

Chamber seeks light pole decorators

by Chandler Smith
Gayla Mead-Ellis, a member of the Chamber Board, was appointed to the Chamber Board of Directors during the group's Thursday meeting. Mead-Ellis, who is involved in a number of community organizations, was confirmed unanimously by the group, and will fill a recently vacated Board of Directors position expiring October of 2017.
The Chamber Board, who is sponsoring the decorating of light poles throughout town, also decided that the board itself should find and decorate a light pole to encourage other community members to follow their lead and get in on the Christmas spirit. As of the meeting Thursday night, six individuals and groups

have chosen posts to decorate. The Christmas Committee will decide the winner of the light pole decorating contest, and the pole must be decorated by Nov. 28.
So far, Christmas spirit has been slowly building in Thermopolis. The entirety of the first order of Klink Building ornaments has sold out, and an order for 20 more has been placed. The board also changed their policy on student directors being allowed to vote during board meetings. Executive Director Meri Ann Rush noted that this was not a change in board bylaws, but a simple policy change.
The Chamber Board will hold a special Meet and Greet on Thursday, Nov. 19 at Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital. The Meet and Greet

will feature the unveiling of the hospital's new fetal heart monitor, which was purchased with money from the Hospital Foundation Board and matching funds raised by the community. This event will celebrate the incredible fundraising efforts by community members and businesses that exceeded the challenge to raise \$15,000 for the potentially lifesaving piece of equipment.
The hospital will also be celebrating this momentous occasion by serving pink and blue cupcakes from 4-6:30 p.m. the same day. The cupcakes are a "thank you to our community that continues to live and give generously," so make sure to stop by the event to take part in the festivities.



photo by Lara Love

Here's Waldo!

Jackson Reed leads Tracey Medina's 'family' as Spencer Calhoun, Brendan Thomas, Sydney McGinty, Clinton Harris and Joceyln White follow along as Waldo during the Thermopolis Middle School Battle of the Books Friday. Each 'family' dressed up as characters from the book they were reading.

Shaffer, Axtell, Reed take home agriculture awards

Farmers, ranchers, FFA alumni and other community members gathered at the Hot Springs County Fair Building Saturday evening for the annual Harvest Moon Ball to honor those who are keeping the spirit of agriculture alive in Hot Springs County.

Ag Citizen of the Year
Ag Citizen of the Year came up a tie and was awarded to Ray Shaffer and Chip Axtell.

Shaffer was born, raised and educated in Hot Springs County and has been active in both 4-H and FFA, serving as president of both organizations. Except for 10 years working in the uranium and petroleum industries, Shaffer has lived on a farm or ranch. For the last 33 years, he and his wife Carol have owned and operated the North 40 Ranch on Owl Creek north of Thermopolis. They ran a livestock operation for several years, but are currently farming – raising hay and small grains. Shaffer retired two years ago after serving as Hot Springs County Road and Bridge Department supervisor.

Axtell is a fourth-generation rancher. He runs a cow/calf operation, heifer breeding program and raises hay for the livestock, with his wife, Jennifer, and four children. In addition to his ranch responsibilities, he's been on the Weed and Pest Board for

5 years, serves on the Kirby Ditch Board, coaches recreation football in the fall and leads the Catholic Youth Organization for his church. Being involved in the community and his children's lives is very important to Axtell. He also served as an area representative in the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association and is a member of the Farm Bureau.

Rising Star
The Rising Star Award for 2015 was presented to Justin Reed.

In 2012 Reed purchased 250 head of bred cows and is currently operating Reed Ranch. At age 13, Reed, along with his brother and sister, helped their mom run the ranch after their father Clinton Reed passed away in 1999. He is a good steward to the land and his cattle. He helps other area ranchers and neighbors with their projects and with their cattle. He recently rebuilt the corrals on the mountain property according to plans his dad had drafted prior to his passing. His future plans include to upgrade the ranch facilities and follow in his father's legacy.

Century Award
The 2015 Century Ranch Award was given to the Shumway family.

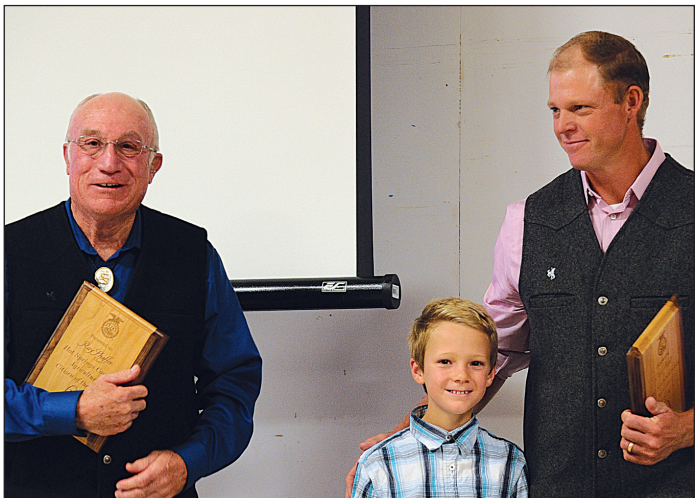


photo by Chandler Smith

Ray Shaffer and Chip Axtell accept the Ag Citizen of the Year awards at the Harvest Moon Ball. Lance Axtell proudly supported his father.

HSCMH Master Plan meeting

by Chandler Smith
Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital hosted two evening discussions featuring representatives from Erdman and interested members of the Hot Springs County community to discuss the ongoing Master Building Plan process. Erdman collaborates with healthcare organizations to improve profitability, patient satisfaction and staff satisfaction by helping them meet their business goals.
The discussions, which were attended by over a dozen members of the community, featured an hour-long presentation by Erdman representatives who each explained one portion of the project.
Rustin Becker, Erdman Executive Vice President of Strategic Planning, opened the discussion with a breakdown of the Conceptual Building Study by explaining in great detail the research the firm has undertaken to give adequate understanding of the needs of the Hot Springs community in terms of a healthcare facility.
Becker explained market research and county demographics that dictate improvements the Building Master Plan will suggest. He made special note of the fact that 31% of the county's population is aged 45-64, and a fur-

ther 23% of the population is over 65 years of age.
Becker, who has worked on Erdman projects throughout the nation, noted that the hospital should start to focus more on out-patient care as advances in medical science allow formerly dangerous procedures to become quick and pain-free.
Tim Casey, Erdman's Vice President of Architecture, then explained to the audience various suggestions for future building design. Casey was quick to tell the audience that the brief pen-and-paper sketches shown were at the very beginning of the planning process, and no designs have been seriously considered yet.
Casey also explained how Master Building Plan options will be developed, including circulation patterns of both staff and patients, a study of the existing facility footprint, and more efficient layout of hospital facilities and wings. Casey noted one of his priorities is, "Making sure the building is the right size," for the community and the services it will offer.
Before the presentation, Becker and Casey spent the day in individual meetings with each department and walking around and through the existing medical facility. The walkthrough was done to

study existing infrastructure, whether mechanical, physical, or electrical. Both the walkthrough and the meetings with staff are crucial to developing a comprehensive program to repurpose current space or develop new space.
Although extensive study has already been undertaken, Casey and Becker were quick to tell community members that, "We don't know [what changes will occur] at this stage. We're still very early in the process."
Casey added that, "It is not clear how much, if anything, will be built. It's really up in the air."
Holding the discussion at this stage of the planning process allowed community members to voice their opinions on current building studies, while also allowing them to understand the thorough planning process currently undertaken by Erdman and hospital staff.
Becker said the Master Building Plan will be completed by the end of November, much to the surprise of audience members.
When a community member asked if Becker knew that was two weeks away, Becker responded in the affirmative, noting that Erdman employees were working hard to complete the plan.