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Defense contractor selects H.S. County

by Breez Longwell Daniels
VAST Manufacturing, a defense contractor from Oakland, Calif., is moving to Hot Springs County beginning in January.

CEO Alexandria Kinane said the company will move over a two-week break at Christmas, when they normally close for the holidays.

"We are going to keep our California office open for at least six months while we put the real estate on the market," Kinane said. "We have located a place in Thermopolis, and we are currently negotiating a lease."

Kinane was pleased with the response to the employment advertisement she ran in the Thermopolis Independent Record.

"We got a great response; over 50 people have contacted us," Kinane said. "The quality of people responding is exciting. We would like to get applications from all of the people who have called us."

"To fulfill our current contracts we will need to employ a minimum of 30 people," she said. "I don't know how many of our current employees plan to make the move. The closer we get it is obvious they are making other plans."

Kinane emphasized she welcomes all applicants including those near retirement.

"This is sit-down work, if you can crochet you can absolutely do this," she said.

"And the daycare we advertised as an employment benefit is not just for women; men with childcare responsibilities can also take advantage of this

option."

VAST is advertising for a number of entry level positions, and Kinane emphasized, "cable assembly is simple stuff; there is nothing magical involved."

Kinane said the company has a "nice contract" producing airplane cable for the defense industry.

"VAST has also been doing prototypes of targets for the Navy," she said. "The targets have a 12-foot wing span with sensors around the edge. We have the potential to earn a new contract with these prototypes."

Founded in 1987, VAST Manufacturing has been providing MIL-Spec assemblies to the defense industry for the past 21 years. The firm has produced cables for the Bradley fighting vehicle, Patriot missile launcher and a number of other defense projects.

Kinane said she is looking forward to moving to a small town.

Hot Springs County Economic Development director Lorraine Quarberg said, "We are obviously delighted."

"It is the kind of primary light industry jobs that we desire in this community," Quarberg said. "It is a primary job; we actually make things and ship a value-added product out of the county and out of the state."

"Those jobs are valuable, providing stability to any community's economy. They stand alone and are not dependent on tourism. They are a good clean industry."



School superintendent Marty Kobza, left, roving reporter for KATZ, comments on the Kiddie Kollege float in the homecoming parade. Passengers include, l-r, teacher Bethany Webber

and students Gavyn Jamieson, Will Clark, Isabella Gerber, Kaden Fuller, Eli McCumber, Kamey Bowman, Atlee Kobza and Carson Williams. —Lara Love photo

School staff cooperates to broadcast (almost) from KATZ radio station float

by Breez Longwell Daniels
The 2008 homecoming parade had a special feature with KATZ 880 AM Radio onboard the "Oldies But Goodies" float.

"It was all Rick Engelbrecht's idea," superintendent's secretary Kelly Andreen said. "Ron Philips and Steve Radabaugh helped, but Engelbrecht personally bought the AM transmitter."

Business manager Lisa Pearce said Engelbrecht followed FCC guidelines that allow a non-profit to broadcast within a quarter

mile radius for a short period of time for a specific purpose.

However, Engelbrecht had trouble with the transmitter and was not able to broadcast live during the parade.

In the spirit of homecoming, they continued with their theme and played music from the float.

Hot Springs County School District administrative staff has a history of fun floats. For the past two years the float has been accompanied by the "Wild Hogs" on motorcycles, and this

year they added motorized scooters.

Superintendent Marty Kobza was the roving reporter for KATZ, and technology assistant Steve Radabaugh was the disc jockey.

"For the past few years we have had a ball building our float," Pearce said. "We have about 15 people get together for pizza and root beer floats, and we work together in the evening."

"The fun has been the planning part. Everybody throws out ideas and the guys run

with it."

"It is fun to talk about the parade project and enjoy each other's company outside of the business day," Andreen added.

The senior class float, Dynamite Wright, won the Hot Springs County High School homecoming parade this year.

The junior class float, Bobcat Pride, took second and the freshmen float, Roast Wright, was third.

No other results from homecoming events were available from school officials.



Maddie Price tees off on the ninth hole Saturday. The sophomore shot a 195 to help the Lady Bobcats repeat as state champions. —Jonathan Green photo

Former judge Hartman testifies at trial

by Jonathan Green
Special prosecutor Mike Fuller concluded his case against Hot Springs County attorney Jerry Williams on Friday.

Then John Worrall, Williams' attorney, moved for a dismissal. Fifth Judicial District judge Steven Cranfill took the dismissal motion under advisement.

If Cranfill rejects Worrall's motion and continues the trial, it is unclear what will happen next. Cranfill declined Friday to speculate on what fate Williams would face if found guilty.

Even if granted, Williams still faces a possible ethics inquiry from the Wyoming State Bar.

RETIRED district judge Gary Hartman, the first witness called Friday, testified via telephone for about a half hour about presiding over the trials of David Allen Hull and Jamie Lieder.

Hartman said he verbally ordered the release of Hull and Lieder's property so long as the U.S. Attorney's office did not object.

During cross examination

Worrall asked why the verbal command had not been "reduced to writing."

"I ask you if it is common, sir?"

Hartman said "hundreds" of orders crossed his desk each month, and he could not remember each one.

Williams and Brigita Krisjansons, Lieder's lawyer, each submitted a proposed order during a hearing Dec. 3, 2007. Krisjansons specifically discussed her client's property, while Williams' did not.

Worrall asked Hartman how he dealt with competing orders.

Hartman said there was no hard and fast rule, but he generally would try and reconcile differences between them or call another hearing so the parties involved could argue their cases. Sometimes he would sign the order he thought more closely reflected his beliefs, expressed in court before the lawyers submitted their proposed orders.

Friday, the defense also had to share an order, signed by Hart-

man, with the prosecution. In his opening statement, Worrall said he would try and convince the court no such order existed.

Worrall asked Hartman if he had signed the order.

"I cannot contradict what's in the record, Mr. Worrall," Hartman replied.

The signed order was apparently the one Krisjansons had submitted, directing the release of Lieder's property.

Worrall asked Hartman if he had called Williams' office and spoken to Renee Baldez about Williams' request to continue a hearing so he could attend the Republican National Convention.

Hartman couldn't remember doing so.

Worrall then asked Hartman if Williams had asserted the county attorney lacked jurisdiction to release the property. Hartman said he didn't remember or care if Williams had, because the judge had told Williams to check with the office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Wyoming to see if there was

a hold on the property.

Hartman testified Williams said he had no problem returning the property and informed the judge the assistant U.S. attorney had no objection to the transfer.

"(Williams) represented to me (the U.S. attorney's office) had no hold, no interest" in the held property, Hartman testified.

Worrall pivoted to Hartman's intent. Would he order the release of property that was evidence of another crime?

No, Hartman said.

Worrall seemed to be contending Williams had probable cause to suspect obsidian rock seized by police after the trial was stolen from Yellowstone National Park.

MARK NELSON, Thermopolis police chief, returned to the stand after Hartman's testimony. Fuller's direct examination of Nelson began Sept. 17, the first day of the trial.

Questioning focused on reports officer Kevin McGinty prepared following the obsid

Continued on page 12

Tom Harrington, Dan Massey and Ed Luhm nominated to be the next circuit court judge

by Karla Pomeroy
Three names for the next Fifth Judicial District Circuit Court judge in Worland have been submitted to Gov. Dave Freudenthal, and two of them are former Thermopolis residents.

Judicial Nominating Commission member Mike Messenger of Thermopolis said Monday the seven-member commission met in Worland Sept. 23 and interviewed six of 13 applicants to replace Robert Skar, who was elevated to Fifth Judicial District Court judge.

The governor now has 30 days to appoint

one of the three. Messenger said the governor has made it a practice to interview all three candidates before making his appointment.

According to Barbara Warburton of the governor's office, the three nominees are:

• Thomas W. Harrington, an attorney with Davis and Harrington in Worland. According to the Wyoming State Bar Web site, Harrington has been a member of the Wyoming State Bar since 1991.

The former teacher and wrestling coach currently serves as Thermopolis municipal judge.

• Daniel T. Massey serves as the city attorney in Rawlins. He has been a member of the Wyoming State Bar since 1987, according to the Web site.

He is a former Hot Springs County attorney.

• Edward G. Luhm of Worland. He has been a member of the Wyoming State Bar since 1986, according to the Web site.

This is the third judge position to be filled this year by the commission and the governor. Messenger said this appointment will fill the final vacancy in the Wyoming judicial system at this time.