

Hospital board receives budget numbers

by Mark Dykes

Though action on the fiscal year 2018-19 budget was scheduled for the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees' meeting Tuesday evening, the item was removed from the agenda prior to the start of the meeting.

However, Chief Financial Officer Shelly Larson provided a quick overview of some of the budget highlights, noting it does have the framework to it and reflects information from a recent feasibility study. There is an expected increase of 12 percent in patient revenue, an increase of 16 percent in expenses and an increase of 36 percent for

non-operating revenue.

The expected net surplus will be about \$294,000, Larson said.

Larson also reported that the days in accounts receivable continue to increase and are currently at about 65 for April, while days cash on hand are at about 12. There is still no resolution to the change of ownership with respect to Red Rock Family Practice, Larson noted, and the hospital did not receive much of their miscellaneous receivables in April.

"May tells a different story," Larson said, pointing out the hospital is looking at hitting about \$1.8 million in collections for the

month. There are some increased collections with Medicaid, she said, and in May days in accounts receivable should decrease as days cash in hand improve.

Larson further reported the submission for and receipt of SLIB funds has been completed.

Also at the meeting, information was provided from Nina Landis' quality report. According to that report, things are progressing well for clinical informatics. Landis plans to spend May 30 and 31 in Billings at the Regional IT Users Group, making contacts

See Hospital on page 8



photo by Cindy Glasson

Last day of school fun

Dallis Flores had a great time last week at the field day with his friends from Head Start. Rachel Johnson, teacher's aide, along with the other teachers had a variety of games for the little ones, from running races to ball tossing and frisbee, all of which were met with giggles and lots of energy.

Farm to School program update

by Cindy Glasson

In their continued quest to feed our school children healthier meals the Hot Springs County School District Board of Directors heard a report from Becky Martinez at Thursday night's meeting about a Farm to School conference she and Hannah Brooks, middle school cook, recently attended.

The conference, which was held in Cincinnati, showed Martinez that every Farm to School program in the country looks a little different and the pair came home with some great ideas for expansion of the middle school program.

One of the first things they learned was not a single case of any kind of outbreak, like e-coli or other food-borne illness, has ever come out of a Farm to School program. The food handling techniques and farming practices being used are excellent.

They have been gathering eggs from their chickens since last August and selling them to the school during the week for a dollar a dozen to help not only with their seed costs, but saving the school food service money as well.

They only sell eggs to the

school during the week when they can gather them and candle them immediately. Eggs collected from over the weekend can be sold to the public for three-dollars a dozen, again, to help defray costs and Martinez hopes to start that over the summer.

The director of another Farm to School program who attended the conference gave a presentation on how, in his area, local ranchers have been donating cattle to the program and all the school has to do is pay for processing.

According to Martinez, the donations are cows that perhaps didn't produce a calf or for some other reason would be sent to slaughter. By donating the beef, the rancher receives a tax write-off, sometimes more than what the animal would have brought in at market.

There are grants available that would cover the cost of processing the animal into hamburger, something that is used approximately three times each week in the cafeterias.

Some quick calculations on number of pounds for the animal and the processing cost

See Update on page 3

Grizzly bear hunting season set

by Lara Love

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission set a conservative approach for Wyoming's first grizzly bear hunting season since 1974. Grizzly bears in Wyoming have exceeded recovery criteria since 2004 and management of the bear was returned to the state last year.

The vote of the Commission was unanimous and followed the recommendation of Game and Fish personnel, the latest research, a three-state memorandum and thousands of public comments.

A quota of 12 grizzly bears exists for inside the demographic monitoring area, which is the area experts deemed as suitable habitat. As hunters kill bears, they will call into the department to report the gender of the bear. Because of the way the licenses will be issued, only 11 bears can actually be killed in the monitoring area, not the 12 the quota says. The number of males and females is closely monitored inside this area. A quota of 12 bears has also been set for areas that are not considered suitable grizzly habitat.

For ranchers like Josh Longwell, who oversees Hay Creek Land and Cattle Co. owned by his father-in-law Frank Robbins, it's a small step in the right



courtesy photo

After dozens of sheep were recently killed by a grizzly or grizzlies, a bear trap was placed at the Curtis Place on Owl Creek by the Wyoming Game and Fish.

direction. Since 2011, thousands of dollars worth of livestock have been lost to predators on the ranch.

From May 14-21, 80 sheep have died on the ranch due to a grizzly or grizzlies who are frequenting lambing grounds on Owl Creek west of Thermopolis. The kill

sights are spread along Owl Creek between 22-35 miles from town among homes, people, livestock and pets.

Wyoming Game and Fish personnel responded with traps to try to catch the bear killing the sheep. The traps were moved around and located near the kill sights. They were unable to catch the bear.

There have been problems in the past with grizzly bears. According to Longwell, seven grizzly bears have been trapped and relocated from the ranch in the past five years.

Another Owl Creek Rancher, Arnold Pennoyer, said his ranch on Owl Creek lost one cow and two calves to confirmed bear kills in 2016.

Like many other ranchers, Longwell has strong feelings about his livestock being killed by predators.

"Not only have they taken the livestock which is private property, but we can't keep the livestock on the mountain so they are taking our private property from us with bears and wolves," said Longwell.

Both predators have been responsible for killing livestock within Hot Springs

See Grizzly on page 8