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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 113, No. 43, October 25, 2012

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

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Lights On lift-off



Hot Springs County School District No. 1's Lights On Afterschool 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program hosted a celebration Saturday at Thermopolis Middle School. Participating Lights On students displayed the hot air balloon models they constructed and enjoyed a visit from the full-sized Cloud Kisser II balloon from Riverton outside TMS. Above, Lights On assistant Wes Meier shows students, from left, Savannah Magelky, Aiden Cox and Austin Barral the dynamics of how a hot air balloon is launched.

— Joe Sovo photo

Candidates in spotlight during pre-election forum

by Joe Sovo

Six Hot Springs County residents who will be on the ballot in the Nov. 6 General Election participated in a candidate forum sponsored by the Independent Record on Monday evening at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center. They included six of the nine candidates who are involved in contested races.

Republican Nathan Winters and Democrat Connie Skates, the candidates for the state representative for House District 28 replacing Lorraine Quarberg, participated by answering questions posed by Independent Record staff.

All four candidates for two seats on the Thermopolis Town Council were also on the forum panel. They are incumbents Allan Braaten and Dick Hall, and challengers LeRoy Hayes and Mark Nelson.

There are three candidates for two seats on the Kirby Town Council. Incumbent Ross Rhodes was in attendance; challengers Raymond Nettles and Jessica Slagle declined to attend.

Candidates in uncontested races were also invited to the forum. Hot Springs County Commissioner Brad Basse, who is running for reelection, spoke briefly and answered a couple of questions from the audience.

Among the other candidates in uncontested races are incumbents Jack Kuiper and Merle William Moore for two East Thermopolis Town Council seats; Republican incumbent Mark Mortimore, county coroner; and Republican incumbent State Sen. Gerald Geis, state senate. Geis told the Independent Record he regretted the inability to attend the candidate forum; he had another commitment with a conference in California.

Here is a snapshot of responses by the candi-

School board focus Tuesday

Six candidates vying for four open seats on the Hot Springs County School District No. 1 school board participated in an open forum Tuesday evening at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center.

Incumbents Joe Martinez, Clay VanAntwerp and Dr. Travis Bomengen were joined by Melissa Johnson, Britnee Nelson and Danny Pebbles to discuss various issues within the school system and their thoughts on possible solutions to those issues moving forward.

The candidates talked about the 4-1/2 day school week, PAWS testing, periodic drug testing and retention of quality teachers in the district before taking questions from the audience.

As a whole, the candidates emphasized the need to ensure students received the best education possible and welcomed input from the community.

The Independent Record will have a full story on the school board forum in next week's (Nov. 1) issue.

dates on the panel to several prepared questions (note: candidates will respond to other questions in the IR General Election Section in the Nov. 1 issue):

Thermopolis Town Council

Question: How will you seek to revitalize downtown to encourage more small business in the community?

Nelson — "We've been working on that for years," said Nelson, the former chief of police. "We don't have a lot of businesses that export from them... We have to establish a base." He gave credit to RT Communications for its fiber optic project in town. "We have a low tax base compared to other states."

Hayes — He said he was on the town council when CAPTEL began operation in Thermopolis. "People have been in and out of business. Ideas have lost their chance." He would like to see a revitalization of businesses. "I would really focus

See Candidates on page 14

Save The Ritz event brings in \$7,100-plus

by Joe Sovo

More than \$5,000 was collected in the Save The Ritz fundraiser held Saturday evening at the Hot Springs County Fair Building in Thermopolis. The fundraiser was part of an effort by The Ritz and Entertainment Center owners Edie and Bob Rollings to keep the theater's doors open when they have to convert from 35mm film to a digital projection system by the end of the year.

Bob said about \$6,092.50 was raised during the auction that featured a variety of cookie jars, gift baskets, movie posters and specialty items. There were 210 spaghetti dinners served before the auction, which brought in \$1,050. Therefore, the total receivables from the fundraiser were \$7,142.50.

"We really had a good time. I'm pleased with the response. We appreciate the support the community has shown and through the donations we're getting," Edie said. "They're interested and they're concerned, and want to be able to support it (the theater)."

The Rollings had earlier opened a bank account to accept donations for the cause and donations are still being accepted in working toward raising the \$80,000 needed for the conversion to a digital system. They said the type of film they're projecting now would not be available after the end of 2012. The new system would also allow the Rollings to show 3D movies.

They are doing what they can to have enough money for the conversion, which would have to be done well before the end of the year in order to have the new system operational by Jan. 1, 2013.

"We have everything we own on the line as collateral," Edie said.

There were approximately 50 cookie jars sold during the live auction along with dozens of movie posters, with John Holm calling for bids as the auctioneer. The top-selling item drew the most attention before the auction began. It was an R2D2 replica

from the original Star Wars movie; this R2D2 is actually a beverage cooler. The bids climbed until it finally sold for \$750.

According to Edie, the R2D2 replica had been on display at the theater since they bought the business four years ago. Bob would not buy the theater unless R2D2 was included, and letting it go in Saturday's auction was an emotional moment for him.

Cat in the Hat top seller

A Cat in the Hat antique was the cookie jar that was sold for the highest price. It was donated by the Independent Record and was purchased for \$260. A Wyoming Whiskey gift basket sold for \$160.

A bevy of movie posters sold for from \$20 to \$155. The largest draw was \$155 for a I Am Legend poster featuring Will Smith. An oversized Narnia poster brought \$100. A Casino Royale poster, depicting "James Bond" Daniel Craig, went for \$95.

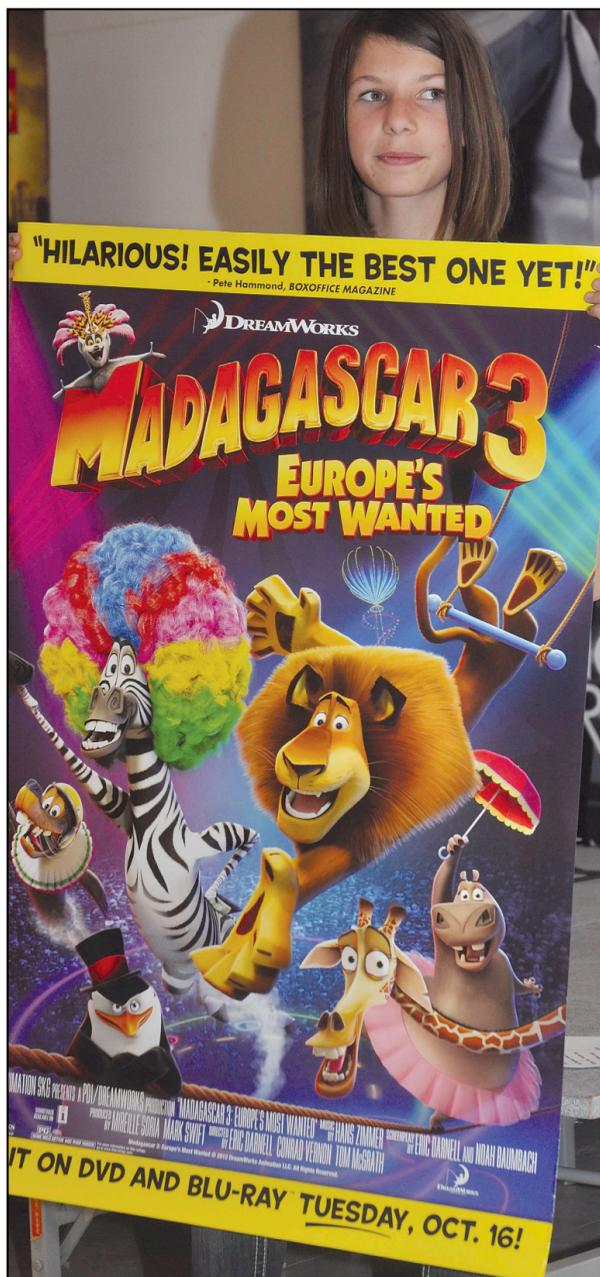
Edie said more movie posters are available at the theater and can be secured by making a certain donation.

The Rollings already have another fundraiser underway, in which a person can sponsor a specific seat in the theater — for a minimum donation of \$50. The donor's name will be engraved on a plaque placed on the back of their seat. That fundraiser continues through Nov. 30 and seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. There were 142 seats available to sponsor.

Edie made it clear that if they are unable to raise enough capital to make the digital conversion, all money donated will be returned to the donors (with the exception of the \$5 paid for Saturday's spaghetti dinner).

"It's all going toward the conversion," she said of the money collected during the fundraisers. "If conversion does not happen, those making donations will get their money back."

Anyone with questions about the fundraisers should call Edie at 921-1560.



Becky Burrows shows a Madagascar 3 movie poster that was up for bid during the Save The Ritz fundraiser on Saturday evening at the Hot Springs County Fair Building. Dozens of posters were sold at the auction.

— Joe Sovo photo

Ambulance Service seeks to solve problem of 'non-reimbursed lift assists' in HSC

by J.D. Stetson

Mortimore Ambulance Service presented the Thermopolis Town Council with a letter indicating the service can no longer respond to "non-reimbursed lift assist" calls due to liability, staffing and financial issues.

During a later interview, owner Mark Mortimore explained that non-reimbursed lift assists are calls where the EMT crews are dispatched to a location with the sole purpose of helping a person lift themselves up and do not require any further medical assistance.

Many of the calls are reported through services such as Lifeline or Life Alert, where the companies call 911 instead of a family member or neighbor to assist the customer. The companies are used to dealing with customers in large cities with full-time EMTs that are able to quickly respond to the calls.

Mortimore's service uses part-time EMTs who are not at the garage at all times waiting for calls. Each call takes the EMTs away from their other jobs or time with their families.

Mortimore said the goal of the letter is to get all of the entities involved aware of the situation and to come up with a solution.

The service has also contacted Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital and spoken with representatives of the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office and Hot Springs County about the issue, Mortimore said.

Mortimore said responding to the calls are also outside of the service's agreement with the hospital.

Responding to the calls is a financial burden to the service because the patients are not transferred to the hospital, and thus the cost of the crew and fuel are not eligible for reimbursement.

The calls also hinder staff because the crews respond to the calls, some which have involved drives of 35 miles out of town at 2 a.m., taking time away from their work or personal lives, Mortimore said.

Mortimore also indicated the calls are becoming an increased liability to the service.

"We just want to get the conversation started," Mortimore said.

Candidates

from page 1

on that if I get on the council."

Hall – "I kind of feel Thermopolis has no distinct personality. We don't know what kind of town we are. We've been slowly boxed in as a community," he said, and there is not enough support to help people who want to go into business. "An incubator would be nice to have."

Braaten – He said he's been asked, "Why haven't we grown?" Braaten said Thermopolis should be something that has an identity to it. "We need to make our entrances (to town) and exits more beautiful... We need businesses that can anchor the community. People need to speak up and encourage things."

Question: When making budgeting decisions for the next fiscal year, how will you decide between fiscal responsibility and government expense?

Hayes – "I would not like to cut employees. Hopefully, we can use attrition," he said of when staff reduction is needed. "I would try to do the best I could with the budget." Hayes would deal with budgeting decisions as they arise.

Hall – "We do not spend money we do not have," he said. "We have fewer people now than when I came on board (on the council)." Hall was elated with the Arapahoe Street water line project. "We're doing projects and doing them well... Money is going generally to employees and the rest to projects."

Braaten – "We've laid off only one person since we came on four years ago," he said of being on the council, and he believes management of town funds are very well handled. "We have to set goals we want to work toward."

Nelson – "The services the town provides need to pay for themselves," he said, referring primarily to utilities, and cost increases have to be handed down to the consumer. Nelson said there were 10 police officers on the local force 19 years ago and now there are only six on staff. He did point out the de-

cline in population over the last two decades.

Question: The Thermopolis Police Department is currently operating under an interim police chief. What skills and attributes will you be looking for when interviewing qualified candidates for the position?

Braaten – "We have had people who have come and gone... We want to look at people within the (police) force," he said. "We want to protect the people who've been around awhile and those coming in." Braaten said the police chief must interpret the law in a way that's going to be helpful.

Nelson – He said he has 29 years experience as a police officer. "I know what's expected of a police officer. As a councilman, I would have the opportunity to ratify the mayor's choice (of a police chief). We need someone with experience and a job performance rating... You still have to do po-

licing in a small community. It's a fine balance."

Hayes – "I would like to see a chief who has experience and lots of enthusiasm," he said, and the police chief would have to take a strong stance on drug enforcement. "He has to be involved in the community other than as the chief."

Hall – He said the town should use community surveys, including evaluations of community policing, and such surveys completed years ago were filed away and never used. "I want someone to be responsible for MY neighborhood. I want a policeman of my very own," Hall said, rather than sitting behind a desk or the wheel of a car. "There is more to it than that."

State House Representative

Question: There has been a lot of talk regarding a tribal casino that may be built south of Thermopolis. What is your stand on

gambling in the state? Do you feel a lottery or scratch tickets would be a feasible solution to cutbacks for schools from the federal level?

Skates – "I would hate to see a casino at the mouth of the canyon. There is a better place for it," she said. Skates said she would not like the "extra traffic" created by having a casino near Thermopolis. She said she would be willing to "look at a lottery ticket" and perhaps Wyoming could join with other states on a lottery.

Winters – He indicated infrastructural support from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Wind River Indian Reservation tribes would be important if a casino is built in Hot Springs County. Winters said gambling produces a "very inefficient tax." He added that addiction to gambling would be a concern.

Question: We hear reports from all over the state about individuals receiving DUI after DUI,

yet they are not serving any jail time, nor are they losing their driver's licenses. How would you approach drunk driving laws in Wyoming to assure citizens' safety from impaired drivers?

Winters – "We have the right laws on the books but we're not enforcing them," he said. As a state legislator, Winters said he would listen to suggestions from Wyoming citizens and begin to work with them.

Skates – "We do have a problem with addiction to alcohol," Skates said.

Question: How will you assist small towns in recovering from the economic recession?

Skates – "Our small towns have a real, real problem. We don't have the money," she said. "Grants are money out of our pockets." Skates said there needs to be a master plan in economic recession recovery.

Winters – He spoke about Wy-

oming Business Council (WBC) intervention in helping towns recover from the recession, especially with infrastructure. "Smart and careful spending of that (WBC funding) is important," Winters said.

Question: How would you seek to streamline our current court system for both civil and criminal cases?

Winters – "You have to educate yourself and take time to learn the processes that are going on," he said. He referred to Constitutional Amendment C on the General Election ballot. It would allow district court commissioners to act even if the district court judge is present and even if the judge could properly hear the case.

Skates – "We need to not have such a backlog," she said of pending court cases. "Streamlining is essential... Who are the real criminals?"

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SCHOOL MENU
Week of Oct. 28 - Nov. 2
(Menu subject to changes)

MONDAY - Sloppy Joes On A Bun, Potato Chips, Lettuce, Applesauce, Pineapple Chunks, Milk
TUESDAY - Breakfast For Lunch, French Toast Sticks, Eggs, Sausage Patties, Honeydew, Orange Halves, Milk
WEDNESDAY - HALLOWEEN - Monster Mash, Bones, Spider Nest, Swamp Mush, Pumpkin Bites, Milk
THURSDAY - Ham, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Beans, Dinner Roll, Fruit Cocktail, Applesauce, Milk
FRIDAY - Corn Dogs, Pork & Beans, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Pears, Milk

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The fee will be \$30 to have your brand on all the new merchandise, purchase of items is not included. Branding of benches will be Nov. 3 at the Harvest Moon Ball. **Bring your irons!**

Anyone who would like to purchase branding rights on the benches and other items should contact Britton Van Heule at 921-9044, Thermopolis FFA Alumni president Phil Scheel at 307-460-0347 or sign up at the Harvest Moon Ball.

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