

Take a look at Wyoming's new license plate art **7**

Judge in Cody takes over the dog gone case **12**

A review of 2008 in Hot Springs County **8-10**

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 110, No. 1, January 1, 2009

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

No help from OnStar Search and rescue pulls three boys off mountain

by Jonathan Green

Three Thermopolis boys were unharmed after Hot Springs County sheriff's office search and rescue members pulled their truck out of a snowbank on Copper Mountain Sunday night.

Chris Ryan, 15, James Luke Casciato and Seth Marton, 16, were hunting coyotes Sunday, search and rescue captain Chad Baldez said.

All three were in a white 2008 Chevrolet Suburban. Marton had left his truck, a green Chevrolet pickup, lower on the mountain in the Buffalo Creek area.

The youths became stuck at some point during the day, Baldez said. With Marton's pickup elsewhere, they were unable to pull the Subur-

ban out.

At about 8 p.m. Ryan's father, Bob, contacted sheriff's officials to file a missing persons report before asking the OnStar division of General Motors' to use a satellite to determine the location of the Suburban.

For unknown reasons, OnStar was unable to locate the truck, Baldez said. Search and rescue volunteers were rallied shortly after 9 p.m. and headed for the mountain at about 10.

The three youngsters were found about 11:30 p.m. Volunteers, assisted by sheriff's deputies, dug a bit and pulled the Suburban out of a snowbank.

"They were fine," Baldez said.

Lights On! program relit by a new \$500,000 grant

by Breez Longwell Daniels

The "Lights Are On!" in the Hot Springs County School District with the awarding of a \$500,000, five-year, 21st Century grant, according to curriculum director Janet Philp.

"This means increased programming and increased benefits for kids in the community," Philp said. "We can reenergize and enhance programs with five years of secured funding."

"The lights were flickering," Philp said, referring to the reduced funding received over the past year.

The Lights On after school program was initiated in 2003 with funding of \$50,000 per year through December 2007. A second round of funding began in 2004, overlapping the original grant and providing an additional \$50,000 per year through this December.

As the first funding cycle ended, the overlapping funds also ended, and the total grant was reduced to \$50,000 for the past year with no guaranteed renewal.

Superintendent of schools Marty Kobza praised Philp's efforts in applying for grant funding. "Janet really put a lot of time and effort into the grant and application. She has a lot of passion for the program and we are proud of her."

"We are just excited about the opportunity it provides to kids. We are proud of the people that

have made the program successful and will continue to in the future."

Philp said the original grant was called a 21st state incentive grant and funding was combined from the state and federal levels.

"Initially it was targeted to middle school and required community based planning and involvement," she said. "This is a K-5 grant written just for Ralph Witters Elementary."

"The proposal was written for RWE as the funding priority for Title 1 school wide programs and schools with 40% or more students on free or reduced lunch status."

"The idea is to improve academic achievement, not just by lengthening the school day, but by high interest and engaging activities that allow students to practice academic and pro-social skills."

Funds will be used to provide more training for staff, to insure that Lights On is more than just homework help, according to Philp.

"We would like to add a morning program," she said. "As parents get off to work it would be a safe place for kids. We could also provide a transition in the morning to help kids prepare for their school day."

"One area of emphasis for the new funds may be to increase the number of weeks the school provides programming in the summer from the current six weeks, up to 12."

"It would be good to see us going back to having a full-time coordinator," Philp said.

The grant application outlined a significant increase in hours and quality of programming with the addition of before school and extended summer programming, additional staffing and training on research based strategies for parents and staff.

Goals tests are outlined as increased performance levels for RWE students on Wyoming PAWS in reading, writing and math.

The Lights On program goal is to provide a range of high quality, engaging academic, artistic, recreational and cultural enrichment activities in a safe environment.

Formal community partnerships include Hot Springs County Counseling Services and Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation. Philp said various district and grant funds would be used to continue support services for students grades 6-12 who had been served by Lights On programs.

"We will enhance programs to create a healthy environment for all kids to grow and be challenged," Philp said.

The lights were flickering.
--Janet Philp

*We are just excited
about the opportunity
it provides to kids.*

--Marty Kobza



Town of Thermopolis loader operator Stan Kraushaar dumps part of the four inches of snow from holiday storms into a truck driven by Fred Oneyear. Temperatures that soared to 54 degrees on Monday allowed many town streets to be cleared. --Pat Schmidt photo

State park entrance fees hiked

Visitors to Wyoming's state parks and historic sites that charge fees can expect a slight increase in day use and camping fees effective Thursday.

The raise in camping, entrance and lodge/shelter fees is equal to the rate of inflation since 1999 when fees were last adjusted. A new "Amenities Fee" may be charged for added services such as electrical hookups, showers or camping structures.

Revenues generated through the collection of user fees are used to help fund improvements to Wyoming's state parks and

historic sites.

State officials do not expect the fee increase to adversely affect visitation at Wyoming's state parks and historic sites.

The fee changes include:
• Daily use fees for designated state parks, archaeological sites and recreation areas: Resident, \$2 to \$4; non-resident, \$4 to \$6
• Daily use fees for designated historic sites: Resident, \$1 to \$2; non-resident, \$2 to \$4
• Daily use additional vehicle pass: Resident and non-resident, \$5 to \$7
• Overnight camping fees:

Resident \$4 to \$6; non-resident, \$8 to \$11

• Annual daily use permit: Purchased before Feb. 16, resident, \$20 to \$27; non-resident, \$35 to \$46. After Feb. 15, resident, \$25 to \$33; non-resident, \$35 to \$46.

• Annual overnight camping permit: Resident, \$30 to \$40. An annual non-resident overnight camping permit is no longer offered.

Veterans who have a 51% or more disability are offered a free lifetime pass. Call 777-6323 for more information.



The "Grinch That Stole Christmas" giggles at the prices he and the Christmas tree decorated by Maralee Hilzendeger drew again for auctioneer Gary Nash. --Pat Schmidt photo

Maralee already working on next tree

by Breez Longwell Daniels

As the rest of us rushed around, preparing for Christmas, adding last minute decorations and wrapping presents to put under the tree, Maralee Hilzendeger, Nu Vogue Salon owner, was shopping for decorations for her entry next year in the Festival of Trees.

"As soon as each year's festival ends I choose a theme that someone hasn't done yet," Hilzendeger said. "This is the best time of year to shop for next year. The decorations are in the stores and often on sale."

"The 2009 tree is almost done, I just need to find a few more items. I get excited about a new theme and just start looking."

"The theme I chose for next year should appeal to a wide range of people."

Hilzendeger said the challenge is to select a unique Christmas theme that more than one person at the auction will like.

"I go into it very competitive, in a good way, and I have a lot of pride," she said. "It is an artistic outlet for me."

All six years she has donated a tree to the festival her entry has been the first or second highest seller. For the past two years

the Nu Vogue tree Hilzendeger designed has been the highest seller, \$1,400 last year and \$1,200 this year.

"I always want to make sure it is going to sell and whoever gets it gets a lot," she said. "People unwrap the lights and keep them along with the decorations."

"I believe in loading the tree so the person who buys it has ornaments to keep. The second year we created a Victorian tree, and the local woman who bought it still puts up those decorations each year."

The first year she signed to donate a tree Hilzendeger said she was not sure how to get started and what people expected.

"I was scared the first year," she said. "When you are growing up everything is about tinsel. I wasn't sure if tinsel was still in style."

Now, after six years of donating trees she has yet to see a tree with tinsel.

Hilzendeger chose a Grinch theme for the auction this December.

"I stole the idea from a client that said somebody should make a Grinch tree," she said. "It was hard to find Grinch stuff, and then I had to find ornaments that went with

the theme."

Not only did she create a Grinch themed tree, Hilzendeger stood a life size Grinch next to the tree.

"The Grinch was a mannequin, anatomically correct, I bought him on eBay," she said with a laugh. "We put tinfoil in his gloves so his fingers would bend."

"I even watched The Grinch movie to see the character. It took three of us two hours at Bank of Wyoming to decorate the Grinch tree, and we are not slow."

"Decorating a live tree is harder than a fake. You can't bend it to make it do what you want it to do."

Hilzendeger expressed appreciation for the buyers who attend the Festival of Trees each year and make the event successful.

"The community has always been so generous; it is amazing what they put out," she said. "Donating a tree to the festival is my way of being able to help out in the community."

Proceeds from the Festival of Trees sponsored by the Bank of Wyoming go to the Thermopolis Community Fund, which in turn gives money to assorted causes and projects in Hot Springs County.