

Schwan guilty of aggravated homicide

by Mark Dykes

It was an emotional time for friends and family of Matthew and Reilly Schwan last Wednesday, after a jury found Matthew guilty of aggravated homicide by vehicle. The verdict capped off an already emotional three-day trial which involved testimony to Reilly's being struck by a vehicle driven by Matthew in the early hours of May 14, 2016, the injuries she received and her subsequent passing after being taken off life support June 4.

Though originally charged with driving under the influence with serious bodily injury, the charge against Matthew was updated af-

ter Reilly's death.

During opening arguments, prosecuting attorney Jerry Williams explained he planned to bring forth evidence of the events that led to Reilly being hit by the vehicle. Among those, he said, were the Schwans and the Sikes — Gary and Jolan — heading to Worland the evening of May 13 and consuming alcoholic beverages at several locations, and Matthew drinking more than the others.

Also in the series of events, Williams said, was the Schwans arguing as to whether Matthew was flirting with a waitress. As the four returned to Thermopolis, the arguing contin-

ued. The Sikes decide they've had enough, Williams said, so they go inside their home. However, they can still hear the Schwans yelling; there's a brief pause in the argument, after which the Sikes can only hear Matthew screaming in more of a panicked tone, screaming for Reilly. Gary goes outside, Williams said, sees Reilly unresponsive under the vehicle and tells Matthew to go inside.

Williams noted the jury would also hear from neighbor Jackie Price, whose child was woken up due to the loudness of the Schwans'

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Piece of the 'pi'

Rhiannon Muller received a pie to the face Friday at Thermopolis Middle School. In recognition of "Pi Day," members of the Mathcounts team challenged classes to a variety of math challenges; students chosen from among the winners were given the honor of selecting which team members would receive a pie.

photo by Mark Dykes

Concerned parents, students address school budget cuts

by Cindy Glasson

A number of parents and students were in attendance at the Tuesday night meeting of the Hot Springs County School District's Board of Directors, having heard rumors that certain programs were going to be eliminated for the upcoming school year.

Before opening the floor to public comment, board chair Nichole Weyer read a statement from the board asking people to understand that no assumptions should be made about certain programs based on whether or not a teacher is retained or let go.

Weyer said the board has had to make some very tough decision this year as the legislature has cut funding to the tune of one full-time teaching position. In addition, the legislature has frozen transportation funding and the district is looking at having to cut \$300,000 out of their budget this year and an additional \$280,000 next year.

Even after approaching the legislatures with alternative solutions, their solution was to cut funding to education all across the state. Obviously, the legislature's answer is to cut the funding for our children's future, she added.

Weyer went on to say they are still looking at every angle for budget cuts, which may include reductions in staffing, but they do not want to have to cut programs. In larger school districts they may have two or three staff running a single program, so cutting one of those staff members doesn't affect the program. However, in small districts, like Hot Springs County, the cutting of one staff member can mean the loss of an entire program.

While programs will probably be discussed at the April meeting, Weyer said Tuesday's meeting was to discuss staff only. She went on to suggest everyone contact our state legislators regarding the cuts, going so far as to offer a comprehensive list of all senators and representatives, their phone numbers, mailing address and email address.

Superintendent Dustin Hunt addressed the issue as well, saying if members of the public, and especially students, contact these legislators, to be sure to include a personal side to the letter such as what a certain program has meant to them or how a certain program helped them attain their life's goals.

After telling the board about the upcoming plans for bringing artists into the schools in the coming year, Jacky Wright, on behalf of the Greater Learning Foundation, urged folks to write their representatives in Washington as well since they are looking at cutting federal funding for both the arts and humanities, programs the Foundation uses to help fund the programs they bring into the schools.

On a brighter note, the revamping of the food service for the district is having very positive results.

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Honors handed out

by Mark Dykes

Saturday evening at the fair building, members of the community gathered for the 96th annual Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

Among the festivities for the evening were the announcement of the 2016 Business, Non-Profit and Citizen of the Year.

This year saw two recipients for Business of the Year — Thermopolis Hardware & Mercantile and Vicklund Pharmacy. Comments made about Thermopolis Hardware were, "This business has created a fantastic inventory to provide a service of availability when anyone needs," and, "They are very knowledgeable and helpful with projects."

A comment about Vicklund was, "Owner and staff provide great service and go the



Tony Deromedi



Kevin Skates

extra mile. They provide an invaluable service in the community."

The 2016 Non-Profit Organization is Hot Springs State Park. Comments about the park described it as a "wonderful asset to our community," and "the staff does a tremendous job."

The 2016 Citizen of the Year was Thomas A. Sullivan, Sr., who was described as someone who is passionate, and who lives and breathes the community of Thermopolis. Among his favorite sayings was, "It doesn't get any better than this."

Sullivan passed away on Jan. 17 so family members accepted the award on his behalf.

Prior to the awards presentation, attendees enjoyed a social hour and a meal including salad, shrimp cocktail, rice, potatoes and kebabs.



Accepting the Citizen of the Year award in memory of Thomas A. Sullivan Sr. is his wife, Jeanne, and his son, Thomas Sullivan Jr.