



Hospital reimbursement over \$620,000

by Mark Dykes

Among the action items approved by the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees at their meeting Tuesday evening was the annual cost report.

Chief Financial Officer Shelly Larson explained the report is very much like a tax return. It's required to be filed by Medicare, and is their way of settling up with the hospital, which is cost reimbursed.

Larson further explained all of the information, including revenue, expenditures and hospital statistics are included in the report.

Currently, it looks like the hospital will receive a total reimbursement of more than

\$620,000. That amount is composed of two different amounts, for inpatient and outpatient.

Larson explained on the inpatient side when there is a significant decrease in patient days, the hospital receives a higher reimbursement.

For the outpatient side, Larson said the hospital's expenses are divided by the revenue to come up with the ratio of cost to charge.

Larson also reported the inpatient "per diems" for Medicare patients will increase from \$3,696 per day to \$3,912 per day. Swing bed will increase from \$2,419 per day to \$2,702 and the outpatient ratio will go from 53 percent to 60 percent. The rural health clinic rate,

which is Big Horn Basin Clinic, will increase from \$204 per encounter to \$208. These figures are for Medicare patients.

Larson said volume is the hospital's friend, and if they drive volumes up they will drive costs down.

The cost report is required by HealthTech, Larson noted, and is also necessary for the audit to complete.

In other action, the board approved renewing a line of credit with Central Bank and Trust in the amount of \$1.2 million. The hospital's security with the line is the current year accounts receivable and revenue. The line expires June 30, 2018.

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photo by Cindy Glasson

Hey Bus-ter!

School District transportation director Jerry Bowman, with the help of Buster the Bus, took students at Ralph Witters Elementary through bus safety tips last week. Buster is a remote controlled bus on loan from WYDOT for schools to use during Bus Safety Week, complete with flashing lights, blinking eyes and a microphone that allows Bowman to give instructions through the bus.

4-H members team up with G&F

by Mark Dykes

Last week, members of the Hot Springs County 4-H Fishing Club set out on the Big-horn River with staff from Wyoming Game and Fish to gather information on the fish population.

Using electrofishing, a process which involves dropping electrodes in the water to create a mild electric field and cause involuntary muscle contractions in the fish so they are easier to net, the fish are then weighed and measured.

The full process takes about four days, with fish marked with small fin clips to ensure the same fish are not being caught twice. 4-H members helped with the process on Tuesday and Wednesday of last week.

Leader Dick Staiger said there were a total of 10 4-H members helping during their two days on the river, six on Tuesday and five on Wednesday. Among them were Eli and Porter McCumber, John Maier — who went both days — Carson Williams, Hardy and Hadley Johnson, Jeffrey Lewis, Seth Wyer, Simon Ream and Owen McCumber.

Being the oldest, Maier had a boat and was able to row and take kids with him. In addition to Staiger, other leaders were Joel Farber, John Thurman, Bob Vosseler and Alyssa Halls.

All of the 4-H members had a good time, Staiger said, handing fish out of baskets for processing and placing them in recovery baskets prior to releasing them back into the river. Staiger explained the muscle spasms caused by the electrodes are very minimal, and when they are going to actually handle the fish a bit of clove oil or its equivalent is put in the water to slow them down without completely anesthetizing them. Recovery baskets are used to give the fish time to get the oil out of their system.

The entire process, Staiger said, involved putting the fish on a measuring board, calling out the length, then moving it to a scale and tallying the weight. It was also noted if a fish was clipped on a given day. The actual process started from the bridge below Wedding of the Waters and ended at the WYDOT building, Staiger said, with processing at four

pre-determined locations.

happened to be in the water and was unintentionally shocked.

This was his first year going out on the river with Game and Fish, but something he plans to do in coming years.

Member Carson Williams said he learned there is a lot more fish in the river than he thought, and the average is one fish every two feet. He added he really enjoyed measuring and weighing the fish.

Member Owen McCumber also said his favorite part was the weighing and measuring, but also holding and seeing the different types of fish. McCumber was part of the electrofishing group last year, and plans on doing it in future years. To those considering coming along on the boats, he said it's a really fun time and they get to learn something. He expressed his appreciation to Game and Fish, the leaders and 4-H for making the opportunity possible.

Cody Region Fisheries Biologist Joe Skorupski said it was still a bit too early to give accurate estimates of the fish populations, but they did see a good number of fish the days they were here.

Since 2008, Skorupski said there has been a trend of seeing around 2,750 trout, and from the numbers collected it appears that will continue for 2017. He noted there has been a big increase in population since the flushing flows began.

Skorupski further added the electrofishing provides a great opportunity for Game and Fish to work with local 4-H youth, as the boys helped them with catching and handling the fish, even doing a bit of clipping. He added the group was really engaged, which was great to see, and it will be nice to continue working with 4-H in the future and stay connected with the community.



photo courtesy of Tara Hodges

Fisheries Biologist Joe Skorupski shows and explains the difference between a sauger and walleye to 4-H members.

pre-determined locations.

Staiger said his personal goals for the kids are to have a good time doing this type of activity and to "appreciate the phenomenal resource they have running through their back yard." He also wants them to have the opportunity to meet the Game and Fish staff and gain an appreciation for what they do.

4-H member Jeffrey Lewis said his favorite part was when the electrodes were placed in the water and the fish were put to sleep for them to net. The biggest fish he saw was a 24-inch brown trout.

Lewis also noted there was a muskrat that

Vietti part of fossil digitization

by Mark Dykes

A \$100,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was recently provided to the University of Wyoming Geological Museum. That money will go toward making more of the museum's rare fossil mammal collection available to researchers, schools and the public through digitization of roughly 5,000 items.

Thermopolis native and UW Geological Museum and collections manager Laura Vietti explained the ultimate goal is to digitize the entire collection, which is not economically feasible at this point.

Instead, the digitized items will be from the time right before and right after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

Vietti noted the timeframe is not immediately around the time of the extinction and covers a broader spectrum, roughly plus or minus 30 million years from the actual event.

As for what fossils will be digitized, Vietti said it would be a subset of the best preserved and most interesting fossils that give an idea of what the ecosystem of Wyoming was like. The majority

of the museum's specimens were found in Wyoming, and over half of them were found on public lands, such as state or BLM.

The University of Wyoming Geological Museum has only one-half of 1 percent of its fossils on display to the public. The other 99.5 percent are stored away, and are rarely seen.

The two-year digitization project is titled "The Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-PG) Fossil Mammal Project: Digitizing and Sharing Wyoming's Rare Fossil Mammal Collection for Understanding Mammal Extinction and Recovery through Ecosystem Collapse." The grant will go toward making 15,000 quality images of rare mammal species, some of which are as small as the head of a pin. Vietti said the grant was received Oct. 1, so the process is in its infancy.

The digitization will take place through the use of a Keyence imaging station. Vietti noted this station allows for extremely high magnification while still being able to keep focus. With the use of a digital microscope and the Keyence imaging

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