

Christmas Tree Festival Thursday

by Durward D. Jones

The annual Christmas Tree and Wreath Festival will be Thursday, Dec. 3 at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center.

Dinner starts at 5:30 p.m. with the auction to follow at 6:15 p.m.

Red Rock Family Practice and the Wyoming Dinosaur Center will be hosting the event.

There are 20 trees and 13 wreaths decorated by local businesses and groups to be auctioned off. All proceeds will go to the Thermopolis Community Fund.

Over the last year the Thermopolis Com-

munity Fund has given funding to several different entities including the Thermopolis Chamber of Commerce, Jr. National Leadership Conference scholarship for Thermopolis Middle School students, Hot Springs County Greater Learning Foundation, PRCA Rodeo, Big Horn Basin Foundation, Hot Springs County Library, Books for Babies, Ralph Witters Elementary School, HSCMH Foundation and Children's Resource Center.

For more information about the Community Fund or the Christmas Tree and Wreath Festival, contact Stephanie Conrad at 921-1267.



Lighting up the town

Above, Hot Springs County High School seniors and newly crowned Snow King and Queen Adam Hansen and Randi Ellison smile for the crowd before the lighting of the town Christmas tree.

A Thermopolis Fire Department truck kept watch over the crowd during the annual tree lighting ceremony.

Ashley Jackson was the winner of the puzzle drawing and was awarded \$200 in Chamber Bucks. Connie Fachrneisen was the winner of the second place drawing, winning one of the Main Street Thermopolis ornaments which depict the historic Klink Building.

After the tree lighting, carols were sung and families moved to Hazel n Pearls for a special visit with Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

photos by Chandler Smith

Hospital board approves Medicare Cost Report

by Chandler Smith

The Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board approved Nov. 24 the hospital's 2015 Medicare Cost Report, which details information about the facility and is necessary for critical access facilities like HSCMH.

The report, which is "tax-like" in its structure and is over 100 pages long, was presented to the board in a condensed slideshow. The purpose of the report is to determine reimbursement to the hospital and is also used to update hospital payment rates.

Payment rates are expected to change slightly, with an inpatient per diem falling from \$3,773 to \$3,363, a swing bed per diem will fall from \$2,858 to \$2,398, and percentage of outpatient allowable gross charges will rise from 56 to 57 percent.

After the presentation, the board approved the report, which was sent to Eide Bailly, LLC, a Fargo, N.D. based accounting firm for review. Eide Bailly will prepare the cost report.

Bill Williams, Chairman of the Board, noted that, "All critical care facilities have to have a financial report like this," and that the process is not unique to HSCMH.

The board also approved the purchase of surgical saws for orthopedic surgeries, which would allow for surgeons to sched-

ule two surgeries back to back and would allow for more time to sterilize the saws between uses.

The saws cost a total of \$12,815, and were purchased at a large discount.

Robin Roling, HSCMH CEO, then updated the board about the hospital's MRI project, which is currently 2.1 percent due to asbestos testing and removal, which will end up costing between \$2-5,000.

The hospital was approved to spend \$1.5 million on the project, and so far the current estimated budget is \$1,478,000. Completion of the project is slated for Jan. 29.

Roling then informed the board of updates in regard to the Master Facility Plan update, which is being undertaken by Erdman strategic planning firm. Members of Erdman have reviewed HSCMH square footage, and this week Roling will meet with Vice President of Architecture Tim Casey and Rustin Becker, Executive Vice President of Strategic Planning, to review concepts.

Two community meetings are scheduled for Monday, Dec. 7 and Tuesday, Dec. 8 from 5:30-7 p.m. in the hospital conference room. The meetings will be similar to those held on Nov. 12-13 which discussed the first steps of the formation of a new Master Facility Plan,

Commissioners hear updates on airport, road project

by Chander Smith

The Hot Springs County Board of Commissioners sat Tuesday for their monthly day-long session which heard updates on the new county airport from both GDA Engineers and airport FBO Nate Messenger, updates about the future Black Mountain Road project and Barb Rice's monthly report from Youth Alternatives.

Updates on the new airport were the first order of business with GDA CEO Dustin Spomer informing the board about new airport business. A hydraulic gate, which is not functioning properly, was among the first updates on the airport.

The gate, which was built in Billings by the same company that made the hydraulic gate for the old airport, is in need of a part that will allow it to function properly. A subcontractor for the airport project has obtained this part and the gate will be repaired shortly.

Spomer added the airport's un-

derdrain project was going according to plan, and there was no significant news about the project.

Airport FBO Nate Messenger reported that the new airport had 72 total recorded operations since its opening, with just over half of the month's activity during the Nov. 7 grand opening. Messenger added that fuel sales were on par with the old airport.

Dustin Spomer then explained to the board GDA's current suggestions for the Black Mountain Road project, which seeks to rebuild, or at least maintain, the failing road. Spomer suggested various ways to pay for the recommended project, which was recently revealed at a public meeting.

Although Spomer said GDA was willing to help with any questions the board had about possible funding routes, decisions about applying for grants to provide funding for the project will be left to the commissioners.

Barb Rice, of Youth Alternatives, then gave her monthly re-

port for November, during which eight males and five females were referred to the program. Rice stated that Youth Alternatives had a number of holiday activities planned.

Finally, Rice mentioned the need for a security camera, which would "provide accountability both ways," for youths and employees alike. The board then voted unanimously to approve the purchase of security cameras for the Youth Alternatives office.

Also during Tuesday's meeting, Commissioner Brad Basse clarified that during the last commissioner's meeting he had stated that no formal written complaints had been received by the board, and that Basse and GDA engineer Jeremy Gilb were reaching out to residents living near the airport to make sure there was not an issue with the lighting beacon.

Basse and Gilb were acting proactively to make sure the beacon was acceptable to nearby residents.