



We celebrate
National Fire Prevention Week
October 5-11

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2014 Homecoming Royalty

Homecoming Royalty for 2014 include, left to right, junior Matthew Tjepkes, sophomore Kenna Oliver, junior Aressa Goodrich, sophomore Alex Jensen, senior Vinny Castle, senior Tyelynn Meyers, Queen Haylee Hoffman, King Spencer Luce, senior Sierra Schmidt,

freshman Lauren Reed, senior Jackson Roling and freshman Lucas Kraushaar. Students at HSCHS have been having a wonderful time celebrating this Homecoming, painting the "T", playing powder puff football, and gearing up to play Lovell in football Friday night.

Arts and Oktoberfest downtown Thermopolis Oct. 10-11

Smoking Waters Art Guild will hold its downtown ArtStroll, Friday, Oct. 10, 5-8 p.m. with spinning and weaving demonstrations, music jams, and a sneak-peek of scarecrows on the auction block on Sat. Downtown businesses will host artists, who will be showing jewelry, photography, creative cupcakes, recycled fashion, oils and watercolors.

Owl Creek Graphics in conjunction

with HSCMH Foundation is the host business featuring hand made glass ornaments. An artist reception and show for Angela Siems, soft pastels, will be held at Flying Eagle Gallery. Other participating businesses include: Hazel N Pearls, Broadway By-gones, Ramsey Gallery, Wow Store, Nature's Corner and Storyteller.

Saturday Oktoberfest opens at 1 p.m. in downtown Thermopolis with a

Beer Garden and bratwurst. A 50/50 raffle and poker run begins at 1 p.m. For those who prefer less strenuous activity, there are historic district building tours, 1-5 p.m. A mini-exhibit of handblown glass art marbles on view at Hot Springs County Library is sponsored by Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation.

Music begins at 1 p.m. with area performers -- Cody Burrows Band (1

p.m.); Eric Kay (2 p.m.); John Brooks & Friends (3 p.m.); Vintage Cowboys with Ken Swick (4 p.m.). Featured group is Cory McDaniel Duo, from Casper, 6-8 p.m., with McDaniel and Amy Gieske. The duo is sponsored by Bruce Webster and Wildcat Productions.

There will be a "bouncy house" for children and an apple biting contest.

A fall fashion show will be sponsored by Hazel 'n' Pearls, and many artists

from the ArtStroll activities Friday night will be on hand for Saturday's festivities.

Scarecrows will be on exhibit in the downtown area until auction time at 5 p.m.

Proceeds from the Oktoberfest will go to benefit Main Street Thermopolis.

For more information contact Thermopolis Chamber of Commerce at 307-864-3192.

It all starts with education

by Cindy Glasson

Education is the key to keeping our young people away from drugs and alcohol during their formative years. In this fourth installment of our series, we are looking into the programs and resources available to our youth through Hot Springs County School District #1.

When children are young they listen to their parents and most of the time, are quick to correct their behavior.

As they get older, though, peer pressure kicks in and it becomes difficult for parents to have the same control over their child's actions that they did before.

When it comes to alcohol and drugs, it is an education thing.

By the time a child reaches middle school it is very important to see that drug and alcohol education is part of their school year in an attempt to keep them clean, sober and healthy. That education has to continue into high school, as they get ready to go out into the "real" world.

Middle School

According to Thermopolis Middle School principal, Breez Daniels, they have at-risk students faced with the challenges of drug and alcohol abuse on both a personal level and at home.

The DARE program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a vital part of the school year at TMS and is part of their fifth grade curriculum.

Brandon Deromedi teaches fifth and sixth grade health classes and Shannon O'Keefe teaches the seventh and eighth grade health.

"Both teachers emphasize healthy choices and the importance of taking care of your body by not experimenting with drugs, alcohol or sexual activity as a middle school student," Daniels said. "Unfortunately, our surveys indicate that students as young as fifth grade are experimenting with both drugs and alcohol."

Daniels said there has been an increase over the past year in the use of prescription drugs. There have been moments when they have realized that a student is bringing a prescription pain medication to school and sharing that prescription with peers.

"It is important for parents to reinforce that a child should never take someone else's medication," she said. "Our school policy is that all prescription medications must be kept by the school nurse in the office and dispensed as prescribed. Students should not be carrying prescription medications in their backpacks or storing them in their lockers."

If a problem arises, Daniels is there.

"I stay in contact with the Department of Family Services and probation officers as assigned," she said. "One of my roles is to sit in on meetings with the student to create a connection between the school and other agencies and support the student through a difficult

and challenging time.

"As a TMS staff we support our students when they face hardships caused by drug and alcohol abuse within the family. Our role is not to judge a family in crisis, it is to support the student during a difficult time."

High School

The pressure students feel by the time they reach high school can be overwhelming, leading to poor choices. Add an insecure family life to the mixture and it can create a volatile situation.

Hot Springs County School District #1 has specific rules and regulations in place when it comes to students getting caught with drugs, alcohol or tobacco on campus, ranging from in school suspension to expulsion, depending on the situation.

High school principal Scott Shoop is one of the people responsible for investigating reports of students with any inappropriate substances.

"I investigate to the point of having a reasonable belief that we have a problem," Shoop said. "Law enforcement is called when I believe a student has broken school policy and the law. Parents are contacted if law enforcement wants to talk to their son or daughter and whatever happens on that end is up to law enforcement."

"It is my job to uphold school policy and also do what I can to help the student."

That doesn't mean, however,

that teachers and staff are just waiting in the wings to nab an offender.

"We have a required health class at the high school that contains relevant curriculum," Shoop said. "The students in our system, I believe, have a very good understanding of the dangers of drugs and alcohol."

"We work hard to teach "refusal skills" and promote the belief that you do not have to drink to have fun. We also have assemblies on the dangers of drinking and driving, these-ductive nature of meth, etc."

The Youth Alternatives program is available to both middle school and high school students, giving them the opportunity to turn those poor choices around.

Shoop is dealing with the Youth Alternatives program for the first time this year.

"I am still learning the system," Shoop said, "but I see us as partners in endeavoring to help students improve their lives."

Counseling

Cortney Thoren, high school counselor, works closely with

Youth Alternatives to provide information such as grades, social or emotion concerns and updates as well as a student's behavior at school to the program director, Alan Rossler.

She is provided with a release from the student and their parents to give the information to Rossler in order for him to get a complete picture of the student and the progress they are making.

"In the past, Alan has also worked with me in the school running social/emotional groups, specifically with young men in our school to address some of the issues students face in high school," said Thoren. "Often times, I have a couple of the kids that are in Youth Alternatives in the group so they are provided with extra support."

Getting caught with illegal substances in school and the consequences that follow are scary and confusing and Thoren says its her job to support those students in any way she can.

"Of course it's not good when a student has been using or is in possession of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco," she said, "but I try to support the kid by helping them address the real issue of why they are using or are in possession of illegal substances."

"I would say that nine times out of ten, students that get caught have unstructured or unsupervised home lives. And, nine times out of ten, students want someone to care about them using substances."

"What I mean by this is most students that I ask just want to feel loved and cared about in their home. They want structure and stability in their home. They want someone to look up to that can show them a healthy lifestyle."

Thoren said even though the school tries its best to nurture these students and give them stability, they still have to go home, and there isn't always a clear picture as to how that home life really is.

And that's not the worst of it.

According to Thoren, most students start with these substances to ease the pain of feeling sad, abused, neglected or unwanted. Depression and thoughts of suicide follow.

"In the month of September, we had one to four referrals per day of students reported to have suicidal thoughts, ideation, and some even had a plan," she said. "This is so scary to think that our children have lived and faced such tragedy in life that they are considering to end their lives at such a young age because they have no hope of it getting better."

But, she feels there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

"We are a small, involved community that has the potential to create big change," she said. "If we can come together to address this issue, and provide resources and education for each other, the impact can be overwhelmingly positive."

