



Dr. Willson named Physician of the Year

On Jan. 13, Dr. Howard Willson was honored as Wyoming's 2018 Physician of the Year by the Wyoming Medical Society. Willson was recognized during a ceremony in Jackson.

According to a tribute from Senator John Barrasso in the Congressional Record on Jan. 11, Willson worked tirelessly during his medical career to improve healthcare in Wyoming. His contributions in medical education, quality improvement and public health touched countless patients. Outside medicine, he served Wyoming as a member of the University of Wyoming's board of trustees and as an officer in the United States Air Force.

In addition to professional accomplish-

ments, people in Thermopolis and Basin know Willson as their family doctor. Multiple generations of patients benefitted from his caring and compassionate approach to medicine.

Though his biggest impact was in Wyoming, Willson was born in Spring Lake, Fla. After completing his undergraduate degree from Florida State University, he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. He then attended medical school at the University of Florida and graduated in 1965, and went on to complete his internship at the U.S. Air Force Hospital at Andrews Air Force Base. He served a total 10 years with the Air Force, rising to the rank of captain.

Over the next several years, Willson practiced medicine in Florida, where he was an active member of the medical community. In 1976, he decided to move to Wyoming. He began his practice in Basin and eventually moved to Thermopolis.

He quickly became active in the county's medical society and the Wyoming Medical Society, later becoming the Society's president in 1986. He was also an active medical staff leader at South Big Horn County Hospital and Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

Willson was also passionate about training

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courtesy photo by Binnie Bleak Murphee

Tunnel blockage

Saturday afternoon, a semi tractor trailer travelling over the speed limit through the Wind River Canyon tunnels was unable to stop and struck a truck and trailer. The accident closed the road for over five hours while the accident was cleared.

WRC tunnel wreck closes highway

by Mark Dykes

Roads were closed for over five hours through Wind River Canyon on Saturday, after a wreck that occurred at a 2:20 p.m. at milepost 116 on Highway 20 in Fremont County, inside the north tunnel in the canyon. A jackknifed semi tractor-trailer blocked both lanes of travel.

The roads were closed until the wreckers removed the damaged vehicles. The wreckers, Wyoming Highway Patrol Trooper Regina Schulmeister stated, did an amazing job removing the totaled vehicles and debris that was spread all over the roadway. This allowed motorists trapped in the canyon to continue on their way after approximately three hours. Five school buses had to be turned around to Shoshoni due to the road closure.

According to information from Dennis Russell, in a display of community service Shoshoni Schools Superintendent, Bruce Thoren, opened the high school in Shoshoni for 120 students, parents and bus drivers. While at the school, they watched a movie to pass the time.

Trooper Schulmeister responded to the accident from Thermopolis, and en route to the crash site the roads were dry. It was, however, starting to snow in Thermopolis.

A southbound semi tractor-trailer, driven by 61-year-old Robert McGuire of Brighton, Colo. and estimated to be travelling about 40-45 miles per hour in a 35 mph zone, took the north tunnel too fast. Due to frost on the road, his vehicle crossed the double yellow line and entered the northbound lane.

Sixty-one-year-old James Debock of Powell was northbound driving a Dodge truck towing a trailer with a Jeep Laredo on it,

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Pat Schmidt, left, former editor and publisher of the Thermopolis Independent Record and new inductee of the WPA Hall of Fame, accepts his plaque from Hall of Fame member Jim Hicks.

Pat Schmidt inducted into WPA Hall of Fame

Pat Schmidt, longtime owner, editor and publisher of the Thermopolis Independent Record, was inducted into the Wyoming Press Association Hall of Fame during the association's annual convention in Casper over the weekend.

Schmidt worked at several Wyoming newspapers as a reporter, editor and publisher, running publications that earned recognition for their high-quality reporting and commitment to excellence.

He served as editor and publisher of the Lovell Chronicle from 1975-84. In 1978, Schmidt purchased the IR with Robert and Roy Peck, Dave Bonner, Ron Lytle and then editor and publishers Gretchen Berning and

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Independent Record named best small weekly

For the first time since 2008, the Thermopolis Independent Record has been named the best newspaper in the small weekly category of the Wyoming Press Association.

The IR won second for typographic excellence and for advertising excellence.

The Casper Star Tribune and the Jackson Hole News & Guide also received the General Excellence award for daily and large weekly papers.

The awards were presented during the annual convention in Casper last weekend.

Staff members of the IR won several Pacesetter awards in individual categories including:

First place

News Feature Story, "Thermopolis women reflect on emotional Vegas shooting," by Cindy Glasson. Judges' comments: "Not only did this piece do an excellent job of localizing a national tragedy, but also brought the reader right into the horrific scene these women experienced."

Small Ad, "John Roberts," Dennis Nierzwicki. Judges' comments: "Nice use of the photo - clean and open ad - readable."

House Ad, "Not sure why business is slow?" Donna Pennoyer. Judges' comments: "Perfect - it is what we tell our advertising clients all the time."

Best Designed Ad, "Gottsche," Dennis Nierzwicki. Judges' comments: "Good use of art. I like the photos of smiling staff. The copy provides information about the services offered without being too wordy. Very nice overall."

Spot News Photo, "Chilly morning rescue," Lara Love.

General News Photo, "A Prehistoric Event," Mark Dykes.

Portrait/Personality Photo, "Devastated," Cindy Glasson.

Second place

Column Writing, Mark Dykes. Judges' comments: "A great dose of positivity and down to earth writing...refreshing!"

Front Page Design, staff. Judges' comments: "Your dominant photos are excellent. They really set the tone for the page. You would have won, except your front page doesn't really look like a front page with its short-story-as-part-of-the-masthead."

Institutional Ad, "Hospitality and customer service workshop," Dennis Nierzwicki. Judges' comments: "Nice ad - the handshake is just the right touch."

Merchandise Ad, "Days Inn," Donna Pennoyer. Judges' comments: "Cute - love the play on the words. Only thing would make this better would be color."

Honorable mention

Best Special Section, "Eclipse," staff. Judges' comments: "Just missed placing in the top two - great cover, lots of information about a one time event."

General News Photo, "Snow showers," Mark Dykes.

Feature Photo, "Get to the buck-et piggy," Dennis Nierzwicki.

"We work hard at the IR to cover the news in Hot Springs County and enjoy serving this great community. It is thrilling to be named the best small weekly in the state, but we couldn't do it without the support of our advertisers, readers and community members," said IR publisher Lara Love.

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