

Congratulations to the Boys Golf Team 2A State Champions

See page 1 of our sports section for more details



Thermopolis second safest Wyoming city

by Cindy Glasson

We live in Wyoming for any number of reasons, the clear blue skies, the beautiful mountains, a lower cost of living, or maybe the unparalleled freedoms we have in the Cowboy State that you don't find anywhere else.

In Thermopolis, it's the mineral water, the easy access to hunting, camping and fishing, and most importantly, the wonderful sense of community.

Now there is another reason for living here.

Thermopolis has been named the second safest community to live in in Wyoming.

According to Safe Choice Security, Thermopolis, the smallest community on their Top 11 list, is safer than 53% of all the cities in America with just 1.97 violent crimes per 1,000 people and 14.78 property crimes per 1,000 residents.

Topping the list was Worland with .72 violent crimes per 1,000 population and property crimes of 6.68 per 1,000.

In the number three spot was Cody, followed by Green River in number four. Evanston is next on the list at number five with Torrington taking the number six spot.

Sheridan is listed as number seven, Jackson comes in at number eight, Laramie, home to the University of Wyoming is number nine, and finishing out the list is Rawlins in the number 10 spot and Lander at number 11.

The rankings are determined by national crime statistics published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The statistics reflect crime reports gathered from 2012.



Even flour burns

Fourth graders were shocked and awed at the simple things in their house that are flammable, including the flour their mothers cook with as shown here by firefighters James Coates and Rod McQueen.

Students from RWE have been visiting the firehall this week learning about fire safety. The department has the classes each year as part of Fire Safety Week. — photo courtesy Jim Andreen

A small dip in Hot Springs County tourism over the summer

by Michael Stafford

Summer is turning to fall and the main tourism season for the area is starting to slow. This year saw a large influx of visitors to Thermopolis and Hot Springs County.

But how does this year's numbers compare to previous years?

According to some, the numbers took a slight

dip this year.

Chamber of Commerce Director Meri Ann Rush said that this year the number of visitors to the chamber was down a little from 2013. However the number of phone calls to the office were on the rise.

"Comparing this year's numbers to last year's numbers, we are down," she said about visitation

to the Chamber office.

However, that decrease does not necessarily indicate a decrease in tourism for the area. One reason could be a natural fluctuation from year to year. This year from June to August there were 2,319 people that stopped into the office compared to 2,988 in 2013. The year before there were 2,561 people that stopped in.

"It's not a huge difference," the Director said.

Rush also said that one reason visits to the office may be down this year is the greater usage of smart phones from which visitors can access a tremendous amount of information and directions about a location without paper pamphlets

See Tourism on page A6

Bad choices bring big consequences for youth

by Cindy Glasson

This third installment in our series on drug and alcohol abuse in Hot Springs County revolves around the Youth Alternatives program available to those under the age of 18. The program is under the direction of Alan Rossler in conjunction with the County Attorney's Office.

It probably started out innocently enough. A group of friends, a little music, and the next thing you know you're hearing the click of handcuffs.

Bad enough when you're an adult, but imagine the fear and confusion with this scenario if you're only 14 or 16 years old.

Once a juvenile is taken to the Law Enforcement Center in Hot Springs County, a majority of the time, the child will be released to their parents or legal guardian. If the parents are unavailable and the juvenile does not require detention, a 48-hour, non-secure hold is available.

In the non-secure hold, the teen is kept away from the general population in a separate area with a place to sleep and watch TV without contact with the adult inmates.

The non-secure hold can also be used for non-offenders such as runaways or when the Department of Family Services are involved. By having a non-secure hold area, it allows law enforcement to return to patrolling the streets, leaving the juvenile in

the care of another member of the court system, a parole officer for example.

The alternative

It used to be, that once a juvenile was brought into a detention center he would receive a ticket and a court date, later he would receive a fine, and that ticket, whether for tobacco, drugs, alcohol or any other offense, would stay on his permanent record. Forever.

While that may not sound so horrible, there are consequences to having a ticket on your record, even a ticket received as a juvenile.

For instance, upon reaching the age of 18, the now adult may not be able to serve his country through military service or be accepted into a law enforcement program or sometimes, even the college they've dreamed of going to their entire life.

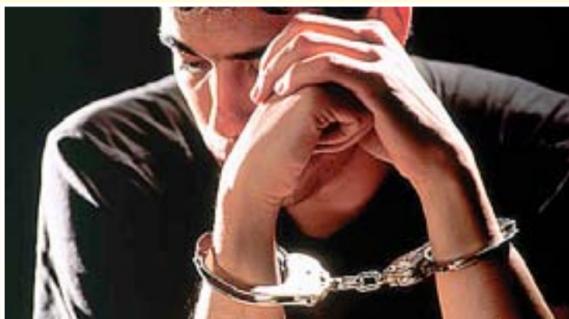
Fortunately for tweens and teens in Hot Springs County, a diversion program was started in 2008 that would allow them to remove that blemish on their record, the Youth Alternatives program.

According to Alan Rossler, director of the program, there are, on average, 10 - 14 juveniles in the program at any one time, with as many as 24 or 25 at various times. Their offenses range from vandalism to DUI or MIP (Minor in Possession) charges as well as drugs and tobacco use.

A teen who completes the program has the opportunity to have their record cleared at the end of approximately six months, depending on the circumstances.

The program

There are several steps to the Youth Alternatives program, many of which run concurrently



and are tailored for each individual child.

Every teen in the program will have a weekly meeting with Rossler to go over grades from school and any personal issues or things the youth wishes to discuss. Rossler is in close contact with each of the child's teachers and the counselors at the schools.

There is a strict no drugs, no alcohol and no tobacco policy in the program.

One of the biggest issues, with both the kids and parents,

is a curfew.

Rossler said the curfew can be a real incentive for teens and can be adjusted, depending on how the teen is doing in the program.

"We don't want them to miss out on the big things," Rossler said. "Something like prom, for instance. We look at each individual in the program and decide whether or not they are

doing well enough to be given that little incentive to attend.

"Fifty percent of these kids have self-esteem issues and out of school activities really help them work through those feelings."

And parents have options as to how restrictive they want things to be going forward. If a parent wants to keep their teen away from certain "associates," they have that right.

"Often, though, the kids figure out who's good for them and who isn't," Rossler said.

Another part of the program is a corrective thinking class that gives the youth the tools they need to make positive decisions in their lives.

Rossler doesn't use it as a typical class, either, sometimes working parts of the class into discussions with the teens, making it rather flexible.

The same type of class is used through DFS and at the Boys School in Washakie County.

The bottom line

So what happens to that ticket?

According to Rossler, the ticket remains in the possession of the county attorney who makes the determination if the juvenile goes into the program or if the offense was one that could make the child a danger to himself or others in the community.

Once the teen has finished with the program, a letter is sent to the county attorney outlining how they did with all the pieces of the puzzle and a recommendation for discharge is made.

Since the ticket never left the county attorney's office, it has, technically never been filed, so if the decision is made that the teen has completed the program sufficiently it does not appear on their record.

Of course if the youth did not comply completely with the program, the ticket can then be filed with the court.

Currently, the Hot Springs

County Sheriff's Office is participating in the program, but for several months, the Thermopolis Police Department has not.

Rossler said he doesn't know why the police are not going along with Youth Alternatives, but the county attorney and town's attorney are working through the issue.

"This isn't something new (alternative programs)," he said. "It's something that has been around since the 1980's and is growing in popularity in Wyoming. Right now, there are 16 of the 23 Wyoming counties that have some sort of program like this."

Not only is it helping the youth with their future endeavors, it's also saving the county about \$10,000 a year on detention time. With no juvenile detention area in the current jail, youth offenders must be taken to Lander or Casper at a cost of \$190 a day and that does not include the pay or overtime pay for an officer to accompany them, travel expenses and so forth.

The non-secure holding area also saves the county thousands of dollars a year.

"We're unique in that the county funds over half of our costs," Rossler said. "We're doing well with it. There is a threat to other counties, though, that aren't being backed by their county commissioners like we are. They could easily lose their programs for lack of funding."

Tourism

from page 1

or maps.

Despite the number of people stopping in at the Chamber's office, Rush said that the summer has been a good one for businesses and increasingly visitors are seeing more of the attractions of the area as well as visiting at other times than just during the summer.

"What is great is yes, we do see an increase in tourism during the summer, but it's year round," she said. "The attractions are not only nice to experience during the summer months but during the winter as well."

According to Amanda Moeller, Tourism Director with the Hot Springs Travel and Tourism Board, the tourism season this year has been good.

"At this point we had a great year," she said.

According to Moeller, many of the events throughout the year bring people to the area. She said that while some of the events are long standing, new ones were added this year including the People of the Earth Festival, the monthly Art Strolls and the Freedom Run. Attracting people to the area is a goal of the events.

"We bring a lot of people to town," said Moeller. "We sponsor them because they bring people to stay in the hotels in town."

Increasing visitor lodging in the vicinity is important in a number of different ways. Not only does it help lodging and other tourism geared businesses, but the lodging tax collected on those stays is reinvested in promoting the area. Hot Springs County has a four-percent lodging tax.

The lodging tax returns so far for the summer months show a slight decrease in the number of stays at local establishments. According to information provided by Moeller, the lodging tax returns for August this year were \$14,582.17, down a little bit from \$15,812.60 in 2013. Returns for September were also down, coming in at \$25,098.08 this year and \$28,807.71 in 2013. Moeller explained that the lodging tax returns are delayed about two months from when they are collected, meaning August returns likely reflect May and September's returns reflect June.

Some of those lodging businesses saw that little dip. Jenni Dorman, Sales and Catering Manager for the Days Inn in the Hot Springs State Park, said that while business has been

good, stays were down slightly this year from previous ones.

"It's been steady, but numbers aren't up there like they've been in the past," she said.

But that dip could be simply a natural fluctuation in the number of people staying. Dorman said that it can be "hit or miss" sometimes on how many people come to stay in Thermopolis. Part of the reason for some slower times at the hotel could be due to more or less events through the establishment. The manager said that last year the H.O.G. Rally was an event that brought a number of lodgers to the hotel, whereas this year the event was held elsewhere in the state.

"This year there wasn't a lot of stuff through the hotel," said Dorman.

Moeller explained that the lodging tax returned to the county is used to attract more visitors to the area. Advertising is a large component of that and the director spoke about some of the different methods used including billboards. She explained that not only do the billboards encourage people to visit, but they also are used to promote events.

And from what she's heard, those billboards are doing what they are intended to.

"It's working," she said after relaying a story from a couple who traveled to Thermopolis after seeing one of the advertisements.

Not only do those advertising efforts get visitors from across the country, but also those from across the sea.

"We get a ton of people from Europe," said Moeller.

While the mineral pools are the big draw to the area, Moeller said that by promoting other attractions and events, visitors have more to see and do and may be enticed to spend more time

and dollars in the area.

"We really want people to come and at least spend a night," she said. "Thermopolis is a great community to visit."

Some are up and some are down

While lodging establishments and lodging tax returns can provide a good indicator of how the main tourism season went, other establishments can also get a handle on how many visitors passed through the area. In Thermopolis, some saw a little bit of an increase, while others saw a small drop.

Ross Rhodes of the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center said that both the number of people visiting the attraction as well as those attending meetings at the facility is up from last year.

"We are ahead count-wise this year compared to last year," he said.

According to Rhodes, visits to the Museum this year in August totaled 370 compared to 312 for the same month last year. As far as meeting attendance, August saw 523 attending in August this year compared to 418 last year. July this year saw numbers on par with 2013 with 603 museum and meeting visitors in 2014 and 610 in

2013. June's numbers were up significantly with 547 in 2014 and 369 in 2013.

Overall, year-to-date there have been 4,163 visitors compared to 3,932 last year.

"We get visitors from all over the world," said Rhodes listing off countries such as Africa, Australia, Canada, England, Germany, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland and Sweden.

Although he said that he doesn't have a reason for the rise in museum visitors, he said that more meetings have been scheduled at the facility including the ones regarding Hot Springs State Park.

Rhodes said the more people walking through the doors of the museum, the better for it.

"The number of people we get helps us justify the funding we get from the county," said Rhodes.

Other attractions have seen a small dip in the number of visitors this year. Angie Guyon of the Wyoming Dinosaur Center and Dig Sites said that compared to June, July and August last year, visitors were down by 289. However, with 15,000 visitors to the Dinosaur Center during those three months, the change in visitation is likely nothing more than a natural fluctuation.

Rainy weather may have had some effect on the number of visitors to the center and the dig sites. Guyon said that due to the rain this year, the dig sites had to close for the first time in 13 years.

"The dig site tours are all held outside," she said.

Guyon said that over the past few years there has been a small trend of a decline in visitors however, she said that she did not have any theories why that may have occurred.

"It's really hard to attribute why," she

The summer season for some though wasn't as good this year as in the past. Bill Moriarity of the TePee Pools in Thermopolis said that while the tourism this year was good, business was down.

"We had a significant drop in attendance," he said.

But for the TePee, Moriarity explained that there were external factors which are believed to have caused the drop. He said that issues and negotiations with the State of Wyoming stemming from proposals to change the use and setup of the state park have deterred business.

"Our receipts are low but not because of the tourism," he said noting that over the years past there has been a slight rise in attendance.

Moriarity said also that the cost of fuel has had an affect on the number of visitors. When the gas prices are high, less people travel than when the cost is low. That can affect visitors that stop while on their way to visit a National Park or those coming from the surrounding regions to take

a short trip to Thermopolis.

Keeping up with the other counties

Hot Springs County has improved over the years in the amount of travel spending through the county. However, that improvement is less than most other counties in the state.

According to information from the Wyoming Office of Tourism on Travel impacts per county from 2000 to 2013, travel spending in Hot Springs County has improved by \$9.5 million increasing from \$17.3 million in 2000 to \$26.8 million in 2013—a 3.4 percent annual change over that time frame.

However, 3.4 percent annual change is less in the lower range of increased tourism across all the counties in Wyoming.

According to the figures, only two counties had lower annual change over the past 13 years—Big Horn and Weston Counties. Average annual change for all counties was 4.9 percent.

Despite being low on the list, it's neighboring counties have seen approximately the same annual percentage of increase in travel spending: Big Horn—3.0 percent, Washakie—3.9 percent and Park—4.2 percent.

However, in looking beyond the annual percentages to how much spending actually increased, some differences can be seen.

Between 2000 and 2013, travel spending in Hot Springs County increased \$9.5 million, Big Horn County increased \$9.7 million, Washakie County increased \$9.1 million and Park County increased \$131.6 million.

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Salad, Yellow Cake

WEDNESDAY

Pork Chops, Mashed Potatoes
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Strawberries w/Yogurt

THURSDAY

Chili Con Carne, Garden
Vegetable Salad, Corn Bread,
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FRIDAY

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Proposed Amendment to the Wyoming Constitution to be voted on at the General Election Nov. 4, 2014

Underlined words would be added to existing law.

Constitutional Amendment A

The adoption of this amendment would allow the governor to appoint nonresidents of the state to serve as University of Wyoming trustees. Not more than twenty percent (20%) of the appointed trustees may be nonresidents of the state. The governor would not be required to appoint any non-resident as a trustee. All appointments to the board of trustees are with the advice and consent of the Wyoming Senate.

Article 7, Section 17. Government of university.

The legislature shall provide by law for the management of the university, its lands and other property by a board of trustees, consisting of not less than seven members, to be appointed by the governor by and with the advice and consent of the senate, and the president of the university, and the superintendent of public instruction, as members ex officio, as such having the right to speak, but not to vote. The duties and powers of the trustees shall be prescribed by law. Not more than twenty percent (20%) of the appointed trustees may be nonresidents of the state, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 6, Section 15 of this Constitution.