

London Jenks named district Teacher of the Year **3**

Bjorhus receives Wilford Mower Memorial Award **6**

Melanie Kress sworn in as new officer on police force **9**

Drought in 2013 expected to continue **14**

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Chamber board discusses feedback on 3-on-3 tourney

by J.D. Stetson

The official number of teams that played during the 2013 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament was 183 teams.

Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Amanda Moeller said she had a great time during her first tournament and presented some statistics during the May 9 board meeting.

Final figures for the tournament were still to be determined as it was too early to tabulate many of the bills for services.

Moeller reported some of the feedback survey results from teams that included a number of questions with ratings between 1 and 5.

She said many of the respondents marked "4" or "5" on whether they were satisfied with registration process.

Lodging Tax Board Chairman Earnest Cummings said a number of hotels in town chose to discount their rooms 45-50 percent for the 3-on-3 weekend

in order to help dispel feedback concerning room price sensitivity or "price fixing."

However, he did point out that since the hotels didn't fill at prime rates, less money from the weekend would go to lodging tax coffers.

Downtown business owners who gave feedback during the meeting included Debra Tudor of Black Bear Café and Tom Butler of Flying Eagle Gallery. Butler is also a board member.

Tudor said the café had planned to have food ready to go, but instead chose to open the restaurant after people said they wanted a place to sit down and eat.

She said a few locals came in, but business mostly catered to visitors during the weekend. Tudor said the restaurant might have had more business without so many out-of-town vendors.

She said many of the restaurants would rather see more promotion of local restaurants and limits on the number of vendors in future

tournaments.

Butler said his business did not sell what it normally would on a regular weekend. He said other feedback he received from downtown merchants indicated business was slow to pitiful and that while they support the event, none of them want to take a loss.

All of the board members in attendance thanked all the various downtown businesses for being open and their support.

As far as the actual tournament, Moeller said the volunteer referees had said it was the smoothest tournament in years and that the teams and vendors appreciated the layout.

The board briefly discussed ways to reach an ideal 250 teams for the tournament. One of the suggestions was to move the date of the tournament back to the first weekend in June so that it would not conflict with school events.

Cummings suggested the chamber and lodging tax board

See Chamber on page 10

K-2 Spring Music Program



Ralph Witters Elementary School held its K-2 Spring Music Program on May 9 in the RWE gym. Above, from left, second graders Trinity Mohr, Ariona Bazzle, Jackson Reed, Saraiya Sosa, Tanner Macie and Cade Jackson (back) use an original poster while performing "Down By the Bay." — Joe Sova photo

HSCHS graduation Sunday

Forty-seven seniors will be in cap and gown when the Hot Springs County High School Class of 2013 celebrates graduation with commencement exercises Sunday at 2 p.m. in the high school gym.

Tri-valedictorians Tanner Abbott, Jennifer Cramer and Brianna Hill will each provide a brief address, as will salutatorian Laurel Leonhardt.

Eric Kay, a HSCHS teacher, will be the guest speaker at the commencement exercises.

See the special 2013 Graduation Edition in this issue of the Independent Record for photos of the graduates and salutes by businesses and other members of the community.

Abbott and Cramer were named recipients of Most Outstanding Boy and Girl awards during

Senior Scholarship Awards Night on Tuesday at the school auditorium. In addition to Abbott and Cramer, honor students from the Class of 2013 — with GPAs of 3.5 or above — are Dana Bjorhus, Jason Bowman, Henry Chism, Katie Crosby, Holly Dennis, Kaylee Groh, Jacqueline Henrichs, Hill, Shannon Jordan-Lorenz, Katlyn Lehman, Leonhardt, Emily Lesmeister, Jordan Leyba, Charles Patterson, Dhestinny Rangel, Kelley Sheperd, Hannah Swick and Demitra Zamora.

National Honor Society members are Leonhardt, Abbott, Zamora, Leyba, Rangel, Bjorhus, Sheperd, Hill, Cramer and Groh.

A list of the scholarship recipients will be published in next week's Independent Record.

Tree City USA status sought

by J.D. Stetson

Citizens of the town approached the Thermopolis Town Council May 7 to discuss the possibility of designating Thermopolis a Tree City USA.

Becky Hutson was joined by Carla Thomas and Ken Averill in promoting the benefits of the designation to the council. Also on hand for the discussion was Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Amanda Moeller.

Hutson explained the education and community pride that goes along with the Tree City designation.

"I'm not a big tree hugger, and that's not where I'm coming from," Hutson said. "But I want people to be aware of their environment."

Some of the requirements in order to receive the Tree City designation include forming a tree board, a forestry ordinance, a forestry program and an observation of Arbor Day.

Other boons of the designation and the program would be access to state forestry grants for projects and an improved image for the town and county.

Moeller told the council the chamber is in favor of the designation and its potential to draw visitors to the area.

Averill explained the current dilemma facing the existing trees in town. He said many of the trees are elms or cottonwoods and some ash trees. He said the town could improve on its varieties.

"I think a tree board would be beneficial," Averill said.

One of the catches of the designation is the forestry budget needs to be at least \$2 per capita. Hutson explained her research indicated some of the current programs and expenses can be counted toward the budget requirement.

See Tree City on page 10

Early deadline for May 30 issue

The Independent Record office will be closed on Monday, May 27 in recognition of Memorial Day. The deadline for

classified, display and legal advertising in the May 30 issue is noon Friday, May 24. The IR office will be open until 5 p.m.

on that day.

The deadline for editorial/news content for the May 30 issue is noon Tuesday, May 28.

Cindy Hill addresses SF104 issue at town hall meeting

by Cindy Glasson

Wyoming's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Cindy Hill, has been hitting the road of late, answering questions about Senate File 104, the so-called "Hill Bill," as well as other items of interest to parents and citizens in town hall-style meetings across the state.

Stopping in Thermopolis on Saturday, May 11, Hill began the evening explaining what her intentions had been for the education of Wyoming's young people when she was elected to the position two years ago.

"I went into this with a certain focus, certain goals," Hill said Saturday.

She was surprised, however, when she arrived in Cheyenne only to be met with what could be termed a "cold shoulder" by those where were to be her colleagues during her term in office.

"Employees wouldn't make eye contact with me," she said. "They were told not to engage with me."

And before long, employees started leaving their positions. Positions Hill converted to at-will employment from permanent or tenured positions. When she first arrived in the capitol city, of the 158 employees in the department of education, only two were at-will employees.

"Some would try to tell you I changed all of the positions to at-will," Hill said, "but the reality is I only converted those jobs

that were coming up vacant after people left those positions."

Hill also ended contracts with some vendors, wanting to "move the money closer to the children."

Conflicts with legislators

Hill's problems weren't just internal as she indicated she was being attacked from the outside, too, by members of the legislature that she felt believed the emphasis in the department should be on money and contracts rather than the education of the children.

One such case was the much-maligned PAWS (Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students) testing done in all 349 schools in the state.

In wanting to make the department more cohesive, Hill had the PAWS offices moved from Laramie to Cheyenne so they could work as a team.

The move not only brought everyone to the same table, it eliminated \$276,000 from the budget that was being paid for the rental of office space in Laramie. Those employees were moved into the Hathaway Building with the rest of the department.

That, Hill said, is when Rep. Sen. Phil Nicholas from Albany County attacked.

Nicholas, who held a seat in the State House from 1997-2004 then moved to the Senate in 2005, is currently the Senate Majority Floor Leader. An attorney from

Albany County, Nicholas is also an ex-officio member of the Laramie Economic Development Corporation and co-chair of the Laramie Beautification Committee.

"He wanted to take all of the first floor (of the Hathaway Building) away from us," Hill said. "He said to take it away from us and give it to anyone else. He didn't care who, he just didn't want us to have it."

At the time, it was within Hill's power to make the move, but statutes have been changed since then.

The PAWS assessment director wanted to make changes to the testing system, creating timed tests and shortening the duration from three weeks to two weeks.

"One legislator said they felt the tests were too long and that caused the whole 'want' for change," Hill said.

According to Hill, when you want the right answer you go to the source and that is precisely what her team did. They called every one of the schools in the state.

"The teachers didn't want the change," Hill said. Training, however, had already started for timed tests, which Hill called to have stopped immediately.

Allegations about use of funds

During Saturday's gathering, Hill addressed accusations made regarding misappropriation of funds within her department.

At one point, an outside auditor was brought in to thoroughly examine the financial records of the department.

Saturday evening, Hill played a recording taken during the auditor's presentation to the legislature, which clearly states there were no missing funds and no misappropriation as far as the auditor could see.

The auditor did find various entries totaling less than \$40,000 that had been deducted from the wrong line item in the budget, but nothing that indicated intentional wrong doing.

Despite all the negativity, Hill said she would do it all again.

"I kept the promises I made on the campaign trail," Hill said.

Effort to repeal SF104

Signatures are currently being gathered across the state for a referendum seeking to repeal 2013 Senate Enrolled Act 1 (the law resulting from the passage of SF104), which amended the duties of, and transferred specified duties from, the state superintendent of public instruction to the director of the state department of education.

If enough signatures are gathered, the people of Wyoming will have a vote on the issue.

The local contact for the referendum request is Carrie Galovich. If you wish to get more information on it or sign the petition you may call Galovich at 864-2723.



Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction Cindy Hill conducted a town hall-type meeting in Thermopolis last week as part of her statewide effort to gain a referendum on Senate File 104. — Cindy Glasson photo

Chamber

from page 1

need to get more scientific with marketing the event and identify the geographic areas, ages and genders interested in the event.

The chamber will continue discussing 3-on-3 as the board will need to make a decision on whether to renew a contract with World Events to provide baskets and manage the tournament.

Budget

The board had its first look at the chamber's proposed budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Included in the budget is a request to the Town of Thermopolis for \$5,000 and a request to Hot Springs County Commissioners for \$10,000.

Moeller explained the request to the town would help pay rent on the chamber office to the state and the commissioners contributions will be to help fund a full-time position in the office.

The board and Moeller discussed the benefits of the chamber and tourism to local sales taxes and the need for "buy-in" from local entities to benefit the entire community.

Chamber President Meri Ann Rush, Moeller and Cummings stressed the need for board support and planning as the chamber makes its presentations

to the town and county.

Overall, the chamber is budgeting for potential revenues of \$147,315 and expenses of \$142,370 in the next fiscal year. The proposed revenues are contingent upon the approval of the requests to the town and county.

Moeller said she has set goals to increase revenue from chamber memberships to \$40,000 and increase revenue from the annual Chamber Banquet to \$16,000.

"I want see memberships meet the 200 mark," she said adding that the current chamber membership is 45 memberships short of 200.

Miscellaneous

The board decided to continue a new tradition that started last Fourth of July, and will once again have the Pedal and Pet Parade. Details are still being worked out for the parade, which encourages kids and adults to dress up pets, bicycles or other non-motorized transportation in patriotic fashion.

The chamber also briefly discussed the Gift of the Waters Parade and decided it would need to decide on a theme by the June meeting. The board asked for a list of potential themes in advance.

Tree City

from page 1

Mayor Bill Malloy explained that he is personally in favor of the designation and has looked into the Tree City requirements in the past. He said the first step must be the formation of a willing and active board to investigate the program and bring a plan back to the council.

He said that he was unaware of the possibility of "in kind" contributions to meet the forestry program budget mandate, which Malloy estimated to be about \$6,000, but said the tree board can investigate further.

Currently, the town cannot afford to set aside \$6,000 for a forestry program, Malloy said.

"It will take someone to form a board, and it isn't something the town is going to take over and run," Malloy said.

Town miscellaneous

The council also approved a request from the Centennial Committee to hang a Centennial plaque near a similar plaque on the base of the cowboy and horse statue in the 500 block of Broadway Street.

Codes Administrator Fred Crosby indicated the town may have to adopt new residential building codes in the near future.

He said some of the 2012 codes may need to be written out because they may cause too much of a burden on homeowners. He specifically mentioned problems with insulation requirements and fire sprinkling systems in residential houses.

Later in the meeting, Crosby also informed the council of a potential rate increase needed

to balance revenue into the enterprise fund for water.

Crosby said the increased costs to the town for chemicals and electricity are factors in a potential water rate increase. He said the request could likely be presented at the next meeting of the town council.

Earlier in the meeting, the town also approved a request from bar owners for the bars to be open all night on July 19 for the All-Class Reunion, Aug. 17 for the Demolition Derby, Oct. 26 for Halloween parties and Dec. 31 for New Year's Eve.

The town also approved a request from Mac's Bar for an open container permit in order for the bar to offer a fenced-off patio section during the H.O.G. Rally July 11-13.

Kiddie Kollege Field Day



Ayden Coleman Weisz, Peyton Green, James Whitt and Ellis Webber bounce on balls in a race Friday during Kiddie Kollege Field Day. Graduation is Wednesday, May 22 at Bicentennial Park. Graduating students must be at the Kiddie Kollege by 5:30 p.m. and a picnic in the park will be at 6:30 p.m. — J.D. Stetson photo

State park hosts needed

Does staying at a Wyoming State Park for free sound appealing? The Wyoming Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails is currently looking for campground hosts.

In exchange for 20 hours per week of serving as a campground host, a person, couple or family can stay fee-free in a campsite with water and electrical hook-ups.

Opportunities are available at Boysen, Curt

Goody, Seminole and Keyhole state parks. Also, maintenance and grounds keeping assistance is currently needed at Hot Springs State Park.

These are great opportunities to enjoy Wyoming's State Parks free of charge while interacting with visitors from throughout the region and country.

For more information about these campground host opportunities, contact Shelly Morrell by email at shelly.morrell@wyo.gov. Safe

Safe Kids holds car seat checkup

Safe Kids Wyoming will check child safety seats and install new seats during the Boost Till 9 event.

The event will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday, May 23, behind Thermopolis Town Hall.

Booster seats will be available for children ages 3-9 and between 30 and 80 pounds.

Key points in the Wyoming Child Restraint Enforcement Guide include having a booster seat for children up to age 9, the child must be secured in rear seat except in vehicles with one row of seats or if all other safety belts are in use by other child passengers.

Non-use or misuse is a primary offense that can result in reasonable suspicion for a traffic stop and investigation.

For more information, call Deb Gerharter at Hot Springs

County Public Health, 864-3311, or Kim Black at the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office at 864-2622.

Five generations



Five generations of Ruth Clare Yonkee Johnson's family gathered for a photo March 30. Johnson is seated in the center. Seated on her right is daughter Margo Ann Rush; her husband Dennis is standing. On Johnson's left is Damon Rush, her grandson (the Rushes son). Seated on the floor are, left, Johnson's great-granddaughter Kylee Rush, holding son Jaiden Lahoya, and right, great-granddaughter Lacie Neibor, holding her daughter McKenna Clare Neibor. Kylee Rush and Lacie Neibor are Dana Rush's daughters.

Ag department annual plant sale set today

The Hot Springs County High School Agriculture Department is holding its annual plant sale today (Thursday) and early next week.

Plants will be available for purchase from 3 to 5 p.m. today, Monday and Tuesday in the agriculture department's greenhouse, located in the vo-tech building.

There will be lots of bedding plants available as well as vegetables that are already started. Make purchases at the greenhouse during the sale hours or call 864-6501 for an appointment.

All proceeds from the plant sale go toward Thermopolis FFA chapter travel costs.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM RT COMMUNICATIONS

NEED HELP PAYING FOR YOUR PHONE BILL?

Many low-income families qualify for assistance with phone charges, but don't realize that this help is available. Lifeline provides qualified customers with a \$12.75 monthly discount. Additional discounts are available for individuals that live on a federally recognized reservation or trust land.

Participation in Medicaid, SNAP (formerly called food stamps), LIEAP (low income energy assistance program), TANF (temporary assistance for needy families), FPHA (federal public housing assistance program), National School Lunch Program, SSI (supplemental security income) can qualify you for Lifeline.

Even if you do not participate in any of the above programs, you may still qualify for Lifeline based on your household income level. Contact your local phone company for application forms and income guidelines.

The name on the phone bill must match the name of the family member participating in the eligible program. The program is limited to one benefit per household and the benefit is non-transferable.

Lifeline is a Government benefit program and anyone who willfully makes false statements in order to obtain a benefit can be punished by fine or imprisonment or can be barred from the program.

For more information, please contact:



1-800-647-9841 or (307) 347-7020

Legislative Report by NATHAN WINTERS

Friday, May 17 • 6-8:30 p.m.

Hot Springs County Museum & Cultural Center

Come enjoy coffee & cookies.

Questions & Answers time to follow.

Paid for by Nathan Winters

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Thur., May 16 Storytime, county library, 10:30 a.m.
National Day of Prayer, Bicentennial Park, 12:15 p.m.
Thermopolis Toastmasters meeting, museum, noon
RWE Field Day, HS track, 1-3 p.m.
Chamber Meet & Greet, Stoplight Pizzeria, 5:30 p.m.
HSC Democratic Party meeting, Super 8, 5:30 p.m.
School Board meeting, board room, 7 p.m.
Lights On Space Musical, auditorium, 7 p.m.
Book discussion, county library, 7 p.m.
- Fri., May 17 Acoustic Jam, Southside Travel Center, 6 p.m.
Lights On Spring Celebration, state park, 7 p.m.
Open gym, armory, 7-9 p.m.
- Sat., May 18 Adult Scrabble, county library, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Open gym, armory, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
WYO Quarter Horse Sale, fairgrounds, 1 p.m.
Motivated Couch Potatoes bowl-a-thon, A&W, 2-6 p.m.
- Sun., May 19 HSCHS Graduation, high school gym, 2 p.m.
Memorial service, Monument Hill Cemetery, 4:30 p.m.
Memorial service, Riverside Cemetery, 5 p.m.
- Mon., May 20 Republican Party meeting, annex, 6:30 p.m.
Recreation Board meeting, armory, 7 p.m.
HS Spring Sports Awards/Hall of Fame, auditorium, 7 p.m.
- Tues., May 21 Wyoming Workforce Services, library, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Lodging Tax Board meeting, Days Inn, noon
County Commissioners meeting, annex, 4 p.m.
HSC Museum Board meeting, museum, 6 p.m.
Master Gardeners meeting, museum, 6 p.m.
Pops Concert, auditorium, 6 p.m.
Hot Springs Hospice meeting, museum, 7 p.m.
Thermopolis Town Council meeting, town hall, 7 p.m.
- Wed., May 22 Storytime, county library, 10:30 a.m.
NWBOCES Board meeting, Children's Center, 7 p.m.
Open gym, armory, 7-9 p.m.
- Thur., May 23 Risen Son Christian School track meet, HS track, 8-noon
Storytime, county library, 10:30 a.m.
Thermopolis Toastmasters meeting, museum, noon
Child Safety Seat Check, next to Town Hall, 3-5 p.m.
Hershey Track Meet, high school track, 6 p.m.
HS Conservation District meeting, Weed & Pest, 6 p.m.
Power in the Constitution, Big Horn Federal, 7 p.m.

Call 864-2328 to have your community event listed.

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