



Forgery, theft charges total over \$150,000

by Mark Dykes

Lola Vialpando, 34, is currently charged with 13 counts related to forgery and thefts that resulted in a \$157,593.24 loss. According to court documents, Vialpando faces 10 counts of felony forgery, one count of felony larceny and two counts of felony theft.

Affidavits of probable cause allege that, during Vialpando's employment with Smith Oil Field Services, Inc., between Jan. 1 and Aug. 1 she issued 10 checks drawn upon an account belonging to the company in the total amount of \$14,056. She signed each with the name of Kevin Smith, the authorized account holder and signer.

It is further alleged that Vialpando listed each check be paid to the order of "Cash," endorsed the back of eight checks with Smith's name and provided secondary endorsement of each in her signature and name. In return, she received payment for nine of the 10 checks for a total \$12,556. As for the 10th check, which was in the amount of \$1,500, Vialpando presented it to the bank on Aug. 8 for payment, along with a deposit slip for her and her husband's personal checking account. At this time, the bank was aware of her previous actions and took the check and slip without authorizing the actual transfer of funds to the account.

Check issuance dates, as well as the amounts, are: Jan. 4, \$1,575; Jan. 18, \$2,276; April 11, \$850; April 25, \$950; May 2, \$2,150; May 9, \$1,105; June 6, \$1,150; June 21, \$1,000; July 19, \$1,500; and Aug. 1, \$1,500. However, the final check was the one not authorized.

With regard to the larceny charge, while Vialpando was employed with Smith Oil Field Services, allegedly between Dec. 13, 2010 and July 21, 2016 she facilitated online and mobile transfers of money from the company and directed those funds be paid

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photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

Rubber ducky racing

Jolie Ann Herring, Celeste Nelson and the new school nurse, Brenna Huckfeldt, play a relay race game with straws and rubber ducks at the Ralph Witters Elementary back to school carnival Tuesday evening.

Hot Springs County Senior Center faces \$50,000 in budget cuts

by April S. Kelley

The Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center faces \$50,000 in state budget cuts. Executive Director at the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center Chanda Waddell said the center was fortunate to receive

no county or federal budget cuts. "We were very fortunate that the county saw the importance in our programs and in our demographic," she said. "They did not cut us and we were one of the only entities that did not get cut, and we're incredibly grateful."

Waddell said two state-specific Wyoming grants had to be cut funds — the Wyoming Senior Services Board and Wyoming Home Services. The Wyoming Senior Services Board covers operational expenses for the Senior Center. The cut

from WSSB was \$20,000. "The money the state has put together for operational expenses are hard to come by for a non-profit," she said. Wyoming Home Services is a division of the Department of Health that is Wyoming focused

and fully state-funded. They cover costs associated with in-home services for seniors such as light-duty housekeeping. The WHS cut funding for the Senior Center in the amount of \$30,000. "Sometimes the difference between staying at home and be-

ing institutionalized are things like laundry," Waddell said. "If you had someone to do that, you could live on your own. It's such a fine line. If you can clean your own bathroom, for example, you

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LIEAP and WAP programs face cuts

by April S. Kelley

Recent state budget cuts have affected Wyoming Department of Family Services programs, specifically LIEAP and WAP. LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program) is a program that is both state and federally funded to help low income people pay home heating bills November through June. The program helps cover the costs of electricity, propane, natural gas, diesel heating, wood, oil, coal and pellets when used for heating a home. LIEAP Program Director Brenda Ilg said the program is still receiving federal funds, but state funds have been eliminated. "We're tasked with doing more with less resources and trying to make it as seamless as possible," she said. Ilg said the Wyoming Department of Family Services has made several technological advancements over the last few years, which should reduce labor time, consumable supply and overhead costs. Benefit levels for those approved for the program will be lower this year, Ilg said. "Because of the budget reduction, benefit levels will be based even more on need factors that come into play," she said. Ilg said federal income guidelines have increased, however, so more should be eligible this year. "We are fully operational, that's why we make the adjustments," she said. "Benefits will be based on pri-

ority instead of who walks in the door first." As far as employees, Ilg said the state office runs lean and mean. "We contract out for other employees," she said. "We have a lot of temporary employees and there will be less need for them, but no permanent positions will be eliminated." WAP (Weatherization Assistance Program) is a program for those approved for LIEAP that may also need weatherization services to make their homes more energy efficient which would effectively lower heating costs. Weatherization services include adding insulation, sealing leaks around windows and doors and basic health and safety checks. Ilg said the Wyoming Department of Family Services will not be able to give as many benefits for the WAP program either and there will be longer wait lists. They intend to use technology in any way they can think of, Ilg said. "We aim to work smarter, not harder," she said. "Many are struggling and we're here to help." Ilg said she encourages people to still apply for both programs. "We are getting ready to send applications to priority homes — seniors and families with kids under the age of five, if they were approved last season," she said. Applications will be open to the general public beginning in September, Ilg said. She recommends getting the applications in as soon as possible.

Not just another road trip

by April S. Kelley

Don Hafner, of Overland Park, Kan., his friend, Jeff Howell, of Jefferson City, Mo., and Howell's two children Dax and Kate stopped at Hot Springs State Park on Monday during a long journey to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. They named their adventure 'National Park 100 Road Trip.' Within nine days, Hafner and Howell will go from the Gateway Arch in St. Louis to the Roosevelt Arch in Yellowstone, stopping at numerous National and State Parks along the way. They plan to be at the Roosevelt Arch on the historic centennial date — Aug. 25. Hafner said he wanted to do something to celebrate the centennial. "Our original plan was to go to Nebraska," he said. "Neither of us had really been out there to camp, hike or see the sights. We knew the western part of the state was a pretty cool place. Then I suggested that we could slip over to Wyoming to see Fort Laramie. From there, Jeff took over, saying it was like 'eating one gummy bear.'" Howell said they saw all the western Nebraska sights.

"We stopped at Scottsbluff and Chimney Rock and Jail Rock," he said. "Today, we hit Fort Laramie and the Oregon Trail Ruts and Register Cliff and then we came here. After this, we are headed to Yellowstone. I think on the way back we are going to hit Devils Tower and Badlands National Park." Hafner said they are calling their journey 'Arch to Arch.' "We're going from the Gateway Arch in St. Louis to the Roosevelt Arch in Yellowstone, so we are calling the whole thing 'Arch to Arch,'" he said. Howell said by the time they reached Hot Springs State Park, they had traveled nearly 1,100 miles. "We try to get the driving done in the mornings so we can see the sights in the afternoon and evening and camp," he said. Hafner and Howell said their favorite spot so far was Scottsbluff. Howell's daughter Kate did not share their opinion. "Nebraska is just flat," she said. "I think we try to find the reason why it's there," Hafner said. "We feel like we've not only driven the Oregon Trail and Pony Express, but we know the Oregon Trail and Pony Express because we've been on it so long. We stop and read things and learn the history. Then we quiz the kids and they quiz us." As for Hot Springs State Park, Hafner and Howell said



Jeff Howell (left), his two children — Dax and Kate and Don Hafner stopped at Hot Springs State Park on Monday.

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