

Commercial Center
dedication set
for Monday **3**

Bobcats battle
No. 1 Glenrock
here on Friday **6**

Wyo Quarter Horse
Sale gelding
goes for \$16,500 **9**

Sikes selected
as officer
for schools **13**

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Visitor totals generally down but some bright spots noted

by Cindy Glasson

Although numbers are down, July appears to have been the busiest month for tourism this season, according to several local businesses.

The Elk Antler Inn, Rainbow Motel, Super 8 and Days Inn all report lower visitor numbers June through August.

Carl Leyba, owner of the Super 8 and Taco John's, didn't think the motel gained anything this year.

"We had hoped things would be better, but it just didn't pan out that way," Leyba said. "We were down about 5% each of the three months."

Leyba noticed more travelers in campers.

Mel Schneider, owner of the Elk Antler Inn, said things were "a little slower all summer."

He did say July was busy.

Days Inn owner Jim Mills observed visitors were from areas a little closer to home, Billings, Casper and Colorado.

"They were a little more economical with their meals in the restaurant too," Mills said. "We had fewer fancy meals like lobster going out of the kitchen."

Mills said what is hard to think about is the number of new hotels around the country that haven't even made it through their first year due to the economy. He said many have already had to turn their properties back to the bank because they cannot make their mortgage payments.

Wanda Nordwick, Rainbow Motel owner, said travelers from bordering states made up a majority of their visitors. There were some folks from other countries, but not as many as they usually have.

"Gas prices weren't bad, but I think they were still worried about what was going to happen with the economy," she said.

Dan Moriarity with the TePee Pool said his numbers were down. "Not a lot, but a little bit."

Moriarity noticed visitors were picking and choosing what activities they did and said more

folks seemed to be going to the grocery store and picnicking rather than eating out.

"They definitely spent more money last year," he said.

Roland Luehne with the Star Plunge indicated numbers were slightly up.

"June really stood out," he said. "It was our best June ever."

Luehne agreed more visitors came from surrounding states like Colorado and Idaho.

"We didn't have much from back east like we usually do," he said.

Eagle RV owner Nancy Blaich also said their numbers were equal to or higher than previous years.

"Folks were staying longer than usual too," Blaich said.

She said the RV park has visitors that come back year after year, but they were still seeing people arrive from all over the country.

"We had people from Texas, California and Florida," she said.

Although Blaich said there were still people asking where to get a good steak in town, she said there were more inquiries about grocery stores.

"I don't think people were spending like they used to," she said.

Blaich said July was the best month, being full pretty much every day.

Ross Rhodes, director of the Hot Springs County Museum, said, "We had 158 more visitors from June through August than we did last year."

While visits were down during July, both June and August posted higher numbers than in 2008.

"What surprised me is we had more foreign visitors than normal," he said. "We had a lot of people from overseas."

Yellowstone National Park had its busiest tourist season since 1999, tallying 2.3 million travelers in June, July and August. RV visitors to the park were 35% higher than 2008.

Oral surgeon joins Drake Dental

by Cindy Glasson

An oral surgeon and dentist is joining the practice of Dr. Guy Drake on Oct. 5.

Dr. Leif Polson, originally from Lander, is a captain in the U.S. Air Force. Polson has advanced surgical skills and will be able to do things like remove wisdom teeth, offer IV sedation and dental implants.

"I've been trying for years to get an oral surgeon in Thermopolis," Drake said.

Patients needing those procedures have been sent to Billings or Casper.

"This will keep the work here," Drake said.

The change is creating three new jobs, doubling the number in the office.

Polson and his fiancée, Jacqueline, have been looking for a home here. She served as an Air Force medic in Afghanistan.

Polson received his dental degree from the University of

Nebraska.

"Some folks around here will already know him," Drake said.

Polson wrestled for Lander in high school, graduating in 1997, as well as Arizona State University. His stepfather, Dr. Dale Peterson from Lander, has been traveling to Thermopolis recently to assist Drake.

With the addition of Polson, Peterson will no longer be traveling to Thermopolis.

Bids for search and rescue building reach \$350,000; site work underway

by Cindy Glasson

Site excavation has begun for the new Hot Springs County Search and Rescue building on Fourteenth Street.

According to drawings, the \$350,000 metal building will have a brick façade similar to the fire hall, which is next door.

County clerk Hans Odde said the general contractor for the project is Roy Decker of Worland. Decker's bid for the building was \$198,530.

Decker will also be doing the paving for the parking area for a bid of \$56,600. There will be some shared parking that falls between the fire-hall and the new search and rescue building.

Basin Mechanical of Worland was low bidder for plumbing and HVAC work at \$46,000.

Jadeco of Thermopolis was the only bidder for electrical for \$37,270.

The bid for site excavation was awarded to WaR of Thermopolis for \$11,680.

Eagles 100th party for all

Eagles Aerie 1884 will mark its 100th anniversary Saturday with a public celebration.

Manager Terry Kimes said the event runs from 10 a.m. until closing time. While the club has secured a malt beverage permit from the town, Kimes stressed the event is planned for the whole family.

"I really hope the public will come," she said. "It's for the public."

Games for children will be available. Adults will be able to drink beer outside, where activities will include a cakewalk and dunk tank.

The Thermopolis Eagles have about 250 members, Kimes said. The anniversary was on Sept. 4, but the club decided to wait for a quieter weekend to throw their party, she said. Lunch will be served at 1 p.m.



Michael Meier throws a dart at balloons as hospital CEO Charlie Myers watches. Live music, food and games attracted a crowd to the Fall Festival. —Pat Schmidt photo



Licking liquor before its time from a vat of fermenting grain are Gov. Dave Freudenthal and Wyoming Whiskey tourism director Donna Nally. He also visited with Thermopolis fourth graders and spoke at the state AFL/CIO convention. —Jonathan Green photo

Governor talks 9/11 with students, visits distillery

by Jonathan Green

Thermopolis fourth graders met Dave Freudenthal Friday before the governor visited Wyoming Whiskey in Kirby.

Freudenthal also addressed the Wyoming AFL-CIO at the Days Inn Friday morning before lunching at Pumpnicks.

In visits to the three fourth-grade classrooms, the governor presented a proclamation addressing the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and then answered questions.

The questions ranged from social ("Do you like the Green Bay Packers?" to which the governor demurred) to the serious (One boy prefaced his question about tough choices by telling Freudenthal he had pardoned the boy's father, restoring his voting and gun rights).

Most of the second term Democrat's answers revolved around his family and education. Freudenthal rarely missed an opportunity to joke about his wife, often at his expense. (The adults in earshot frequently chuckled.)

He arrived in a rental (an electric blue utility vehicle with Colorado license plates, which drew some mirth from a Wyoming Whiskey representative) accompanied by a bodyguard and his acting press secretary. Freudenthal joked he didn't get to pick what he drove because he was stuck with a vehicle that can carry bodyguards, support staff, communications equipment and bullet-resistant vests.

"I got along fine by myself" before being elected, he joked. As to the bullet-resistant vests in his usual state car, he drew laughs from students when he wondered what good they were. He stuck up his hands, explaining how he would ask any bad guys to hold their fire while he put his vest on.

Freudenthal told teacher Kathy Hammond he didn't like legacy questions when she asked how he wanted to be remembered. "As a good husband and father."

He then spoke about his decision-making process, hinting impacts in the here-and-now are at least as important as the future implications. At the Wyoming Whiskey facility at Kirby, tourism director Donna Nally and her husband, master distiller Steve Nally, walked Freudenthal through the distillery building while discussing production and distribution.

After tasting a batch of fermented grain in the early stages of production, the governor signed four barrels, including the first two produced and one he branded. One of the barrels will be donated to Freudenthal for him to use as he likes; he indicated he would auction or raffle it to raise funds for charity.

He lamented "whiskey" had been misspelled on one of the barrels by Brad Mead, who the governor appointed to the University of Wyoming board of trustees. He said he would need to apologize for appointing someone with poor spelling.

Fall Festival packs River Walk; 18 scarecrows raise over \$960

by Cindy Glasson

Eighteen scarecrows found new homes and lots of Thermopolis residents had a wonderful time at the First Annual Fall Festival Saturday.

"We never dreamed we'd fill the area to that capacity," Gottsche Rehabilitation and Wellness Center executive director Cheryl Shero said.

"We sold out of food, water and drinks," she said. "We were more than overwhelmed with the turnout."

Shero said plans are already being made for a second annual

event. Vendors told Shero they were thrilled.

"People have already asked to be added to the list for next year," she said.

Bids for the scarecrows started at \$60. The top scarecrow, Abbie the Postal Scarecrow, created by the post office, sold for \$105 with proceeds going to help Cheyenne Weisbrod who recently lost her mother.

Monies raised for the various charities totaled \$960.

"We never thought we'd have that many," Shero said. "We may do things a little differently next

year, like have them displayed closer to the stage or do a few as a live auction."

Shero said a lot of out-of-town people attended.

"They heard the music or just passed by and came on over," she said.

There were 15 competitors in rock climbing at the Wellness Center, according to Dusty Lewis. Mike Grissom won and Cody Glasson placed second in the adult division.

Devon and Natasha Knight took first and second in the kids division.

Band instruments needed for youths

Do you have an old band instrument that you would be willing to share with a youngster?

A high turnout for the Thermopolis fifth and sixth grade band has instructor Dustin Olsen appealing for more instruments. In fact, 43 of 55

sixth graders and 46 of 60 fifth graders want to be in the band.

"We will accept all band instruments regardless of quality," Olsen said.

Contact him at 864-6540.