

D.A.R.E. fifth-graders receive awards during ceremony **5**

Ibach inducted into Bobcat Athletics Hall of Fame **7**

Dinosaur Center gets new look, fossils and features **8**

Airports' economic impact report released **14**

Thermopolis  
Hot Springs

# Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 115, No. 22, May 29, 2014

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

## Filing deadline Friday for Aug. 19 primary

The filing deadline for the Aug. 19 primary election is Friday, May 30, and the following have thrown their names in the ring for various offices as of Tuesday morning.

For the town of Thermopolis, candidates are needed for mayor as well as three councilpersons.

Currently filed are incumbent Bill Malloy and Mike Mortimore for mayor, and incumbent Dusty Lewis for town council.

East Thermopolis is seeking mayoral candidates and two councilpersons. Filed are incumbent David Peak for mayor and Sybil Hannah for town council.

As of Tuesday morning, there were no candidates filed for the town of Kirby for mayor or two needed councilpersons.

### County filings

There are eight races for Hot Springs County offices, and the following will appear on the primary ballot as of Tuesday.

Mike Baker (incumbent) and Thomas J. Ryan, for county commissioner, two openings; Terri Cornella (incumbent), clerk of District Court, one opening; Shelley Deromedi (incumbent), assessor, one opening; Lou Falgoust (incumbent), sheriff, one opening; Ron Jurovich (incumbent), Circuit Court magistrate, one opening; Isabelle Willson (incumbent) and Julie Mortimore, treasurer, one opening; Mark Mortimore (incumbent),

coroner, one opening; Nina Webber (incumbent), county clerk, one opening; and Jerry Williams (incumbent), county attorney, one opening.

According to the Wyoming Election Code, a write-in candidate shall not be nominated and shall not be entitled to have his name printed on the ballot for the next general election unless he received at least 25 write-in votes.

### Election information

The primary election will be held on Aug. 19 with the general election slated for Nov. 4 – both Tuesdays.

If you require assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability or inability to read or write, you may be given assistance by a person of your choice. Also, if you have questions regarding the accessibility of your polling place, information may be found by calling the county clerk.

Every candidate, candidate's campaign committee and political action committee must file a statement of campaign receipts by Aug. 12.

All candidates, whether successful or not, must file a statement of receipts and expenditures by Aug. 29. A candidate must file the statement before receiving a certificate of nomination or election. A fee of \$25 shall accompany all late reports.



Thermopolis captured its first high school boys' state track title since 1932 on Saturday in Casper. Members of the Thermop boys' and girls' teams that competed at state are, front row from left, Choc Maddock, Cody Bjorhus, Jake Hart, Kaden Haun, Harley Rhodes, Tyler Cornwell, Domanic Jensen, Vinny Hinojos-Castle and coach Brad Morrison; and second row, coach Brenna Dooley, Stacy Lewis, Kayla Conner, Makayla George, Leesa Jensen, Haylee Hoffman, Elizabeth Rhodes, Ivy Paris, Zoe Stehlin, head coach Ernie Mecca, coach Aimee Kay and manager Logan Kay. – Joe Sovo photo

## Bobcats reign supreme

### Thermop wins first boys' state track title in 82 years

by Joe Sovo

Ernie Mecca is not a math teacher. But he is a mathematician when it comes to track and field scoring. Many coaches are said to be "a student of the game," and Mecca has gone beyond that. After all, he had coached Dubois High School teams to six state track and field championships – from 1990 through 2001.

Going into the 2014 season – his second as head coach at Thermopolis – Mecca knew the Bobcats would be contenders to win the

Class 2A state title in Casper. It was evident that Lovell and Burns would stand in the Cats' way of state supremacy.

What made the scenario even more intriguing was that – through research of records – Mecca learned that it had been 82 years since Thermop had won a boys' state track championship. The title captured in 1932 was sixth in school history, all within an 11-year span. The first boys' crown was in 1922.

Mecca and his assistant coaches – Bren-

na Dooley, Aimee Kay and Brad Morrison – watched the team scoring closely throughout the three-day state meet. With superlative performances from all eight Cats representing the boys' team at state, Thermop had closed the door on both Lovell and Burns – guaranteed the 2A state crown with still two events yet to go Saturday, the 200-meter dash and 1,600 relay. At the time, the Cats led Lovell by two points, 85-83. But the

See Champions on page 10

## State officials talk HSSP Terrace health

by Drew Foster

Replacing pond liners, decreasing water volume in the cooling ponds, raising walkways and reusing water from concessionaires were several topics discussed Tuesday evening at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center during a community meeting on the health of the Terraces hosted by state officials.

About 40 people attended the 90-minute gathering that followed an afternoon lunch and tour of the Terraces. Milward Simpson, director of the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, and Darin Westby, field support chief for the department's Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails, led the meeting.

Westby said a new, thicker pond liner should be installed by the middle of next month. The liner was supposed to be in place by June 6, but Westby said an ordering miscommunication stalled the installation. The new 30-mil polyethylene lining will replace an existing 16-mil lining.

Westby said the state confirmed leakage in the ponds when water flow was shut off and the water level dropped 14 inches in 12 hours.

"We had some of the Terrace ponds severely leaking," he said.

Westby added: "The success of the pond liner should be (seen) instantly."

The state also is in the midst of raising the walkways anywhere from four to 12 inches to

improve water flow, as well as reducing the depth of the cooling ponds to increase water temperature. Westby said those projects also should be complete by the middle of June.

Other measures the state is undertaking to increase water flow out of the Big Spring and over the Terraces include breaking up spots of travertine buildup in the Big Spring to allow for better water flow.

"We know the water has a good grade to the Terraces," Westby said. "What we're trying to do is knock down some of the growth that's built up over the last 15 or 20 years."

As of November 2013, the Big Spring was producing 1,390 gallons of mineral water per

See Terraces on page 10

## Meth: A problem ... right here in our community

### Hot Springs County has third-highest arrest rate for methamphetamine in state

*Editor's note: Several names in this story have been changed to protect the people's anonymity. They include a member of Narcotics Anonymous and two Big Horn County Family Treatment Court participants.*

by Drew Foster

Felix bent forward and slipped a lace-less black shoe off his foot. Beneath was a worn grey sock, wrapped near the toes with dull silver duct tape – equal parts compression wrap and patchwork. Slowly, he removed the sock and revealed five gnarled toes; the hallux twisted and bent sideways beneath four hunched digits.

Rheumatoid arthritis has left his toes disfigured and hobbled his step. The disease can be caused by a number of factors, including exposure to bacteria and a weakened immune system.

For years, Felix lived immersed in bacteria. He lived to live among bacteria. Felix was a dumpster diver, driven by a desperate compulsion to find something, anything of value – real or perceived.

His compulsion was fueled by methamphetamine, a drug that cost him his career, his livelihood, the roof over his head and, at times, his mind. And he's not alone.

There's a meth problem in Thermopolis, says Felix, whose name has

been changed to protect his anonymity. Members of law enforcement, the court system and counseling community agree. So do the statistics.

According to the 2013 Alcohol and Crime in Wyoming report released in April by the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, methamphetamine was involved in 6.6 percent of arrests that occurred last year in Hot Springs County. That's the third-highest percentage in the state behind Campbell County at 8.09 percent and Sweetwater County at 7.33 percent. Statewide, 3.44 percent of arrests reportedly involved methamphetamine, a crystalline stimulant that can be snorted, smoked, injected or ingested orally.

In 2012, Hot Springs County reported 2.11 percent of arrests involved meth, and in 2011, it reported 4.46 percent. In 2010, just .015 percent of arrests reportedly involved meth.

"We've had a horrible run on meth in the last year or two," County Attorney Jerry Williams said. "Several years ago, I had cases with no meth in them, and all of the sudden they're back, and they're back really big. We're trying to address it, but it's pretty tough."

Williams said the numbers don't tell the whole story. The higher percentages, he said, translate to both a spike in methamphetamine use and a more aggressive approach by law en-



Methamphetamine, pictured above, was involved in 6.6 percent of arrests last year in Hot Springs County – the third-highest percentage among counties statewide, according to a report released last month by the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police. – Drew Foster photo

forcement to combat meth's presence in the community.

"We have more people testing positive for meth than we've had in the past," Williams said. "Now, when it comes to arrests – we arrest for meth; we don't cite and release. So we are a lot more aggressive about making arrests for it. The arrests numbers may look higher, but the overall total use of meth is up. With marijuana, a lot of

them are cited and released. We don't do that with meth."

### On the streets

Thermopolis police officer Kevin McGinty said he's seen methamphetamine use rise and fall and rise again since joining the Thermopolis Police Department eight years ago.

"I know there was a huge problem when I started," McGinty said. "It's

bigger now. And I don't know if that's because I just recognize it a bit more than I did then. It's hard to say. It's never gone away and, realistically, it probably never will go away."

It's a difficult problem to fight, he said, and requires a coordinated effort between law enforcement, the prosecutor's office and the local Probation and Parole agent.

"It roller-coasters – it goes up, it comes down – and right now we're coming back up. It's pretty bad right now," McGinty said. "We're trying to knock it down – it's one of the reasons you've seen more search warrants lately, more probation revocations. There are a lot of different angles on it."

Without a local Division of Criminal Investigation unit or drug task force, the local police department's resources can be stretched thin. The police department can reach out to DCI, a division of the State Attorney General's Office established in 1973 to assist state, county and local law enforcement agencies with investigation and crime detection. DCI employs 36 special agents assigned to 12 field offices across the state, including one in Riverton.

"Sometimes we'll just call them in for a resource," McGinty said of DCI.

See Methamphetamine on page 10

# Methamphetamine

from page 1

"I'll say, 'Hey, I'm struggling – I know this guy is pushing meth, I can't find an in', and sometimes they'll come and help with those. All we have to do is ask."

Of the 106 total offenses reported in Hot Springs County last year, 20.75 percent involved drugs. Neighboring Washakie County reported 15.61 percent of arrests involved drugs, while Fremont County reported 6.7 percent.

Felix was not among those arrested last year, but he said methamphetamine contributed to past transgressions – he said that by age 44 he had been arrested 25 times.

Felix recalled once being reported as a drunk driver in Casper. He said an officer stopped him in a shopping center parking lot and found methamphetamine residue in his vehicle, which eventually let to his probation being revoked. While dumpster diving, a near-nightly obsession at the height of his drug use, he said he'd occasionally steal items left outside businesses and homes. While homeless and living in an abandoned building, he stole propane tanks for heat and water from neighbors' hoses.

## In the courts

Seventy-six misdemeanors were reported in Hot Springs County last year, and 25 percent of those cases involved drugs. Statewide, only Platte County had a larger percentage of misdemeanors involving drugs – 30.43 percent. The majority of first-time methamphetamine-related misdemeanors result in probation, a punishment that too often fails to dissuade people from using.

"The reality of it is that most first-time users won't get enough jail time to deter them from using and will not go to treatment," Williams said. "So what we're left with is getting a jail sentence, having all or part of it suspended and putting them on probation. If

they're meth users, they'll keep using even if they're on probation. Some of them can make it, but the vast majority do not.

"And then we have a second meth charge, and then pretty soon we have a third meth charge and then eventually we have enough charges that they're looking at up to a couple years in jail. Then they'll finally go to treatment. It takes that much leverage for them to do it."

The Hot Springs County Attorney's office has sought dual-sentencing options in misdemeanor drug cases. A dual sentence allows a defendant to be given a short jail sentence followed by a period of probation and a longer jail sentence that's suspended. Williams said the purpose is to keep the person in jail until they secure a bed in a treatment facility. Once they complete treatment, they're released on probation with a longer jail sentence hanging over their head in case they violate probation. Dual sentencing could work with felonies too, Williams said.

"It's sort of a one-last-chance," Williams said. "If you have someone that already has felonies for drugs, especially meth, do you really want to lock them up for eight, 10, 12, 15 years? Or do you want to make that one last stab of running them through a treatment program and trying to put them back on the street? Then if they can't make it, put them in."

One option Williams would like to see is a drug court, where eligible individuals frequently appear before a judge and are held to specified obligations structured toward maintaining their sobriety and keeping them out of trouble. While Hot Springs County does not have a drug court, Big Horn County does. It's presided over by District Judge Robert E. Skar and began operating in 2001.

According to the Wyoming Drug Court Association, drug

courts help provide individual and group outpatient treatment, inpatient treatment, 12-step programs, general education development testing, literacy classes, continued education services, thinking skills development, budgeting, vocational rehabilitation and parenting classes. It also allows for immediate sentencing of up to 30 days in jail, Skar said, reducing the amount of time between transgressions and punishment.

Big Horn County's drug court is available to residents of Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park and Washakie counties. The juvenile drug court is funded by the state Department of Family Services, while the adult drug court is funded privately.

"We run the program based on a positive approach," Skar said. "We applaud their successes, and we sanction them if we have to."

Earlier this month, two young women appeared before Skar in Big Horn County Family Treatment Court. One had done well. One had not.

Patricia, 22, had recently gotten a new job and notched 125 clean days. She received a four-month coin acknowledging her sobriety and got to choose a prize from the fishbowls, one filled with candy and the other with beauty products, body spray and popcorn. She also progressed to stage three, which meant she had to attend drug court less frequently.

Jasmine, on the other hand, had been fired from her job, disappeared for three days and admitted to drinking and using drugs. The 22-year-old was or-

dered to remain on house arrest and call her probation officer every four hours.

"I'm not putting you in jail today," Skar told her. "But that doesn't mean that I won't."

In tears, Jasmine asked to go to drug treatment and receive counseling.

"We'll get you set up with treatment," Skar told her. "Immediately."

## After the sentence

Probation and Parole Agent Ron Woodward is often one of the first people an individual convicted of a crime will have to contact. His caseload last month hovered around 70 people. His office on the top floor of the Hot Springs County Courthouse is a hive of activity. He's a counselor, sentry and father figure. He's an authoritarian, mentor and stickler. He administers urine analysis tests, monitors employment

and personal relationships, visits homes, offers advice and orders arrests.

Woodward worked in Riverton before becoming Thermop's first probation and parole agent in July 2013. Offenders on probation previously traveled to Worland to visit their probation and parole agent, Woodward said. His presence has directly attributed to the increase in meth-related arrests. Urine analysis has increased, and arrests have followed.

"There's a real prevalent problem here in Hot Springs County – there's no doubt about it," Woodward said. "We have a lot of people here dealing with addictions to methamphetamines.

“  
We run the program based on a positive approach. We applaud their successes, and we sanction them if we have to.

District Court Judge  
Robert E. Skar

# Terraces

from page 1

minute. After allotted amounts are divvied among the concessionaires, about 600 gallons per minute flow toward the Terraces. Westby said since the heat exchanger became operational in 2006 the flow of water toward the Terraces has not been affected.

Increasing the flow of water is crucial to restoring the once-illustrious rainbow colors that swept across the Terraces. Westby said those colors are generated by organism growth facilitated by alkaline control, pH balance, temperature ranges and oxygen levels.

"Everything we try to do is based on that," he said.

Westby and Simpson said the state plans to consult with specialists in order to figure how to best cultivate those organisms.

Pumping water used by concessionaires back over the Terraces also was mentioned. Westby said that's something the state would be willing to try, though probably only in specific areas such as near the old TePee Pools cooling pond and close to the State Bath House cooling pond.

"Our biggest concern, obviously, is what are we introducing," Westby said, referring to possible contaminants.

Simpson said he plans on returning to Thermop sometime next month to continue the community dialogue regarding the Terraces.

## Brown bag tour of terraces

Simpson and Westby spoke to a group of about 25 people during a brown bag lunch and tour of the terraces during the noon hour Tuesday.

They explained how a contractor had drained three cooling ponds, dried them out and installed sand in preparation for the lining before being refilled.

A question was asked as to why the cooling ponds are needed anymore since the heat exchanger was installed to cool the mineral water. Westby responded by saying distribution of water over the terraces is an issue and regular maintenance could allow a more even flow over them.

According to Randy Wahler, many years ago the temperature in the holding ponds was monitored and it stayed around 88 degrees F, year round. "We need these cooling ponds," he said.

Another meeting attendee voiced his displeasure with goose feces being present around the ponds used for cooling the mineral water through the heat exchanger. HSSP Superintendent Kevin Skates indicated there had been health issues when there was mineral water in the pools, but no such problems have arisen since the installation.

Westby said maintenance of the terraces would be required once water starts to flow over them again, but there was no intent to increase the local state park staff. Skates did say he had made a request for an additional employee in the park.

According to Westby and Simpson, flow of mineral water from the Big Spring is cyclical, with some dependence on drought conditions.

Local geologist Dan Wychgram attended the gathering



Darin Westby, field support chief for the department's Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails, explains the Terraces project during Tuesday's tour. — Joe Sovia photo

and spoke about his "Save the Big Spring" idea. "I believe it's the drought that's giving us the problem," he said.

Wychgram indicated there are several mineral water wells north of Thermopolis and there is no control over their flow. He proposes drilling substitute wells, with the cost to property owners being tax deductible, and capping the existing wells so the flow of mineral water could be regulated.

Before getting a closer look at the Terraces project, Westby said that if the back-pressure on the Big Spring could be relieved, perhaps that would increase its flow.

HSSP's John Fish said that the water from the Big Spring is now only about two-thirds of the amount of (mineral) water coming out when he began working for the state park 22 years ago.

"We seem to be victims of Mother Nature," a lady in the audience said.

"We're trying but that's all we can do," Fish said of trying to increase the flow of mineral water over the Terraces.

— Joe Sovia contributed to this article.

**\$SAVE MONEY NOW\$**

**SALES AND USE TAX IS DUE WITHIN 50 DAYS!**

**Don't wait on your sales or use tax, it could end up costing you more money!**

**Contact us at 864-3616  
Hot Springs County Treasurer's Office**

# Champions

from page 1

Bulldogs did not have any finals qualifiers in the 200 and did not have a 1,600 relay team. Burns had fallen out of contention, sitting with 58 points.

Sophomore Tyler Cornwell won the state title in the triple jump and placed second in the long jump. Senior Kaden Haun claimed the 300 hurdles title, coming from behind to win in a photo finish. Haun, Cornwell, junior Choc Maddock and sophomore Domanic Jensen teamed to take the state crown in the 4x100 relay – breaking the school record. Senior Harley Rhodes was also huge for the Cats, contributing 21 team points with second place in the 1,600 and 3,200, and fourth in the 800.

"It was going out and perform-

A lot of people have relapses on methamphetamine... I must say that of my particular caseload, I'm probably dealing with more people that have problems with meth (here) than I did in Riverton."

Woodward said methamphetamine and marijuana use account for nearly equal numbers of failed urine tests. A single failed UA can result in a probation revocation warrant, though two or three often accumulate because of backups at the state crime lab. Once back in court, the prosecutor's office can argue for harsher penalties or longer probation stints for probation violators. Prison is a last resort.

"With probation and parole, our goal is the same as (the offenders) – we want to see them succeed," Woodward said. "But, ultimately, for some people (prison is) the only result."

## Developing a new habit

After about 25 years of drug use, dumpster diving and disarray, Felix decided in 2007 to get help. He joined an outpatient drug-treatment program in Worland. That was where Narcotics Anonymous entered his life. Felix embraced NA's 12-step approach to confronting and addressing addiction. He attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings as well, trying to hit a recovery meeting every night.

"When you talk to another addict or somebody that knows where you're coming from, it makes all the difference in the world," he said.

The meetings provided structure to his life, offered him something positive to focus on and introduced him to men and women fighting similar battles with addiction. He also gained confidence – confidence in himself, in his ability to stay clean and in the knowledge that a higher power was by his side. Recovery provided him with a forum to share his story and to learn from the

stories of others.

"I figure I'm being about as useful as I can be by sharing my story, by telling people who come in my story and where I've been," Felix said. "Every week we carry a meeting to the jail, and I go in there and tell my story, try to reach them while they're still in jail, try to tell them we'll be there and try to meet them when they get out. You know, (tell them to) go to a meeting that first night, get that habit rolling."

Felix continues to battle the demons that led him to recovery. He relapsed in 2009 after finding a long-forgotten vial that had contained meth.

"There wasn't enough to scrape out of it, but there was enough to rinse out of it," Felix said. "There was enough meth in one of those containers to rinse out with water and keep me up all night and take me back."

He spent that night prowling alleys and looking for dumpsters – right where he was before entering recovery. He'd been clean nearly two years, but the disease of addiction still resided inside him. So, he did the only thing he could think of – went to a meeting, put his faith back in his higher power and started over.

"(NA's) a lifeboat in this sea of life for us," he said. "Without it, I'd be out there by myself, and I'm convinced I'd run back into meth and do it again. It's such a powerful drug."

Being in that lifeboat means, for Felix, that others have to be left out. His friends have changed; his habits have changed. He rides his motorcycle past the homes of people he knows still use, considers stopping and saying hello, maybe asking for a hit – just one – but he knows it will lead him straight back to his past. So, he keeps riding.

Felix's toes will never uncurl; he'll forever feel like there's a pebble in his shoe. But he's back on his feet and moving forward.

**SECONDHAND SMOKE KIDS**  
suffer more asthma attacks.

**Don't raise a Secondhand Smoke Kid.**  
Quit smoking today.  
Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [quitwyo.org](http://quitwyo.org)

Wyoming Department of Health  
Breathe in your health.