

Hunter missing five days found safe

by Cindy Glasson

Tragedy was averted this weekend as two hunters located 82-year old Wayne Hockaday who had been missing since Wednesday. Hockaday left a note at his residence saying he was going hunting last Wednesday afternoon. When he had not returned after dark, the Sheriff's Department was notified and Hot Springs County Search and Rescue activated.

Search and rescue were out overnight on Wednesday, searching the Black Mountain area where Hockaday was believed to have gone.

When he was not located that night, the

Civil Air Patrol was called in out of Powell and sector searches by air began.

With no real idea where on Black Mountain Hockaday may have gone hunting, and knowing he deals with some disorientation, Washakie County's Search and Rescue joined in, covering areas on the other side of the Hot Springs County line.

Hunters in the area were asked to keep a lookout for Hockaday and his truck and a few times, hopes were raised, thinking his brown Chevy had been spotted, only to discover it wasn't his truck after all.

The search continued through Friday night, Saturday, Saturday night and into Sunday

morning.

Hockaday was found Sunday, just before 2 p.m. by brothers Fred and Robert John who were in town hunting over the weekend. The John's both grew up in Thermopolis and know the area well.

The brothers had driven down Black Mountain Road, turning on the Big Hole BLM road before going east about five miles across the ridges. They spotted Hockaday about a quarter of a mile away, and Fred John said they saw him signaling them before he dropped to the ground.

"He was very dehydrated and exhausted."

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photo by Cindy Glasson

Magic smoke

Kolby Riveria looks a bit apprehensive at the mysterious smoke coming out of the cup at the Lights On Afterschool Celebration, but Dallyn Griffin is taking it all in stride. Students and their siblings, along with parents, were treated to dinner and a selection of games and experiences revolving around things that glow in the dark. The evening culminated with lighted luminaria on the Thermopolis Middle School's front lawn.

Preventing voter fraud in HSC

by Cindy Glasson

From 2000 through 2010, 649 million votes were cast in general elections, there were 47,000 UFO sightings, 441 Americans were killed by lightning and there were 13 credible cases of in-person voter impersonation.

UFO sightings are more common than voter fraud.

So is getting hit by lightning.

With election time just around the corner, County Clerk Nina Webber and her deputies conducted the mandatory voting machine test last Friday morning.

Each of the five voting machines are hand-loaded by the clerk with a computer chip that has been programmed by the State of Wyoming for state and national elections and by the county or town for local races.

Pre-filled ballots are then run through each of the machines to ensure they are working properly before being set back to zero. At that time, the slot encasing the computer chip is sealed with a metal locking mechanism until voting is completed on Election Day.

At that time the voting machines are locked in individual cases and stored in a secure area where only a few people have access.

That access is through a "fob" key system with each fob programmed with a specific, individual number. At any time, Webber can check who has been in the secure area along with the time and date of entry, all based on which fob was used.

All ballots are also kept securely locked away until the election with limited access. Every ballot is counted once it arrives at the clerk's office, re-packaged, signed and dated so every ballot is accounted for.

Election Day

The morning of the election, the individual cases are moved to the various polling places and the next step in the democratic process begins.

When the election judges first turn on the voting machines they are prompted to run a check that prints out a slip of paper showing the machine is set to zero votes, the date and a timestamp. Three of the election judges are required to sign that slip.

Voting begins at each of the polling places at 7 a.m.

Once a voter has filled out their ballot, they take it to the judge at the voting machine where it is placed in a slot and electronically scanned and the votes counted. Every ballot is dated and time stamped to ensure accuracy.

If a voter has accidentally voted for too many people on their ballot the machine will catch it and return the ballot. The ballot is then destroyed and a new ballot given to the voter.

In addition, if there is a write in on the ballot,

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EDC gains insight through survey

by Mark Dykes

A few months ago the Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Economic Development Company (EDC) set up a survey for people to share their thoughts on the county strengths and challenges, as well as items such as where they do their shopping and receive services such as medical and dental.

Amanda Moeller, CEO for the EDC, said she hasn't had time to really collate the information, but some of it stands out on its own. There were a total 101 respondents for the survey, though it allowed for people to skip questions if they chose. Moeller noted about 92 percent of all respondents believe Hot Springs State Park is a strength for the county.

Moeller said, with regard to this particular question, people could put more than one answer. Additional percentage results were: Big Horn River — 85.15, Small town feeling — 79.21, Natural environment — 62.38, Boysen Reservoir — 55.45, Affordable place to live — 39.6, Historical society — 22.77, Lively downtown — 16.83 and Historic homes and buildings — 14.85.

Moeller pointed out there were a lot of responses with regard to the growing arts program, and many were in favor of the hospital and tourism.

As for challenges facing the community, Moeller said the highest percentage was for "Difficult for young people to remain in town, lack of opportunity," at 84.16 percent. Moeller said it's

important to note that's the number one thing, for whatever reason, be it lack of daycare, the cost of food and fuel or other causes.

Much like the question about community strengths, respondents could select more than one answer.

Other percentages were: Small population/market share for growing a retail or business base — 54.46, Lack of public transportation — 30.69, Deteriorating roadways and public infrastructure — 29.70, Lack of new houses being built — 26.73, Need for affordable senior housing — 22.77, Cost of solid waste removal — 14.85, Unsafe pedestrian or bicycle conditions — 11.88, and Tax burden disproportionately on residential base — 9.9.

Some of the responses might be surprising, Moeller said, further explaining that many people choose to spend their money in town and use local services. It's a myth that people want to go out of town to do their shopping, she said. According to the survey, over 60 percent of people shop locally, and about 14 percent do their shopping online, which is a big competitor. In the same vein, over 70 percent of the respondents receive most of their services here in town.

Though many would like to see improvement to current businesses, the survey also asked what other businesses they would like to see

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photo by Cindy Glasson

Wreck closes Wind River Canyon Friday night

by Cindy Glasson

Thermopolis Volunteer Firemen and Mortimore Ambulance Service responded to a two-vehicle collision between the first and second tunnels in Wind River Canyon Friday night.

First responders from Fremont County, specifically Shoshoni, were also on scene as the accident was across the county line in Fremont County.

According to Wyoming Highway Patrol, there were three injuries with the accident.

A Glenrock man was reportedly traveling north on US 20 toward Thermopolis when, for unknown reasons, he lost control of his 2000 Ford F-250 in the third tunnel.

The vehicle drove up onto a raised curve, he overcorrected and struck nearly head on, a 2015 Chevy Silverado that was heading southbound. The Chevy was driven by an individual from Fort Washakie.

The driver of the Ford bailed from the vehicle and fled on foot toward Thermopolis before crews arrived, however, he was located on Saturday. His passenger received minor injuries and the driver of the Chevy received minor injuries to his chest.

Clean-up of the accident scene caused the closure of the canyon for a couple of hours Friday night.

The driver of the Ford received citations for leaving the scene of an accident and failure to maintain a lane of travel.

Hot Springs State Park master plan unveiling

The Hot Springs State Park new 20 year master plan will be unveiled on Thursday, Nov. 3 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, 110 Carter Ranch Road.

A brief presentation by HSSP Superintendent Kevin Skates will explain the highlights of the master plan. Discussion and questions from attendees will follow.

The public is invited to attend the unveiling and share their thoughts with Skates.