

# Feasibility study planned for hospital

by Mark Dykes

At the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees meeting on Oct. 24, the board approved moving ahead with a feasibility study for the planned renovation and expansion of the hospital.

CEO Margie Molitor explained a feasibility study is required before any project seeking funding, and is a routine part of the process. During the study, an individual will come in to determine if the hospital will be able to afford the project.

The bid for the study was awarded to Eade Bailey. Molitor noted the firm will also do a cost report, and is familiar with the hospi-

tal's operation. Results from the study will be presented to the hospital in the next 60 to 90 days.

Also during the meeting, Chief Nursing Officer Sarah Aliff reported the lab recently had their Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) inspection, and an action plan has been accepted and submitted to address any deficiencies. Regarding the blood utilization review, Aliff said, they continue to work on the process and criteria for blood administration. Infection prevention and education is ongoing as well.

Aliff pointed out hand washing compliance is declining, as staff are not "gelling" in or out

of patient rooms. Aliff noted there are "secret shoppers" monitoring staff as they go in and out of the rooms, and there will be on the spot corrections when necessary. Pace reports will be ongoing for hand washing compliance.

Aliff noted sometimes when staff "gel in" but don't "gel out," they wash their hands prior to leaving. Molitor said if they don't touch anything in the room and are simply talking to a patient, they don't need to gel out. Dr. Jason Weyer noted there are times when he gels out of a room and goes directly into the room next door, and gelling in is not required

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## Vialpando enters no contest plea

by Mark Dykes

Monday afternoon in Hot Springs District Court, Lola Vialpando pleaded no contest to 23 counts — 21 felonies and two misdemeanors — against her. The charges are from two separate cases, as Vialpando was initially charged with 10 counts of felony forgery, two counts of felony theft and one count of felony larceny. She was later charged with an additional seven counts of forgery and three counts of theft.

Pursuant to a plea agreement, two of the felony counts were amended to misdemeanor larceny. Trial for Vialpando was expected to take two weeks, scheduled to begin Nov. 13. The case could still see a trial date though, as the court accepted Vialpando's pleas but not the plea agreement. There is still a chance for objection to and rejection of the agreement.

County attorney Jerry Williams, during Monday's proceedings, provided factual basis to the charges that span several years.

The counts on which Vialpando was originally charged stem from: a Jan. 4, 2016 check for \$1,575; a Jan. 18, 2016 check for \$2,276; an April 11, 2016 check for \$850; an April 25, 2016 check for \$950; a May 2, 2016 check for \$2,150; a May 9, 2016 check for \$1,105; a June 6, 2016 check for \$1,150; and a May 21, 2016 check for \$1,000.

All of the checks were drawn on the account of Vialpando's former employer, Smith Oil Field, and purportedly signed by Kevin Smith. Williams noted an additional two checks were different, as they were taken to the bank and left there. Tellers had been made aware of irregularities in the account and informed Vialpando their computers weren't working so they would have to make the transactions later. The two left checks, also purportedly signed by

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photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

### Princess power

Las Fuentes Moonlight Madness Pinata Bash on Thursday drew a large crowd of ghouls and ghosts of many different age groups. This little princess focuses on getting the candy to fall from inside the Pinata as she takes a swing.

# Bones identified after being nameless for 25 years

by Cindy Glasson

A decades-old mystery that captured the attention of Hot Springs County as well as the entire country has finally come to a close with the identification of skeletal remains found in a trunk in 1992.

Through advances in DNA research, the remains were finally identified last week as belonging to Joseph J. Mulvaney, born January 3, 1923 in Illinois.

**From the beginning**

It was the spring of 1992 when Newell Sessions used a cutting torch to remove the lock from a trunk left on his property several years earlier. When Sessions opened the trunk and removed the top shelf, he was shocked to find a skeleton packed so tightly inside that it didn't even rattle.

Using his knife, he lifted the skull from the trunk to take a better look.

His first thought was to just bury the bones, but his wife encouraged him to call the sheriff's department to report it and Sheriff John Lumley took over from there.

When Lumley examined the trunk's contents, he realized the entire skeleton was not there -- the legs were missing. He also noticed signs the body had been exhumed from its original resting place as there was a reddish-colored dirt on it. Although there was no clothing on the skeleton, Lumley did find a brown leather belt and a bag from a "Hy-Vee" grocery store chain inside the trunk as well.

Sessions told Lumley the trunk had been left behind by John David Morris, aka David Tanner, when he moved in 1986.

Morris had given Sessions a shed in exchange for some work he had done for him. Sessions had moved the shed, along with its contents, from the Park Glen Mobile Home Park to his residence on Sessions Lane, north of Thermopolis.

Figuring Morris would eventually be back for his things, Sessions left everything where it was for six years before his curiosity got the better of him and he opened the trunk.

The County Coroner at the time, Clark Mortimore, drove the trunk and its contents to Cheyenne to the Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation (DCI) and turned them over to the head of the crime lab, forensic scientist, Sandy May.

and an agent interviewed him over the phone. At the conclusion of the interview, the agent called Lumley, telling him she believed Morris' story that he had bought the trunk at a yard sale.

Lumley flew to Arlington, Texas to interview Morris in person. At the time, Morris said he had purchased the trunk at a yard sale in Oklahoma or maybe Iowa, Illinois, Arizona, Texas or Wyoming, he just couldn't remember.

The pair met in a neutral place at Morris' request, a restaurant in the Sheraton Hotel, and Lumley read him his Miranda rights.

It struck Lumley as odd that Morris had never taken the time to open the trunk.

"I told him I didn't believe him," Lumley said, "strongly relating that I thought it was basically BS that he bought the trunk, moved it from town to town, state to state, and only once, according to him, tried to open it when he purchased it, using some skeleton type-lock keys with negative results, and then never tried to open it again."

"It was a gut feeling. Who moves a trunk all over and never opens it? I knew then, and I know today, he sure as hell knew something about it."

"I've talked to a lot of people about this case and everybody said, almost 99.99% or more, that they would've opened it immediately upon purchasing it. They said if they went to a yard sale or garage sale, bought a trunk, that's half the excitement, it's like a Christmas present, can't wait to get home to open it."

Lumley said, during the Texas interview, at one point Morris got so agitated he was sure he was going to jump out of his chair and hit him. When asked to take a polygraph test, Morris refused. At that point, he invoked his right not to talk and walked out of the interview.

DCI determined the victim had died of a gunshot wound to the left eye from a .25 caliber Colt pistol. The bullet was found lodged in the skull behind the left eye, indicating the shot had come from a right-handed person at close range. There was a nick in one of the ribs, too, indicating a second shot had been taken.

They also reported the skeleton belonged to a male, 55 - 65 years of age, 5' 9" with a robust build and missing his bottom teeth. They were unsuccessful pulling DNA from the remains, May then sent the remains to a private laboratory for more investigation.

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photo courtesy of Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office

The remains of Joseph J. Mulvaney are still in their trunk in the evidence locker at the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office but will be returned to the family.

She and a forensic pathologist/paleontologist examined the remains and called Lumley that night to tell him he had a homicide on his hands.

In the meantime, Lumley ran a background check on Morris, finding he had had several run-ins with the law over the years.

With DCI involved, they made the initial contact with Morris