statement update (last done in 2001) and review by the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC), followed by a recommendation to the school board for changes/updates.

"We were asked to continually evaluate our system," Hunt said. "We do that through the PLC process. Our board is on top of that, too. Our board has set strong goals." He will give a report to the board as progress on goals occur.

"Although it's time consuming, self reflection is really important as a district," Hunt said. "We always want to do a little bit better. We have one shot at delivering education to our students."

The district will receive a detailed report from AdvancED within 60 days of completion of the evaluation. That should come later this month or by early December.

Jury finds man guilty of aggravated assault

by J.D. Stetson

A 12-person jury found Jeremiah Couch guilty of aggravated assault and intimidating witnesses during a two-day trial Oct. 27-28 in Hot Springs County District Court.

Couch, who was 29 at the time of his arrest, was charged with two counts of aggravated assault and one count of influencing, intimidating or impeding a witness, stemming from an incident that took place March 5 in the 300 block of Eighth Street, according to court documents.

The jury found Couch guilty

of aggravated assault for slashing Josh Spence's back with an 18-inch long sword. They also found him guilty of influencing, intimidating and impeding a witness after he followed a group of people who were at the residence to another home and threatened to kill them if they talked to the police, according to court documents.

The jury found Couch not guilty to the second charge of aggravated assault, which involved William Larson after he tried to intervene in the attack on Spence and grabbed the sword. Larson

contended the attacker said he would kill Larson if he did not let go of the sword, according to court documents.

Authorities arrested Couch April 5 in Polson, Mont. He pleaded not guilty to the charges on June 6.

The jury also decided Couch fit the criteria for "habitual criminal," due to three prior felony convictions on his record. Couch's prior convictions include: grand theft on May 31, 2007, in Nez Perce County, Idaho; four counts of theft of a firearm on Feb. 20, 2003, in Asotin County, Wash.;

and possession of methamphetamine on May 6, 2002, in Asotin County, according to court documents.

The habitual criminal decision could impact Couch's minimum and maximum prison sentence for the aggravated assault charge. The habitual criminal statute increases the minimum prison sentence to 10 years, and could increase his maximum penalty to life in prison because he has more than three prior convictions.

Couch's date for sentencing has not yet been filed with the district court.

Hunter's Ball camo winner



Jeffrey Clark won the camo contest during the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Hunter's Ball held Saturday night at Days Inn. Keith Sonesen and Will Clark shared top honors in the hunter orange contest.