

# Hospital makes billing changes

by Mark Dykes

Recently, Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital implemented some changes in the way the billing process is handled.

Chief Financial Officer Shelly Larson explained the hospital currently partners with First Party Receivables Solution (FPRS). The organization sends out statements and makes phone calls to patients. There has always been a 120-day workflow with FPRS, Larson said, explaining when insurance billing is complete the account balances become patient responsibility.

Outsourcing for balances has become a standard practice, Larson said. “It’s very efficient. It provides a nice, consistent process for getting our self-pay billing out.” She added hospitals typically don’t do a lot of their own self-pay because of the number of accounts handled and the cost of specialized equipment.

On top of that, FPRS also provides services for recording phone calls. If one happens to go bad, Larson explained, they can pull the record and determine whether something has been done in a professional manner and correct those issues.

Business Office Director Larinda Bushur stressed the insurance billing is done in-house, and FPRS is utilized only when bills have gone to the patients’ responsibility. “Until that time,” she said, “we do handle that.”

What has changed with FPRS’s part lies within the 120-day workflow. Larson said the first change made was the result of several requests for itemized billing, which provide more detail than the typical statements. Once insurance billing is completed and the account is loaded with FPRS, the hospital also sends out an itemized statement.

This document from the hospital, Larson noted, has a stamp on it that indicates the statement is for informational purposes only, and is not a bill. However, the bill from FPRS is sent in the same time frame, so the statement acts as something of a notice that the bill is coming.

Bushur added the itemized bill also lets people know what their insurance paid, so they can compare it to their insurance companies’ explanation of benefits. Larson said if there is any kind of discrepancy, patients are encouraged to call the hospital to further discuss the matter.

Bushur thinks offering the itemized bill will open communication and help identify discrepancies.

Financial Counselor Jessyca Rodriguez added since she has been with the hospital, most of the calls have been requests for itemized statement. These statements, she added, help patients see exactly what services were rendered during visits.

Patients receive a second statement from

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# Budget crisis at county library

by April S. Kelley

The Hot Springs County Board of Commissioners were asked for funds to cover budget shortfalls at Hot Springs County Library because of budgeting mistakes.

Library director Tracey Kinnaman said she was having trouble with her budget. She believed the amount she used for the 2015-16 fiscal year was prepared with incorrect numbers.

The library’s total budget should have been \$264,146, Chairman Brad Basse said. He said the reserve amount of \$20,000 should have been used as a line item in the budget in order to not overspend.

“Ignore the reserve,” Basse said. “As long

as you spend within the line items, it should be fine. You’ve overspent.”

Kinnaman asked if the board expected her to cut \$20,000 between now and July.

“Our expectation is that all of these line items and the reserve equal \$264,146,” Basse said.

Kinnaman said she needed an advance on her levy money in order to deal with the budget crisis.

There is no money in the bank and no cash flow, Kinnaman said. She also said she increased one position to full-time with benefits and raised her own salary. She did not say how much this costed.

Basse said no entity in the county got raises or any added positions.

“There was a disconnect somewhere because we weren’t aware of the issue or the changes or additions to the staff,” he said.

Chairman John Lumley said he did not understand what happened because the library’s budget did not match their budget formula.

“She spent her reserve,” Basse said. “I don’t know what to tell you to do.”

Kinnaman said she had only \$1,000 in the bank right now.

Basse said he did not have a problem with

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photo by Mark Dykes

## Drummed decisions

“Smeagol,” played by Aaron Hanson, left, tries to perform a drum solo for dramatic effect as “King” Kameron Olsen prepares to choose which of his daughters — Cinderella, Bella or Ellie — will receive his kingdom. This early scene of “Game of Tiaras” sets the stage for a bloody, humorous conflict that is a mashup of Game of Thrones, Disney and Tolkien. The one-act was part of the Spring Musical Revue put on by the Hot Springs County High School Drama Department with assistance from members of the speech and debate team.

# Teacher of the Year, retirees honored

by April S. Kelley

The Hot Springs County school district honored the 2015-16 Teacher of the Year and five retirees on Wednesday at the annual Teacher of the Year/Retiree banquet held at the Thermopolis Middle School.

Sixth grade mathematics teacher Catelyn Deromedi was recognized as the 2015-16 Teacher of the Year.

“Thank you so much for choosing me for this award,” Deromedi said. “I’d like to thank the administrators who have guided me and given me all of the opportunities that you have and for letting me grow as a teacher and letting me become what I’ve always wanted to be — a math teacher. It has been an absolutely amazing journey. Thank you all for supporting me and I hope to represent you well.”

Superintendent Dustin Hunt said the Teacher of the Year will receive a monetary award and a chance to compete for the Wyoming Teacher of the Year. He also said he was proud of all of the teachers nominated for the award. Other teachers nominated were Emma Christoffersen, Mary McGillivray, Shannon Hill, Tom Koehler, Kay Uffelman, Donna Daniels, Brock Merrill and Jacob Strenger.

“Thank you all for all of your dedication and hard work in the classroom,” Hunt said.

Retirees recognized at the banquet were the Hot Springs County school district business manager Colleen Anderson, school nurse Janet Chimenti, literacy coordinator and read-



The 2015-16 Teacher of the Year, Catelyn Deromedi, was honored by the Hot Springs County School District on Wednesday. She received her award from superintendent Dustin Hunt.

ing coach Sonja Holm, Thermopolis Middle School librarian Carol Burns and instructional facilitator John Gores.

The banquet also featured for the first time the 2015-16 Power Parents of the Year. Etta Emmett was honored for Ralph Witters Elementary, Ciley Andreen was honored for Themopolis Middle School and Jacky Wright was honored for Hot Springs County High School.

Staff members of the month throughout the 2015-16 school year were also recognized. They included Jessica Ream, Brenda Cornwell, Susan Little, Brandon Deromedi, Dave Manning, Craig Redland, Connie Dickinson, Tammy Redland, Ryan O’Connor and Kelli Bloedel.

Others honored at the banquet included Hot Springs County School Board members Chairman Tobi Johansen, Treasurer Nichole Weyer, Vice Chairman Melissa Johnson, Trustee Travis Bomengen, Trustee Jennifer Axtell, Trustee Dan Pebbles and Clerk Clay Van Antwerp. The administrative staff — elementary principal Deborah Brown, middle school principal Breez Daniels, high school principal Scott Shoop, special services director Jim Lash, business manager Colleen Anderson, transportation supervisor Jerry Bowman, maintenance supervisor Jere Aplan, technology director London Jenks, food service director Cindy Wallingford and Lights On coordinator Jenny Davis — were also recognized.

“We all have different roles and different titles but we all are very important to the district,” Hunt said. “I just want to express my appreciation for our staff, whether they’re retiring or in their first year, and the community members also.”

# Democratic caucus Saturday

by April S. Kelley

The Hot Springs County Democratic Caucus will be begin at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 9 at the Hot Springs County Library meeting room. Doors will open at 10 a.m.

Howie Samelson, the temporary caucus chairman, said there are 278 registered democrats in Hot Springs County, which makes up about 10 percent of registered voters in the county.

“I’ve never done anything at this level politically before,” he said. “I’m doing this because there is a process that needs to be followed and there was no one there to lead that process.”

At the democratic caucus on Saturday, those who registered as democrats in Hot Springs County on or before March 25 will be eligible to participate and choose the candidate they support for president.

“It’s important for the democratic process and to support the candidate that you feel would be best for the United States presidency,” Samelson said.

Participants can choose one of the democratic presidential candidates — Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton or Roque “Rocky” De La Fuente — or choose to be undecided or uncommitted to a particular candidate.

Samelson said Hot Springs County will elect two delegates to attend the Wyoming Democratic Convention on May 28 in Cheyenne. Those

delegates may or may not then be elected to go to the Democratic National Convention July 25-28 in Philadelphia, Pa.

There will be a lot of open discussion and then people will physically move into groups to support their candidate of choice, Samelson said.

“If any group gets less than 15 percent of the participating vote, a new vote will be called, eliminating the group that had less than 15 percent,” he said.

Based on these groups, two delegates will be chosen as well as two alternates to represent candidates chosen by Hot Springs County at the Wyoming Democratic Convention.

Samelson said it is important to know that once someone is counted, they cannot change their mind. When someone commits to a candidate, they are committed. They also must stay for the duration of the caucus process or their vote will not count.

“We will figure out what the two delegates are going to do and hopefully form an organization,” he said. “The other thing I’m going to try to do is get the group to decide whether or not they want to have a real county committee. If the people want that, I’ll work with the state to develop a Hot Springs County Democratic Committee.”

The committee would be an organized group to promote planks for the party, Samelson said.