

LOCAL

Big Piney Cutting Horses competition

See A4



SPORTS

Cross-county, rivalry game opens football season

See A13

Pinedale Roundup

Newspaper of the Upper Green River Valley, Est. 1904

AUGUST 31, 2023

One Dollar

Under pressure!



TERRY ALLEN PHOTO

Otto Troegle lets a charging grizzly Robobear have it with a well-directed shot of bear spray during a free training held on Aug. 23. Maria Davidson of Safari Club International partnered with Wyoming Game and Fish to bring bear awareness and training to Pinedale.

Clint Atkinson, the large carnivore biologist for Wyoming Game and Fish in Sublette County, said, 'The biggest threat to human safety is dirty camps. Bears go after anything with an aroma, even toothpaste. They also have a great memory and will go back to the exact spot they found food previously.'

Missing hiker found deceased Thursday

By Cali O'Hare cohare@pinedaleroundup.com

SUBLETTE COUNTY — A Minnesota man who was reported as overdue from a hiking trip on Aug. 21 was located deceased above Spider Lake in the Wind River Mountains on Thursday. Tip Top Search and Rescue members made the grim discovery at about 11:30 a.m. on Aug. 24, and said in a release that 64-year-old John Diepholz appeared to have suffered and succumbed to injuries sustained from a fall.

Diepholz embarked upon a solo trip into the Wind River Range on Aug. 5 and was expected to return on Aug. 16. His brother reported him missing at 4 p.m. on Aug. 21. Tip Top Search and Rescue and the Sublette County Sheriff's Office immediately began searching for the missing hiker by ground and air in the area of Wall Lake, about 15 miles from the Elkhart Trailhead. Weather hindered initial helicopter and ground team operations early in the week.

In a series of comments made to the Pinedale Roundup Facebook page, Diepholz is remembered by friends and family as "a gentle soul and lover of the Earth and adventure."

His niece, Amy Michelle, thanked the community for the "kind words, hopes and prayers" as well as the search-and-rescue crew, noting the family is "broken but fortunate to have answers and some closure."

In a separate release, SCSO Sgt. Travis Bingham extended the department's appreciation to "the public and backcountry hikers for getting the word out and keeping an eye out for John."

The agencies involved extend their sincerest condolences to the Diepholz family, noting, "It was not the outcome any of us wanted."

'One Room Life Lessons'

Emerson School documentary, open house

By Joy Ufford jufford@pinedaleroundup.com

SUBLETTE COUNTY — Although her late father Brooks "Bubba" Mitchell didn't get to host the first public showing of the documentary he spent years compiling, his daughter Marcy promised she would do it for him.

The result is a mini-extravaganza centered on one man's desire to preserve local oral history and a woman's desire to preserve the building, rancher Claire Faler at the old Zembo Ranch.

Marcy Mitchell said her late father met her mom when they both worked at Jackson Lake Lodge in 1965 and Wyoming became important to the whole family.

"Wyoming has always been a very special place for our family. He loved Pinedale so much! He was really dedicated to making this film happen."

Mitchell visited with former students in Sublette County and even drove to Kansas and Montana to interview former students, she said. He worked on it for a couple of years, but when he became seriously ill he hired professional editor

See 'EMERSON' on page A10

Hospital District presides over full agenda

By Robert Galbreath rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE — Construction crews are progressing on the project to build a new critical-access hospital and long-term care facility in Pinedale, providing plenty of tasks for the Sublette County Hospital District (SCHD) Board of Trustees, administration and staff over the course of a busy month.

The SCHD tackled a wide range of issues at a board meeting that lasted beyond two hours on Wednesday, Aug. 23. Topics ranged from a construction update, housing and recruitment, providers stepping into new positions, storm damage at the Sublette Center, Rocky Mountain Power rate hikes and more.

Laying the foundations

Workers continue to move earth as the ground is prepared to construct a health-care campus where the town's ballfields once stood.

"There is a lot of activity on the hill," said Karl Lueschow of Lueschow Property Management, the SCHD's owner's representative. "It's starting to look like something other than the old ballfields."

Teletractors, Inc., wrapped up the compaction process and carried out tests to ensure that the groundwork meets regulations, Lueschow told trustees. Compaction is where the soil is compressed to a certain density in order to eliminate

pockets of air.

Crews finished laying the water lines, allowing them to dig out a storm-water retention management system, Lueschow noted. Activity is expected to begin on the sewer lines this week, he added.

Overall, construction is proceeding on schedule and foundation work is slated to commence on Sept. 1, Lueschow said.

Lueschow praised Teletractors for an "outstanding" job on all the excavation completed to date and he highlighted the company's "top notch" safety record at the site.

Dave Doorn, SCHD administrator, expressed a desire to start tearing out the parking lot next to the Pinedale Clinic this fall rather than delaying it until the spring.

Housing and wages

The shortage of affordable housing options in Sublette County poses a significant obstacle to attracting top-notch talent to work for the district, said Dr. David Burnett, SCHD medical director.

Dr. Burnett proposed converting the old Marbleton-Big Piney clinic building that was completed in the 1980s into housing for providers and staff.

Upon recent inspection, the old clinic was in "sound

See 'SCHD' on page A3

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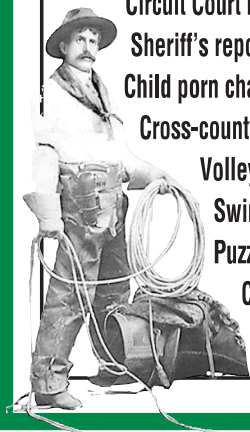
M - F 8:00 am - 6:00 pm • Sat. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm • Closed Sunday



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THE ROUNDUP, ROUNDED UP

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Joy Ufford PHOTO

Warren Phillips speaks about his struggles with opioid addiction, overdose and recovery to promote countywide acceptance of making Narcan available in public places.

Survivor succeeds with county Narcan policy

By Joy Ufford

ufford@pinedaleroundup.com

SUBLETTE COUNTY – Two years ago on an early August morning, Warren Phillips of Big Piney was lying in his F150 truck, unconscious, unresponsive and basically dead, after overdosing on an opiate cocktail mixed with meth.

On Aug. 6, 2021, a passerby saw Phillips' truck in the sagebrush off Highway 351, checked on him and began CPR, which kept him alive until deputies and Sublette EMS responded. Their first response was for a "heart event" but nothing changed.

"The ambulance crew didn't immediately go to an overdose until they found a bottle of my pills," Phillips, now 30, was told later.

An EMT then administered a dose of Narcan, a nasal spray that almost immediately

blocks the effects of an opiate overdose. It took a second dose to bring Phillips back to consciousness, and his first thought was how to hide his drugs from deputies.

That didn't happen. Detectives tested several white pills and powder that came back positive for Buprenorphine, an opiate used to treat dependence, and meth. Phillips had two previous possession convictions before Judge Curt Haws in Sublette County Circuit Court so the new misdemeanors were enhanced to felonies.

He faced years in prison.

As he moved through 9th District Court, he decided to change his pleas. One essential element would be successfully completing Sublette County Treatment Court's program. Phillips graduated this summer with the goal to make a difference by saving one person's life.

See 'NARCAN' on page A9



Weekly Weather Forecast

Pinedale, Wyoming • August 31 - Sept. 5

Today

Sunrise: 6:43 a.m. **Sunset:** 7:56 p.m.

High: **77°** Low: **45°**

RealFeel® 76° 44°

Day: Sunny to partly cloudy, beautiful.

Night: Partly cloudy.



Friday

High: **75°**

Nice with times of clouds and sun.

Low: **48°**



Saturday

High: **74°**

Nice with times of sun and clouds.

Low: **47°**



Sunday

High: **67°**

Times of clouds and sun with a t-storm.

Low: **41°**



Monday

High: **60°**

Clouds giving way to some sun.

Low: **39°**



Tuesday

High: **61°**

Mostly cloudy.

Low: **38°**



Garden of Beauty – Heart and Soul Café



ARLENEA McLAUGHLIN PHOTO

One can't help but notice the beautiful array of colors in front of the Heart and Soul Café in Pinedale. Karla Knopic, a renowned gardener in Pinedale's public spaces, and Kathy Lee, owner of Heart and Soul, have created a dazzling display of beauty using window boxes and multiple Sage and Snow flower barrels. Karla filled the window boxes with nasturtiums, chrysanthemums, petunias and lobelia, creating overlays of color and shapes. Her secret to beautiful flowers – she fertilized the plants with Osmocote, a timed-release fertilizer, when she planted them and waters the flowers every day. Inside the patio next to the restaurant, Karla planted numerous containers with a variety of flowers – calibrachop, lobelia, petunias, geraniums, nasturtiums, lantana and chrysanthemums, and they are all flourishing with her tender loving care. The inside patio border also has perennial cranesbill geraniums, day lilies and ornamental grasses. And, now, diners are entertained with numerous hummingbird moths flitting from flower to flower.

SCHD

Continued from 1A

condition structurally," Dr. Burnett told trustees. The space covered approximately 5,000 square feet and could house four residences, he continued.

Using the old clinic would save the SCHD a "great deal" of money on housing, serve as a "fantastic recruitment tool" and boost the economy in Marbleton and Big Piney.

"This is a great building that is not being used," Dr. Burnett said.

If the SCHD decides to pursue renovating the old clinic into housing, the next step is to hire an engineer or architect to develop a floor plan and provide a project cost estimate, Dr. Burnett noted.

The finance committee reviewed salaries for SCHD providers and staff, concluding that the district's current wages came up short when compared to rates across the region, said trustee Dave Bell. Future wage increases were necessary to recruit "quality and exceptional talent," Bell added.

"This was a wake-up call for us on wages," Bell remarked.

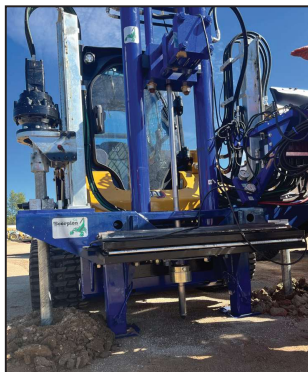
The finance committee tasked senior staff with developing plans to "get wages competitive" and to present their ideas to the SCHD board for an extensive discussion among trustees and staff at the September meeting, Bell said.

The SCHD received approximately \$700,000 in federal employee retention credits, funds that could "give room to help us fund additional wage costs," Bell told trustees.

Damage to the Sublette Center

A powerful storm barreled through Pinedale on Tuesday, Aug. 22, wreaking havoc across the community, including at the Sublette Center.

The wind and rain caused "significant flooding" in the Heritage Room at the Sublette Center, said administrator Dawn Walker, requiring the replacement of carpeting and



The machine pictured above is used for compaction testing. It sends a probe into the ground to test the density of the soil. The probe is lowered as far into the ground as it will go before there is too much pressure being applied and the computer tells it to stop.

ceiling tiles.

The employee break room also sustained damage to its ceiling, though Walker confirmed to the Roundup that the tiles were all replaced by Friday, Aug. 25.

Immediately after the storm, staff checked in on each resident to confirm that everyone was okay, Walker said, and fortunately the residential rooms escaped damage.

"We are really grateful for the actions the staff took to come in and check on residents and clean up afterwards," Walker told the Roundup.

Familiar faces in new places

SCHD Assistant Administrator Lindsey Bond introduced the new interim co-directors of EMS – EMTs Jen Adam and Steven Sanders. Longtime EMS director Bill Kluck transferred to the SCHD nursing department.

In response to concerns raised by SCHD board chairwoman Tonia Hoffman about coverage, Adam stated that EMS had formed a hiring committee and was conducting interviews. The situation was improving and "moving in the right direction," Adam added.

EMTs recently expressed "positive feedback" on the direction the department was headed, Adam continued, and she stated that EMS employees were "happy to be at work."

As a former teacher, Adam places a high priority on education and outlined plans for weekly and annual training for EMTs in collaboration with Sublette BOCES.

Sanders addressed efforts by EMS staff to compile a "detailed invoice" of the ambulance fleet to determine how best to use the additional \$100,000 pledged by the SCHD board to update or replace aging vehicles. Plans are underway to seek out certified emergency vehicle technicians to service Sublette County's fleet, Sanders added.

Dr. Burnett presented Ryan Grove, PA-C, as the SCHD's interim emergency services director. Grove is a physician assistant with more than three years of experience at the Pinedale Clinic emergency room.

Despite the ongoing challenge of keeping the emergency room fully staffed, Grove told trustees he felt like there was finally light at the end of the tunnel with two new prospective PAs with emergency room backgrounds willing to relocate to Pinedale (see "Recruitment" below).

Grove expressed gratitude to existing SCHD staff for filling the gaps over past months.

"The nurses and providers really stepped up and put in long shifts in addition to their regular practice," Grove said. "We hope the end is in sight."

Morale in the ER was back on the uptick, Grove remarked to trustees, and the environment was once again more collaborative and energetic with the potential for two new providers.

Grove emphasized the necessity of "investing in the team" at the SCHD – from providers to nurses and X-ray technicians – to prevent burnout as the district transitions into a hospital.

"Building a team that we can put in this hospital is really important," said Grove.



PHOTOS BY MORGAN TRAUHBER, LAYTON CONSTRUCTION

The tractor in the photo above carries out high-energy impact compaction in the construction zone for the hospital and long-term care facility. The rollers behind the tractor weigh 16 tons and can apply 32,000 pounds of pressure to ensure a high percentage of compaction throughout the entire site.

Recruitment update

Following a lengthy executive session, the SCHD Board of Trustees approved contracts for Kelsey Wagner, PA-C, and Noah Chutz, PA-C.

Wagner practiced as a physician assistant in emergency rooms for more than five years, said Grove, including a stint working in Sublette County through Locums, Inc.

"(Wagner) has top-notch skills and is excited to start in November," Grove stated to trustees.

Chutz served as a physician assistant in a "busy and underserved" emergency room in California, is bilingual in Spanish, fluent in American Sign Language and possesses experience in treating patients who are battling substance abuse, said Grove.

Dr. Rex Wortham, a board-certified family practitioner, is expected to start at the SCHD on Jan. 1, Dr. Burnett announced to trustees. The addition of Dr. Wortham will help close the primary-care gap in Sublette County, Dr. Burnett added.

The SCHD is still searching for one more primary-care provider before both clinics are expected fully staffed, said Dr. Burnett.

The district is interviewing a nurse practitioner, said Dr. Burnett, hoping to hire a female provider. Women's health care remains a significant need in Sublette County, Dr. Burnett continued.

Donated building

Trustees unanimously approved a motion to acquire a prefabricated office building donated by Jonah Energy. The costs for the SCHD to relocate the building from the gas field to Pinedale, reassemble the facility and lay foundations came to around \$400,000, said Bell.

The motion included language committing the SCHD to advertise for bids to move the building, perform foundation work and reassemble it.

Trustee Jamison Ziegler called the building a "good investment" for the district.

The SCHD intends to use the facility to

house its business offices and administration, said Doorn. Relocating administration into the donated building will free up space in the future critical access hospital for providers and patients, said Mike Hunsaker, chief operating officer for the SCHD and its management partner, Star Valley Health.

The building also contains a board room and "space for education," Doorn remarked to trustees.

Hoffman thanked Jonah Energy on behalf of the trustees for its generous gift.

RMP rate hikes

Each trustee agreed to sign a letter drafted by Bell to the Wyoming Public Service Commission expressing "grave concern" regarding proposed rate hikes for electricity announced this summer by Rocky Mountain Power (RMP).

Lueschow and Paul Ulrich, a member of the Sublette County Health Foundation Board, looked into RMP's planned rate hike, said Bell. If RMP's increases come to fruition, the SCHD will spend an additional \$78,248 per year on the electrical bill for both the critical-access hospital and clinics, Bell told trustees.

The additional costs would create a significant financial strain for the SCHD, the letter stated.

"As a hospital district, operating on razor-thin margins in rural Wyoming, this rate increase cripples our ability to offer competitive medical services to our residents in western Wyoming," the letter continued.

Based on the SCHD's study of RMP's proposal, the price increases were the result of a "rapid switch from reliable fossil fuels" to "more sketchy and unreliable sources of power" like wind and solar, the letter claimed.

The SCHD raised the concern in its letter that the rate hikes will only be the "first of many" as utility companies' hands are forced by "the national fever concerning climate change and alternative sources of energy."

SCHD trustees requested RMP take a "more balanced alternative-energy schedule with less financial impact on its customers."

Street Talk

By Terry Allen

Should we stop funding foreign wars and start funding America?



Absolutely! We should not be doing it if we can't take care of our own American people.

Brent Young, Boulder



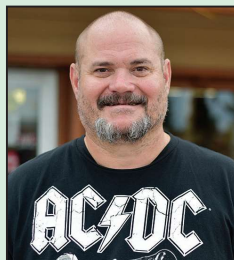
Yes, as long as the foreign war is not a threat to America and our values.

Magy Marcure, Pinedale



As a general rule, I would say yes.

Jon Gibson, Pinedale



Yep. Look at our country. We have so much homelessness, drugs, and a president that _____.

Keith Rhodes, Pinedale



Yes. When was the last time Ukraine sent us money?

Brion Greene, Pinedale