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Thermopolis  
Hot Springs

# Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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## Skates files for HD28 position

by Cindy Glasson

Fifth generation Wyoming native Connie Skates has made the decision to run for Wyoming's House District 28 seat on the Democratic ticket.

Born and raised in Rawlins, Skates moved to Thermopolis six years ago with her husband, Kevin, who is the Hot Springs State Park supervisor.

"I've always been interested in current events," Skates said. "I've always followed it and it's really a hard thing to put down."

She's served on several boards over the years, including the Rawlins City Council. She has been director of the Rawlins Chamber of Commerce and served on the Old Penitentiary Joint Powers Board.

Skates says Wyoming's heritage speaks for itself.

"As a state, I think we're on the right course," she said. "So many states would like to be like us, especially financially. Over the years we've been very consistent with the direction we want to go."

She says although Wyoming residents are conservative and thoughtful, they are still open-minded and unafraid to speak their piece.

"We're a sovereign state with our own ideas," she said. "I like that. I think the states need to stand more on their own."

"Our resources are what drives us – the coal, the wind power, oil and gas. I think those resources need to come back to our citizens."

The application period for the primary election ends June 1.

Hot Springs County Clerk Hans Odde said applications for running for office could still be picked up at the clerk's office in the courthouse. Applications for the Town of Thermopolis positions are available at town hall, and Kirby and East Thermopolis applications are available at their respective town halls.

### Kiddie Kollege cap & gown



Josie Newby, Sofia Gerber and McKayla Ely hold their hands over their hearts as they recite the Pledge of Allegiance during the Kiddie Kollege Graduation May 23 in Bicentennial Park. The eight graduates received their diplomas in a brief ceremony before an impending rain storm. — J.D. Stetson photo

## Trustees approve 'steps and lanes' for district staff

by Joe Sovo

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 trustees approved 2012-13 school year salaries and benefits after a 55-minute executive session during a special meeting Tuesday evening.

By unanimous vote, trustees approved:

- "Steps and lanes" for all certified and classified staff.

- Passed on a State of Wyoming contribution of 2.8 percent to district employees (based on their salaries) for insurance premiums.

- Continuation of the district contribution of 1.43 percent of salaries to those employees entitled to receive Wyoming retirement (same as the 2011-12 school year).

- Addition of one additional sick day for part-time classified employees.

- A \$700 defined benefit for returning principals Jason McArthur and Deb Brown and curriculum director Janet Philp.

As reported earlier, district employees are expected to see a 4 percent increase in their health insurance premi-

ums for 2012-13 and a 7 percent hike in their dental and vision premiums. However, if 85 percent of employees and their covered spouses either had a blood draw during the April health fair in Thermopolis or were to have a blood draw Wednesday – both through Wyoming Health Fairs – district employees' health insurance premiums would not increase for the next school year. If at least 65 percent of the employees and spouses fulfill either of those requirements, the increase would be just 2 percent.

District Superintendent Dustin Hunt said he was pleased to see trustees allow "steps and lanes" for employees.

"It's well deserved by staff," he said after Tuesday's meeting, "and I applaud the board for their work to be able to make it possible."

### May 17 meeting details

During the May 17 regular board meeting, trustees heard a district initiative report from high school principal Jason McArthur and vocational agriculture teacher Britton Van Heu-

le, approved third and final reading on two policy revisions and passed a motion to approve the second reading on two other policies.

The report by McArthur and Van Heule was on an "action research project" that focused the graduation rate in the district over the last four years. The research showed "why we have lost students in the past," McArthur said. The graduation rate in the district for the 2010-11 school year was 93 percent.

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### VFW Memorial Day ceremony



Members of VFW Post 2281 take aim during Memorial Day services held at Mountain View Cemetery. Other services were held at Riverside Cemetery and the VFW.

— Cindy Glasson photo

## School district employees retiring

by Cindy Glasson

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 is losing five long-time employees at the end of this school year due to retirement.

They are teachers Dr. Jeb Schenck and Kathy Taylor, high school librarian Cindy Toth, transportation/maintenance supervisor Phil Miller and groundskeeper Dick Howe. Here is information about Schenck, Toth, Taylor and Miller, and some of their memories. Howe was not available for comment.

### Dr. Jeb Schenck

Schenck has spent a majority of his life, 40 years, educating young people. Thirty-eight of those years have been spent right here at Hot Springs County High School.

Teaching science and photography, Schenck has been known as an innovator, stepping outside the traditional teaching box to bring his students hands-on lessons that most former students of his say have stuck with them.

But just because he's retiring doesn't mean he's ready to sit back and relax.

Schenck will teach two sections of photography at the

high school next year as well as teach graduate level classes online through the University of Wyoming and Montana State University.

He will also be sitting on the PhD dissertation committee for Walden University and helping his daughter co-write research articles on neuroscience.

There will be all kinds of photography projects, adult photography classes, as well as some peak climbing.

"In June, I'll be climbing the Tetons for photos," he said. "Then next spring, I'll be going to Patagonia for some peak climbing and photography."

Making the decision to retire was a tough one.

"I wanted to go out closer to the top of my game," he laughed. "It wouldn't be fair to the kids to wait until I was slipping. I will miss it."

### Cindy Toth

Toth started her career 34 years ago, teaching fourth grade. She then moved to the library at the elementary school and has since spent 25 years in the high school library.

Toth has lots of plans after

her last day of school.

"I'll be doing a little traveling," she said. "I hope to visit my family in Minnesota more often now."

She plans to do more quilting and is happy to finally be able to spend more time gardening as well.

"I'm going to miss this," she said, looking around the quiet library. "I still have mixed feelings. I'm going to miss the kids and the library."

Toth said she has plenty of funny stories about the kids and things that have happened within the library. "But I don't want to embarrass anybody," she laughed. "I think I'm ready. I'm really looking forward to being at home for a while."

### Kathy Taylor

Taylor has spent the last 35 years teaching Hot Springs County's youth, focusing her time on physical education and coaching. She is also a former district activities director.

Taylor began her career in Thermopolis in 1978 at the Big Horn Basin Children's Center teaching their PE classes and

See Retirees on page 10

## SO, PD memorial events Sunday

The Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office and Thermopolis Police Department are hosting a memorial service Sunday to honor and pay tribute to those in law enforcement who have given their lives in the course of duty.

There will be a memorial service at 9 a.m. at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.

Later in the day, a wreath-laying ceremony will be held at Monument Hill Cemetery flagpole. The ceremony begins at 4:30 p.m.

Following that service, there will be a wreath-laying ceremony at Riverside Cemetery.

The public is encouraged to attend the memorial service and either or both wreath-laying ceremonies.



## Solar-powered competition



The team consisting of Thermopolis agriculture students came out on top over the science team in an electric car race on the last day of school Friday at the high school track. The ag team's solar-powered vehicle completed 15 laps, nine more than the science team's car. The race was called after 35 minutes with both cars still running, but the science vehicle was about to fail because the gear ratio was causing the motor to overheat. Britton Van Heule was the sponsor of the ag team while London Jenks headed the science squad. Above, Jenn Cramer cruises around the track in the ag car. At right, teacher Jim Cramer works on the science car's electrical system.



## School board

from page 1

well above the state average, but the goal of the district is a 100-percent graduation rate.

McArthur and Van Heule indicated most students who drop out of school are identified before they reach sixth grade. While reading ability figures into the dropout rate, there is also a strong correlation between dropouts and the use of alcohol or drugs.

They indicated parental support and expectations are among the most important influences on students' behavior and academic performance, especially for students of middle school age. The research project shows one-third of dropouts occurred in ninth grade nationally, while most local dropouts are in 11th grade. McArthur explained that could be because those students are well behind on credits earned in high school.

The study shows 75 percent of dropouts in Hot Springs County over the four-year period were male. However, McArthur said the males are not dropping out and going into the service (i.e. Army, Navy, etc.).

McArthur and Van Heule indicated they would start to compile an action plan to address the drop-

out issue in the school district.

Trustees voted to approve revision of job descriptions for the transportation supervisor and maintenance manager positions on second reading. However, after executive session late in the meeting, they tabled indefinitely second reading on the revision of the job description for the food services manager.

Trustees carried a motion to approve two student contracts with Northwest Wyoming Board of Cooperative Educational Services. They were for \$28,843.75 for April 30-June 30 and \$38,625 for April 4-June 30, both this year.

The board moved to advertise for physical therapy services for the 2012-13 school year.

Terms of Hot Springs County Recreation District board members Glenn Thomas and Greg Herold will expire July 1. School trustees carried a motion to advertise for letters of interest for those positions. They are both five-year terms.

Student handbooks for Ralph Witters Elementary and Thermopolis Middle School for 2012-13 were approved by trustees. The high school handbook will be addressed during a later meeting.

## Retirees

from page 1

serving as director of Special Olympics.

In 1981, she moved to the school district, teaching PE for both the middle school and high school. She coached the girls' swim team and was head volleyball coach. For the past 14 years, Taylor served as activities director.

Taylor and her husband Wedge own the Red Ranch Retreat on East River Road, and she figures, at least during the summer months, that will keep them both pretty busy.

"I'll still be teaching swimming lessons in the pond," she said. "I teach the little ones, the 2-and-3-year-olds."

She's really looking forward to doing what she wants, when she wants to - spending time traveling, relaxing and just living life at a slower pace.

"It's going to be an adjustment," she said. "I'll be able to really enjoy time with my grandchildren."

"It's really been a privilege teaching here. I have loved it. I'd like to wish everyone their continued success."

### Phil Miller

For the past 15 years, Hot Springs County's children have been safely driven hundreds of thousands of miles, from home to school and back, across the state for academics and athletics, music

and school trips - all thanks to the dedication of transportation maintenance supervisor Miller.

"I've got mixed emotions (about retiring)," Miller said. "I've worked all my life."

His job at the bus barn has been the most fun job he's ever had, though. "I'm going to miss the contact with the kids," he said.

Miller and his wife, Bobbie, who retired from the district a few years ago, are planning a coastal vacation in their convertible.

"We're going to go through Idaho to the Oregon coast, through San Francisco to Monterey, Barstow, Laughlin and Mesquite, Nev.," he said. "We're going to take all two-lane roads."

"We'll be looking around Mesquite a bit, maybe start spending our winters there."

But not to worry, Miller said they don't intend to leave Thermopolis forever, just the winters. "We have too many friends here," he said.

Other retirement plans include working more on some stained glass projects, building birdhouses and getting back into gardening.

"We used to garden years ago," he said. "I've built some raised boxes, waist-high ones, and figured out a watering system for them so we can still travel and the plants won't die. It's still in the experimental stages right now, so we'll see."

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