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Memorial Day
Monday, May 30, 2011
*Never Forget,
Always Honor*

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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School district to tap reserves to balance its FY2012 budget

by Joe Sovo

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 will have to dip into its reserve funds to balance the 2011-12 school year budget, but business manager Lisa Pearce stressed to trustees during last Thursday's budget work session there is no cause for alarm.

Pearce's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2012 (FY12) is \$10,618,502. It's anticipated a special board meeting would be held in late June to deal with budget amendments. On July 20, the monthly board meeting would be held at 7 p.m. and incorporated an hour into the meeting will be a public hearing on the proposed budget. Trustees will then adopt a final budget later in the regular meeting.

In her report, Pearce stated there would be a budget deficit of at least \$300,000 for the next school year and the district would need to tap into reserves to meet the budgetary obligations for FY12. She said there has been no external cost adjustment (ECA) by the state in two years and it's unlikely the state would go three years without an adjustment, which would go a long way in closing the district's budget deficit.

"Funding levels have been stagnant over the last couple of years," Pearce told trustees. "We're looking at some struggles to meet our obligations. We'll have to go into reserves, but we'll be OK."

This is Pearce's 18th district budget and the first that is not "zero-based," or not having a deficit.

A major factor in funding is the annual mill levy. The estimated assessed valuation in the county was \$220 million, but Pearce said it has dropped significantly to about \$184 million.

"People are dollars in this school district," she said. "It's important the mill value stays up but it's not a catastrophe."

The drop in the mill levy money for the district is not a major concern, according to Pearce, since more money would come from the state to keep "bottom-line funding" the same. "It just shifts our revenue," she said.

"It's a 'two steps back, three steps forward' concept."

Pearce spoke about recalibration issues, saying state funding is up \$4.5 million to a current \$1.36 billion for the state's public schools.

The funding per student goes up from \$14,740 to \$15,493 - to maintain authenticity of the block grant concept.

By state law, the student-teacher ratio cannot be higher than 16:1, according to Pearce. That ratio in the Hot Springs County district is currently 15.75:1. Funding from the state is based on student enrollment, also known as ADM (average daily membership).

There is an anticipated \$50,000 budget amendment that would double the original amount in food services, due to huge increases in food costs that are expected.

Trustees held an executive session during Thursday's meeting to discuss salaries and benefits for 2011-12. When the board reconvened, trustees voted to:

- Increase employer health insurance contribution to \$1,070 for family and \$550 single;
- Absorb employee share of 1.43 percent Wyoming Retirement System;
- Allow steps and lanes for all employee groups;
- Adjust bus driver stand-by time to their regular hourly rate; and
- Adopt salary schedules as presented with changes noted.

All those issues would have an affect on the 2011-12 budget.

Special education funding

Reflected in the latest update of the preliminary budget are changes in funding for special needs students.

"Special education reimbursements are going to be up next year. That's good news at this point," Pearce said.

Information provided by Pearce indicates Hot Springs enrollment has increased by 16 students

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“It's a 'two step back, three steps forward' concept

Lisa Pearce

School Days coming to museum on June 4

16



Valedictorian Sarah Basse is excited by what some of her classmates wrote in her graduation book while she shows it to Kassidi Marquart after the graduation ceremony Sunday at Hot Springs County High School. — J.D. Stetson photo

LeRoy Hayes tells seniors about 'never giving up'

by J.D. Stetson

"Pomp and Circumstance" filled the gym at Hot Springs County High School once again Sunday as a new group of 49 seniors walked across the floor to celebrate their graduation.

After hearing from class president Jessica White, salutatorian Sallie Myers and all three valedictorians, Sarah Basse, David Leonhardt and Josh Materi, a familiar face took the podium.

LeRoy Hayes has been a teacher, a coach and an inspira-

tion for the graduating seniors throughout their high school careers. Hayes retired from teaching after the class' freshman year, but he's always been there as a coach for the numerous athletes in the class.

Hayes started his commencement speech stating how nervous he was to be standing in front of the class and their families, but then thanked them for the opportunity.

He told them he had a couple of points to make about friendship and "never giving up."

His tale started while he was in kindergarten at Springview Elementary, the preceding school to Ralph Witters Elementary, and the beginnings of his friendships throughout his junior high and high school careers.

"Friends stay with you, don't forget your friends," Hayes told the class. "An older friend once told me if you have five people you can count on as friends, you're blessed."

See Hayes on page 11

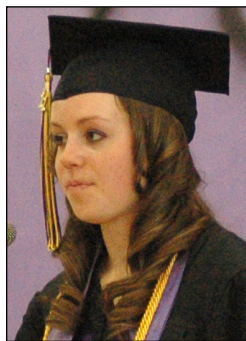
Early deadline for June 2 issue

The Independent Record office will be closed on Monday, May 30 in recognition of Memorial Day. The deadline for classified, display and legal advertising in the

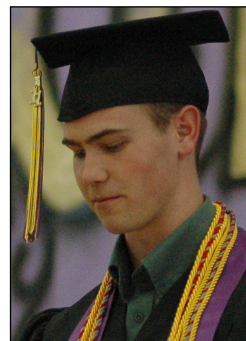
June 2 issue is 4 p.m. Friday, May 28.

The deadline for editorial/news content for the June 2 issue is noon Tuesday, May 31.

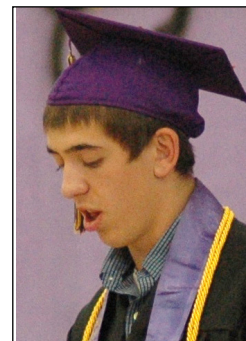
Basse, Leonhardt, Materi, Myers say farewell



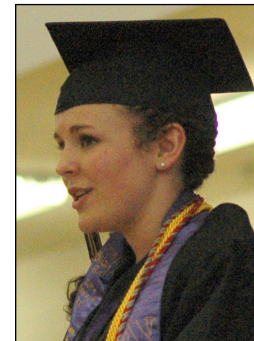
Sarah Basse



David Leonhardt



Josh Materi



Sallie Myers

Valedictorians, salutatorian deliver commencement addresses

Three valedictorians and one salutatorian delivered addresses during the 2011 Hot Springs County High School Commencement exercises Sunday in the high school gymnasium.

Sarah Basse, David Leonhardt and Josh Materi each compiled a 4.0 GPA to earn Class of 2011 valedictorian honors. Sallie Myers was the lone salutatorian.

For those people who attended the graduation ceremony and didn't catch every word spoken, or for those who were unable to attend, here are the addresses given by the valedictorians.

Myers' salutatorian address was not available at press time.

Sarah Basse

"There are times I almost

think I am not sure of what I absolutely know." Thus says the King of Siam in the popular musical, "The King and I."

On our recent choir trip to Denver, we attended a dinner theater that put on this production.

I found the song "A Puzzlement" quite amusing, and I also found it related to what most of our graduating class is going through. So, I put together lyrics from this song as they relate to our class, the Class of 2011.

"When we were young, the world was a better spot, what was so was so, what was not was not, now that we are older, things have changed a lot, some things are nearly so, others nearly not."

When we were younger, our parents were always right. Mine knew everything, and always knew how to fix any problem. Life was good, and the toughest choice we had to make was whether to eat mac 'n cheese or peanut butter and jelly for lunch.

The older we got, the more we realized life is not as simple as we thought. We realized that sometimes even our parents don't know what to do. We discovered that there isn't always a quick fix for everything. It would be nice to stay little and think of the world as a simple place. However, that's not our purpose. We have to grow up, and that includes figuring out that life is not always black and white. We live in many shades of gray.

There are times I almost think I am not sure of what I absolutely know.

We very often find confusion in conclusions we concluded long ago.

In our heads are many facts of which we wish we were more certain we were sure."

High school taught us, above all, to think for ourselves. We learned to have our own views, and to stand firm for what we believe in. Dr. Schenck challenged our Dual Credit Biology class to dig in, research and form our own informed opinions on everything from stem cell research to evolution. Some of these subjects challenged our beliefs and required us to really sit back and think hard.

See Speeches on page 11

Mongol music



Mongolian performer Ariunbold Mijiddorj shows Thermopolis freshman Jon Burrows how to play a few notes on the morin khurr, a traditional Mongolian horse head fiddle, made from horse hide and hair. Known as "Ari," the performer played his music for several classes and had a public performance May 18. — J.D. Stetson photo

VFW to host Memorial Day ceremonies

The Hot Springs County Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 2281, has planned a series of services to commemorate service men and women, past and present, for the Memorial Day holiday on Monday.

The day's activities will begin at 11 a.m. with a service at Monument Hill Cemetery.

At 11:30 a.m., a service will be held at Riverside Cemetery, followed by an ad-

ditional observance at the Park Street Bridge at noon.

The public is invited to attend and join the observance of the national holiday.

Hayes

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Point of perseverance

Hayes then talked about his junior year in high school. He told them he was shot and had a punctured lung that prevented him from playing football.

He added he had another friend who broke a wrist and the two decided to attend the football camp at Grass Creek and go to football games together where the friend would don the "Bobby the Bobcat" outfit.

He said the team eventually played an undefeated season as the smallest school in the 4A division up until the State Championship game against Cheyenne East — where the team was pounded 35-15.

It didn't matter that they lost the game, the team was still proud of its accomplishments.

Hayes' senior year flew by, and he eventually went away to college to study to be a rancher. Af-

ter his first semester at Northwest College in Powell, he was offered a scholarship to play football at Black Hills State in Spearfish, S.D.

After college, he began his teaching career in 1977 and spent the past 33 years in Thermopolis teaching and coaching.

His fondest memory is the "three-peat" state championships in 1990, 1991 and 1992 and commented he hoped the next class could do the same next year.

Battling back from stroke

Soon after the successful seasons, in 1995, he said, "God slapped me in the face." Hayes said he displayed symptoms of a stroke and then had a stroke while in surgery.

"It was my year of reckoning," Hayes said. "But I decided to battle back and not give up.

"I chose to do what I love and that was to harass you guys and be a part of the coaching staff."

The coach then told the teens about a recent student who told him to "suck it up coach, it's the fourth quarter," which was something he wanted to tell the grads, but thought it was perhaps only their second or first quarter instead.

Hayes then told the grads that while some of them won't come back to Thermopolis, some of them will.

No matter what they're going to do, they should do it with pride and have faith in their abilities.

"Remember your Bobcat pride and make us proud. Go Cats," Hayes closed.

Afterward, the students received their diplomas and prepared for the final walk through the high school doors — with pride in their eyes and a smile on their face as they go out into the world with a job finished and another soon to begin.



Coach LeRoy Hayes hugs graduating senior Kristin Daniels after delivering his commencement speech to the Class of 2011. Hayes tells the grads to have pride in what they do and confidence in their abilities as they go on to the rest of their lives.



Duard Cable receives his diploma and lily from members of the Hot Springs County School Board while Joe Martinez congratulates him on his graduation. Cable is one of 49 seniors to graduate Sunday in the HSCHS gymnasium. — J.D. Stetson

Speeches

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Sometimes I didn't like it, but I learned that it's normal for the human mind to question things. We will always have some doubts and uncertainties. It's important to reason through things, but it's also important to have faith and know what we believe in.

In English, Mr. Kay made us find 'the water under the boat.' We were forced — I mean prompted — to look for deeper meanings in poetry and classic stories.

We've all asked Mrs. Peterman the classic algebra student question: 'Why do we have to learn this?' I don't know about everybody else, but imaginary numbers and hyperbolas will not be a part of my everyday life after high school.

As Henry Chism so eloquently stated, 'I think the only time you need to find "x" is if you are a pirate!' Her response: "To get you thinking on that deeper level." Much as we didn't like doing it, it happened and it actually did us some good.

'There are times I almost think I am not sure of what I absolutely know.

But no matter what we think, we must go on living life.

Be mothers to our children, and husbands to our wives,

As leaders of our world we must go forth.

Everyday, try to live another day.

Everyday, do our best for one more day.

Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera!"

David Leonhardt

Doodlesbury cartoonist Gary Trudeau once said of college graduations that, "Commencement speeches were invented largely in the belief that outgoing college students should never be released into the world until they have been properly sedated." It often seems that this philosophy is not limited to college commencement ceremonies but bleeds over into high school graduations as well. In the interest of avoiding this problem I'll try and keep this brief and to the point.

My fellow valedictorians and I, along with the salutatorian, decided to each find a few quotes and use them to tell a lesson we have learned or a piece of advice we would like to give. And so, my piece of advice:

Apply yourself. It doesn't really matter what you might be doing or planning to do. Whether it be going to college, entering the workforce, or joining

the military, applying yourself is crucial. Theodore Roosevelt stated, "In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing." Teddy's words ring true. Action is necessary. Even if the wrong action is taken, it is better than doing nothing.

Frequently there are those who do nothing because of that fear of failing or doing the wrong thing.

Apple founder and CEO Steve Jobs offered his view on the subject when he said, "Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose." Jobs has the right of it. You really don't have anything to lose, so do your best and try your hardest, even if failure seems imminent.

After all, as author Roger Babson reminds us, "Keep in mind that neither success nor failure is ever final." So no matter what comes, apply yourself. Try hard and keep trying, whether you succeed or fail. I believe that if you try hard enough and long enough you will eventually have the former.

Good luck, Class of 2011! And

if you hit some hard spots in the future, struggle a little, remember the words of Jack Black, "We are but men, rock on!"

Josh Materi

Hello,

Before I get started, I want to take a minute to thank the people who made this day possible. We owe our gratitude to our parents and families for their support, encouragement and love. Thank you, Mr. Hunt, for setting an example for all of us to follow. Thank you to all of our administrators, teachers, bus drivers, lunch ladies and custodians. Each and every one of you have made a difference in our lives, in our education and in our future.

I would also like to congratulate Sarah Basse, Sallie Myers and David Leonhardt for sharing this valedictorian/salutatorian honor with me. And Class of 2011, I congratulate YOU for making it to this great day.

How about that march in? I guess that's why they call it the Class of 2011 (haha).

You guys may not know this, but I consider myself a bit of a loner. I used to consider myself as a one-man wolf pack. When my mom moved me to Thermop-

olis in the third grade, I knew you guys were one of my own. And my wolf pack, it grew by 48. So we're 49. There were 49 of us in the pack. I, I was alone until I joined together with you and today we stand before everyone here in this gymnasium, the Hot Springs County High School Class of 2011.

We ran wild through the Hot Springs County School District territory.

Throughout these years we have accomplished many things; nearly bowling a 300, standing out in FCCLA, bringing home two state football titles, stacking a towering human pyramid, capturing that perfect photograph, silencing the crowd with that textbook layup, flawlessly showing a steer, defeating our World System teacher's little brother (cough...Dane Dooley) in wrestling, serving our country, winning the solo in the choir or that part in the play, being the Yu-Gi-O master.

Being here today only symbolizes our many accomplishments. We left a dent in T-Town. While our accomplishments are remarkable, they are only the beginning of many great things to come.

Our accomplishments have

given us a glimpse of what it will take to make it in life. Without them we might not know work ethic, dedication or even how it feels to receive the reward of success.

As Tom Brands, an Olympic wrestling gold medalist once said, "The only thing you deserve is what you earn and the only way to earn it is through hard work."

Take the tools we learned from our accomplishments within Hot Springs County and use them from here on out. By doing so, we, as a wolf pack, will make an imprint not just in Hot Springs County, but around the world.

So, wolf pack of 49, our future awaits us. Remember the pack not which you came from, but realize that the opportunity to be wild and free is now.

Follow your instincts and listen to your inner wolf. Work hard, stay motivated and go for the kill. Success will be found in each and every accomplishment we will make from here on out.

P.S.

Remember wolf pack of 49, no matter where our accomplishments take us in the world, we will always be living under the same moon. "Howl"

The stick up



Tucker Whitt tries to jump and stick on one of the inflatable playsets set up in the Thermopolis Middle School gym during the Senior Graduation Party Sunday night. — J.D. Stetson photo

Budget

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from FY05 to FY10 while the increase in staff members was 23.15. Hot Springs is at a reasonable level in staff-to-student ratio compared to districts similar in size.

A factor affecting the ratio is an increase in special education staff over that period, driven by the need to address issues noted by the Wyoming Department of Education in their review process and the shift toward more in-district services to special needs students versus out-of-district placements.

Stimulus funding is another reason for the increase in staff members. Some positions added are anticipated to be absorbed back into the General Fund in FY12.

Capital Construction Fund

It appears the district is in great shape with its Capital Construction Fund, due to the age and condition of school buildings. There is about \$285,000 held by the county that will go into the

fund this summer to pay off the last bond on the high school. Pearce anticipates the district can close the Capital Construction account in 2011-12 into the Depreciation Reserve Fund (an estimated \$700,000).

"We'll be able to build those reserves back up," Pearce told trustees, with help from the Capital Construction Fund.

District reserves are in good shape, largely because of the Major Maintenance Fund. The district receives about \$500,000 per year to go into the fund, but the district must get permission from the state to use it.

The money can "roll over" into the next fiscal year and the fund now holds nearly \$1 million. The fund accounts for financial resources used to complete major maintenance projects; routine maintenance is funded through the General Fund. Projects must be included in the district's School Facilities Commission-approved five-year plan, but projects can be added mid-term.