

Parent Leadership
Training Institute
graduation on tap **3**

Bridges break school
record of Williams
in 100-meter dash **6**

‘Living with Wildfire’
guide valuable
to landowners **8**

School starting time
changes being
evaluated **14**

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 114, No. 15, April 11, 2013

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

Sailor or chef?



About 10 inches of snow fell Monday night and early Tuesday morning, leaving extra adornments on statues of military figures in front of the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center. — J.D. Stetson photo

Chamber, Lodging Tax Board working together

by Cindy Glasson

A meeting held between the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce and the Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board (LTB) at the museum April 4 was highly productive toward bringing the two entities together with a common goal.

With new members on the chamber board, LTB chairman Ernest Cummings explained where the board's money comes from and how it is distributed, emphasizing the governmental restraints put on them as to how the money can be spent.

"We put Thermopolis out there where people can see it," Cummings said. "We own nothing, we simply allocate the money to advertise the city."

LTB vice chairman Carl Leyba added the income for the coming year will probably be down \$30,000 to \$50,000 from normal.

"All of our room occupancy is down (in the county)," he said. "We're still doing better than places like Buffalo, but unfortunately we don't have a resort tax that comes in."

A resort tax would give money back to the county based on monies coming from the pools in Hot Springs State Park.

Amanda Moeller, new executive director for the chamber, said the chamber's part in all of this is based upon commerce – the businesses in the county.

"You need to advertise to get people here, spend the weekend here," she said. "We need to get them to visit the merchants and the activities available. The money goes all the way through the community."

Tawna McQueen, organizer of the annual Hot Spot Car Rally, said that is why she works so hard with the rally.

"The biggest thing is to get people here," she

said. "We've gotten good results in the past. We fill the rooms and get people here."

"We have a lot of volunteers. It's all about community pride."

"All of us believe in Thermopolis," said Meri Ann Rush, chamber board president and owner of Print Zone. "We want to see it grow and prosper, otherwise, we wouldn't be volunteering our time."

The two groups have looked toward Cody for inspiration, citing the focus the town west of Thermopolis seems to have when it comes to tourism.

"They know where they're going from year to year," Moeller said. "We're a little bit scattered. Do we have that kind of organization? As a business community, can we come together?"

"We need to start thinking about these things together – what is our focus, where are we going with this and how do we get there."

Brainstorming ideas

One of the suggestions made while sitting around the tables was the purchase or rental of a double-decker bus that could take tourists from one end of town to the other in the evenings.

The bus could start its route south of town at Eagle RV Park, pick up guests at the Super 8 and other hotels, and bring them downtown for shopping and dinner.

The bus could also be used to take visitors to Hot Springs State Park, the pools and perhaps as far as Kirby and Wyoming Whiskey.

But how do you make something like that work?

"There are Department of Transportation (WYDOT) funds available," Leyba said. "You approach the banks. You ask each of the businesses to give \$25 a week for gas. You're bringing

See Together on page 9

New Era Petroleum presents Warm Springs project

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners were given a presentation at their April 2 meeting from New Era Petroleum, a company specializing in extraction and production of stranded oil.

Paul Carlson, senior vice president of operations for the company, updated the commissioners on a field the company is working east of Thermopolis – the Warm Springs Field.

According to Carlson, the company uses a combination of technologies from the petroleum industry and the underground mining industry to extract pools of oil hidden far underground while eliminating the need for dozens of pump jacks on the surface.

This type of extraction has a smaller "footprint" with minimal surface disturbance, leaving the surrounding area clear so as not to disturb the natural

habitat of wildlife in the area.

New Era has won several safety and environmental awards at its Greybull facility, which has been in operation since 2007, including first place in safety for small underground mine in 2007, 2008 and 2009; U.S. MSHA (Mine Safety and Health Administration) "Sentinels of Safety" award 2007-10; and the MSHA Safest Mine Achievement Award in 2007.

In addition, the operation was nominated to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2008 for Environmental Achievement.

How it works

A single, concrete reinforced shaft is drilled into the ground to start the project. In the case of the Warm Springs project, the shaft goes to a depth of 900 feet – well below the pooled oil reserve.

Excavation below ground creates the production station, which contains the equipment necessary to drill into the oil pool horizontally, extract it and send it to the surface.

From the drill station, New Era plans to drill 59 wells, all below surface in a fan-like configuration – with drilling accuracy in the plus or minus two-foot

See Petroleum on page 9

RMEF banquet, auction grosses nearly \$64,000

by Joe Sovia

Saturday's Ninth Annual Big Horn Basin Chapter Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Big Game Banquet and Auction at the Hot Springs County Fair Building was a rousing success as the event was sold out.

Even though the gross earnings from the banquet and auction was a little less than 2012, it's the bottom line that counts. Western Wyoming Regional Director Jill Tonn said the event brought in \$63,800, falling short of last year's \$66,000 total. However, the net proceeds exceeded last year's figure.

"We had a really good net-to-gross ratio," Tonn said, which was 73 percent. "The Foundation wants at least 60 percent. Our chapter did a really good job of keeping expenses fairly low."

"We got a lot of merchandise donations and cash donations. We didn't have to buy as much to put the banquet on. We were really tickled."

Tonn said she was hoping for a \$55,000 total and the chapter easily surpassed that goal.

For 2012, Wyoming placed first nationally for the second year in a row and won 15 awards at the 2013 Elk Camp, RMEF's annual national convention Feb. 28-March 4 in Las Vegas, Nev. The Wyoming chapter of RMEF was one of eight that had a fundraising total of \$100,000 or more in 2012. The chapter is in the midst of another excellent year. Since last year's banquet and

auction sold out, the number of tickets sold was boosted from 225 in 2012 to 250 this year – which is about the maximum number of people the fair building can hold for such an event. D&R Catering of Lander – an Elks Foundation volunteer – catered the dinner, which featured smoked prime rib, chicken and all the fixings.

Tonn indicated the raffles and games at the event brought in about \$29,000 and the live auction total was approximately \$21,000.

Kyle Lawson of Gillette paid the highest price for an item during the live auction, run by auctioneer Gary Nash. He had the high bid of \$3,000 for the featured firearm – a Browning A-bolt White Gold Medallion 300 rifle.

"The live auction was quite exciting," Tonn said.

The Stinker for a Plinker raffle was quite popular, featuring bidding on five stuffed skunks – each with a different color ribbon. A ribbon color was drawn to determine the winner of a Mossberg 5.56MM rifle. That raffle brought in \$2,550.

A three-deck card raffle for a Kimber .45 ACP pistol and Brunton Epoch binoculars totaled \$3,100 in proceeds.

The RMEF Remington Model 1911 Stainless .45 Auto pistol sold for \$1,500. The RMEF Banquet Buckle was auctioned for

See RMEF on page 9



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteer Bethany Webber had a busy night Saturday during games and raffles at the Hot Springs County Fair Building. Webber was selling tickets to folks attending the big game banquet and auction so they could place their tickets in buckets with hopes of winning one or more prizes on display. Above, Webber gets the most out of measuring a string of tickets for Daniel Harris of Lovell, who got a big laugh out of Webber's technique. Raffles and games brought in \$29,000 and the live auction gross total was about \$21,000. — Joe Sovia photo