



Cost of government in Hot Springs County

by Cindy Glasson

Numbers were recently released by the State of Wyoming on the costs of maintaining county governments throughout the state, including Hot Springs County.

The report is broken down by county, showing the expenses incurred as well as the revenue and their sources, finally showing what running the government actually costs each taxpayer in each county.

The largest expense Hot Springs County has is administration costs, which come in at \$1,268,359 for the year.

The costs for the sheriff's office, jail and

road and bridge departments are next, with the sheriff's office costing \$338,566 for the year, the jail, \$345,381, and road and bridge costs taxpayers \$322,297.

Keeping the county attorney's office running smoothly amounts to \$260,308, with the county assessor's office coming in next at \$233,037.

Rounding out the biggest ticket items is the county clerk's office at \$194,332.

All told, the county's expenses were \$4,938,698 for the last fiscal year, which ended June 30.

Fortunately, revenue for the county was

\$6,592,435.

Revenue sources included \$2.3 million in taxes, and \$2.1 million in state aid. There was also nearly a million in direct federal aid.

Taking all these numbers into consideration, each Hot Springs County resident paid \$1,026 to keep the county running for the year.

We fall in the middle as far as per person costs across the state. The highest taxes paid per person is in Sublette County where they're on the hook for \$3,352 per person while the lowest are paid by those in Washakie County at just \$529 per person.

Hill receives prestigious Milken Award

by Mark Dykes

Friday morning at Thermopolis Middle School, seventh and eighth grade Health/Physical Education teacher, Shannon Hill, received quite a surprise as she was announced as a recipient of the Milken Educator Award and \$25,000.

The Milken Educator Awards, created by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987, recognizes teaching excellence publicly not only to inspire educators, but students and entire communities about the importance of joining the teaching profession. The prestigious honor, to be presented this 2017-18 season at 44 schools across the nation, has been described as "the Oscars of teaching" by Teacher magazine.

More than \$138 million in funding, including \$68 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall initiative, which includes powerful professional learning opportunities throughout recipients' careers.

This is the only Milken Educator Award to be given in Wyoming this season. It is also the first one ever received by a Thermopolis teacher, and the first awarded in Wyoming in 10 years; the last was presented to Tracy Petsch of Albin Elementary School in 2008.

Hill was selected as a recipient of the award due to her work in redesigning physical education classes to incorporate hiking, biking, swimming, canoeing and an annual off-campus camping trip.

According to a press release, "Hill redesigned the Physical Education classes to promote safety and improve physical and mental health. She has presented its success during state and national conferences, including the National School Board Conference in March 2017. As students have become more active, math and reading scores at Thermopolis Middle School have steadily climbed. Five out of nine core areas at the school ranked top 10 percent in the state, and administrators credit this to the positive culture Hill has helped to create."

Hill incorporates cross-curricular concepts to support math and literacy standards in her P.E. classes. Bike rides incorporate trips to the grocery store to purchase fresh foods, with lessons in how to cook healthy meals and calculate nutritional values. Hill also, through lessons and surveys, helps students improve their self-image, stand up to peer pressure and learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Hill is also the head varsity girls' volleyball coach, hosts open gyms, coordinates the Ready, Set, Run program, and is a student council advisor and active member of the Bobcat Booster Club.

In addition to the monetary award, Hill also joins a team of Milken educators. She will travel to Washington, D.C. in March to meet with other Milken teachers to work together to improve education all across America.



photo by Mark Dykes

What a surprise

Teacher Shannon Hill was caught by surprise and plenty of applause when she was announced as a 2018 Milken Award recipient on Friday at Thermopolis Middle School. The award comes with a \$25,000 check.

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Zenas A.P. Crees holds Ares Dylan Han-solo Crees, while sitting with wife Amanda Eveland. Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary members Kim Black, left, and Toni Andreen welcomed the first baby of the year with plenty of gifts.

First baby of 2018 welcomed

by Mark Dykes

"I am your father." These four words are well known in the cinematic industry and to science fiction fans worldwide. But for Zenas A.P. Crees, they'll have a lifetime of use. And it's fitting for his two boys, whose names come from "a galaxy far, far away."

Crees and wife Amanda Eveland welcomed newborn Ares Dylan Han-solo Crees at 8:48 a.m. Jan. 8. He weighed seven pounds, 10.4 ounces and was 19.5 inches long, with a head circumference of 14 inches.

Also welcoming him to the

family was his brother, Apollo Joe Boba-fett Crees. With such names, their dad said they might definitely have some fun rivalries in the future. While he's been told the boys might get ridiculed, he's proud their named after two of the toughest characters in the universe.

And that's only their middle names. Their first names also reflect two of the most powerful beings in mythology, and Crees is confident both will accomplish great things.

Ares marks the third baby for Eveland and the second for Crees.

As Ares is also the first baby of 2018, his family received plenty of gifts from local businesses, presented to them by Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary President Toni Andreen and Auxiliary member Kim Black, who co-chairs collecting donations for the New Year baby with Melene Merzejewski.

Black and Andreen explained they have a list of local businesses to contact, and each auxiliary member takes part of that list. Among the items donated were gift certificates, blankets, stuffed toys and, of course, plenty of diapers.

Number of ineligible high school students decreases

by Cindy Glasson

As you can imagine, discipline within the school system has changed enormously, going from corporal punishment (spanking) to a more meaningful removal of privileges (no activities) and opportunities to bring grades up.

Along with absenteeism, grades can make or break a high schooler's career and chances of acceptance into college.

At Hot Springs County High School, the warning list for grades includes those students carrying a D or F. A student that finds themselves on the warning list can be ineligible for sports or activities until the grades are at an acceptable level.

Students are offered a number of ways to get those grades back up and become eligible again, including retaking tests or doing work over.

Data on the warning list was presented to the school board recently, comparing the first quarter and first semester last year to this year.

The end of the first quarter, 2016, shows there were 95 F grades and a total of 190 D/F grades among 104 students.

That amounts to 45 percent of the student body being on the warning list the end of the first quarter (October).

This year, however, there were just 14 F grades and a total of 43 D/F grades among 25 students. At the end of the first quarter, there was only 12 percent of the student body on the warning list.

At the end of the semester (December 13) last year, 211 D/F grades were on the books with 95 students, or 41 percent of the student body.

End of semester this year (December 12), there were 34 D/F grades among 25 students, or 12 percent of the student body.

It is important to note those numbers dropped even lower by Dec. 19, the date of the school board meeting. At that date, there were 24 D/F grades among 16 students, or just 8 percent of the student body.

There has been a dramatic change in the class failure rate this year as well.

Last year in December 26 students were failing a total of 50 courses. That amounts to 11 percent of the student body.

This December, however, shows only three failed courses among two students, or 1 percent of the total student body.

One of the things encouraging students to keep those grades up is being allowed out of school just a little bit earlier on Fridays if your grades are at a certain level.

Now Principal Breeze Daniels and Dean of Students Caitlyn Deromedi are looking to improve enrichment and accelerations for students achieving high grades, giving students even more incentive to keep pushing.

The school is keeping meticulous records when it comes to discipline with students as well, not only breaking it down by grade level, but by the number of infractions which are then broken down even further to the type of infractions they are experiencing.

The top three reasons for discipline during the first semester at the high school include skipping intervention or detention (34), truancy (26) and disruptive behavior (11).

Inappropriate language, disrespect, tobacco use and refusal to work are also high on the list.

During the first nine weeks of the semester, there were a total of 56 write ups on 25 students, while the second nine weeks has 60 write ups between 39 students.