

SVI Photo by Amanda Nelson

Inside Look

STAR VALLEY
WYOMING

SVI media

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2020 ★ STAR VALLEY INDEPENDENT

SECTION B

Restoration project begins for the Lower Swift Creek waterway

◆ Goal is to enhance and restore fishery and preserve streambed.

By Sarah Hale
SVI Media

Trout Unlimited, the Star Valley Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for the Fish and Wildlife Program have announced plans for the Lower Swift Creek Stream Restoration and Stabilization Project. And, work on the project is now underway.

Located just outside of Afton, the project seeks to “protect and improve spawning cutthroat trout habitat in low-

er Swift Creek, reduce sediment contributions to the Salt River, and reduce landowner flood risk and maintenance requirements.”

Work began the last week of October and will continue into the fall and early winter as weather conditions allow.

According to Trout Unlimited, the Lower Swift Creek Stream Restoration and Stabilization Project “focuses on a mile of lower Swift Creek near its confluence with the Salt River.”

“The Salt River supports an amazing, intact, and wild fishery which is not dependent upon hatchery stock,” said Anna Senecal, WGFD aquatic habitat biologist. “Because of this, careful maintenance of naturally-limited spawning habitats is vital to maintaining these fisheries for future generations.”

According to the Star Valley Conservation District, Swift Creek has been impacted by



Rock donated by Itafos Conda Phosphate Operations in Conda, ID is hauled to the project site for construction. [Photo: SVCD]

“a variety of historic human land uses, which together have contributed to bank and channel instability, land loss, and degraded trout habitat in

See **Restoration on 2B**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

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Star Valley Independent

Wednesday, November 18

CENTSIBLE NUTRITION CLASS with the UW Extension office. Free for those who qualify. Learn to eat better for less. Contact the UW Extension Office in Afton or Kemmerer for details.

HUNTERS SAFETY at the Thayne Community Center. 6-9 p.m. Register online at the Wyoming Game and

Fish website under Education. *Face-masks are required.

Thursday, November 19

4-H CLOVER BUD MEETING 3:30 p.m. at the Afton Civic Center.

Sunday, November 22

TURKEY SHOOT Scotch Doubles Bowling Tournament, hosted by the Star Valley Bowling Association. 1:30 at Skyview Lanes. \$25 per person, two person teams drawn randomly.

Monday, November 23

4-H JUNIOR LEADER MEETING 6 p.m. at the Afton Civic Center.

Saturday, November 28

BLOOD DRIVE at the Thayne Stake

Center. 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Register in advance at redcross.org.

OLD TIMERS TAPS CHARIOT RACES. Honoring the heritage of cutter and chariot racing while benefiting the families of fallen military service members. Saturday at 1:00, Sunday at noon. Cutter track west of Afton.

TOWN OF AFTON Lighting of the Arch and Light Parade. 5:30 p.m.

Monday, November 30

CHRISTMAS ON THE CANAL with the Town of Thayne. 6:30 p.m. Music, lights, North Pole visitors.

December 3-5

THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS concert. 7 p.m. at Star Valley High School.

Saturday, December 5

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR at Kearsley Nursery in Thayne. 9 a.m.-5p.m. Vendors, ornament decorating and family activities.

Friday, December 11

ALPINE HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR at the Alpine Civic Center. Friday from 4-8 and Saturday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Shopping, food and entertainment.

Visit <https://linclib.org> for Story Times at all LC Libraries.

For Alcoholics Anonymous meeting times and locations in Star Valley, visit www.starvalleyaa.org. For Narcotics Anonymous information email starvalleyna@yahoo.com.



Wyoming Airport Operators Association changes its name

◆ Organization was founded in 1976.

By Kyle J. Butterfield
Wyoming Airports Coalition Secretary



WYOMING AIRPORTS
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The Wyoming Airport Operators Association (WAOA) has changed its name to Wyoming Airports Coalition (WAC) and launched a new logo and website.

Under its new name and banner, the organization will continue its mission to represent the interests of Wyoming's airports and the aviation industry to commercial, state, and federal agencies.

It will also continue its growth to in-

volve airport stakeholders beyond airport operators as it emphasizes the value of aviation to Wyoming's economy and the quality of life of its residents.

"The change actually better represents what our organization does on a regular basis," said WAC President Jack Skinner. "We prioritize the success of every stakeholder associated with Wyoming airports. Whether you are

an airport operator, private pilot, engineering firm, or aviation enthusiast, the Wyoming Airports Coalition works to ensure your interests are represented. Our passion for aviation began in 1976 and it will remain vibrant well into the future."

The coalition's new website can be found at wyomingairportscoalition.org. It serves as a central hub of information

and resources for coalition members, airport stakeholders, and aviation enthusiasts throughout Wyoming. The coalition also encourages visits and followers to its Facebook page.

Founded in 1976 as the Wyoming Airport Operators Association, the Wyoming Airports Coalition includes aviation stakeholders and airports of all types and sizes. Its membership comes from nine commercial airports, nineteen general aviation airports, and twenty-two aviation related corporations.

The coalition focuses on professional development, education, and the promotion of aviation and airport interests at local, state, and federal levels.

Restoration

Continued from 1B

its lower reaches, and sedimentation that impacts the Salt River."

Private landowners "approached conservation partners several years ago, concerned that the erosion and channel movement of Swift Creek would form a new confluence with the Salt River."

According to the Star Valley Conservation District, a new confluence "would have resulted in a large sediment release and the loss of about 800 feet of valuable trout spawning habitat in Swift Creek important to the Salt

River fishery."

The Lower Swift Creek Stream Restoration and Stabilization Project design is based on natural channel design techniques by a stream restoration engineer. The project will:

- stabilize the channel in-place in the upstream, seasonally-dry reach;
 - realign the channel through existing riparian vegetation (cottonwoods and willows) where possible;
 - create a new, non-incised channel in the downstream reach;
 - and fence sensitive riparian areas.
- Instream structures will include:
- bioengineered bank treatments such as toewood, rock toe, and soil lifts,

• grade control structures such as rock weirs,

• and riffle and pool sequencing designed to meet the hydrologic conditions of the stream.

"Working with the ag producers on this project and seeing their commitment to improve natural resources along Swift Creek has been great," said Adam Clark, NRCS district conservationist in Afton. "Stream projects are complex and take time. The landowners have been flexible and willing to continue to work with us to improve the stream."

According to Trout Unlimited, these treatments are expected to "restore fish habitat, stream function, bank sta-

bility, and riparian vegetation on lower Swift Creek."

Treatments are also expected to "reduce sediment contributions from bank erosion by 64%, equivalent to over 150 dump trucks of sediment per year."

Project partners believe this project will also "be a good model for addressing similar issues in the upper Salt River in the future."

"We are excited to be able to showcase these best practices, with an eye towards working with other landowners in Star Valley on similar projects that will also benefit agricultural operations and fisheries," said Kay Lynn Nield, SVCD manager.

Silver Star Broadband expansion update

◆ Recent snow puts a bit of a damper on construction.

By Eric Gewiss
Director of Marketing and
Public Relations, Silver Star

This week in Afton:

Crews will be boring on 4th Street

from Adams toward the Maverick.

Elsewhere in Star Valley:

Crews will be finishing up bores and setting vaults on Burton Lane and Sessions Lane.

Crews will be boring and setting vaults on Swift Creek Lane.

We will have a crew plowing main cable on Smith Lane.

Crews are boring and plowing the main cable on the final stretches of Hwy 89

We will be plowing main cable between Smoot and Hwy 241.

We will be placing handholes on Hwy 89 between Grover and Afton.

Crews will be setting vaults and doing a small amount of trenching on Burton Lane and then Braves Lane once that is complete

We are working on getting drops complete and fiber blown into the conduit throughout the entire region.

This weekend's snowstorm put a



bit of a damper on construction, but we are still plowing away and making great progress!

Have a great week!

Share your

SWAG



The Star Valley Chamber of Commerce distributes Swag Bags and informational packets to people attending conferences and events in Star Valley and to people interested in moving or visiting here.

We would LOVE to include Swag for your business!

If you'd like to include some Swag, please contact us at 307-885-2759 or stop by our office at 360 S. Washington in Afton. (Star Valley Independent)

Let us help promote your business!

STAR VALLEY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Diabetes can be prevented and help is available

◆ November is National Diabetes Awareness Month.

By Kim Deti
Wyoming Department of Health

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) wants residents to know they can take control and help prevent diabetes by keeping a check on their activity levels, nutrition

and by maintaining a weight in a healthy range.

Laura Collins, Chronic Disease Prevention Program manager with WDH, said one in three Wyoming adults may have a condition known as prediabetes but often do not realize it.

“Prediabetes should be viewed as a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes,” Collins said. “Prediabetes puts you at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.”

Collins encourages resi-

dents to get a better idea of their prediabetes status and risk factors by visiting www.doihaveprediabetes.org online. “A simple blood test can also let you know if you are at risk. Other factors include weight and family medical history,” she said.

“The good news is that taking action to be more active and eat in a more balanced way can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes,” Collins said. “Many people need support to make lifestyle changes, and one way that can really boost your personal efforts is enrolling in a diabetes-prevention

See **Diabetes on 9B**

Super Crossword ARE NOT!

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN | ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Rigs out | 1 Triage pro | 44 Years (for) | 80 Tokyo-based truck maker |
| 7 Beer holder | 2 In the function of | 46 Nissan, once | 81 French artist Édouard |
| 10 IRS worker | 3 Ball caller | 49 Middle grade | 82 Letters with curves |
| 13 Not passive | 4 Spanish island known for its nightlife | 50 Biblical beast | 84 Audition not closed to anyone |
| 19 India's largest city | 5 Country west of Colombia | 52 12-time papal name | 85 Brain product |
| 20 Made embarrassed | 6 Record one's arrival | 53 Tending to the situation | 86 Cabaret singer Édith |
| 22 Jumped ship | 7 Fez, for one | 54 Relatively small oinker, for short | 89 Jacuzzi and whirlpools |
| 23 Affixing, as gift wrap | 8 — Dhabi bunch | 55 Dryer debris | 90 Feel poorly |
| 24 Marionette doing some undercover police work? | 9 Spill catchers | 57 “Steve Jobs” star Rogen | 93 — -confidence |
| 26 Billy of “The Phantom” | 10 Berated | 58 Whole bunch | 95 Gabor who lived to be 99 |
| 28 London botanic gardens site | 11 Kitty cat, e.g. | 62 Really tidy type | 96 Confidence actor Jack |
| 29 Fine distinction | 12 Hoo-has | 63 Roe, e.g. | 100 Loin cut |
| 30 YouTube upload on how to cook clams and rice? | 13 Addis —, Ethiopia | 64 Pre-Easter | 102 FDR's Scottie |
| 36 Use a beam on in surgery | 14 Puts in a role | 65 Shoddy car | 103 Some hotels and old cars |
| 37 “La Cage — Folles” | 15 Golf ball brand | 66 Earth personified as a goddess | 104 Fed. food safety org. |
| 38 Of Peruvian peaks | 16 Tennis great Nastase | 67 Rebel Turner | 105 Dele undoer |
| 39 Pickle option | 17 A/C opening | 68 Mimics | 106 Really tired |
| 41 Buddha statue, e.g. | 18 Uptight | 69 Wee bits | 107 Flows back |
| 45 Elated | 21 Hotfooted it | 70 Floats in the air | 111 Its cap. is Vienna |
| 47 Lodgings for wayfarers | 25 Of no value | 71 D sharp sound-alike | 112 Dove noise |
| 48 Schnozz or Motor ender | 27 Last section | 76 Lyric verse | 113 Boxing stats |
| | 30 “Cosmos” host Carl | 77 “Skip ahead” abbr. on a music player | 115 Malted quaff |
| | 31 Veil fabric | 78 Result of education | 116 Diver's goal |
| | 32 Dead-on | 79 Novelist Honoré de — | 117 NYC hrs. |
| | 33 Trait carrier | | |
| | 34 U-Haul unit | | |
| | 35 Adds lube to | | |
| | 40 Sugar in milk | | |
| | 42 Gave a ring | | |
| | 43 Leek relative | | |

Answers on page 10B

SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆

◆ Easy ◆◆ Medium ◆◆◆ Difficult

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Answers on page 9B

VISIT US ONLINE AT **BOSV.COM**

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A better way to bank.

FEED THE ANGELS FOOD DRIVE

Let's fill the shelves of the Star Valley Food Banks!

THE BOSV 7TH ANNUAL FEED THE ANGELS FOOD DRIVE IS HAPPENING
NOVEMBER 1ST — DECEMBER 18TH.
HELP US FILL THE SHELVES.
TWO WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE:

- Drop off canned/boxed food at any BOSV location or Broulims, Valley Market or Alpine Market.
- Donate money to the Feed the Angels Bank account at any BOSV branch. The Bank will match up to \$2,000 in donations!

WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN FEED THE ANGELS OF STAR VALLEY!

Have a News Tip?

Send it to the **SVI News Tip Line!**

E-mail: **tip@svinews.com**
Text or Call: **307-203-4637**
Or use the: **SVI Media app**

SVInews.com

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18			
19						20			21				22							
23						24						25								
			26			27			28			29								
30	31	32				33	34			35			36							
37			38						39			40			41	42	43	44		
45			46			47			48			49			50					
51				52	53				54					55						
56						57	58					59					60			
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70	71					66						68	69							
75						72						74					80	81	82	
83			84						85			86								
87						88						89	90				91			
92						93						94				95	96		97	
			98	99	100				101			102							103	
104	105	106							107	108					109					
110									111			112	113		114			115	116	117
118									119						120					
121									122						123					
															124					

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		7			1		6	
4			3					1
	6			8		5		
		8	5	6			3	
		3			4			2
9			1			8		
		2			5	7		
7			4					5
	1				2			9

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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*Answers on 9B

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Book Review

◆ “How to Catch a Turkey,”
by Adam Wallace and
Andy Elkerton

*By October Dunford
Manager Lincoln County
Library*

The turkey in this story has a very large problem: stage fright! He is supposed to perform in the Thanksgiving program, or at least that’s what the plan was. The turkey however, has other plans!

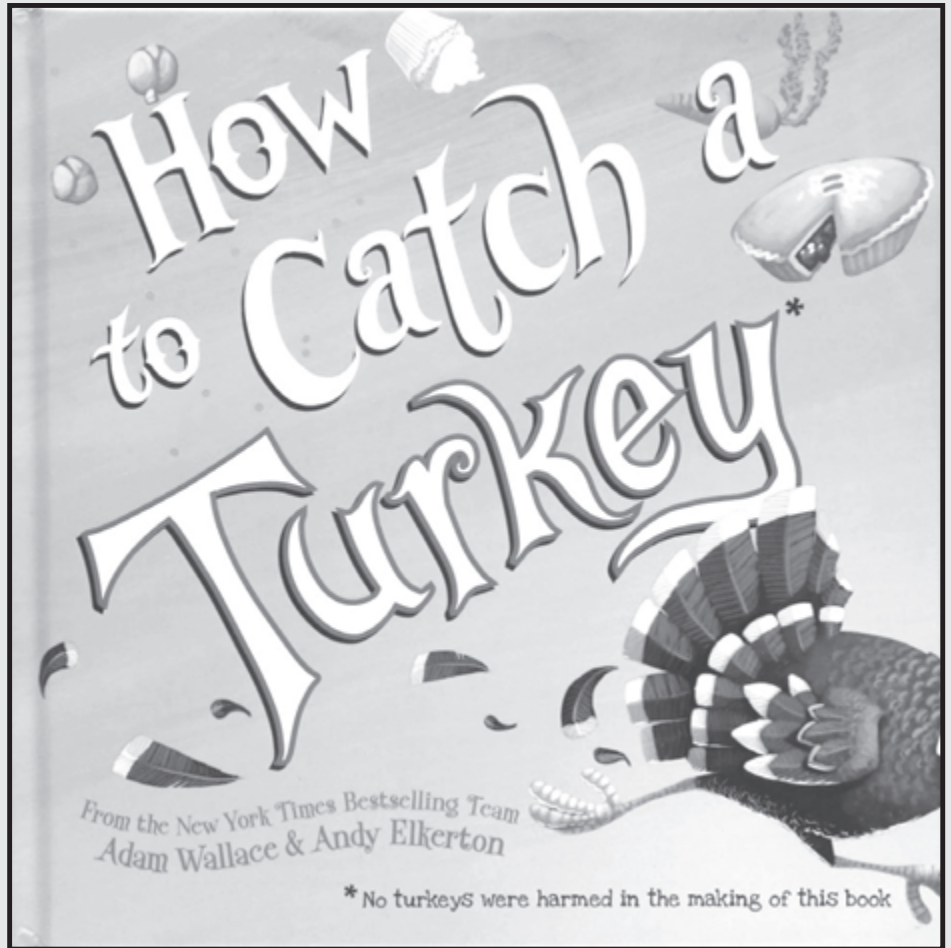
Here is what the turkey has to say about the wild adventure he went on:

“I was a little concerned about why I was at the school, but everyone

seemed so happy. The crowd that was gathering in the auditorium seemed pretty excited...I was just sitting in the cage, minding my own business when I heard someone say the words that made my heart stop , “ ...a turkey on stage.” There was NO WAY I was going to go out on the stage! I had to get out of here! I don’t know where I am going to go, but everywhere I go seems to be a disaster.”

Follow along as the turkey runs through the entire school creating havoc! A fun, engaging story that will have the reader giggling from the very first page with an ending that is fit for a turkey!

(“How to catch a turkey” by Wallace and Elkerton is available in print form at the Lincoln County Library System.)



Holiday celebrations and your local library go hand in hand

◆ Need Thanksgiving activities?

*By Richard Landreth
Director, Lincoln County
Library System*

Thanksgiving! My favorite holiday! I suspect it is the food, but it is also the sentiment and tradition instilled by family.

Go back in history 399 years to what Americans consider our first organized feast of Thanksgiving, and you find the participants being thankful for a good harvest.

Growing up Thanksgivings’ somewhat resembled a festival with family and friends gathering to share food, conversation and play; thankful for each other and the country in which we live.

Now comes the year 2020 when we

are dealing with a global pandemic. How do we honor and celebrate Thanksgiving?

During this time of physical distancing and face coverings we are probably going to share our gratitude a little differently. Maybe just with members of the family that live in the same house, or very close family/friends that make up the hub of daily lives.

Football is a mainstay activity on Thanksgiving for so many families, but there are also those families that play GAMES.

The Lincoln County Library System can help you find great ideas for games.

For instance, check out “Unlock your imagination: more than 250 boredom busters,” a book that provides instructions for games, crafts, and puzzles.

Or “Boredom blasters: brain bogglers, awesome activities, cool comics, tasty treats, and more” by Helaine

Becker.

Find the perfect game, magic trick or optical illusion that will keep the family entertained for hours.

As the day continues everyone needs a great book to read. While at your local library grab a few books that you have been wanting to read.

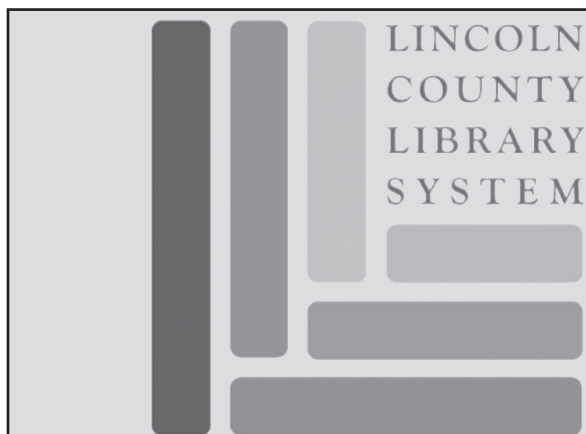
On the new book shelf you might find “The answer is ... : reflections on my life” by the late Alex Trebek or Tom Clancy’s newest Op-Center “God of War.”

Or borrow a DVD like the new “Spies In Disguise,” a recently released animated video by 20th Century Fox.

There are plenty of ways to be thankful in 2020. Let the Lincoln County Library System help! Several of us here plan on enjoying a great ebook, eaudiobook or streaming video by going to OverDrive at linclib.org. Join us as we show our gratitude and thankfulness for being able to borrow wonderful materials for FREE!



Richard Landreth
Director, Lincoln County
Library System



Alpine Branch Library
243 River Circle
Alpine, WY 83128
(307) 654-7323



Cokeville Branch Library
240 E. Main Street
Cokeville, WY 83114
(307) 279-3213



La Barge Branch Library
262 Main Street
La Barge, WY 83123
(307) 386-2571

MAGIC MAZE ● **MAY WORDS**

D Y B Y V T M Q Y O L I G D B
 R C A P E (MAYFLOWER) Y
 W O T D B R Y P M K F I S F D
 B Y Y W Y U H E S Q O Y I M K
 I F D A A A E Y L N A Y A M H
 B Z X W M U M N A P A S N M S
 Q O N L E J H F N M P D N C I
 A Y W V L T S Q S E A A O P F
 N L K I H F E I C B Y R Y Z Y
 Y W V U S R D Q P N M A A A A
 L J I H F E E L O P Y A M K M

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
 Unlisted clue hint: HEAD OF A CITY GOVERNMENT

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Cape May | Mayan | Mayenne | Mayhem |
| Dismay | Mayapple | Mayfish | Mayonnaise |
| Karamay | Maybe | Mayflower | Maypole |
| LeMay | Mayday | Mayfly | |

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	-		x		9
+		+		x	
	+		÷		2
÷		÷		-	
	x		÷		2
5		1			12

DIFFICULTY: ★★★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
 ★★★ GO FIGURE!

1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 9

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Wishing Well®

4	3	8	5	3	2	5	3	5	8	3	2	7
A	C	F	H	H	B	I	O	G	R	O	R	Y
5	3	8	6	3	5	2	7	2	3	4	3	2
H	S	I	S	E	E	E	O	A	W	V	I	K
4	2	4	6	8	6	7	6	4	2	7	8	5
O	B	I	T	E	A	U	Y	D	A	B	N	S
6	4	3	8	2	6	2	7	8	4	2	7	4
A	D	S	D	D	C	H	E	L	E	A	A	B
8	4	8	7	5	8	4	8	3	5	7	3	6
Y	A	G	T	T	A	T	T	E	E	T	L	T
7	3	5	2	5	2	6	8	4	6	7	2	8
H	Y	S	B	T	I	I	H	E	V	E	T	E
2	8	7	8	5	6	7	5	8	5	8	7	7
S	R	O	I	E	E	D	E	N	M	G	D	S

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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Puzzles4Kids by Helene Hovanec

WORD FUN

Study the two words on each line to find the ONE letter in the left column that is NOT in the word in the right column. Write the extra letter on the blank space. Then read DOWN to answer this riddle:

WHAT SOUND DOES A TURKEY'S PHONE MAKE?

- | | | | | | |
|--------|-----|-------|--------|-----|-------|
| EDWARD | ___ | DARED | SWEDEN | ___ | DENSE |
| ALIENS | ___ | LANES | SERBIA | ___ | BEARS |
| ADORNS | ___ | ROADS | AGENTS | ___ | GATES |
| RAGGED | ___ | GRADE | DIGEST | ___ | DIETS |

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STICKELERS (sic) by Terry Stickels

Bob bought a cake that will serve 10 people. The cake is 6 inches in diameter. Then, Mike bought a cake that is 18 inches in diameter and wonders how many people it will serve if Bob's cake serves 10.

How many people will Mike's cake serve?

- 1) 20 4) 80
- 2) 30 5) 90
- 3) 60

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HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Boy is taller. 2. Picture is vertical. 3. Chair back is different. 4. Fewer papers on floor. 5. Boy's collar is different. 6. Two checks on book.

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Strange BUT TRUE

King Features Weekly Service
 April 6, 2020

By Lucie Winborne

- The weight of all the ants on earth is greater than that of all humans.
- Doctors who perform laparoscopic surgery, which involves inserting a tiny camera into a patient's body through a small incision, have better coordination if they play video games at least three hours per week. According to a 2003 study, gamer surgeons made 37% fewer errors and worked 27% faster than those whose only "video game" experience was the surgery itself.
- The ancient Romans used swan fat or donkey milk to soften wrinkles, while sores and freckles were treated with the ashes of snails.
- Eskimos use refrigerators to stop their food from freezing.
- Disney's musical fantasy comedy "The Princess and the Frog" led to an unexpected salmonella outbreak in the United States. More than 50 children were hospitalized after the film's release when they attempted to free handsome princes with a kiss from what turned out to be perfectly ordinary, definitely non-prince frogs.
- Redheads produce more vitamin D than other hair colors.
- Bao Xishun, a Mongolian herdsman, saved the lives of two dolphins by using his incredibly long arms to remove plastic from their stomachs. Bao stands nearly 8 feet tall and each arm extends more than 3 feet. All other attempts at saving the dolphins had failed.
- Watermelons may be a tasty treat today, but that wasn't always the case. Originating in Africa, they were first cultivated solely for their water content — their flavor was very bitter!
- In Sweden, the body warmth of more than 200,000 commuters passing through Stockholm's Central Station is harvested to provide heat for an office building across the road.

Thought for the Day: "When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people." — Abraham Joshua Heschel

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Answers on page 11B



Lincoln County Library
 519 Emerald Street
 Kemmerer, WY 83101
 (307) 877-6961



Star Valley Branch Library
 261 Washington Street
 Afton, WY 83110
 (307) 885-3158



Thayne Branch Library
 250 Van Noy Parkway
 Thayne, WY 83127
 (307) 883-7323

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Jail time, accidents punctuate stressful summer, frenetic fall for Yellowstone, Grand Teton

◆ Parks were very busy this year.

By Mike Koshmri
Jackson Hole News&Guide
Via Wyoming News Exchange

Marc Eckert muttered a drawn-out “yeahhhhh” as he pondered how to tackle the question: So how did it go?

Eckert, Yellowstone’s western district ranger, sat in the

same empty visitor center auditorium as his boss, Superintendent Cam Sholly, who urged him to speak his mind. The Yellowstone ranger shook off a shared laugh over his hesitation, explained he didn’t want to paint a picture of total mayhem, and then took a stab at an answer.

“It wasn’t easy,” Eckert said. But, he added, everyone expected 2020 would be a challenge.

An eruption of “thermal trespass” infractions that Eckert

and his staff dealt with helps tell the tale of the busy season that Yellowstone National Park endured and recently wrapped up. In numbers unlike any other year in memory, the mostly American visitors who flocked to the park went where they pleased, shirking signage, leaving boardwalks and treading on fragile, hazardous crusts and up to the lips of potentially deadly geysers and hot pots. Incidents where such behavior ended badly essentially bracketed the year.

“We started the season — while the park was still closed — with a person getting injured by a thermal feature,” Eckert said, “and we kind of wrapped up with a young person who fell in.”

Moving past the anecdotes, numbers were “eye-opening,” he said.

Yellowstone Magistrate Mark Carman can attest to the proclamation. The federal judge routinely decides the fate of people who opt for off-boardwalk geyser walkabouts — there are 40 or so cases, on average each year.

“I had my staff run some records, and we’ve had 122 thermal trespass cases this year,” Carman said. “I was overwhelmed.”

Ruling from the Mammoth courtroom, Carman took it mostly easy on people who he judged made an honest mistake and weren’t paying attention to signs and park newsletters. Other times that obviously wasn’t the case, such as when a man wielding an American flag walked up onto the cone of Old Faithful. In those types of cases, when perpetrators are clearly flouting the rules, Carman often doled out jail time. It happened about 25 times this year, up from once or twice in a typical summer.

“It’s not cheap to put people in jail, and I don’t like to put people in jail,” Carman said. “But I felt like I had to make a clear statement that this was a very serious matter.”

The spike in illegal behavior

in northwest Wyoming’s national parks wasn’t confined to Yellowstone’s geyser basins. Infractions of all sorts climbed.

“In September alone, our caseload doubled over 2019,” Carman said. “I don’t understand it.”

The judge spoke to the News&Guide in the closing days of October, and at that time he was still catching up on all the cases that backlogged over the second half of the summer.

Grand Teton National Park rangers weren’t spared the rampant disregard for regulations: 141 times they issued summonses to their visitors requiring that they pay a trip to Carman. There were high-profile incidents, such as when a 50-person crew created an impromptu 1,000-foot-long dirt bike track in a historic Mormon Row hayfield in the process of being converted to native vegetation. There were also more routine violations, which occurred at a frequency that far outpaced any increases in visitation to the park this summer.

Teton Park Chief Ranger Michael Nash ran through some of the numbers. Camping-related violations that resulted in either warnings or citations jumped almost tenfold, to 533 in 2020, up from 58 in 2019.

Pet-related violations — having dogs off leash or in places they’re not allowed — skyrocketed to 144, compared to 18 a year ago.

Campfire violations spiked from four in 2019 to 43 in this year.

Although ticket books came out with unprecedented frequency, rangers also knew they weren’t always dealing with their normal breed of tourist in a summer marked by a global pandemic.

“Our general feeling was that a lot of these folks were new,” Acting Teton Park Superintendent Gopaul Noojibail said. “New to national parks.”

Visitors hoping to stake a tent or lay their head with

Teton Range views also had fewer options for lodging, which partly explains why they resorted to out-of-bounds camping. The reason for the scarcity was COVID-19, which knocked out a bunch of dorm-style employee housing and, in turn, prevented lots of staff-intensive facilities from ever opening, including places like Jackson Lake Lodge and Old Faithful Inn. Major changes ushered in by the global pandemic also upended normal operations for the parks’ concessionaires.

At Old Faithful, Cody Lockner runs the show for Xanterra and is accustomed to operating with about 800 seasonal employees who live and work at the remote Yellowstone outpost. This year he operated with about 200 employees for much of the year, albeit with fewer open properties to manage. Although a 60% reduction in workforce sounds grim, it wasn’t too bad.

“We were fine,” Lockner said from the hallway of an empty Old Faithful Snow Lodge. “I’ll be honest with you, this was probably the best staffing I’ve ever had in Yellowstone.”

The reason, he explained, was that his employees were the cream of the crop — veterans who he knew he could count on. At the same time the summer and fall wore on the veteran Xanterra employee and his workforce.

“It was mentally fatiguing, especially mask mandates,” Lockner said. “We’re in customer service, and we had to repeatedly tell people, ‘No, you can’t come in without a mask.’”

Unfortunately, he said, there were quite a few negative interactions.

“We had a guy who essentially spit in one of our employee’s faces,” Lockner said. “I called 911 and a ranger issued him a citation.”

Grand Teton’s staff and concessionaires similarly battled with enforcing restrictions intended to curb the spread of

See *Yellowstone* on 11B



State lawmakers consider tightening restrictions on hemp products

By C.J. Baker
Powell Tribune

Via Wyoming News Exchange

POWELL — A panel of state lawmakers is considering a bill that could significantly restrict the use and sale of certain products derived from hemp — including making it illegal to smoke the substance.

Wyoming law currently says that, as long as certain licensing requirements are followed in the growing and processing of the crop, “the possession, purchase, sale, transportation and use of hemp and hemp products by any person is allowable without restriction.”

As Powell Police Chief Roy Eckerdt sees it, that means hemp “can be used by anybody in any way.”

“You have to be 21 to smoke a cigarette, but as long as you can get past the little child-proof lighter, apparently you can smoke hemp,” the chief told Park County commissioners in

September.

Hemp is a variant of cannabis, the same plant that produces marijuana, but it lacks the psychoactive effects of its cousin.

When the Wyoming Legislature authorized the growth of hemp in 2019, numerous lawmakers expressed excitement about the various products the crop could yield, from food to fiber, and the common wisdom was that smoking the leafy substance would bring only a headache and a burnt tongue.

However, smokable hemp buds, imported from other states like Washington, are now being legally offered for sale at various outlets in Wyoming, including at a shop in Cody.

Although the products presumably contain just a fraction of the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in marijuana, Eckerdt said the buds look and smell the same.

Being unable to differentiate between the substances

“has left law enforcement in a pinch,” he told commissioners.

There have been discussions about using the Wyoming Department of Agriculture’s laboratory to test for THC levels and sort out marijuana and hemp.

In the meantime, however, the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation has been sending samples to a private lab in California at a cost \$500 per test, Eckerdt said.

Further, if the lab’s experts are needed to testify in a court case, he said bringing them to Wyoming would cost \$5,000 to \$10,000, Eckerdt.

He predicted that marijuana users will say they’re carrying legal hemp “and we have no way to prove that it’s not.”

At the chief’s request, Sen. R.J. Kost, R-Powell, has put forward a bill that would ban the possession and sale of hemp for smoking.

The legislation would also limit the use of CBD (cannabidiol), a substance found in hemp

that is believed to provide benefits for certain health conditions.

Under the draft bill, CBD could not be added to any alcoholic beverages or to any food products or beverages without approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Further, the legislation would prohibit hemp products containing CBD from being promoted as dietary supplements or medical cures and would require a label saying, “This product has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.”

The Joint Agriculture Committee voted 6-5 to take up the bill at its Aug. 27 meeting.

“I think we need to do something,” said state Rep. Glenn Moniz, R-Laramie, after hearing from Eckerdt and Lincoln County Prevention Specialist Brittany Ritter. “I think it’s really exciting for the State of Wyoming on the economic potential that hemp has for our state,” Ritter told the panel, “but there is some concern coming from the prevention side of hemp and the issue of smokable hemp coming into our state.”

She said there’s evidence that smoking the substance can cause liver damage and intestinal problems, interact with medications and cause changes in alertness and mood. “We think because this product is so new, and there is such little testing on the definite effects, especially long-term effects, it’s hard to say for sure exactly what could happen to somebody that is consuming — especially in our youth population with an undeveloped brain,” Ritter said.

She contrasted the lack of limits on hemp with those placed on alcohol and tobacco.

But not everyone on the committee was convinced of the need for the bill.

Reps. Dan Laursen, R-Powell, and John Winter, R-Thermopolis, were among those who voted no.

“We’re not for it,” Laursen said.

State Sen. Anthony Bouchard, R-Cheyenne, said he thought the draft went too far in regulating and restricting the sale of CBD products.

“I don’t think we’ve proven that it’s a harm” to consumers, Bouchard said, adding that he personally believes CBD offers health benefits.

State Rep. Stan Blake, D-Green River, similarly expressed concern about going “down the wrong path” in placing new restrictions on CBD oil and other products derived from hemp. He made reference to the fact that Wyoming lawmakers legalized CBD oil back in 2015, seeing its potential for treating epilepsy.

However, Blake did say he’d support prohibiting those under the age of 21 from smoking

hemp.

Committee Chairman Sen. Brian Boner, R-Douglas, promised there would be “lots of opportunities for amendments” to the bill at the committee’s next meeting, which begins Monday.

Chief Eckerdt has long been suspicious of the crop, often noting that the industry talks about hemp “grows,” and “kilos” of product.

“I’m not afraid of hemp. I am concerned about a wolf in sheep’s clothing,” he told county commissioners at their Sept. 15 meeting, adding, “If there’s not any nefarious intent here, why are we using drug terminology to describe an agricultural crop?”

Eckerdt worries that marijuana is being normalized and suggested that local governments should consider regulating shops featuring the hemp-products — perhaps by requiring them to be a certain distance from schools, libraries or parks.

Healthy Park County Community Prevention Specialist Wendy Morris expressed concerns about social norms being established when children see marijuana-like products in stores.

“Marijuana, CBD and hemp, they’re all different, but maybe the average consumer might not perceive them as different,” Morris said.

Commission Chairman Joe Tilden said he was supportive when the Legislature legalized hemp, believing the versatile crop would be good for Park County.

But Tilden said he’d never considered the concerns raised by the chief.

“For me, it’s very apparent that there are a lot of questions,” he said.

In their efforts to develop a new industry, state lawmakers “opened the door and didn’t even think about the consequences when the horse ran away,” Tilden said at the Sept. 15 meeting. “My question is now, how do we get the horse back in the barn — and get the door closed?”

Eckerdt said it will be a challenge. “... I would like to get the horse back in the barn while it’s still a colt — and before something else happens or something more comes down the pipe,” he told commissioners.

The Legislature’s Joint Agriculture, State and Public Lands & Water Resources Committee is tentatively set to take up the bill at 9 a.m. Monday.

“... I am betting there will be some amendments to it after testimony and discussion,” Sen. Kost said in an email.

The meeting will be held remotely and broadcast on YouTube, but with a remote site set up at the Park County Weed and Pest building (1067 Road 13) for public attendance. For more information and a full agenda, visit the committee’s webpage at <https://wyoleg.gov/Committees/2020/J05>.



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Southwest Wyoming SPORTS ROUNDUP

◆ Lyman Eagles top Torrington for 2A crown.

By Dahl Erickson
SVI Media

Championship Football

- 1A 6-Man
- Meeteetse: 30
- Farson-Eden: 42

The Pronghorns completed their second perfect season in the last three years as they brought home the school's second championship.

- 1A 9-Man

Niobrara County (Lusk): 28
Southeast: 47

The only Friday game on the slate saw the team from Yoder pull away for the program's first state title since 2012.

- 2A Class

Lyman: 14
Torrington: 3

The Blazers scored in the second half breaking a 0-0 tie but the Eagles scored the game's only two touchdowns in the fourth quarter to win their first title since 2012.

- 3A Class

Jackson Hole: 13
Cody: 34

The Cody Broncs, hosting a state title game for the first time in 29 years, jumped out to a 20-0 lead over Jackson and claimed the school's third state title since 2014.

- 4A Class

Thunder Basin: 15
Cheyenne East: 29

Trailing 15-7 in the second half, the Thunderbirds scored 22 unanswered points to win the program's first title since 2013.

- Cross-Country

This weekend the XC Town USA Meet of Champions took place in Terre Haute, Indiana where both Star Valley's Peter Visser and Rawlins' Sydney Thorvaldson raced in the field.

Thorvaldson won the race with a time of 16:38.3, shattering the course mark by 11 seconds despite miserable and windy conditions. She defeated the second place runner by a full 40 seconds.

Visser placed 7th in the race with a time of 15:24.6. The winning time was 15:14.1 by Judson Greer out of Texas.

Gordon critical of "knuckleheads," says all options on the table in response to COVID-19 spike

◆ Public health officials from 21 counties in the state have asked the governor for a state-wide mask mandate.

By Tom Coulter
Wyoming Tribune Eagle
Via Wyoming News Exchange

With the number of active COVID-19 cases in Wyoming about five times higher than it was a month ago, Gov. Mark Gordon said Friday he's considering every option regarding new restrictions.

Gordon, who has repeatedly stated his preference to giving counties the ultimate call on public health measures, said Friday the state will be extending its current public health orders by one week, rather than the usual two-week extension.

"All things are on the table," Gordon said during a news conference. "We want to make sure that we address this issue before we completely lose all ability to respond to health crises."

Since the start of November, 40 virus-related deaths have been confirmed in Wyoming, many of which have been in long-term care facilities.

Gordon said those populations are being put at a greater risk "because we are being knuckleheads about this."

"Ask yourself – do you feel better today about what's going on in this state than you felt maybe in June or July or August when we were one of the lowest states for infection rates?" Gordon said, frustration in his voice growing more and more evident as he spoke. "We were one of three states that could have a state fair ... ask yourself – do you think we can do that now without running a risk on everything? Our capacities are overwhelmed."

In Wyoming, COVID-19 hospitalizations were at an all-time high of 192 on Thursday. A month ago, that number was 54. Gordon, who noted the entire region is struggling with capacity, recently authorized stimulus funds to be used to try to draw out-of-state medical personnel to help the state's hospitals.

Gordon held a virtual meeting with about 100 Wyoming businesses earlier this week. On Friday, he said the surge in cases has put a stress on the statewide economy, stating, "We've had more businesses around the state that are closed because of sick workers than by any of our health orders."

"I've asked a number of businesses – do you feel like you're gonna make it through this next year? – and I've got to tell you, people, there isn't a heck of a lot of hope out there. So, again, we've got to get our head in the game," said Gordon, adding "we're running around like chickens with their heads cut off."

As of Thursday, Wyoming's two-week

positivity rate, or the percentage of COVID-19 tests that came back positive, was 11.4% – far above any levels seen before November. Health officials widely consider a 5% positivity rate as a concerning threshold.

Mike Ceballos, director of the Wyoming Department of Health, said the increase in asymptomatic positive cases has further complicated the state's ability to do contact tracing.

"It is literally everywhere," Ceballos said of the virus. "It's not just in the places we traditionally were looking at, where we had lots of folks – for instance, in our bars. That was an initial place where we thought, but it is becoming so pervasive that there's not a place that we're not seeing (the virus)."

The news briefing Friday came after public health officers from 21 counties in the state wrote Gordon a letter urging him to issue a statewide mask mandate. The governor, who met virtually with the health officers Thursday morning, cited projections from the meeting that Wyoming is on pace to see around 3,000 new cases per day, about 2% of which would likely be hospitalized.

"Imagine what that's going to do to our hospital system," Gordon said. "We've relied on personal responsibility throughout this pandemic, so ask yourself, has that really been working? Have people been taking the responsibility we asked them to?"

"Deaths and hospitalizations are increasing, so my problem is if I can't rely on you, we're going to have to do something else."

In line with the increase in cases statewide, the number of long-term care facilities dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks has also risen, with 21 of them reporting ongoing situations this week.

In Laramie County, Life Care Center of Cheyenne has been grappling with one of the worst outbreaks of any facility statewide. This week, the nursing home was reporting 90 cases among its residents – 11 of which resulted in deaths – and 49 cases among staff, according to statistics from the Wyoming Department of Health.

The 90 cases among Life Care residents is the most that has been reported in any Wyoming long-term care facility since the pandemic began, and its death toll trails only Shepherd of the Valley Rehabilitation and Wellness in Casper, which has confirmed 15 virus-related deaths among its residents.

Two other Laramie County nursing homes – Cheyenne Healthcare Center and Granite Rehabilitation and Wellness – are also dealing with smaller, ongoing COVID-19 outbreaks.

Cheyenne Healthcare Center was reporting two positive cases among its residents and five among its staff, while Granite Rehabilitation and Wellness, which already had a few cases earlier this year, was reporting two positive cases among its residents and 10 among its staff.

However, while many virus-related deaths have involved nursing home res-

idents, Gordon emphasized Friday that COVID-19 can be dangerous to anyone, regardless of age.

"There's a 29-year-old I know who's in the hospital now, fighting for her life, so it's not just older people," Gordon said.

With Thanksgiving less than two weeks away, Gordon and local health officials have expressed anxiety over what the coming weeks could mean for the state's COVID-19 case numbers.

During his news briefing Friday, the governor said it's important for people to take health protocols seriously during the Thanksgiving holiday, adding "we also want to make sure that we have a Merry Christmas."

"At this point, with these trends, there's a lot of people that may not be there for Christmas," Gordon said. "So it's time again, Wyoming, that we wake up. It's not forever. There is a vaccine on the horizon."

The warning was reiterated by officials from the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department, which sent out a release outlining best practices Thursday. Laramie County Public Health Officer Dr. Stan Hartman said there was an increase in local cases after Halloween due to social gatherings, and he hoped to avoid a similar uptick after Thanksgiving.

"It is imperative for the community to focus on keeping their family, friends and neighbors safe with alternative Thanksgiving plans," Hartman said in a statement.

A few days ago, updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention emphasized that the safest option to celebrate Thanksgiving is to do so only with members of the same household. If individuals decide to celebrate outside their household, the agency advises them to take extra precautions, such as wearing masks and keeping at least 6 feet of distance from others.

A new modeling tool created by Georgia Tech professors illustrates the risk of large gatherings in Laramie County. For example, a gathering of 25 county residents would pose a 70% chance that somebody in attendance has COVID-19, according to the latest modeling Friday.

"Like many other 2020 holidays, Thanksgiving will look different for most people this year," said Kathy Emmons, executive director of the Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department. "It is important to remember that COVID-19 will not be in our lives forever, and being responsible with your family's health is essential for future celebrations."

The warnings have not been limited to officials from Wyoming, as governors nationwide have urged their residents to avoid nonessential interstate travel in the coming days.

Their pleadings come as COVID-19 spikes have been reported throughout the United States. On Thursday, new cases in the U.S. topped 150,000 in a day for the first time, according to the New York Times. That same day, a national record was also set for new COVID-19 hospitalizations, with 67,096.

Diabetes

Continued from 3B

program. We've worked to make these no- or low-cost programs more available across the state."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, programs are offered online, in person or with a combination, depending on the community and person.

"These programs can have added benefits during COVID as people are isolating a little more and out of their routines. The classes are a fun way to get the support you need," Collins said.

Diabetes prevention programs approved by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been shown to cut the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by

58 percent (71 percent for people over 60 years old). Participants may lose 5 to 7 percent of their body weight through healthier eating and 150 minutes of physical activity a week. Collins said a study showed those who complete a type 2 diabetes prevention lifestyle change program were 1/3 less likely to develop type 2 diabetes after 10 years.

"Healthcare providers can

be a powerful force helping to prevent this disease," Collins said. "It's been shown before that one out of every two people enroll into a diabetes prevention program when their physician recommended it to them, compared to one in ten who were not referred to the program."

WDH encourages health-care providers to screen, test and refer individuals with ab-

normal blood sugar levels to a CDC-recognized diabetes prevention program. A list of CDC-recognized programs in Wyoming can be found at <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/prevention/chronicdisease/program-map/>. At least 12 of these programs are in Wyoming so far; an online program is planned for spring.

SVI Classifieds

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★ BIDS ★

NOTICE OF CALL FOR BIDS

Notice is hereby given that Star Valley Health, Lincoln County, Afton, Wyoming, will, on Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 2:00 o'clock p.m., in the Greys River Conference Room at Star Valley Health, receive and consider sealed bids for a construction project to modify the Central Chilled Water Plant and associated pumping and piping at Star Valley Health in Afton, WY. The bids will be publicly opened, and the bid amounts read aloud.

A detailed Bidding Document package may be obtained at area Plan Exchanges, or by contacting Dan Bentson (DanBentson@CushingTerrell.com) or Kim Beaudry (KimBeaudry@CushingTerrell.com) at Cushing Terrell Architects Engineers at 406.248.7455

A non-mandatory Pre-Bid Meeting for all bidders will be held at Star Valley Health, 901 Adams Street, Afton, WY 83110 on Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at 10:00 am, local time. Due to COVID 19 safety concerns, Personal Protective Equipment, including masks, will be required and all attendees are required to practice social distancing, remaining a minimum of 6 feet apart.

Bids to be presented in a sealed envelope containing complete copy of the bid and supplemental information; and clearly marked "SVH CHW Mods Project." Bids may either be presented in a sealed envelope to the Administration Office at Star Valley Health, Lincoln County, Afton, Wyoming; or mailed to Star Valley Health, Attn: Mike Hunsaker, 901 Adams Street, Afton, Wyoming 83110. All bids must be received, complete, by the above date and time or they will not be considered. No bids will be accepted by telephone or fax. Star Valley Health reserves the right to refuse and/or reject any or all bids, to waive irregularities, or to accept any bid that they deem to be in the best interest of Star Valley Health.

Dated this 11th day of November, 2020.

STAR VALLEY HEALTH
Lincoln County
Afton, Wyoming

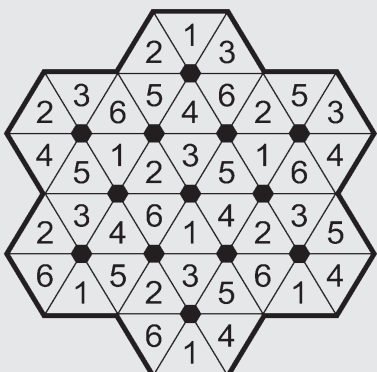
Mike Hunsaker, Chief Operating Officer

★ BIDS ★

★ BIDS ★

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1	3	7	9	8	5	4	6	2
8	9	4	1	2	6	3	7	5
6	1	2	5	9	8	7	4	3
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5	7	8	4	3	1	9	2	6
3	5	6	7	1	4	2	8	9
4	8	9	2	5	3	6	1	7
7	2	1	8	6	9	5	3	4

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Super Crossword

Answers

B	A	S	I	C	T	R	E	A	C	L	E	S	A	L	C	A	P	P
A	C	E	L	A	S	E	A	T	R	A	D	E	L	E	A	N	E	R
E	M	P	I	R	E	O	F	T	H	E	S	U	N	B	A	R	N	E
R	E	T	A	I	N	S	N	O	D	F	E	N	N	E	L			
					D	O	T	R	O	M	E	B	E	R	L	I	N	A
I	S	M	U	R	S	A	E	N	D	E	D	I	T	H	E	N	S	
N	O	O	B	A	P	R	A	Z	A	G	A	T	C	A	D	G	E	
F	U	J	I	S	P	E	E	D	W	A	Y	I	S	O	N			
O	L	O	G	Y	C	R	E	E	M	A	N	U	P	L	O	U		
					A	S	T	I	L	E	A	P	I	N	M	A	S	O
C	O	M	P	A	R	E	A	P	P	L	E	S	T	O	A	P	P	L
G	R	E	E	D	Y	O	H	Y	E	A	H	U	C	L	A			
I	C	H	M	I	L	L	I	R	E	S	T	E	R	A	S	E		
					S	I	T	E	G	A	L	A	O	C	C	A	S	I
R	A	M	E	N	S	I	D	E	B	R	A	R	A	E	D	D	Y	
O	W	E	D	M	I	N	A	R	E	T	P	Y	R	O	A	A	A	
D	E	L	I	C	I	O	U	S	I	R	O	N	Y	R	C	A		
S	A	M	O	A	N	R	O	O	K	E	E	P	E	R	S			
H	O	N	E	Y	S	J	O	N	A	T	H	A	N	L	A	R	S	O
E	M	I	N	E	M	O	P	E	N	L	I	N	E	N	I	T	T	I
S	E	N	T	R	A	S	T	A	T	E	T	A	X	S	L	E	E	P

Yellowstone

Continued from 6B

COVID-19. Once, at the Colter Bay convenience store, a man protested capacity limits preventing him from entering the store. He knocked over stands of stickers in anger, created a huge mess — and earned a trip to see Carman.

“He was quite apologetic in court and didn’t have a record of behaving that way,” the judge recalled. “It seemed to me this year that we just had more people who were on edge.”

The empty Snow Lodge where Lockner stood on the afternoon of Oct. 22 was shuttered ahead of schedule, following a small rash of COVID-19 cases among Xanterra’s staff at Old Faithful and the Madison Campground. Between the two sites, 13 employees tested positive — the largest breakout of the year in both parks. Even more staffers were quarantined, however, and by the last day of the Madison Campground’s abbreviated season there was just a single employee available.

In Grand Teton, where the federal workforce and concessionaires received 50 tests a week, there was remarkably little transmission: a single positive test.

It was fear of novel coronavirus’ spread and the magnet effect of the national parks that prevented them from opening on time last spring. Entrance gates didn’t swing open until May 18, following a 55-day total closure. Even then the northern half of Yellowstone remained closed for another couple of weeks, because the gateway communities in the state of Montana had higher COVID-19 rates at the time and were not deemed ready for the tourism crush.

The crush did come, albeit after a slower-than-usual May and June. By the time peak summer arrived the parks were nearly as busy as they’ve ever been in history, even with the international visitor essentially out of the equation. Once fall rolled around the parks were busier than ever before — and by a good margin.

September set records for both parks, attracting June-like crowds. The National Park Service hasn’t yet posted final numbers for the season-ending month of October, but by some indications previous records were absolutely smashed. Through the first 11 days of that month, traffic counts throughout Yellowstone were double those observed a year ago, according to numbers gathered and relayed by Jackson economist Jonathan Schechter. The spike in South Gate traffic was even greater: up 141%.

Even record cold temperatures the second half of October didn’t seem to deter travel. On a Thursday late in the month there was a constant stream of traffic along the Madison River, even on a day when 3 inches of fresh snow kept the West Yellowstone, Montana, entrance closed until noon. At the first pullout where bison were in view, vehicles boasting plates



Tourists watch an eruption of Old Faithful last month at the Upper Geyser Basin in Yellowstone National Park. Photo by Bradly J. Boner, Jackson Hole News&Guide.

from Oregon, Utah, California, Texas and New York bunched up, while their bundled-up occupants took in the scene.

Among them, Austin, Texas, resident Osby Vega was surprised and impressed by the crowds, joking that Halloween in Yellowstone must be the cure-all for the coronavirus. But the H-E-B grocery store stocker, who flew into Idaho Falls for his vacation, also perceived a silver lining.

“Lot more people seeing nature,” Vega said. “It’s not a bad thing.”

In preparing their staff for 2020, Yellowstone and Teton park leaders encouraged empathy with their on-edge visitors, who were more likely to be experiencing job losses, health scares, or the deaths of near-and-dear family and friends.

“I think the vast majority of people wanted to do the right thing,” Noojibail said. “We were trying hard to educate people on what that right thing was.”

Park employees were also encouraged to look out for themselves. Ahead of the busy season, Chief Ranger Nash brought in a trainer who embedded with staff to teach personal wellness and work-life balance strategies. Worker sanity and staggered shifts were emphasized throughout the summer, he said.

Federal employees interviewed for this story reported that they were able to get out and enjoy the parks they managed, embarking on outings that broke up the chaotic days that stretched into weeks and months. Yellowstone’s superintendent, Sholly, put in 200 miles in the ample backcountry of the 2.2 million acres of public land he oversees, where solitude and respite come easily.

“I can tell you that, unequivocally, once I was beyond a mile away from a road I could count the number of people I’d see on both hands,” Sholly said.

Nash took up backpacking again, managing four overnight trips — a personal best in his decade in the park. He trekked into Open Canyon and camped at Marion Lake for the first time.

Although COVID-19 strapped staffing, sometimes the pandemic simultaneously opened opportunities to get out and reset.

At the Teton Interagency Dispatch Center in Moose there would normally be nine permanent and five seasonal employees helping route information to first responders and law enforcement stationed in northwestern Wyoming. This year there were only three seasonal and six permanent dispatchers, the latter reduction owing to three unexpected departures. The depleted staff made for

some long days and oftentimes converted managers, like 19-year veteran Heather Voster, into front-line employees. That was the case in late September, when big-game hunters’ illegal, abandoned warming fires kept igniting the Bridger-Teton National Forest.

“We usually work four 10-hour days, but when we were very busy with fires those were 12- to 14-hour days,” Voster said. “We were in the room all day long, either sitting or at our stand-up desks.”

In an odd and welcomed quirk, COVID-19 also freed up non-managerial dispatchers to get out, explore and learn their territory. Grand Teton National Park didn’t want any more than three dispatchers in the room at any one time, and they broke the dispatchers they did have on board into two teams. As a result, schedules shook out so that each team had an off-day every other week.

“We used that [day] for folks to familiarize themselves with the resource,” Voster said. “Hiking, reading books, and getting out, because it certainly makes us better dispatchers to have that knowledge of the area.”

Voster’s 2020 felt more stressful than usual at times, but she was also able to successfully decompress. Enjoying some recreation in less-populated areas and finding quiet were key, she said.

Some employees are eager to turn the page to a post-pandemic era.

Yellowstone custodian Ed Ellwanger’s normal duties cleaning the properties and outdoor areas at Old Faithful changed vastly this year. He cleaned the bathrooms with hospital-grade disinfectant much more frequently, a deliberate effort to guard against the spread of coronavirus. Garbage volumes were about the same, at least in the receptacles where trash was supposed to go. But the Americans who flocked to the park this year seemed to be a lot more eager to litter, he said.

“I’d fill a 5-gallon bucket every, like every 20 minutes,” Ellwanger said. “Masks everywhere. I’d pick up fancy, expensive ones. Cheap ones. Everything.”

Judge Carman was also ready to bid Yellowstone’s 2020 season adieu.

“I’m just very glad that we survived the summer, and park is closing up,” the magistrate told the News&Guide. “It was really hard on my staff, and really the park rangers. They work really hard, and they’re just plain worn out by this time of year.”

“Compared to them,” Carman said, “I got it easy.”



RECIPE CORNER

Slow Cooker Olive Garden Chicken Pasta

INGREDIENTS

- 1.5-2 lbs. chicken breasts
- 16 oz. Olive Garden (or any you like) Italian dressing
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 8 oz. cream cheese (I used chive and onion flavor)
- 16 oz. penne pasta, cooked

DIRECTIONS

Place the chicken breasts to the slow cooker. Add the Olive Garden dressing, pepper and 1/4 cup parmesan. Place cream cheese on top. Place lid on slow cooker and cook on high for 4 hours or low for 5-6 hours. When cooking time is almost done, start cooking the pasta. Shred the chicken with two forks. Drain pasta and combine all ingredients. Sprinkle remaining parmesan on top. Serve and enjoy!

Have a great recipe for the Star Valley Independent?

Submit it to AubreyT@SVInews.com for a chance to get published!

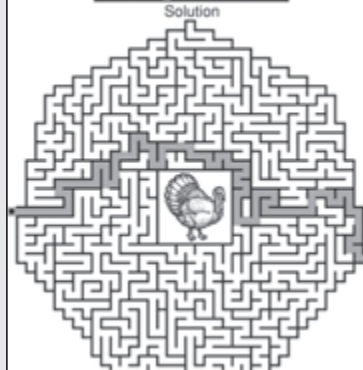


Recipe provided by Amanda Nelson

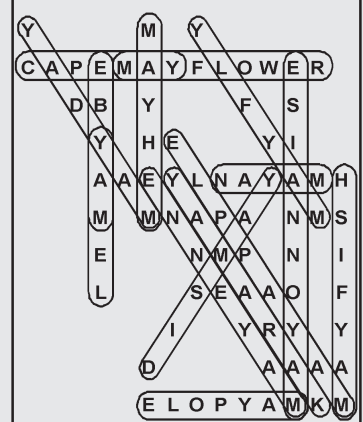
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Mega Maze



MAY WORDS



Sticklers Answer

5) 90 people.
The area of the 6-inch cake is $A = \pi R^2$. The radius is 3 inches. So, $A = \pi 9$ square inches, but Mike’s cake has a 9-inch radius, so $A = \pi 81$ square inches. It’s 9 times as large as Bob’s.
 $9 \times 10 = 90$.

Puzzles on page 5B

Go Figure! answers

4	-	1	x	3	9
+		+		x	
6	+	8	÷	7	2
÷		÷		-	
2	x	9	÷	9	2
5		1		12	

Puzzles4Kids Answer

EDWARD	W	DARED
ALIENS	I	LANES
ADORNS	N	ROADS
RAGGED	G	GRADE
SWEDEN	W	DENSE
SERBIA	I	BEARS
AGENTS	N	GATES
DIGEST	G	DIETS

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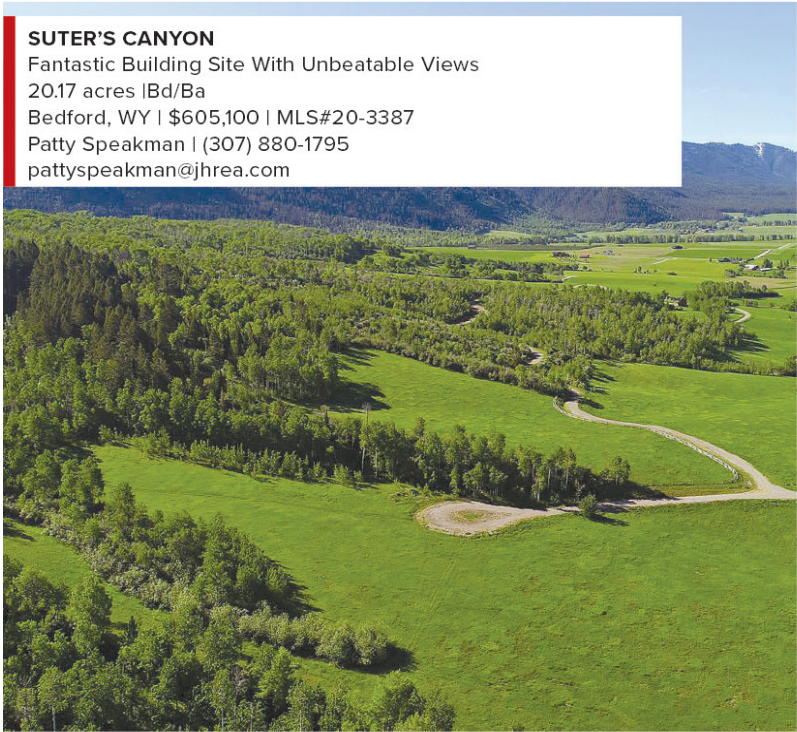


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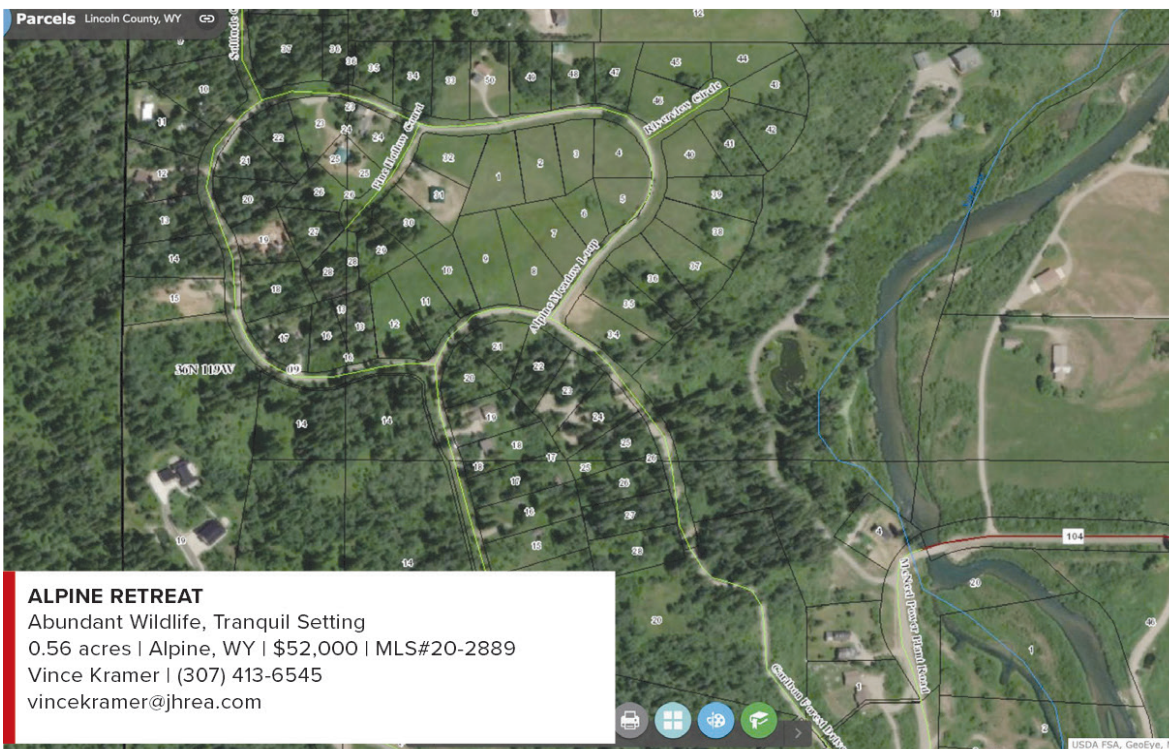
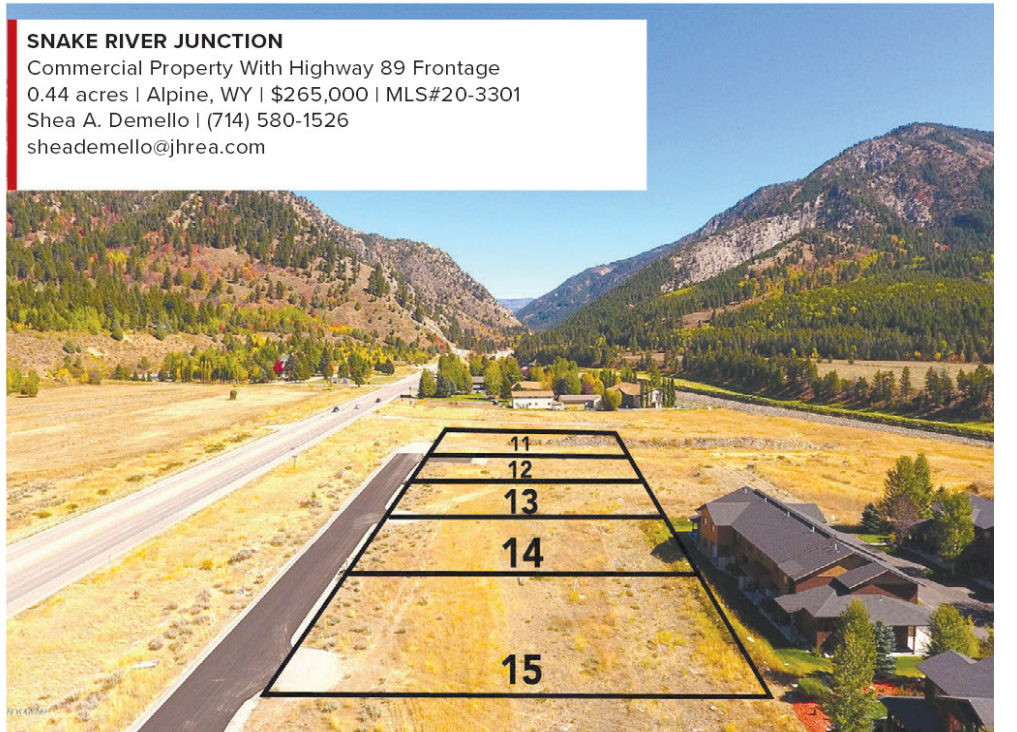
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