

# Trustees consider school start time, bus schedule

by Cindy Glasson

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 board members discussed a possible change in start times for the schools next year along with amendments to the bus route and a change of location for the Learning Center at their meeting Feb. 21.

As discussed during the January meeting, concern has been expressed by some parents that the school day is rather long for the elementary students, especially the kindergarteners.

This month, a proposed new schedule was presented by Superintendent Dustin Hunt.

Under the proposed schedule, elementary students would begin classes at 8:30 a.m., ending at 3:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Fridays would start at 8:30 a.m., ending at 12:30 p.m.

Middle school would also start at 8:30 a.m., ending at 3:40 p.m. to allow for the bus schedule, Monday through Thursday. On Friday, they would start school at 8:30 a.m. and end at 12:25 p.m.

The proposed schedule would change the collaborative time for teachers, allowing students to have more time for extra help from their teachers, if needed.

The schedule would create some challenges, however, voiced by some members of the board.

The change would cut down the transition time for teachers, the time they have between their collaborative time and the time class starts, time they need to get prepared for the day.

Board members were concerned the new schedule wouldn't leave enough prep time for the teachers and would like to see the staff polled to get their input.

Hunt indicated there would only be a 10-minute loss in prep time for the teachers.

"The teachers are losing a little time," he said, "but the kids are gaining time and that's a big benefit."

Another challenge the board sees is having protocols in place for students who arrive at school early.

Hunt said there would have to be some education for the parents about when they may drop students off and some changes in when parents can visit with teachers, if necessary.

While the schedule shortens the day, Hunt emphasized there would be no loss of time during the day for the core subjects – math, science, reading and so forth – but there would be a reduction in "specials," such as study tables at the high school level.

Each of the principals indicated the parents in their respective site councils were supportive of the proposed changes.

A decision on the proposed schedule was tabled by the board until March to give them more time to get feedback from staff and parents.

**Bus schedule**

The Department of Education allows local school boards to declare hazards within their communities that could change school bus routes as needed.

With two major highways, a river and a railroad intersecting the town, the board has declared Broadway and Sixth streets as hazard barriers since they are four-lane streets as well as major highways.

In addition, the district is currently suffering from driver shortages, so a route change will not only alleviate that problem, but make the routes more efficient.

Bus 87, the Frog bus, will now make a stop at Fourteenth Street and Candy Jack Park at 7:33 a.m.

Bus 75, the Bear bus (formerly the Pig bus), will make a stop at Twelfth Street and Candy Jack Park at 7:30 a.m. and at Tenth Street and Warren at 7:31 a.m.

Bus 8, the Deer bus, will stop at Twelfth Street and Broadway at the play park at 7:31 a.m., and at Ninth Street and Arapahoe at 7:33 a.m.

These changes went into effect Feb. 11.

**Learning Center relocation**

The board also approved moving the Learning Center from its current location on Sixth Street to the vocational building on the high school campus. The move will take effect immediately.

The impetus behind the move includes greater access for the regular staff to work with students in the Learning Center and save instruction time by eliminating the need to transport students back and forth between the high school and the satellite campus.

The move will also create a better controlled or supervised environment for the students and allow them better access to the high school counselor.

There was some question from members of the board about the safety of the other students on campus, but those fears were put to rest when they realized none of the students in the Learning Center are there because of violent crimes or drug use. Violent students or those involved with drug-associated crimes have already been expelled from school and are not allowed on campus. Those types of expulsions are mandatory and eliminate those students from participating in the Learning Center as well.

Moving into the vocational building will give the Learning Center a larger space to work with, which will be a big benefit for the students. In addition, the district will save approximately \$10,000 in expenses with the move.

FFA Petting Zoo

Michael SunRhodes and Tiffany Krueger give FFA member Hannah Price a hand feeding a newborn lamb at the FFA Petting Zoo as part of National FFA Week. Children from local preschools and Ralph Witters Elementary enjoyed a morning with various farm animals, compliments of FFA members.

– Cindy Glasson photo

# Chamber banquet tickets on sale

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for its annual chamber banquet.

The annual event will take place Saturday, March 23 at the Hot Springs County Fair Building. Tickets are now available for the event, which has traditionally followed a Hawaiian luau theme.

At a Feb. 19 meeting of the board of directors, chamber president Meri Ann Rush informed the board of a change in ticket prices for the upcoming event.

The price of tickets has been increased to \$50 because of increases in the price for beef and seafood. The ticket prices, which were previously \$45, have not been raised in about five years, board members said.

The board continues preparations in finding sponsors for the table centerpieces, which are to be auctioned off during the event.

The banquet serves as one of several large fundraisers that fund chamber operations and other special chamber events throughout the year.

The evening hosts dinner, raffles and an auction of centerpieces, but the big draw of the evening is the announcement and presentation of the 2012 Business of the Year and 2012 Citizen of the Year.

The board, along with past presidents of the chamber, voted on each award during a separate meeting. The nominees for the awards will be announced closer to the banquet.

For tickets to the banquet, contact the chamber at 864-3192 or visit the chamber office at 220 Park St.

# Hospital to take sign-ups for women's fitness events

by J.D. Stetson

During the Kiwanis Thermopolis Community Health Fair, Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital will take sign-ups for special events promoting National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.

Marketing Director TJ Schoenewald reported to the board of trustees Tuesday night the hospital has events planned in May for women's fitness.

Some of the events include a tour of Legend Rock Petroglyphs, hikes in Hot Springs State Park, beginning kayaking (could possibly take place in the park's cooling ponds) and beginning fly-fishing.

The hospital will host a booth to take sign-ups for the events during the health fair, which is scheduled for April 13.

A second hospital booth at the fair will feature information from the hospital's environmental services department on infection control within the hospital.

Blood draws for the health fair will be Saturday, March 23 and through the week March 25-30, Monday-Saturday. More information about the blood draws is in the full-page advertisement in this issue of the Independent Record. Additional information about the blood draws and health fair will be in upcoming editions of this newspaper.

**Contracts**

The trustees approved several multi-year contracts during the meeting. The first contract was a five-year agreement with GE Healthcare to provide maintenance for diagnostic imaging for the hospital's new X-ray equipment.

The second four-year contract covers maintenance of the hospital's CT scanner with TOSHIBA America Medical Systems, Inc.

A third five-year contract covered an agreement between the hospital and Cablevision (Optimum) to provide cable television service to the hospital.

The final two contracts stipulate executive and health care practitioner search agreements with HealthTech Management Services, which is the hospital's management firm.

The first contract identifies the terms providing HealthTech to find candidates for a Chief Nursing Officer position. The board discussion indicated the contract could possibly include other executive position searches on a contingency basis.

The second contract is a continuation of the service already provided to search for health care practitioners needed by the hospital. The new contract updates the previous contracts.

The board approved all contracts pending legal review of the documents.

# Enzi fields questions from community at listening session

by Joe Sovia

U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyoming) fielded questions about food safety regulations, the "Penny Plan," pensions and Medicare, the Social Security base, the national debt and fiscal cliff, Early Childhood Liaison Program, health care, Second Amendment rights and education accountability during a listening session Feb. 20 at Days Inn in Thermopolis.

It was one of 11 stops during Enzi's listening sessions tour of Wyoming.

"I want you to tell me what your concerns are. Part of my job is to 'learn,'" Enzi said to open the session.

Dr. Howard Willson was the emcee for the session. Community members Joe Martinez, Lea Schoenewald, Jerry Walker, John Vietti, Ellen Galyan, Jerry Williams, Amy Ready, Belenda Willson, Barb Vietti, Charles Curley and Dustin Hunt brought the variety of subjects to Enzi's table.

In response, Enzi spoke about federal budget cuts and that Congress keeps having "contrived crises." He said, "We need to stop deal-making and start legislating." Enzi said that while there is "common ground" on about 80 percent of the issues, there is 20 percent Congress is not going to agree upon.

"We need to have (budget) cuts and we're going to have them," he said.

Enzi responded to the mention of proposed budget cuts in Yellowstone Park, saying, "That's the jewel of national parks."

In terms of education, Enzi – who went to school through third grade in Thermopolis – said the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 turned into "no school able to succeed." He said schools should be "locally operated."

Enzi said, "We do need to balance the budget in this country. We're working on an amendment for that. Congress needs to be held to the fire for a balanced budget." In terms of the "Penny Plan," if the federal government could cut 1 cent from everything spent, it would balance the budget. "We haven't had a budget in four years," he said.

The senator spoke briefly of his "no budget, no pay" for Congressmen. He said it's required to have a budget by April 15.

"There are a lot of ways Social Security can be fixed," Enzi said. "Money paid in by young people is now being paid out to seniors... Don't trust any trust funds. That's the way they work."

Enzi said a 13-page chapter in an AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) publication explains how to fix Social Security, suggesting to raise the age of qualification and raising the cap.

According to Enzi, there is no trust fund for Medicare, which the general fund has to support. He said \$714 billion is being taken out to spend outside of Medicare. "They should have put the money back in," he said.

Our \$16 trillion debt needs to be "paid down," Enzi said. "The 'Penny Plan' can get us down to where we don't have deficit spending, but it doesn't get us out of debt."

Enzi spoke of the United States Postal Service financial dilemma. "There are some ways post offices can save some money," he said, lamenting that mail is being sent out of an area to be sorted before it's delivered. "Wyoming is community, a sense we should never give up."

In terms of education, Enzi said, "We spend more on preschool than we do on K-12. We do need to eliminate duplication. We should take the best (teachers) and improve them."

The Second Amendment has been a hot topic and Enzi addressed it.

"People around Wyoming are afraid for their guns. What they're talking about is violence, not guns," he said. He pointed to violence in movies and video games as a source of the problem.

Enzi showed a book titled, "Hidden America..." which has a section on guns. The author, Jeanne Marie Laskas, worked in a gun shop and wrote about personal rights, an armed militia and having fun shooting as a sport.

"I'm gearing up for the attack," Enzi said of legislators who want to tighten gun control.