

# Chamber reports member increase

by Cindy Glasson

Memberships continue to rise according to Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce director, Meri Ann Rush.

During their November meeting last week, Rush told the executive board they have gained 21 new chamber members since July 1, averaging five or six new members each month. That brings total membership to 211.

Just four members did not renew in the past five months, some of which are no longer in business in the area.

With the chamber office now able to be open on the weekends, the statistics for the number of phone calls and walk-in tourists as well as local walk-ins has exploded.

During August, 295 tourists stopped by the office compared to 157 in August of 2013. Requests for tourism packets rose 100% over last year.

Tonight (Thursday) the chamber will be hosting their monthly Meet and Greet at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center, starting at 5:30 p.m.

They will be drawing for the 2015 Vacation Get-away package during the event.



## Reading adventure

Jazmene Jensen, Tricia Capelle and Jocelyn White share a book at Thermopolis Middle School during the Reading Adventure day. The Reading Adventure was a program done by all District 1 schools.

-Zachary White photo

# Commissioners deny Hughes malt beverage permit

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners denied a 24-hour liquor permit to Linda Hughes for an event at her barn on Bar None Drive.

Hughes approached the board, asking for a malt beverage permit for a Thanksgiving event on Nov. 27. A handwritten note attached to the

request indicated, although she had applied for a malt beverage permit, she felt a winery permit would be more appropriate.

County Attorney Jerry Williams looked over the application and asked several questions of Hughes, including whether or not she was registered as a non-profit entity

with the state as her advertising flyer announced a 50-50 raffle would be held during the event.

Williams expressed concern as well that the proper permits were not yet in place for the business through the Hot Springs County Planning Commission.

Taking Williams' concerns

into consideration, the commissioners denied Hughes the permit.

In other business, the commissioners have received five applications from individuals wishing to fill the Youth Alternatives Director position.

They will be holding a work session in the near future to thoroughly go over each ap-

plication and determine whom they will call in for an interview.

Ross Rhodes, director of the Hot Springs County Museum, checked in with the commissioners to fill them in on repairs being planned in the museum basement after a recent water issue damaged an outside wall.

Rhodes told the commissioners the repair should cost less than \$450 as they are planning to use wood slats to match other areas in the basement rather than dry walling and painting the damaged area.

Cost for the repairs will come out of the county buildings budget rather than the museum budget.



# How to increase traffic at Hot Springs State Park

by Zachary White

The Hot Spring County Travel and Tourism Board approved the expenditure of \$12,500 for the purchase of 40,000 new copies of the Thermopolis Visitor Guide.

To pay for the visitor guide two replacement billboards will be postponed a year.

Instead \$5,500 will come out of the billboard maintenance fund to pay for the visitor guide. The other \$7,000 will come from the board's contingency fund.

Also, the board discussed increasing tourism coming into town.

Part of the plan to increase tourism is to advertise in newspapers in nearby towns.

Tourism Director Amanda Moeller said the chamber plans to take out advertisements in the Gillette News Record and the Rock Springs paper, the Rocket Miner, in order to increase traffic coming into Thermopolis. The advertisements would be for the Key to the City promotion, which gives people who stay at participating motels, RV parks or bed and breakfasts a discount

at restaurants, stores and attractions around town.

The group also discussed and agreed that increasing traffic to the hot springs during the winter is a must.

"The best time to soak in the water is the winter," State Parks Superintendent Kevin Skates said.

Yet, even with winter being the best time to use the hot springs, board member Dan Moriarity said he has seen a decrease in traffic at the TePee pools recently.

The goal of the upcoming advertising is to increase that traffic.

Another point of contention came up in the meeting when discussion of where part of the tax money from the lodging tax goes.

Board member Ernest Cummings said lodgings that cater to visitors are taxed four percent, and one percent of that goes back to the state. However, it is unclear where in the state budget that money goes.

A majority of board members discussed possibly getting state Rep. Nathan Winters to come to a board meeting to explain where that tax money goes.