

LOCAL
**Drive-up flu
clinics set**
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licensed to fly**
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**The winning
continues**
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Pinedale Roundup

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One Dollar

Green River Valley Health Foundation supports goal of critical access hospital

By Robert Galbreath
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PINEDALE – Representatives from the Green River Valley Health Foundation spoke during the Sublette County Rural Health Care District's Sept. 16 board meeting about the future of health care in the county. The Foundation's Executive Director, Sherrie Escobar, and President, Dave Racich, expressed willingness to work with the district on a critical access hospital.

"We definitely support getting a CAH put in place," Escobar stated. "This is something that we've been working with since the process began a couple of years ago."

A critical access hospital aligns with the Foundation's overall goal to "advance health in wellness in Sublette County," Escobar continued.

The Foundation conducted interviews with residents and agencies in the region to feel out support for a critical access hospital.

"What we found out during that process was there are a lot of individuals that want to support a facility here in Sublette County," Escobar added. "There's a lot of dollars that people are willing to pledge and donate toward that."

Escobar emphasized that the foundation is "not a front" for the district and is a separate nonprofit organization that supports mental health, dental and medical care in the county. The foundation works frequently to raise money to purchase equipment for the SCRCHD but also works with other facilities like the Sublette Center. The foundation operates a Families in Need program to help individuals pay for medical care.

The foundation is a nonprofit and cannot fund campaigning for the ballot initiative to create a hospital district in November. The organization is prepared to offer fundraising and support for the facility once the project is underway.

"No matter what happens when this election comes around, we want to make

sure that we still have a (hospital) facility here," Escobar said.

The foundation continues to seek funds and grants to ensure that there is a hospital facility "in the near future," Escobar added.

Racich and Escobar stressed the need for a hospital management team to reassure donors.

"Donors want to see management in place when this all happens so (the project) doesn't falter," Racich said. "CAHs can falter without guidance."

Dave Doorn, administrative director for the SCRCHD, reported earlier in the meeting that the joint planning committee, representing the district and the Sublette Center, is in the process of submitting requests for proposals seeking management. He added that the committee sent RFPs to St. John's, Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, Star Valley Health in Afton and Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County.

Escobar and Racich said they hoped to see a closer partnership and dialogue develop with the board.

Working with the schools

Doorn told the board that both clinics are offering free COVID-19, influenza and strep testing for residents 18 and under. This is meant to "remove barriers" and encourage school students and families to get tested if they show symptoms.

The District also signed agreements with both school districts in the county to provide "backup nursing" to schools if their nurses have to quarantine, Doorn said.

Union fiber agreement

The district is working toward an agreement with Union Wireless to hook the clinics up with broadband Internet to expand speed and capacity, Doorn said.

At the meeting, SCRCHD's attorney Rachel Weksler cautioned the board against signing a "massive contract" without fully examining the terms. She stated that she "understands" the district's need to obtain broadband, but listed numerous concerns with the document.



HOLLY DABB PHOTO

A rainbow peeps through rain clouds while smoke is visible from Pole Creek Road of the Fayette Fire on Tuesday evening. The cause of the fire on private property was lightning from the storm that moved through the area earlier in the day.

By Holly Dabb
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PINEDALE – A fire in the Pole Creek area southwest of Pinedale was quickly extinguished Tuesday evening.

Sublette County Unified Fire units from Pinedale, Boulder and Daniel all responded to the area and discovered an actively burning fire located on private property in sagebrush. The fire was named the Fayette Fire and was quickly contained with assistance from firefighting units from the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, according to Mike Petty, public information officer for SCUF.

A lightning strike was attributed as the cause. The fire was considered extinguished Wednesday morning after crews returned to ensure the fire was fully out during the daylight hours. The fire was just over an acre in total size but was only 20 feet from public lands.

On the other side of the county during

the same time as the Fayette Fire, SCUF crews from Big Piney were dispatched to a pile of grass clippings that was found smoldering near the Plainview Cemetery. The cause of the fire appeared to be self-ignition from the composting effects of continually adding grass clippings to the same pile over a period of time. The fire was extinguished and another check was made the following day as an additional precaution.

Even with the cooler temperatures and occasional rain shower, the National Weather Service is forecasting a fire weather watch for Sublette County through Thursday. Low relative humidity combined with 30 mph forecasted winds will make for elevated or critical fire conditions.

Potential fires should be reported to the local Sheriff's Office or dial 911 as needed. Prompt discovery and response will continue to minimize the impacts of any new starts.

"We are at a disadvantage," she said. "We're the little guys and we have to play by their rules. The wording is very favorable to them."

She added that these terms may adversely

affect the district down the road.

Weksler said that the proposed contract is "not atypical" for customers. She planned to prepare a report explaining the legal terms to educate the board.



Counselor Aaron Preece speaks Wednesday, Sept. 16, to a group who gathered at a suicide prevention vigil. The activity is one of several planned for National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.



ROBERT GALBREATH PHOTOS

Several dozen people gather to shed light at a vigil advocating that suicide is preventable. The event was planned by the Sublette Prevention Coalition.



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