

Hospital foundation nears halfway

by Zachary White

The Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Foundation is nearly halfway to their goal of raising enough money to pay for a new fetal heart monitor for the hospital.

Recently, the foundation had one of their biggest fundraisers to date in the form of a Murder Mystery night at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center.

“Each guest that came to participate in our event made a donation to the hospital foundation,” foundation member Karen Sinclair said.

During the night, participants dressed as characters one would expect to find at an old time murder mystery scene, similar to the style of the popular board game Clue.

In total, 40 people participated in the event. They spent their night trading clues in order to find out who killed the baroness, a fictional character in the fun, and who stole her brooch.

In the end Sinclair said the night was a major success, both creating great fun for locals and raising money for the fetal heart monitor. In total the foundation

raised around \$2,000 during the event.

Anyone interested in participating in future Murder Mystery events can call Judy at 921-9994 in order to get on the list as space is limited.

“We’re hoping to do another, maybe a series of these, so we’re hoping to give more people an opportunity to sign up,” Sinclair said.

This brings their total raised for the fetal heart monitor to \$7,034.

Once \$15,000 is raised the foundation will match the funds and a new fetal heart monitor will be purchased.

Another way the hospital foundation is raising money is through a baby weight board.

“The smallest baby that ever was born and lived weighed, like, 0.9 oz, and the largest baby every born was over 20 pounds,” Sinclair said.

With this in mind the foundation created a chart that has every weight in between those two. People can make a donation in order to represent a weight on the board.

The chart is located at the Thermopolis Hardware and Mercantile.



“I know some new tricks”

The Cat in the Hat works at coercing Ralph Witters Elementary kindergartner Timothy Macie to play some mischievous games like “up-up-up with a fish” during a special assembly dedicated to Dr. Seuss Week. The Cat is played by Kathy Vetter, the state president of the Wyoming Education Association, who is “Cat-a-vanning” around performing Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat for children and adults alike.

- Dennis Nierzwicki photo

Winters comments on hospital uncompensated care bill

by Cindy Glasson

Bills continue to pass through the House and Senate on their way to the governor’s desk during this session of the Wyoming Legislature.

This week, Representative Nathan Winters is looking at a pair of bills regarding health care and hospitals as well as the school accountability bill.

Hospital Uncompensated Care

Senate File 145 (SF145) is a bill looking to help small hospitals in Wyoming with the bills piling up from uncompensated care.

Last month, the legislature defeated a bill that would have allowed Medicaid expansion in Wyoming, giving approximately \$100 million to the state to cover uncompensated care for additional residents of the state.

The money would have come from the Federal Government to help lower income residents, and ultimately, the hospitals, with health care costs. The expansion was supported by the Wyoming Hospital Association.

In its original form, SF145 would have set aside \$10 million that would have been available to the 26 hospitals in the state through a grant program. The bill now sets aside half that amount, \$5 million, and will only be available to the small hospitals in Wyoming.

“SF145 does provide one-time funds to compensate for charity care for Critical Care Access hospitals, such as our own,” Winters said. “Indeed, it was designed with hospitals such as ours in mind.

“I tried carrying a budget footnote that did much the same last year. This year, it was a stand-alone bill that started in the Senate, and after much amending, which focused the funding toward the hospitals that truly needed it, it passed through the House.”

Its amended form was signed by the Speaker of the House last Friday.

As for the Medicaid expansion, Winters said, “We are watching a deluge of information from other states regarding how terribly Medicaid expansion is going.

“Paying just a percentage of the total cost of care, reimbursing the costs for the basic treatments but not for the facility those treatments are received in, and shrinking the payments for current Medicaid recipients to cover the new ones,

are just some of the reasons that expanding Medicaid is not a good choice.”

Right to try

Another health related bill was signed by the Speaker of the House last Thursday, Senate File 3 (SF3), the Right to Try bill.

When patients are facing a terminal diagnosis, many are willing to try just about anything to survive, from unregulated medications to traveling abroad for experimental treatments or surgeries.

With the Right to Try bill, Wyoming residents facing life threatening diagnoses are now able to expand their options to experimental drugs and other life saving techniques.

According to Winters, the bill is designed to protect physicians if a

patient desires to try an unregulated drug.

School accountability

One bill in this legislative session has been worked over considerably, going from including teachers to excluding them, then back to including them, Senate File 8 (SF8), the School Accountability bill.

Winters said the original bill would have taken some of the local control away from school districts and mandated certain standards from the state level.

At one point, school accountability was not going to be based on the performance of the teachers by the state’s standards, but rather, the different districts would have control over the accountability of their own employees, taking the government out of the equation.

Arguments from both sides of the aisle brought up good points, one, that the districts have a better understanding of the educators in their employ and therefore, should have the control over their accountability.

On the other hand, having so many different school districts with different teacher accountability options would make it difficult for the state to determine a school’s accountability as a whole.

In the end, there was a compromise, pushing the implementation out to the 2019-2020 school year. It was decided that only 20 percent of the school’s evaluations would be based on test scores.

“The original bill was not good at all,” Winters said. “It was significantly changed and has become much better.”

Session ends with gun free zones, superintendent elected position intact

by Karla Pomeroy

The Wyoming Senate killed on third reading last week, its own version of the Wyoming Repeal Gun Free Zones Act.

The Senate defeated the bill on a 3-25 vote with two absent. Sen. Gerald Geis (R-SD20, Worland) said.

“I knew that was going to happen,” Geis said, adding that the Senate wanted to make sure this year that they at least debated the bill and heard comments on the bill, which they did not do last year.

Other notable bills that failed in the session that adjourned last Friday included:

- The prohibited livestock grazing bill sponsored by the ag committee. The bill would have

prohibited opening a fence for the purpose of letting livestock on the land of another. The bill failed to get out of the House committee. Geis said the bill “may be worked on some more or we may forget it.” He noted it has not been assigned as an interim topic.

- HB83 the Religious Freedom Restoration Act sponsored by Rep. Nathan Winters. The bill would have limited specified governmental actions that burden religious freedom, including issuing marriages licenses to gay and lesbian couples.
- House Joint Resolution 2. The resolution would have made the state superintendent of public instruction an appointed position rather than elected starting in 2018. A similar reso-

lution in the Senate also died.

- Geis’ tethering bill. He said he won’t bring the bill back during next year’s budget session but does think some sort of legislation is needed to protect dogs from being tied out and neglected.

Geis said he doesn’t worry if good bills don’t pass because “they will come back again,” possibly tweaked and better than the first time.

Budget

Several bills were worked by conference committees in the final days of the Legislature including the supplemental budget with the House basically approving the Senate’s version.

The bill, according to the Legislative Service Office’s fiscal note, contains appropriations of:

- \$8,720,509 from the general fund.
- \$4,750,000 from the School Foundation fund.
- \$7,400,000 from the School Capital Construction Account.
- \$4,842,891 from federal funds.
- \$84,000 from the highway fund.
- \$2,875,576 from the Local Government Capital Construction Account.
- \$15,602,861 from special revenue funds.
- \$107,118 from the miners hospital permanent land fund.
- \$40,977,447 from private funds.
- \$8,570,000 from other funds identified by

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