

Motorcycle theft results in prison time

by Mark Dykes
Jerome Dunks was sentenced to 2.5 to four years in the penitentiary for a felony of wrongful receiving, concealing or disposing of property. Hot Springs District Court Judge Robert E. Skar additionally sentenced Dunks to 180 days on each misdemeanor of fleeing or attempting to elude police officer, and interference with an officer, served concurrently with each other and with the felony. Dunks and Samantha Messick were arrested June 30 after a lengthy chase in Thermopolis involving several traffic violations including speeding and failing to obey traf-

fic signs.
The stolen bike they were riding was found abandoned, and Dunks and Messick were both picked up shortly afterward. During Dunks arrest, he became resistant and started to fight, and was restrained against the side of a law enforcement vehicle. The struggle didn't end there, however, as Dunks continued to fight when being escorted to the Joint Law Enforcement Center. According to the affidavit, he resisted officers, kicked at elevator controls and was otherwise belligerent.
In addition to the prison time Dunks will

serve, he was also ordered to pay \$808 restitution to the owner of the motorcycle to have the vehicle towed back to the owner's home in Billings, Mont.
Messick pleaded guilty to conspiracy to wrongful receiving, concealing or disposing of property and interference with a peace officer, and was sentenced to three years supervised probation. A third charge of possession of a controlled substance was dismissed.
Dunks said he made some mistakes the last time he was released from prison and he plans to use this opportunity to make some real change in his life.



photo by Cindy Glasson

I'm new here...what's the deal?

Little Elijah Hill looks to have the wisdom of the ages as he visits Santa and Mrs. Claus for the very first time last Saturday night at Hazel ~n~ Pearls. Elijah is the son of Shannon and Bob Hill.

Town crew prepares for snow removal

by Mark Dykes
Though it's a blessing for some and a burden for others, the snow is on its way and most of the country got an early taste of winter a couple weeks back. Of course, with the snow comes the necessity of clearing the streets.
Thermopolis Public Works Director Ernie Slagle said "in the heat of the battle," while it's still snowing, the top priority is the highways. That means from Broadway west to the historical marker, Sixth Street south to just past the Children's Resource Center, all the way up hospital hill to the turnaround area, the airport hill and 14th Street.
Once the snow stops, it's a move to the second priorities, which are the downtown area, Springview from Arapahoe to Park, the hills such as Arapahoe from 6th to 14th Streets, Amoretti from 6th to 14th, Cedar Ridge and Mountain View. Anything after that is third priority.
If a winter storm happens to come in and dump extreme amounts of snow, Slagle said they basically blade snow up to the middle, open intersections and load it off of the highways, downtown and 14th Street. He added there are areas, such as from 12th and Broadway out to the historical marker, that now have sidewalks; snow in such areas used to be blown off to the side, but now people complain when it's blown onto the walkways.
Slagle recalled a storm from a couple years back when there was well over 20 inches of snow, and required some help from private contractors to load up snow.
As to where the snow is dumped, Slagle's grateful the State has allowed some space by the rodeo grounds and National Guard Armory for it. Snow is also dumped over by the town shop. Additionally, Jerry Williams has provided some land he owns for snow dumping. Slagle noted with the Williams property they go back in the spring when everything has melted and do a cleaning day, as there is a lot of debris in the snow.
Slagle noted the community really appreciates and wants the snow removal. "We are expected to do it, so we do it," but at cost to the taxpayers. Snow removal costs the town quite a bit of money, Slagle said, including wear and tear, dump trucks, plows, sanders, fuel, manpower and overtime. He estimated around \$80,000 is normally budgeted for snow removal, but with big storms that might require independent contractors it could be up to \$140,000.
To aid in the removal of snow, Slagle said the town now purchases an ice slicer, which "is worth its weight in gold." He added the substance is used on corners and on hills, and it does a great job. Previous materials used were coal slack from the Grass Creek Coal Mine, mixed with sand and rock salt. It worked well when there was sun, he said, and couldn't be used in the downtown area because business owners would get upset when it was tracked into stores.
The purchase of a snow blower for the Bobcat was also approved by the town council, though Slagle pointed out the attachment works well if the snow is right; in cases where it is heavy and wet, like in the recent storm, it doesn't work as well.
Slagle understands many people want their streets to be the first cleared, but explained if the snow is plowed up it has to be moved, and they don't want to get carried away and wind up with too many windrows and not enough time to clear them before the next snow.
With regard to how much snow we might see, Slagle said he buys every Farmer's Almanac — noting some people swear by them and others laugh at them — and according to what he's read the winter in this area is expected to be moderate to mild, but that doesn't mean Mother Nature doesn't have other plans.

Elf Tree offers a hand up for local families in need

by Cindy Glasson
During the Holidays we're snuggled comfortably on our couch with our warm, fuzzy slippers and favorite cup of hot chocolate, surrounded by family and friends. Presents are wrapped in sparkly paper, sitting beneath our tree filled with shiny ornaments and bright lights.
Sometime in the 1990's a program was begun to help the families who may not have all the Christmas blessings we're afforded.
The Angel Tree was born.
Throughout the years the Angel Tree, which has now become the Elf Tree, has helped around 100 children in Hot Springs County each Christmas, by providing gifts, clothing and toys.
The premise is a simple one. Families sign up for the Elf Tree through the Department of Family Services (DFS), providing clothing sizes, ages and the needs of the children in the family.
Paper ornaments are made with that information on them and placed on the Elf Tree, which is displayed at a local business before Christmas. This year, you can find it at Storyteller.
Folks then follow their heart, choosing one or more "ornaments" from the tree, and purchase items to fill the wish list.
Many families choose more than one ornament and turn the Elf Tree experience into something fun, wrapping presents as a family, and use it as a teaching moment for children to learn the essence of giving to others.
Often, we wonder how donations help the families. What is their reaction?
DFS was doing a home visit with a single mother and her two daughters when the mother said they had bought a box of oranges and apples to give as presents that year as they had little money.
The girls had drawn happy faces on the oranges.
Even though they, themselves, had little, they decided to donate their favorite toys to other children who were more needy than they.
The Elf Tree saw to it the family was provided with several gifts and food that year.
For many families, the Elf Tree is not a handout, but rather a hand-up.
DFS is always thrilled to see families that in the past have needed help during the Holidays come back after getting on their feet and taking tags from the tree to pay it forward.



photo by Cindy Glasson

Pick me

Folks are encouraged to select an elf from the DFS sponsored Elf Tree, located at Storyteller. The last date to sign up for the tree is Dec. 9 with the last date to pick out your elf being Dec. 16.