

WREN

WYOMING RURAL ELECTRIC NEWS

DECEMBER ✂ 2019

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WREN MAGAZINE

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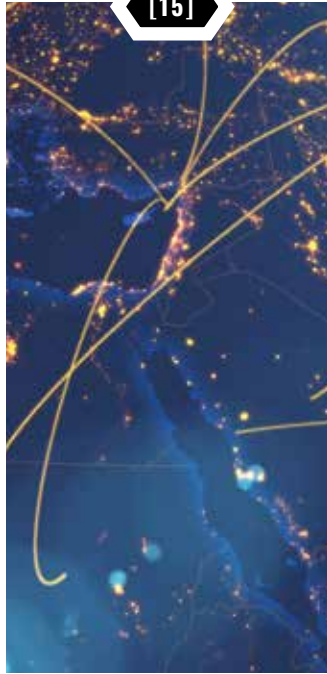
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COVER PHOTO ❖ High winds
blow fresh snow at sunset
near the Snowy Range in
southeastern Wyoming.

PHOTO BY KYLE SPRADLEY

THE NET METERING MESS



SHAWN TAYLOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Normally this time of year I write about the holidays and reflecting on the past and looking towards the future, but instead I feel compelled to try to clear the air on the issue of net metering, which has been in the news recently and is something the state legislature has been looking at over the past year. For purposes of this column I'll talk about co-op members who install rooftop solar or small scale solar, but net metering applies to all utility customers and most renewable sources of energy can be used for net metering systems.

WHAT IS IT?

Net metering is when a member installs a system to produce electricity on their personal property. This electricity is used to offset some or all of the electricity that they normally received from their co-op. In some instances the member can end up producing more electricity than they use. That "extra" electricity is then sold back to the cooperative using the infrastructure (poles, wires, meters etc.) that were put in place to provide service to the member before a net metering system was set up.

This policy sounds simple enough and it is a good way for folks to manage their util-

ity costs and to support small renewable energy projects. However, it also comes with a number of issues that utility operators, regulators and policy makers have been dealing with across the country, and most recently here in Wyoming.

HOW TO MANAGE IT?

Issues like how do utilities, and those tasked with managing the reliability and safety of the nation's electric grid, manage a system with an increasing number of small, intermittent producers of electricity connected to the grid? What is the appropriate size of a net metering system? And probably most prominent in recent discussions is what and how to appropriately compensate those who sell electricity back onto the grid?

The issue of cost-shifting between net metering members and non-net metering members, or subsidies for net metering members paid for by non-net metering members, was hotly debated at the Joint Corporations Committee meeting last month. The Office of Consumer Advocate presented pretty compelling evidence (in my opinion) of subsidies between members, while others in attendance questioned this notion.

COOPERATIVE MISSION

Others felt that utilities (including cooperatives) were attempting to stifle the solar industry, ruin small businesses, kill jobs, oh and ruin the environment. And while I can only speak on behalf of the cooperatives I can say that nothing is further from the truth. Our core mission is to improve the quality of lives of our members, along with providing reliable, safe and affordable electricity. If this means questioning the current net metering policy to ensure that it is fair and equitable for all of our member-owners then we will do that. But more importantly we want to work with our net metering members, policy makers and others toward the common goal of supporting small businesses and the industry, providing responsible, reliable and affordable energy and making sure that we do this in a manner that is fair and equitable to all cooperative member-owners.

The cooperatives pledge to do this work over the coming year but until then I hope we all can take a deep breath, enjoy the holidays and come back in 2020 with a renewed sense of collaboration and vision towards a common goal. So with that, have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



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COUNTIES

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2.58

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Wyrulec Company is proud to assist our community and surrounding area through our revolving loan program. Since the inception of the program in 1998, we have loaned over \$1.8 million to projects including improvements at a nursing home, an Alzheimer's facility, a college, and at manufacturing, printing, farming and freight companies. This loan program is just one of the ways we fulfill our commitment to the cooperative principle of Concern for Community.

AT THE CO-OP



23 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES



30 HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED



35 JOBS CREATED IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



\$18,038,230 SALES

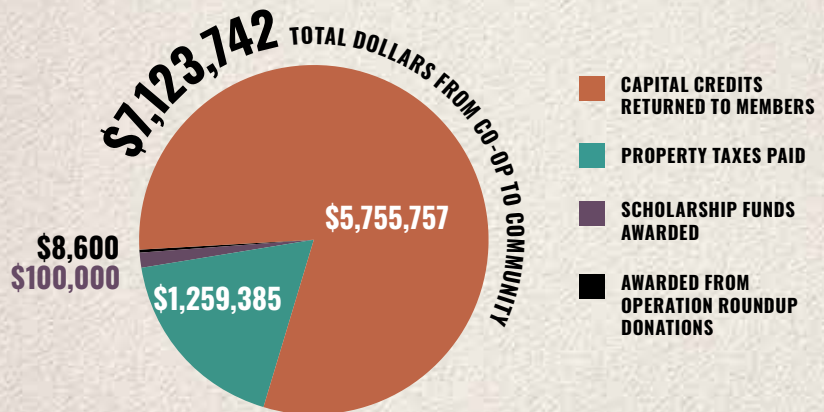


\$1,715,629 PAYROLL



\$2,182,283 PERSONAL INCOME GENERATED

IN THE COMMUNITY



AT THE CO-OP: The Wyoming Business Council (WBC) recently completed a study of the economic benefits of Wyoming's rural electric cooperatives. Looking at employment and tax revenue data from 2017, the WBC reported that Wyrulec Company is an economic driver in the local community.

IN THE COMMUNITY: Between 2007 and 2017, Wyrulec Company gave more than \$7 million back to the community.

Numbers are rounded to the nearest dollar.

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KRISTA MALCOM



HOMETOWN:
Guernsey

HIGH SCHOOL:
Guernsey-Sunrise High School

YEAR OF GRADUATION:
2019

COLLEGE:
Black Hills State University

MAJOR STUDY INTEREST:
Elementary Education and
Special Education

WREN: Tell us about your studies and interests.

KM: I graduated high school at the top of my class and decided to continue my education at Black Hills State University where I am majoring in elementary education and special education. I chose this career path because I absolutely adore children and know the value of education. I had wonderful elementary teachers who made me fall in love with learning, and I hope to do the same for my students. I also have an amazing role model who inspired me to pursue this degree: my mother. She is a first-grade teacher at Guernsey-Sunrise Schools. Watching the impact she has made on her students makes me want to follow in her footsteps and become the best educator possible. I am choosing to add special education to my major because I strive to keep my special education students in my class as much as possible to create an all-inclusive environment and generate acceptance and understanding between all my students. My fascination with traveling and learning about other cultures is leading me to explore my options in studying abroad so that my knowledge of education and life itself is not simply limited to the borders of South Dakota and the U.S.

WREN: How have your hometown, family and/or friends influenced you?

KM: My hometown, family and friends have shaped who I am today. Growing up in a small town gave me a sense of community with small-town values. Guernsey taught me about supporting one another in everything we do. My community taught me how to rally behind those in need and be there to lend a helping hand. My friends taught me about the importance of loyalty, not only to others but also to myself. They allow me to be exactly who I am without the fear of judgment or ridicule that many others my age experience. My family taught me how to love unconditionally and unceasingly and how to always be kind, compassionate and generous. I acquired a work ethic from watching the example my parents set for me, which has led to most of my successes thus far. To say that I have been positively influenced by my hometown, family and friends would be an understatement.

WREN: What are your plans for the future?

KM: I plan to earn my bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from Black Hills State University after finishing my student teaching in Ireland. From there, I aspire to immediately enter the workforce and begin my teaching career in a rural community like the one in which I grew up. I then hope to continue my higher education by either pursuing a master's degree in elementary education or earning a nursing degree.



CO-OP YOUTH

Wyoming's rural electric cooperatives are proud to support our youth, giving college scholarships and lineman scholarships. In addition, our co-ops sponsor high school students on the D.C. Youth Tour in June and Youth Leadership Camp in July.

THIS MONTH:

Wyrulec nominated Krista Malcom, who won a \$1,000 college scholarship from Basin Electric Power Cooperative in 2019.



Interested in applying for a scholarship, D.C. Youth Tour and/or Leadership Camp? Contact your local rural electric cooperative! See the insert in the center of the magazine for contact information.

LINEMAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND



A GOOD PROBLEM IS STILL A PROBLEM, BUT WITH YOUR HELP, OURS CAN BE FIXED.

Due to its popularity and the generosity of our board, and increased interest in the trade, WREA's Lineman Scholarship Program is in danger of running out of funding.



WHAT IT IS

The WREA Lineman Scholarship offers scholarships year-round to one or more individuals, including recent high school graduates who are interested in a career as a lineworker and plan to attend an approved regional lineworker training program.

SCHOLARSHIPS RECEIVED

Over the past several years the board has awarded many scholarships, donating a total of \$146,540.00 since 2015.



CANDIDATES

To be considered, applicants must submit the application form, a resumé describing their education and work experience, three letters of recommendation and a transcript of grades. (If the candidate has not attended an educational institution in the three years prior to submitting the application, the transcript is not necessary.)

Candidates must submit their scholarship application to the Wyoming Rural Electric Association; they are then passed on to the WREA board for consideration.



FUNDING

For over a decade, the scholarship's main source of funding has come from a fundraising golf tournament during the Cody Hotline School. Vendors, cooperatives and others who do business with cooperatives have been solicited for donations to the fund. It has been very successful, raising as much as \$20,000 in some years.



A GOOD PROBLEM IS STILL A PROBLEM

Because of the board's generosity, and due to the fact that distribution systems statewide have done a good job promoting the lineworker trade, schools and scholarships, the fund is beginning to run out.

In 2019, the WREA board agreed that we should start to look at other sources of income for the scholarship fund by reaching out to our membership and others who may want to make a contribution.

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE BY:



Calling the WREA Office Manager, Robin Feezer: (307) 634-0727



Mailing a check to the WREA Office: 2312 Carey Ave. Cheyenne, WY 82001
Make check out to WREA Lineman Scholarship

HOOPER SPRINGS TRANSMISSION LINE –

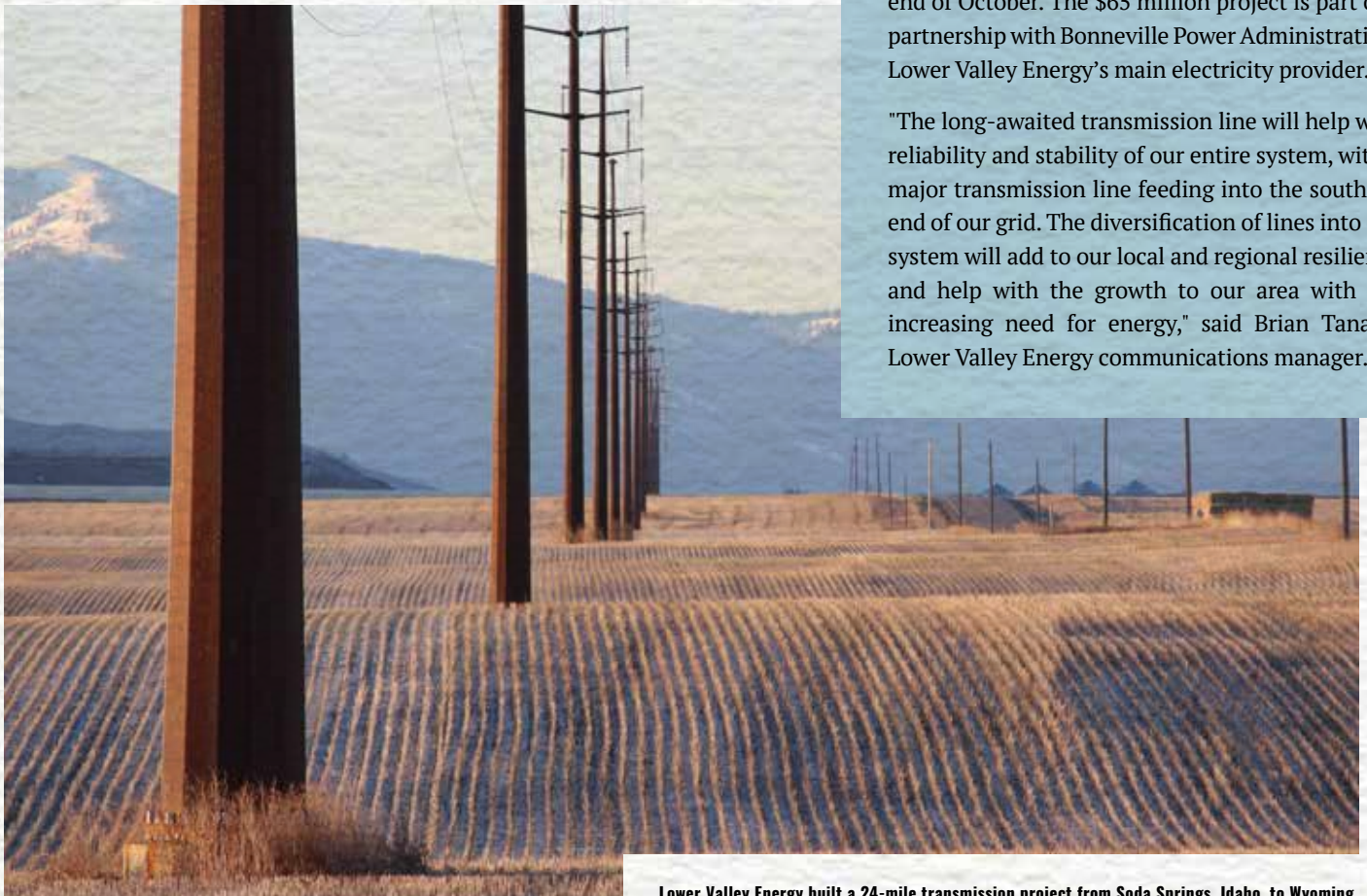
energized!

PHOTOS BY LOWER VALLEY ENERGY STAFF

Cutting the ribbon for the Hooper Springs project are, from left, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Project Manager Mark Korsness, Lower Valley Energy (LVE) Substation Specialist Aaron John, National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Associate Vice President Colleen Taylor, LVE board president and Wyoming Rural Electric Association board member Fred Brog, LVE CEO Jim Webb, BPA Administrator Elliot Mainzer, LVE board members Linda Schmidt and Nancy Winters, and BPA CFO Michelle Manary.

Lower Valley Energy and Bonneville Power Administration officials gathered at a substation near Soda Springs, Idaho on October 24 to celebrate a new transmission line for Lower Valley Energy members. The 24-mile transmission line from Soda Springs to the southern part of Star Valley, Wyoming was officially energized at the end of October. The \$65 million project is part of a partnership with Bonneville Power Administration, Lower Valley Energy's main electricity provider.

"The long-awaited transmission line will help with reliability and stability of our entire system, with a major transmission line feeding into the southern end of our grid. The diversification of lines into our system will add to our local and regional resilience and help with the growth to our area with the increasing need for energy," said Brian Tanabe, Lower Valley Energy communications manager.



Lower Valley Energy built a 24-mile transmission project from Soda Springs, Idaho, to Wyoming.

The sun rises over the new Lower Valley Energy Hooper Springs substation.



LVE Director of Engineering Rick Knori, left, BPA Senior Vice President of Transmission Richard Shaheen and BPA CFO Michelle Manary tour the substation power house.



Officials gather to celebrate the new transmission line.



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PHOTOS BY KELLY EITZEL DOUGLAS

The Wyoming Rural Electric Association (WREA) represents a diverse group of electric cooperative members across the state, and works to support the needs of all of its members when it comes to the delivery of safe, reliable electricity. On November 18, the WREA board of directors held its quarterly meeting in Wheatland, then traveled just outside of Wheatland for a tour of the Laramie River Station coal-fired power plant. Here they are standing on the roof above Boiler 2.



On November 19, WREA Executive Director Shawn Taylor, center, speaking, spent the day at the Joint Corporations Committee meeting, coming forward to speak on two bills the committee was considering for the 2020 Wyoming Legislative Session. On both topics: coal fired electric generation facilities and net metering, Taylor spoke of the cooperatives' need to stay viable and to respond to the needs of their member-owners.

For more information on net metering see page 4.

2 Days 2 Locations

FILM FOLLOWS DEER MIGRATION

FROM KATIE KLINGSPORN, WYOFILE

Sam Dwinnell, a research scientist at the University of Wyoming's Haub School of Environmental Resources, came up with an audacious plan: track the migration path of one particular doe that criss-crosses 85 miles from scrub desert to craggy peaks and make a film about it.

That film, "Deer 139," has just been released, and is making its way around the west. The next showing is January 11 at the Emerson Theater in Bozeman, Montana. The film, which is part science, part adventure and part comedy, is a love letter to Wyoming landscapes, gritty human adventure and, mostly, the incredible annual cycles of migrating animals.

"We're targeting an audience that usually isn't a target for science education or conservation-oriented type stories."

Dwinnell has been studying mule deer since 2011, first in the Jackson area and more recently in the Wyoming Range. As part of her work, she and other scientists collar and track mule deer migrations. One thing she's noticed is just how incredible those routes are. Pregnant does give birth to fawns in rocky amphitheaters, bucks crest peaks, the animals travel over 100 miles through vastly diverse landscapes.



It's one thing to envision these routes based on GPS coordinates and computer mapping, she said. But over the years, a curiosity grew to experience them firsthand too. "I wanted to go out to see what it's like," she said. "We have this research on [mule deer] following the green wave as vegetation greens up, but what does that look like on the landscape?"

The documentary was born. Dwinnell enlisted two friends — radio reporter Tennessee Watson and field naturalist Anya Tyson — to join her, as well as filmmakers Morgain Heim and Jayme Dittmar. And one overcast day in May

of 2018, loaded with heavy packs, they set out to follow the 85-mile spring migration of Deer 139.

Why Deer 139? This female deer has an exciting route. From the rolling sageland of her winter range, she moves up and over rocky ridges and into the snowy Wyoming Range to her summer destination: a stunning cirque high in the mountains. She does so all on the verge of giving birth.

★ FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FILM, VISIT DEER139FILM.ORG.

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WYOMING TRIVIA

CHRISTMAS TREE CUTTING IN WYOMING



U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land use permits are available for a variety of products, including Christmas trees. Both agencies offer permits at their field offices around the state, along with advice and guidelines for proper tree cutting:

1. Stay on designated roads and respect private land.

Some tree cutting areas may be inaccessible after snowfall – early season cutting is advisable.



2. Be sure that you are cutting a tree in the proper place.

The U.S. Forest Service stipulates that trees may not be cut within 100 feet of roads or within 200 feet of campgrounds, picnic areas, scenic pullouts, administrative sites, timber sale areas or designated Wilderness areas. Distances may be greater for state highways and scenic byways.

3. Choose a tree that is growing with other trees in a cluster, not standing alone.

The forest environment benefits by thinning the clusters and allowing the strong trees to remain and provide for a healthy genetic source for the future forest.

4. Be prepared!

Tree cutters traveling through Wyoming’s public lands should be prepared for poor road conditions or inclement weather. Make sure you have everything you need for an outdoor venture including warm clothes, food, water and safety equipment.



5. Let someone know where you’ll be going and when you plan to return.

If you get stranded, call for help and stay with your group and vehicle until help arrives.



6. Please dispose of trees properly.

Consider composting or using as firewood, if those are options available to you.

7. Keep in mind that hunting seasons are usually open during these times.

The BLM advises wearing bright colors.



To read about Ty Stockton's Christmas tree cutting experience, turn to page 36.

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Rural America is in jeopardy if we don't get broadband into these places. Many people want to live and work in smaller, rural areas, but they need the internet. - Russ Elliott, Wyoming Business Council



BY GAYLE M. IRWIN

internet usage

has exploded during the past 20 years. However, there are areas, including a large portion of Wyoming, that do not have reliable, high-speed service. Several entities, including state government, are making stronger internet to those locations a priority.

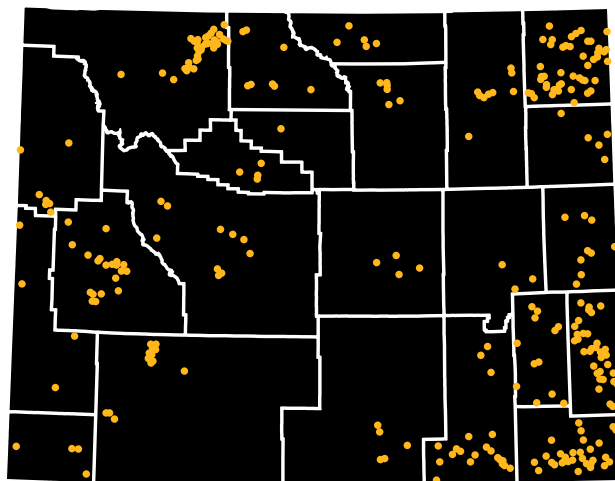
CONNECTING WYOMING

“Access to reliable and affordable high-speed broadband, even in remote areas, is critical in today’s digital economy,” said Governor Mark Gordon. “If we don’t improve broadband connectivity, agriculture producers and communities in rural areas will ultimately not be able to be competitive in the global economy. If we want to keep young people in our state and expand economic opportunities, broadband is crucial.”

“Wyoming is part of the underserved, and our area is the unserved of the underserved,” said Lisa Miller, chief executive officer at Goshen County Economic Development. “Not having reliable internet service is detrimental to our businesses and residents.” When the internet goes down, it’s cost our businesses considerable money, loss of productivity and safety. Internet service is integral to our current businesses and residence, as well as a key infrastructure component to recruiting new businesses.”

Last year, the state set aside funds to bring reliable, high-speed internet to rural Wyoming through a broadband development program managed by the Wyoming Business Council. An advisory council

Opposite: Visionary crews install broadband equipment in Ophir, Colorado.



● SURVEY RESULTS: NO BROADBAND AVAILABLE
According to the Wyoming Business Council broadband map, 427 of 2,617 respondents reported no broadband available on December 2, 2019. (See “Next Steps” on page 19 for information about this survey.)

was established that created a plan to help rural areas, such as Fort Laramie, move beyond basic internet service.

The Town of Fort Laramie accepts credit card payments for utilities. However, the current internet service is unreliable and slow, said Town Clerk Kim Craft.

“We have to go into the system and enter everything manually,” she said. “Having broadband would help not just the town, but all our businesses, and increase our opportunities with businesses that might come to town.”

Miller agreed.

“To have reliable service and be able to expand is crucial,” she said. “Being able to ensure Goshen County businesses and residents the needed technology to function and operate in addition to recruiting other entities to our county is not a ‘nice to have’ it’s a ‘must have.’”

partnership

OPPORTUNITIES

Bringing broadband internet to those communities and other rural areas is also a priority for the state's electric co-ops. For example, Wyrulec now has a partnership with Gillette-based internet provider Visionary Communication. In early 2019, Wyrulec installed a new metering system at the Pine Ridge subdivision north of Fort Laramie and discovered an opportunity to bring broadband to the area.

“At that time we were visiting with Visionary, and it just so happened where we needed to put our routers in for metering was also a great spot for them to put their equipment in for broadband. We were able to partner with them, bringing broadband to that subdivision,” said Ryan Schilreff, Wyrulec’s general manager.

That project “kickstarted” additional opportunities, he said.

“We’re working with Visionary to put fiber on our poles,” Schilreff said. “We at Wyrulec don’t want to jump into the broadband business, although some electric co-ops around the country are doing that. We felt like we wanted to help facilitate [broadband development] and partner with somebody to help them get more broadband out there to the

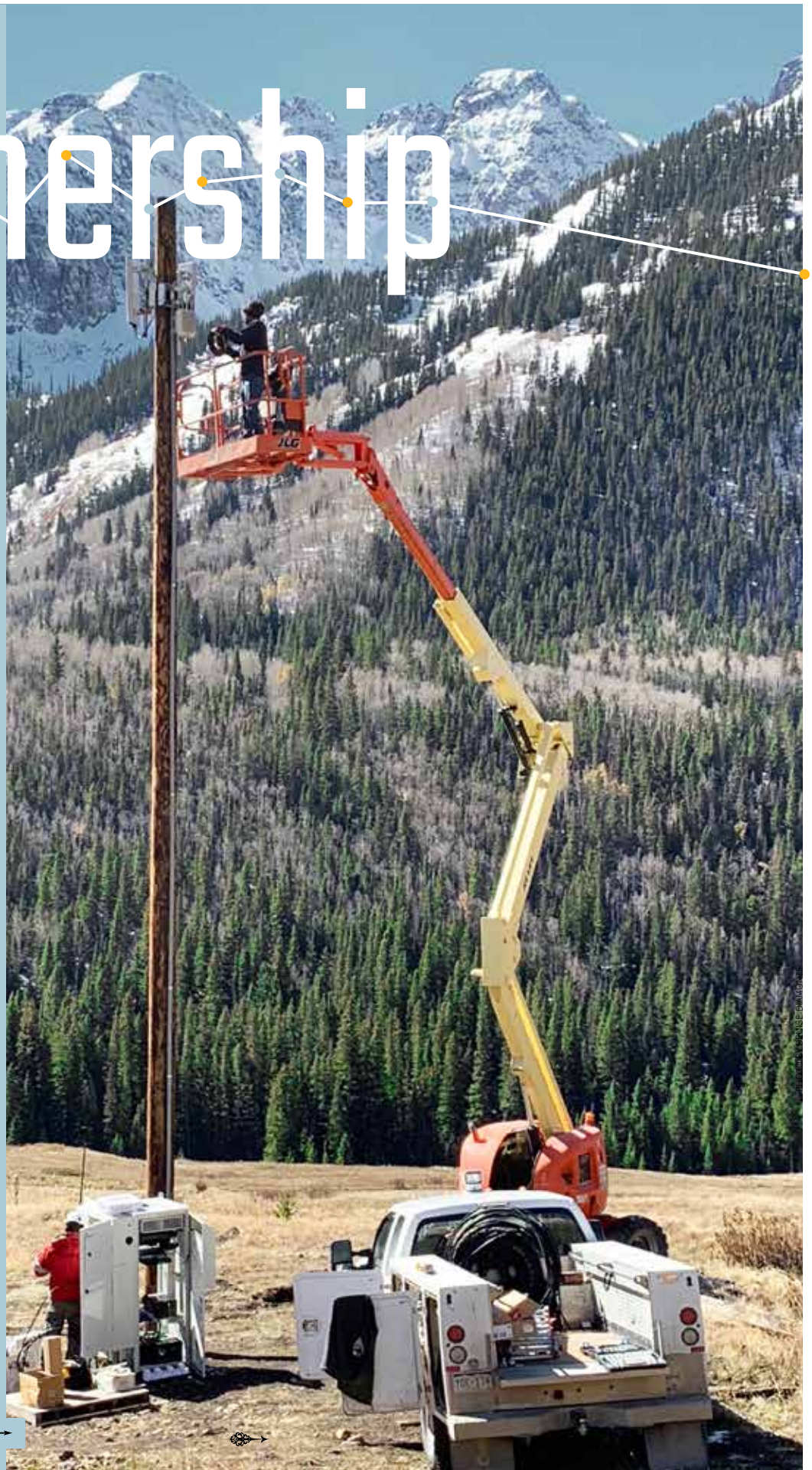


PHOTO COURTESY BRIAN WORTHEN

← rural communities and to our members. We hope that this project starts the process for more throughout our counties.”

Brian Worthen, CEO of Visionary Communications, said his company appreciates such partnerships. The business has brought high-speed service to ranching communities and tiny towns, like Bill. Experiences from customers as to how having reliable, high-speed service makes a difference helps him better “understand” the need.

“A woman came up to me once and said that our service to her rural area changed her life,” he recalled. “That’s a good feeling. If it takes longer to have a return on our investment, that’s okay. The stories help justify that. My employees take pride in their work, and these stories of how we’ve helped our customers are encouraging.”

Ranchers coming together with their neighbors to bring high-speed internet to their locales “is pretty common,” he added.

Some counties are also banding together to entice internet providers to their area. A joint powers board is developing between Goshen, Platte and Niobrara counties, Miller said.

“We don’t have the population [within our individual counties] that broadband companies require when investing their funds,” she said. “They know what Goshen County’s infrastructure needs are, however until there is a solid business case for their investment, they’re not going to just dive in. Our tri-county focused effort combined with federal funding builds a stronger case for internet providers to invest in our rural counties, resulting in a win-win for all.”



PHOTO BY GAVLE IRWIN

The moon rises near Jeffrey City.

funding

POSSIBILITIES

Funding options also come from an initiative by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through grants, partial grant/partial loan money and 100 percent loan money. Internet providers apply for these funds, said Scott Sutherland, USDA’s Rural Development business and cooperative program director in Casper.

“Broadband is a basic infrastructure item and an economic driver,” he said. “You can’t move forward without excellent access to broadband. It touches virtually every aspect of our lives: business, education, health ... We need to prepare for now and the future.”

“No longer do we live in a little bubble within our local community, within the state, or even within the nation, we’re on a digital, global economy,” said Wally Wolski, USDA state director for Wyoming. “Internet for rural Wyoming people is a No. 1 priority as we move forward into a technological 21st century.”

According to the Federal Communications Commission’s 2018 Broadband Deployment Report, 80 percent of the 24 million American households which do not have reliable, affordable, high-speed internet service live in rural areas.

“The Secretary of Agriculture ... believes broadband is the key to bridging the gap between the urban sector and the rural sector,” Wolski said. “The USDA will be the vehicle for delivery of programs and financial support for broadband in rural areas.”



Rural Broadband Summit speakers included, from left, Russ Elliott, Karen Perry of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Governor Mark Gordon and Wally Wolski.



PHOTO BY LAURE ANDERSON, USDA

U.S. Department of Agriculture Hosts First Wyoming Federal Rural Broadband Summit

In October, the USDA hosted the 2019 Wyoming Rural Broadband Summit. Despite foul weather, more than 100 people gathered in Casper for this event, said Wally Wolski, state director for the agency.

“The purpose of the summit was to assist and empower local citizens, to enhance communities by taking essential first steps, and to reshape communities and drive rural prosperity,” he said. “To do so, there’s three things we planned to do: share best practices, discuss common problems, and seek out new partnership opportunities.”

A variety of presenters spoke, including Governor Mark Gordon.

“The governor’s remarks included a reminder of the importance of having a statewide conversation about our future, and that broadband is an important piece of that picture,” said Gordon’s communications director, Michael Pearlman. “He

noted that broadband build-out is occurring slowly but needs to occur more rapidly if we want to keep our state economically competitive. He also noted that broadband connectivity is critical to improving health care access in our rural state.”

“Just like 80 years ago with electricity, broadband will empower lives,” Wolski said. “We want to make sure we don’t have two classes of citizens in Wyoming – everybody deserves broadband; it levels the playing field.”

The Wyoming Rural Electric Association and Wyoming Telecommunications Association sponsored the summit’s breaks. Wolski believes these organizations “will play a key role in Wyoming’s broadband future.”

He believes another broadband summit will take place next year, and he hopes to offer virtual connection for people who cannot attend in person.

NEXT steps

In October, Wolski’s office hosted a broadband summit (see sidebar). From that endeavor, and the progress made in the past year by the Wyoming Business Council, next steps are in the works. Russ Elliott, former broadband manager for the council, developed a map by which to collect information regarding internet usage and connectivity in Wyoming.

To take part in the survey visit wyobbmap.org.

“Data is being accumulated,” Elliott said prior to leaving earlier this fall. “In order to figure out where the need is, you have to know where the people are who are experiencing slow internet connections. Rural America is in jeopardy if we don’t get broadband into these places. Many people want to live and work in smaller, rural areas, but they need the internet.”

Schilreff agreed. “Broadband allows people to do many things. I think getting that out to more areas in the counties would serve our members well, whether they run a private business out of their house, whether they are looking at agricultural reports or cattle videos, or whether their children are needing to do homework.”

The various partnership and funding opportunities can spur future connectivity in the state.

“Wyoming is a very roll-up-your-sleeves state,” Visionary’s Worthen said. “There’s a lot of people here who don’t wait around for something to happen; there’s people in the state who are willing to ‘do.’ The key to broadband is getting those people the right level of excited, the right level of funding, the right level of support. We’ve done a lot of amazing things in this state when you think about other sources of revenue, and it’s time to focus on broadband and tech in Wyoming. This state can do a lot, for sure!” **W**

Gayle M. Irwin is a freelance writer based in Casper.

South of the Continental Divide



ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA PEREZ

The Continental Divide is an interesting place to stand with one foot on each side. In theory, if you stand there in a rainstorm, the water running down one leg will end up in the Atlantic Ocean, and the rain on the other leg will end up in the Pacific. (Don't try this – it's a bad idea to stand in a rainstorm on the Continental Divide.) But that's not always true in Wyoming.

The southernmost piece of the divide in Wyoming is at the crest of the Sierra Madre, about halfway across the state, and the divide exits the state to the west through Yellowstone National Park, into Idaho. As you might expect, the highest point on the Continental Divide in Wyoming is also the highest point in Wyoming, the top of Gannett Peak (13,804 feet/4,207 meters) in the Wind River Mountains.

But between the Sierra Madre and the Wind River Mountains, the divide splits as it follows two relatively low ridges, forming the Great Divide Basin between. Precipitation that falls in the basin has no opportunity to flow into any river or ocean; instead, it flows into several small, salty lakes, from which it evaporates. Such basins are called endorheic, which means "interior drainage." The edges of this basin mark the lowest elevations (about 7000 ft/2130 m) of the divide in the region, and an easy crossing used by transcontinental railways and highways. However, because the basin is dry and salty,

earlier travelers went north around the basin, crossing the Continental Divide at South Pass (elevation 7,412 feet/2,259 meters).

There is another place in Wyoming where rain and snow do not run to an ocean – the Bear River drainage in the far southwestern corner. The Bear River, while entirely on the west side of the Continental Divide, flows into another endorheic basin, the Great Basin, and Great Salt Lake.

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Two adult tiger salamanders.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZACK LANGE, WYOMING GAME AND FISH



the amazing
State Amphibian

How would you like to choose which stage of maturity you want to stay in for the rest of your life? Or if you grow lungs and legs? Sound futuristic?

Not for the creature named the blotched tiger salamander. This amazing animal became the official Wyoming state amphibian in February due to the efforts of English teacher Ben Catton, science teacher Chip Woolwine and the Pathfinder High School science students in Lander.

BY NEVA BODIN

It is the only salamander known in Wyoming; it's native to the region and, "They blanket the state," said Woolwine. "From the get-go, they've been here."

I first experienced the creature some years ago, near the edge of a high mountain stock pond in north central Wyoming. Small creatures stayed just below the surface as the brown, opaque water rippled with activity. Something in the mud beside the water caught my eye – a creature that seemed half-fish, half-salamander lay posed in death. It was light gray, had dark feathery fronds lying flat on the sides of its head, had four feet and appeared suited for crawling or swimming. I thought I'd found a mudpuppy. After contacting Wendy Estes-Zumpf, herpetological coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, I learned mudpuppies don't live in Wyoming, but blotched tiger salamanders do.

A mudpuppy and an immature tiger salamander look remarkably alike. Research suggests differences: mudpuppies have four toes on each of four feet and remain aquatic, using gills to acquire oxygen from water, though they have a limited ability to breathe through lungs and their skin; the mature tiger salamander has five toes on each of two back feet, with four on each front foot, loses its gills as it matures, breathes through its lungs and to a limited extent, through its skin.

Tiger salamanders possess amazing powers of adaptability to Wyoming's wide range of weather patterns and geographical features. In a land-locked pond such as the place where I found them, they may retain their gills from the larval stage (an early stage of development). If the pond dries up, lungs develop and legs may grow larger so the innovative creatures can move on. The gills absorb back into the body.

Fully developed adult female salamanders hide fertilized eggs, which charac-

teristically hatch in four weeks, on stems, stones or pieces of wood in the water. After hatching, explained Estes-Zumpf, they become larvae for one or two seasons, then "kick into metamorphosis mode," and become terrestrial (living on land) adults. Or not.

"If conditions are just right, they might not ever turn into the adult stage ... staying in a neotenic phase," Woolwine said. Salamanders that retain juvenile



Tiger salamanders possess amazing powers of adaptability to Wyoming's wide range of weather patterns and geographical features.

features and remain aquatic may grow to a greater length – up to 14 inches – than those that mature into terrestrial animals which typically reach 6-8 inches.

When terrestrial, "They migrate to breeding ponds in March or April several miles across the snow," said Estes-Zumpf. "They occur at all elevations from mountains to basins." During winter months they live in underground burrows.

Their diet is mostly small invertebrates such as insects and worms, although Estes-Zumpf said larvae can become cannibalistic. They may dine on small frogs and other aquatic animals and they play a major role in eating mosquito larvae.

They can also be on the menu. Fish, toads, turtles and water snakes eat

salamander larvae. An acquaintance of Woolwine observed a Blue Heron eating adult salamanders. Fishermen sometimes use them for bait.

Want to know them better? Estes-Zumpf said, "They are easy to keep as pets. There's no problem having them as pets in Wyoming. They are harmless and charismatic."

They can be kept in an aquarium-type enclosure and need access to water to keep their skin moist. Because the salamanders need clean skin to breathe, humans need to wash their hands and rinse them well before handling the animal.

"We have five of them in our classroom," said Woolwine. "The students will walk over to the tank and they'll come up to the glass; they're begging for food." His class feeds them mealworms every other day.

How did Wyoming come to be one of the few states naming a state amphibian? As Woolwine's class studied vertebrates in 2017, they realized there was no state amphibian. Woolwine, who loves herpetology, said "[The tiger salamander] is a great species ... everyone we ran into had a soft spot for these salamanders." So the project-based class went to work.

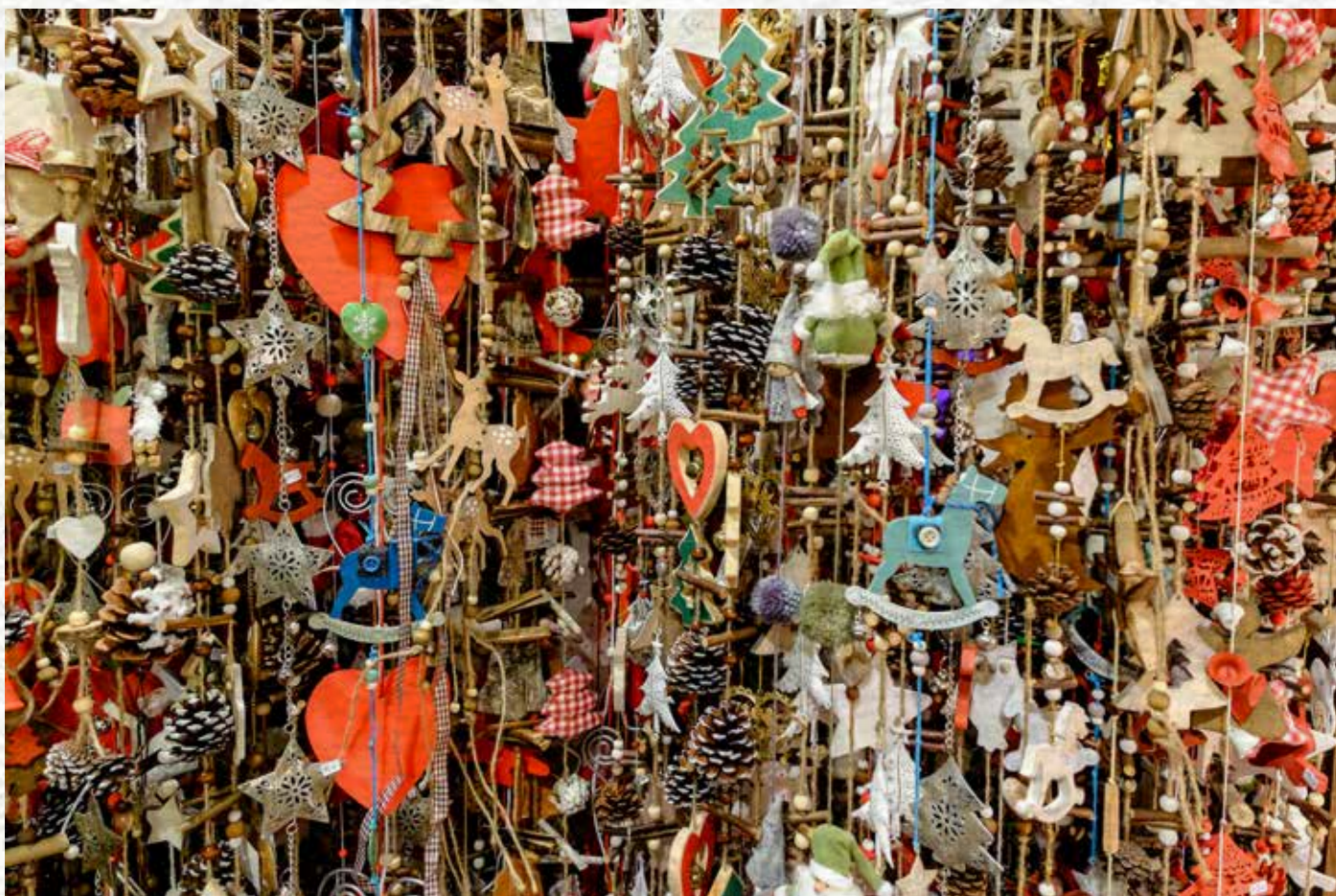
He is proud of his students who learned "the arduous process" to have a bill passed, met with the governor and other politicians to find a sponsor and two co-sponsors, and traveled to Cheyenne to present their bill to the house and senate. "The whole school got involved," said Woolwine. "It was a fantastic learning experience." Thanks to an amazing, adaptable and silent Wyoming native. **W**

Neva Bodin is a Casper-based freelance writer, registered nurse, painter and poet.



Did you know that Christmas trees have been around since long before Christmas? For thousands of years and in many parts of the world, people adorned their homes with cheery evergreens in the darkening days leading up to the winter solstice.

During the Middle Ages, Germans began adding ornaments to their greenery – starting with simple apples to represent the Garden of Eden. But Christmas trees weren't part of mainstream culture outside of Germany until the Christmas of 1848, when fashionable Queen Victoria encouraged her German husband, Prince Albert, to decorate a tree as he did in childhood. This fanciful tree, bedecked with sweets, ornaments, candles and an angel topper, was featured in a posh London society magazine that season – and the rest is history.



The tradition of handmade ornaments is alive and well in Vienna, Austria. Set a stopwatch and challenge yourself to spot as many of the following 20 items as you can. You'll need both your time and the number of items you found in order to read your results on page 35.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> RED MITTEN | <input type="checkbox"/> FAWN WITH 7 SPOTS | <input type="checkbox"/> GOLD CHAIN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE OWL | <input type="checkbox"/> RED PINECONE | <input type="checkbox"/> POLKA DOT TREE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANGEL | <input type="checkbox"/> SILVER BELL | <input type="checkbox"/> TAN 4-HOLE BUTTON |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRICE TAG | <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE 4-HOLE BUTTON | <input type="checkbox"/> GINGHAM STAR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BRAIDED PIGTAIL | <input type="checkbox"/> WHITE HEART | <input type="checkbox"/> RED STAR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GLOWING LIGHT | <input type="checkbox"/> GOLD HEART | <input type="checkbox"/> SILVER SPIRAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GREEN POMPON | <input type="checkbox"/> RED HORSE | |



THE ENCHANTED SONATA

BY HEATHER DIXON WALLWORK

From the publisher

ORDERING INFORMATION:

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ISBN: 978-1732831513

Publisher: The Wallworkshop

Available at local and online booksellers.

Heather Dixon Wallwork, of Salt Lake City, worked as a storyboard lead for Disney and is the author of two novels published by HarperCollins. Beyond art and the written word she has a deep love for music, performing the flute and piano regularly. Her latest book combines her knack for a good story with her passion for song, culminating in the breathtaking young adult novel *The Enchanted Sonata*, which provides a new twist to the beloved holiday classic, *The Nutcracker*.

In *The Enchanted Sonata*, 15-year-old Clara Stahlbaum has her future perfectly planned: marry the handsome pianist, Johan Kahler, and settle down to a life full of music. But all that changes when Clara receives a mysterious and magical nutcracker.

Whisked away to his world – an enchanted empire of beautiful palaces, fickle fairies, enormous rats, and a prince – Clara must face a magician who uses music as magic ... and the future she thought she wanted.

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JOE GONZALEZ



Every Single Sport

BY RACHEL GIRT

When not working for the Wyrulec Company, Joe Gonzalez spends the majority of his spare time coaching youth sports and volunteering in Torrington.

"I just love coaching kids from the first practice where they don't know the sport to the end when they pick it up," Gonzalez says. "It makes me happy that they are learning and having fun."

Whether coaching a team or helping one of his four kids practice, Gonzalez participates in so many different sports that he has a constant rotation of various sports equipment in his truck. Warmer months equate to flag football, soccer and baseball. Winter may mean basketball, volleyball or wrestling.

Gonzalez says that he learned the importance of giving back to the community from his grandfather and one of his supervisors when he served eight years in the Air Force.

With his grandfather's encouragement, Gonzalez played many sports growing up in Torrington. He explained, "We're a small town. We don't have enough people to play just one sport, so we usually play every single sport."

Despite working two jobs, his grandfather coached sports and was very involved in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOE GONZALEZ

Gonzalez's sports participation. "I guess that I followed his lead," he said, referencing his current involvement in youth sports and his children's sports activities.

After high school, Gonzalez joined the Air Force. While stationed in Florida, Gonzalez said that one of his supervisors encouraged him to volunteer. "He didn't have a wife or kids either. When we hung out, he started taking me around to different places downtown to volunteer like serving food at Thanksgiving to the homeless."

Those volunteer efforts soon branched off to Gonzalez, helping his friends' kids and coaching basketball, soccer and flag football.

After his military service, Gonzalez worked for the city of Torrington in the electrical department for about two years before joining Wyrulec, first as a journeyman lineman and now as a meter tech. He has worked for Wyrulec for over seven years now.

Colleen Brown, Wyrulec billing capital credit specialist, and the three other women in the front office work closely with Gonzalez. He always has a positive

attitude with coworkers and members, she says, adding that his contributions to the Torrington community go way beyond work.

As a small community, word has also gotten around about his coaching so many different sports, she explains. "He's very involved with his own family's sports, but it goes way beyond that. We've heard about how much patience he has, especially with the younger ones."

Gonzalez began coaching in Torrington after he married his wife Lacy and gained two stepchildren. "I heard that you should be involved with everything your kids do, so I did."

First, he helped with basketball for his stepson and his stepdaughter with T-ball and then softball. When his stepdaughter left softball for cheerleading, he kept coaching T-ball even though he had no children on the teams at the time. He has coached T-ball for about nine years now.

With the birth of two additional sons, several years apart, Gonzalez's family has grown, as have his coaching duties.

This past summer was pretty busy, going straight from work to coaching, Gonzalez admits. He coached his 7-year-old son in baseball and his youngest, a 4-year-old, in T-ball. "My days are pretty long," he laughs.

As a coach, Gonzalez focuses on developing the basic fundamentals necessary to be able to play and encouraging other parents to help coach. His favorite is helping the little kids, because of the overall enthusiasm they bring. "It's a good feeling seeing them grow, learn the terminology, and pick up the sport."

Gonzalez doesn't coach his older children anymore but still practices with them. "We still shoot hoops at the gym and work on my stepdaughter's serve for volleyball," he said.

Coaching is not Gonzalez's only volunteer activity. Gonzalez is one of Jan Alexander's "roadies" for the annual Cut-a-Thon, a fundraiser put on by The Class Act, the salon that Alexander owns and where Lacy Gonzalez works. One day each summer, the salon cuts hair outside and donates its proceeds to different organizations. This year's event raised \$10,000 for the Candy Thompson Memorial Dog Park.

"Joe helps any way he can. The night before, he runs all the wires and extension cords for everything that we need outside and helps me set up," Alexander said. "If he's not working, he's there all day for the Cut-a-Thon."


Gonzalez has also been known to dress up and lip-sync to entertain the attendees at the annual Ladies Night Out, which

raises money for those battling breast cancer in Goshen County.

"Our MTV-style lip-sync battle is a seriously good time, and we raise money to help people here who have breast cancer," Gonzalez said.

Volunteering efforts can make a tremendous impact on communities and states.

In 2018, 147,341 volunteers contributed 13.2 million hours of service in Wyoming. Those volunteer hours added up to an estimated economic value of more than \$320.2 million.

Gonzalez added, "I just enjoy helping and doing whatever I can to help our community." 

Rachel Girt is a freelance writer and owner of Girt Communications based in Cheyenne.



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ONE DISH MEAL

ONE DISH QUESO CHICKEN CASSEROLE

- 4 CUPS SHREDDED CHICKEN
- 1 PKG TACO SEASONING MIX
- 1 (15 OZ) CAN BLACK BEANS, DRAINED AND RINSED
- 1 (4.5 OZ) CAN CHOPPED GREEN CHILIES
- 1 (14.5 OZ) CAN FIRE ROASTED DICED TOMATOES, UNDRAINED
- 8 OZ VELVEETA ORIGINAL CHEESE, CUT INTO 1/2 INCH CUBES
- 1 CUP SHREDDED MEXICAN CHEESE BLEND

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 13 x 9 glass baking dish with cooking spray. In a large bowl, mix chicken, taco seasoning mix, black beans, green chilies, tomatoes and cheese cubes. Spread in baking dish.

Cover, bake 30 to 40 minutes or until bubbly and heated through. Uncover and top with shredded cheese. Bake another 5 minutes or until cheese is melted.

NANCY DENK ★ RIVERTON

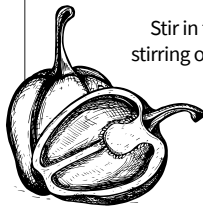
AMERICAN GOULASH

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 LBS GROUND BEEF | 2 (14.5 OUNCE) CANS DICED TOMATOES WITH GARLIC, BASIL AND OREGANO, JUICE INCLUDED |
| 1 LARGE ONION, CHOPPED | 3 TBS WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE |
| 1 GREEN PEPPER, CHOPPED | 2 TBS DRIED OREGANO |
| 1 RED PEPPER, CHOPPED | 2 TSP DRIED BASIL |
| 2 STALKS CELERY, CHOPPED | 1 TBS SEASONED SALT |
| 4 LARGE CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED OR GARLIC POWDER TO TASTE | 1/2 TSP BLACK PEPPER |
| 3 CUPS WATER | 2 CUPS ELBOW MACARONI UNCOOKED |
| 2 BEEF BOUILLION CUBES | |

In a large pot brown the meat over medium heat until cooked. Stir in onion, green pepper, red pepper, celery and garlic. Cook until tender.

Stir in water, beef bouillon cubes, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, oregano, basil, seasoned salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the pasta, cover and simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally until the pasta is tender, about 25 minutes. Remove from heat. Serve with crusty French bread.



NANCY DENK ★ RIVERTON

SKILLET CHILI SOUP

- 3/4 CUP SLICED ONION
- 1 LB BURGER (BEEF OR GAME)
- 1 (16-OZ) CAN KIDNEY BEANS, DRAINED
- 1 (28-OZ) CAN CRUSHED TOMATOES, UNDRAINED
- 3/4 CUP GREEN PEPPER STRIPS
- 1 TSP CHILI POWDER
- 2 CLOVES GARLIC, CRUSHED
- 1 TSP SALT
- 1/4 TSP CRUSHED RED PEPPER, OPTIONAL

In large skillet, sauté onion and meat until browned; drain off fat. Add tomatoes, kidney beans, green pepper, chili powder, garlic, salt and (if desired) red pepper. Bring to boiling. Lower heat and simmer uncovered for 20 minutes.

ANNE METZLER ★ RIVERTON



MARCH: BEEF

Do you have a chicken recipe for the February issue? Send the recipe by January 10!

SUBMIT A RECIPE

Send complete recipe by February 10!

Please include your name, address and phone number.

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- 🌐 wyomingrea.org/wren-submissions

WHAT'S HAPPENING REGIONAL MAP



01 | SOUTHEAST

GUERNSEY

FOURTH SUNDAYS

American Legion Riders: 2p, Crazy Tony's Bar & Grill, info 307-575-0838.



SARATOGA

JANUARY 18-19

Ice Fishing Derby: This event has been held at Saratoga Lake every year since 1983. In 2017, it was voted Best Annual Event in Carbon County. Saratoga Lake, info 307-326-8855.



TORRINGTON

JANUARY 25

Sagebrush & Roses: This black tie and blue jean gala is an elegant evening of dinner and dancing. Fundraiser for Eastern Wyoming College agriculture programs. 6p, Goshen County Rendezvous Center, \$75, info 307-532-8206, ewcsagebrushandroses.com.

SECOND TUESDAYS

Lunch-N-Learn: Bring your lunch and questions about social media, human resources and more at Goshen County Economic Development talks. 12-1p, 21st&Main Loft, info 307-532-5162.

02 | NORTHEAST

BUFFALO

THURSDAYS

Bluegrass Jam Session: 6:30p, Occidental Saloon, free, info 307-684-0451.

GILLETTE

THIRD SATURDAYS

Farmers' Market: Come out and enjoy a unique blend of crafts, produce, meats, jams, jellies and community. Always welcoming new vendors. 9a-noon, Gillette College Tech Center, info on Facebook.

TUESDAYS

Levis and Lace: Square dance club will give modern square dance lessons, 7:30p, Rockpile Community Center, free trial lessons, info 307-660-7207.

ONGOING

Ava Community Art Center: Info avacenter.org or 307-682-9133.

NEWCASTLE

SECOND & FOURTH WEDNESDAYS

GiGi's Closet: Providing free gently-used clothing for the family. 9a-1p, First United Methodist Church, info 307-746-4119.

RECLUSE

JANUARY 25

Chili Cookoff: Recluse Community Trust fundraiser with live music and dance to follow cookoff. 5-7p, 110 Greenough Rd, \$150 to enter cookoff, \$10 to attend. Info on Facebook "Recluse Community."

SHERIDAN

SUNDAYS IN JANUARY

Classic Western Film Series: Various films will be shown. 2p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, \$12.50, \$7 student, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

FEATURED EVENT



FURNITURE REHAB WORKSHOP

JANUARY 11-19 ★ 8A-9P

GILLETTE

CAM-PLEX Central Pavilion

Northeast Wyoming Furniture Restorers hosts open hours workshop with demonstrations, mini workshops, mentoring and heated indoor space to work. \$90 for 9 days, info 307-660-6577, Facebook, ssranch10@hughes.net.

NORTHEAST

JANUARY 23

National Theatre Live, All My Sons: 6:30p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, \$16, \$11 student, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

JANUARY 23

Nicole Foran Artist Talk & Exhibition Opening: 4-6p, Whitney Center for the Arts, info 307-670-0360.

FEBRUARY 1

Hillbilly Silly Science Spectacular: 10a, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, \$12.50, \$10.50 senior & military, \$7 student, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

FEBRUARY 2

Mark Bergman Recital: 2p, Whitney Center for the Arts, info 307-670-0360.

**FEBRUARY 6**

A Far Cry: Boston based Grammy-nominated string orchestra will perform. 7p, Whitney Center for the Arts, \$35, \$25 senior, \$10 student, info 307-670-0360.

FEBRUARY 9

The Peking Acrobats: 7p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, \$30, \$26.50 senior & military, \$14.50 student, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

FEBRUARY 18

Llama Llama Live! 6p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, \$14.50, \$12 senior & military, \$9 student, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

FEBRUARY 27

Aaron Treeher Artist Talk & Exhibition Opening: 4-6p, Whitney Center for the Arts, info 307-670-0360.

**UPTON****JANUARY 22**

Chicken and Noodles Dinner: Fundraiser for Upton Senior Center. 5-7p, at the center, \$8, info 307-468-2587.

JANUARY 25

Chamber of Commerce Installation Banquet: 6-12p, Community Center, info 307-468-2642.

MONDAYS & THURSDAYS

Zumba: 4p, Senior Center, \$5, info 307-391-0223.

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS

Indoor Archery: 12-8:30p, 2741 N. Hwy 116, \$5, info 307-468-2506.

ONGOING

Senior Center Activities: Lunch is served at noon Mon-Fri, \$4, call for reservation before 9a. 307-468-9267. Stop by Tue morning for coffee and treats, with an exercise program at 9a. Seniors welcome Thu and Fri from 1-4p. Potluck at 5:30p third Mon. Ask about medical equipment loans. 1113 2nd St., info 307-468-9251.



WREN does not publish a January issue.

FEBRUARY ISSUE:

Send complete information for events from February 20th to March 20th by January 10!

MARCH ISSUE:

Send complete information for events from March 20th to April 20th by February 10!

Be sure to include the date, title, description, time, cost, location, address and contact information for each event.

Photos are always welcome.



Look for more events at wyomingrea.org/news.

QUESTIONS & SUBMISSIONS:

✉ wren@wyomingrea.org

☎ [307] 772-1968

✉ 214 W. Lincolnway Ste. 21C Cheyenne, WY 82001

💻 wyomingrea.org/wren-submissions

03 | NORTHWEST**CODY****ONGOING**

Cody Country Art League Gallery: 9a-5p Mon-Sat, 836 Sheridan Ave, info 307-587-3597.

**DUBOIS****DECEMBER 21**

Holiday Movie Showings: Playing different movies and serving popcorn. 11a-4p, Dubois Public Library, info 307-455-2992.

DECEMBER 30

New Year's Eve "Eve" Party: Dance to the music of Packin' the Mail, bring finger food and beverage. 7-11p, Headwaters Art and Conference Center, donations accepted. Info 307-455-2687, headwaterscenter.org.

**JANUARY 25**

Dubois Soupenny: Soup and bread cookoff competition includes prizes for taster's choice, 5p. Hootenanny follows at 7p with area musicians performing. Bake sale throughout the evening. This event supports Headwaters, Needs of Dubois and Kiwanis of Dubois. Headwaters Arts and Conference Center, \$5, under 6 free, info 307-455-3534.

**NOVEMBER-MARCH****Guided Wildlife Viewing**

Tours: Hours-long guided tours include biology, history and photo opportunities. Bag lunches available on request. National Bighorn Sheep Center. Register 48 hours in advance 307-455-3429.

ONGOING

Library Activities: Storytime for birth-5 years 10:30a Fri; Lego Duplo Club for toddlers and preschoolers 11a Fri; and Lego Club for grades K-5, 3:30p Dec. 3&17, Dubois Public Library, info 307-455-2992.

LANDER**DECEMBER 31**

New Year's Eve Party: Come see a special midnight fireworks show. 10p-1:30a, Shoshone Rose Casino and Hotel. Info 307-206-7000, shoshonerose.com.

JANUARY 1

First Day Hike: Bring snowshoes or good boots for 3-mile hike on the Canyon Loop Trail. Dogs on leashes permitted. Refreshments provided after the hike. 1-3p, meet at the nature trail parking lot in the Popo Agie Campground at Sinks Canyon State Park. Info 307-332-6333, sinkscanyonstatepark.org.

JANUARY 10-FEBRUARY 21**Red Desert Audubon Art**

Show: Opening reception 6-8p Jan 10. Art show ongoing Tue-Thu 10-6p, Fri-Sat 10a-4p. Lander Art Center, info 307-332-5772, landerartcenter.com.

FEBRUARY 4-5**Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog**

Race: Feb 4 meet and greet on Lander's Main Street 5:30-6:30p. Lander Bake Shop hosts the 2019 Pedigree Stage Stop movie. Feb 5 race 9-11a at Louis Lake parking lot on South Pass Hwy 28. Do not bring dogs. Info 307-343-6130, facebook, wyomingstagestop.org/stages/lander-wy.

**JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2****Wyoming State Winter Fair:**

Trade show features vendors from around the region, Fri 2-8p, Sat 10a-8p. Lander Community Center, info 307-335-5585. **Horse Show** includes over 40 classes: showmanship, lead line, English equitation, poles and barrels and more. Registration 7:30a, shows 9a-3p, Lander Rodeo Grounds. Info 307-349-5844, wyomingstatewinterfair.org.

ONGOING

First Friday: New artist and local musician each month. Art show reception 5p, music 6p. Middle Fork Restaurant. Info 307-335-5035, facebook.com/MiddleForkCafe.

RIVERTON**FEBRUARY 14-16****Ice Melter Mini-Z Remote**

Controlled Car Races: National Contest at the Wind River Hotel Casino. Fri set up and practice. Sat qualifiers 10a-3p. Sun Last chance qualifiers and finals 9a-3p. Regional racers compete for prizes. 10269 Hwy 789, info 307-840-3761, shannon@shannonwattsart.com.

SHOSHONI**JANUARY 1**

First Day Hike: Bring good boots and dress warmly for 1-mile hike through moderate to difficult terrain. Dogs on leashes permitted, refreshments served. 10a, Boysen State Park Headquarters, info 307-876-2796, john.bass@wyo.gov.

SOUTH PASS**JANUARY 1**

First Day Hike: Bring good boots and dress warmly for 2-mile hike. Dogs on leashes permitted, refreshments will be served. 11a-1p, meet at the Dance Hall. Info 307-332-3684, southpasscity.com.

THERMOPOLIS**SECOND FRIDAYS**

ArtStroll: Stroll on Broadway Street in Historic Downtown Thermopolis. Info 307-864-3002, gatherer@panix.com.

04 | SOUTHWEST**EVANSTON****DECEMBER 31**

A Roaring Good Time: Evanston Chamber of Commerce New Year's Eve Gala Fundraiser is a 1920s-themed event with dinner, champagne at midnight, cash prize drawings, live music, ball drop. 7p-1a, Historic Roundhouse, info 307-783-0370, evanstonwyo.com.

JANUARY 25

Evanston Area Community Foundation Fundraiser: 7p, Old Post Office, info 307-679-6549.

FORT BRIDGER**JANUARY 1**

First Day Hike: Take in history, scenery, and make new friends as you walk 1 mile around the site with refreshments to follow. 1p, Fort Bridger State Historic Site, free, info 307-782-3842.

TUESDAYS

Bingo: 6p, American Legion Hall, info 307-780-5489.

LYMAN**SECOND FRIDAYS**

Storytime: 11a, Lyman Branch Library, all ages are welcome, free, info 307-787-6556, uintalibrary.org.

MOUNTAIN VIEW**WEDNESDAYS**

Storytime: 11a, Uinta County Library, info 307-782-3161.

SECOND WEDNESDAYS

Chamber of Commerce Community Luncheon: For business owners and individuals alike. \$15/plate, noon, Mountain View Town Hall, RSVP bvchamber@bvea.net, 307-787-6378.

ONGOING

Community Classes: Fitness, computer, workforce and kids' classes are available. Valley Learning Center, times and prices vary. Info valleylearningcenter.coursestorm.com or 307-782-6401.



01
02
03

- 01 | "Professionals" preparing to box the soffit, Charles Dirks, Buffalo
- 02 | Preparing the troops, Dan Borgialli, Buffalo
- 03 | Over the river and through woods ... it's a long way home, Marilyn Norman, Cheyenne

THIS MONTH:

PREPARATIONS

MARCH (DUE JAN 10):

EXPERIMENTING

APRIL (DUE FEB 10):

MACHINES

JUST PICTURE IT



✉ wren@wyomingrea.org
 ✉ 214 W. Lincolnway Ste. 21C Cheyenne, WY 82001
 🌐 wyomingrea.org/wren-submissions

Please include your name, hometown and a title.

Please submit high-quality digital files* or an original we can scan, as well as details about the artwork, the artist's name, and the co-op. *Use the highest quality setting on your camera, or save digital artwork as a .jpg or .tif file with at least 300 dpi resolution. Don't use Kodak Easy Share®.

If you would like your work returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

SANTA WAS IN *a fix*

AL SAMMONS ★ RIVERTON

Santa Claus was in a fix
The worst you could believe.
For his reindeer team had quit him
And it was Christmas Eve.
The situation it was worse
Then that foggy night
When Santa called on Rudolph
To help him in his plight.

For Dancer had bog spavins.
Prancer had a cough.
Donner suffered from the colic
And Blitzen's shoes had all come off.
Comet wheezed from bad distemper.
Cupid's hind leg it was lame.
Dasher was off his feed
And Vixen was the same.
It was early in the journey
Yet the reindeer team was through.
The sleigh was still filled with toys,
What was poor Santa Claus to do?

When Santa saw a dwelling
With window light aglow
He nursed the team to the place
And stopped out in the snow.
He trudged up to the cabin
And knocked upon the door.
He was greeted by a cowboy
Judging from the garb he wore.

"Hello, my name is Santa Claus."
Declared the fat man dressed in red.
"I've had some grave misfortune
That has stopped me in my stead.
You see I drive eight reindeer
Which pull this little sleigh
But my team is ailing
And we can not make our way."
"I'd say you've got some trouble,"
The stranger then did say.
"You're welcome to layover here
And make the trip another day."
"I can not," said Santa,
"For this is Christmas Eve.
What would the children think,
What would they believe,
If on Christmas morning
They found no gifts or toys?
They'd say Santa broke his promise
To all the girls and boys."

The man thought for just a moment.
Then said, "I'll lend a hand.
But best we hurry
If we're to get across this land."
He quick put on his Stetson hat
And a well worn sheepskin coat,
Buckled on his bat wing chaps,
Tied a bandanna round his throat.

— continued —





← continued from →

They went directly to the tack shed
Laid open wide the door,
Out tumbled bridles, saddles,
And packing gear galore.
The sleigh was then unloaded
The toys quickly all re-sacked,
It took but just a minute
Till the loads were ready to be packed.

Then the cowboy whistled
And in from out the night
Came a string of pack mules
It was the grandest sight.
Their ears were up and forward
And each one looked the same,
Yet when the mule man caught them up
He called each one by name.
There was Muggins, Kate, Red Polly
And Rocky Mountain Rose
Turk and Doc and Knobby
And a mule he called Old Mose.

In a flash the mules were ready
A saddle on each back,
Cross-buck or decker
Or sometimes Salmon River tack.
Then the panniers full of toys were loaded.
Lash cinched and roped down tight,
With a diamond hitch
Which would hold fast through the night.

Then the packer said to Santa,
"I will lead this string,
But sliding down chimneys
Is really not my thing.
So Santa you best mount up
And with us you must go.
There's no need to worry
Cause this won't be no rodeo."
Before Santa could object
Or think of a reason why
He was deep seat in the saddle
And they were on the fly,

Now the presents were delivered
The children got their toys,
But folks said Christmas Eve was different
There was the strangest noise,
And some of them are certain,
They swear to this very day
Instead of hearing sleigh bells ring
They heard a pack mule bray.

We share a selection of WREN readers' creative writing (poems, limericks, haiku, short verse, and prose) every issue as space and content allow. To be considered for publication, please include the author's consent to be submitted, his or her mailing address, and confirmation that the work has not been published elsewhere. If you would like us to return your work, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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A PIECE

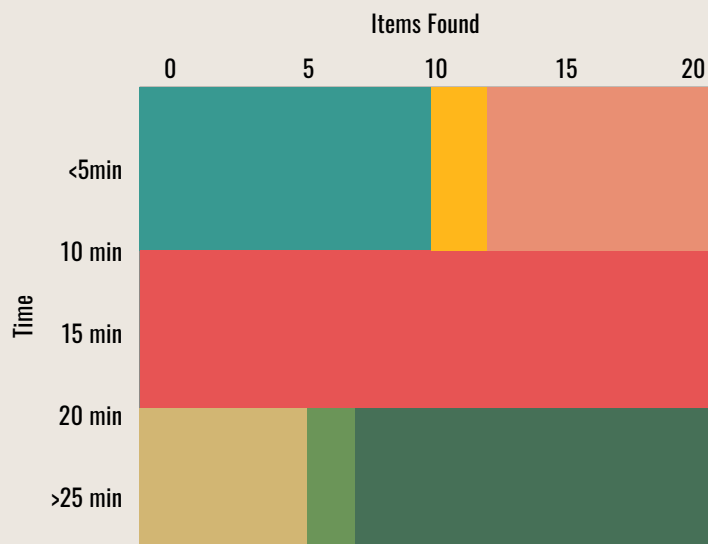
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GLEEFUL TREEFUL

FROM PAGE 24



- 0-12 items <10 min Had fun. Gotta Run!
- 10-20 items <10 min How'd you solve it so fast? It must be a gift!
- 0-20 items 10-25 min A little bit of something sweet
- 0-7 items 20 min Ended in a crumble! (You deserve a snack.)
- 5-20 items >20 min How steadfast are your branches!

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WREN

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Gathering up the Season

BY TY STOCKTON

National forests play a big role in my family. We enjoy hiking and camping, but we also like to bring some things home from the forests.

When we go hunting and fishing, the goal is to bring something back. I don't often have a lot of luck with that. I spend far more hunting and fishing trips just enjoying the scenery than I do packing out any critters. My lack of ability to catch any fish is legendary in my family.

Partly in an effort to do something with a 100% chance of success, but mainly as an excuse to get out in the fresh air and sunshine, my wife and I started our tradition of cutting our own Christmas tree a few years after we got married. The first few years we went, the kids hadn't joined the family yet. It was just Amy and me and a couple of dogs, out in the forest looking for the perfect pine.

Then the boys came along, and our trips were a little more involved. We had a small house in those early years, so we didn't need a very big tree. That was just fine, because it was hard enough lugging a toddler on my back. I was happy to settle for a smaller – and lighter – Christmas tree to lug back out of the forest.

As the boys grew, we continued the tradition. They always tried to help, but I have to admit when they were





“

Even with two eager beavers with hatchets, cutting down trees and stripping off the extra limbs is time-consuming.

little they were more of a hindrance than a help. They're both teenagers now, and they're a lot more helpful, as long as we can find them when the time comes to do some work. Usually, though, they're off climbing a tree or chunking rocks through the ice of a frozen stream. We gave them each a hatchet a year ago, and that helped a lot. Last Christmas, the problem wasn't finding them to help – it was getting them to quit hacking off limbs before they stripped our poor little Christmas tree bare.

Skip ahead to this fall. We use a wood-burning stove for our main source of heat for our house in the winter, but our woodshed is running on empty after our last delivery from the firewood guy. We started calling around to see how much three or four cords of firewood might cost us, and we realized the going rate has increased dramatically since the last time we had to buy any.

That got my wife to thinking. She is well aware of our children's penchant for chopping the limbs off of trees, and she also knows I am a sucker for any excuse to: 1) go to the forest; and 2) use my chainsaw.

I admit the thought of getting to combine those activities may have blinded me to the realities of cutting our own firewood. I overlooked the work involved with lugging 8-foot sections of felled trees the 300 or 400 feet – or more – to the trailer. And there are a LOT of 8-foot sections in a cord of wood.

The Forest Service requires that you cut down trees that are at least 100 feet from any road, or 200 feet from state or federal roads. But you can't find many good firewood trees closer than 300 or 400 feet from the road, because the people who actually planned ahead and cut their firewood earlier in the year have already cherry-picked the closer ones.

And you don't need as many 8-foot sections to make a cord if you cut down the bigger trees, but that means you have to carry heavier tree sections that far. No matter which way you slice it, that's a lot of work.

It also takes a lot of time. Even with two eager beavers with hatchets, cutting down trees and stripping off the extra limbs is time-consuming. It took us about two hours to cut the first cord of firewood, and it was a 90-minute trip each way to get to where we gathered it. That works out to 20 man-hours. And that was before we cut those 8-foot sections into log-sized chunks and split them. The \$210 per cord price tag started looking more palatable the longer we worked. I got to thinking, those people who do this for a living aren't charging enough. If they're as slow as we are, they're only making about \$6 an hour.

But now that I know what to expect, I don't think I'll go back to paying for firewood to be delivered. Even though it was a lot of work, much like cutting your own Christmas tree, it's rewarding work. Both activities are great excuses to venture into the forest. And at the end of the day, you can see your results and know that you did it all yourself.

Just don't forget to take your Ibuprofen when you're done, or you won't be able to get out of bed the next day. **W**

Ty Stockton is an outdoor writer and photographer based in Hillsdale.

CATEGORIES

- 01. EQUIPMENT
- 02. FOR SALE
- 03. HORSES
- 04. LIVESTOCK
- 05. POULTRY
- 06. REAL ESTATE
- 07. WANTED
- 08. CRAFTS
- 09. OPPORTUNITIES
- 10. MISCELLANEOUS
- 11. BUSINESS CONSULTING
- 12. FOR RENT
- 13. HELP WANTED
- 14. DOGS
- 15. EMPLOYMENT SOUGHT
- 16. BUILDING SUPPLIES
- 17. TRAVEL & RECREATION
- 18. HEALTH
- 19. PERSONAL
- 20. FREE

02 | FOR SALE

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Generators, air heaters, engine driven pumps, (all sizes), solar pumps, 3" and 4" polypipe, etc. A variety of types and sizes available. Call for pricing and details: Premier PowerPlants & Pumps, Farson, WY 307-273-9591.

07 | WANTED

Antique Collector Looking For Oil Company Gas Pumps, Globes And Signs.

Will pay fair market value! Also looking for general antiques for our antique shop. Please go to our website FrontierAutoMuseum.com. Located in Gillette WY, our passion is to preserve Wyoming history and the nostalgia of the past, especially Parco, Sinclair, Frontier, Husky and any car dealership along with all brands. We are also always looking for WY license plates and WY highway signs and State Park signs. Please call Jeff Wandler 307-680-8647 jwandler@LNH.net or daughter Briana Brewer 307-660-2402 bbrewer@frontierauto.net.

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We Pay Cash For Mineral & Oil/Gas Interests producing & non-producing. 800-733-8122.

10 | MISCELLANEOUS

Youth College and Career Fair

Tuesday, February 11 at 5:30 pm at Worland Community Center. Visit with representatives from several community colleges and the University of Wyoming. Meet professionals from a variety of natural resource and agriculture related fields including research, production, mechanics, engineering, and consulting. This event is free and includes dinner. Registration required: 307-347-3431. www.uwyo.edu/uwe/programs/westi-ag-days.html.

13 | HELP WANTED

Due to in-house promotions we are now hiring CNAs housekeepers and cook. Call 307-455-2645 for application. Join our growing team in Dubois, WY. See, www.warmvalleylodgewy.com

20 | FREE

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Murphy



Scientists Target New Acid Reflux Pill for Anti-Aging Research

Surprisingly, the secret to slow the aging process may reside in a new acid reflux treatment; studies find the pill to help protect users from fatigue, cardiovascular issues, and serious conditions that accompany premature aging.



Seattle, WA – A published study on a leading acid reflux ingredient shows that its key ingredient improves digestive health while maintaining health levels of inflammation that contributes to premature aging in men and women.

And, if consumer sales are any indication of a product's effectiveness, this 'acid reflux pill turned anti-aging phenomenon' is nothing short of a miracle.

Sold under the brand name AloeCure®, its ingredient was already backed by research showing its ability to neutralize acid levels and hold them down for long lasting day and night relief from bouts of heartburn and, acid reflux, gas, bloating, and more.

But soon doctors started reporting some incredible results...

"With AloeCure, my patients started reporting, better sleep, more energy, stronger immune systems... even less stress and better skin, hair, and nails" explains Dr. Liza Leal; a leading integrative health specialist and company spokesperson.

AloeCure contains an active ingredient that helps improve digestion by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach.

Scientists now believe that this acid imbalance could be a major contributing factor to painful inflammation throughout the rest of the body.

The daily allowance of AloeCure has shown to calm this inflammation through immune system adjustments which is why AloeCure is so effective.

Relieving other stressful symptoms related to GI health like pain, bloating, fatigue, cramping, acid overproduction, and nausea.

Now, backed with new scientific studies, AloeCure is being doctor recommended to help improve digestion, and even reduce the appearance of wrinkles – helping patients look and feel decades younger.

FIX YOUR GUT & FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Since hitting the market, sales for AloeCure have taken off and there are some very good reasons why.

To start, the clinical studies have been impressive. Virtually all participants taking it reported stunning improvement in digestive symptoms including bouts of heartburn.

Users can also experience higher energy levels and endurance, relief from chronic discomfort and better sleep, healthier looking skin, hair, and nails.

A healthy gut is the key to a reducing swelling and inflammation that can wreak havoc on the human body. Doctors say this is why AloeCure works on so many aspects of your health.

AloeCure's active ingredient is made from the famous healing compound found in Aloe Vera. It is both safe and healthy. There are also no known side effects.

Scientists believe that it helps improve digestive by acting as a natural acid-buffer that improves the pH balance of your stomach and helps the immune system maintain healthy functions.

Research has shown that this acid imbalance contributes to painful inflammation throughout your entire body and is why AloeCure seems to be so effective.

EXCITING RESULTS FROM PATIENTS

To date millions of bottles of AloeCure have been sold, and the community seeking non-pharma therapy for their GI health continues to grow.

According to Dr. Leal, her patients are absolutely thrilled with their results and are often shocked by how fast it works.

"For the first time in years, they are free from concerns about their digestion and almost every other aspect of their health," says Dr. Leal, "and I recommend it to everyone who wants to improve GI health before considering drugs, surgery, or OTC medications."

"All the problems with my stomach are gone. Completely gone. I can say AloeCure is a miracle. It's a miracle." Another user turned spokesperson said, "I started to notice a difference because I was sleeping through the night and that was great. AloeCure does work for me. It's made a huge difference."

With so much positive feedback, it's easy to see why the community of believers is growing and sales for the new pill are soaring.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND ALOECURE

AloeCure is a pill that's taken just once daily. The pill is small. Easy to swallow. There are no harmful side effects and it does not require a prescription.

The active ingredient is a rare Aloe Vera component known as acemannan.

Millions spent in developing a proprietary process for extracting acemannan resulted in the highest quality, most bio-available levels of acemannan known to exist, and it's made from organic aloe.

According to Dr. Leal and leading experts, im-

proving the pH balance of your stomach and restoring gut health is the key to revitalizing your entire body.

When your digestive system isn't healthy, it causes unwanted stress on your immune system, which results in inflammation in the rest of the body.

The recommended daily allowance of acemannan in AloeCure has been proven to support digestive health and manage painful inflammation through immune system adjustments without side effects or drugs.

This would explain why so many users are experiencing impressive results so quickly.

REVITALIZE YOUR ENTIRE BODY

With daily use, AloeCure helps users look and feel decades younger and defend against some of the painful inflammation that accompanies aging and can make life hard.

By buffering stomach acid and restoring gut health, AloeCure's ingredient maintains healthy immune system function to combat painful inflammation...reduce the appearance of wrinkles and help strengthen hair and nails ... maintains healthy cholesterol and oxidative stress... improves sleep and energy.... and supports brain function by way of gut biome... without side effects or expense.

Readers can now reclaim their energy, vitality, and youth regardless of age.

AloeCure Taken Daily

- Helps End Digestion Nightmares
- Reduces appearance of Wrinkles & Increases Elasticity
- Supports Healthy Immune System

HOW TO GET ALOECURE

This is the official nationwide release of the new AloeCure pill in the United States. And so, the company is offering our readers up to 3 FREE bottles with their order.

This special give-away is only available for a limited time. All you have to do is call TOLL-FREE 1-800-991-3341 and provide the operator with the Free Bottle Approval Code: AC100. The company will do the rest.

Important: Due to AloeCure's recent media exposure, phone lines are often busy. If you call and do not immediately get through, please be patient and call back. Those who miss the 48-hour deadline may lose out on this free bottle offer.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO READ

Reading together benefits your child's language development, it sparks their curiosity about the world around them, it ignites their imagination, and it's a perfect, easy way to develop your relationship.

To make your time reading together feel even more special, create a reading nook!
As they grow, your child will use this comfortable space to read on their own, too.



First: Hunt!

Let your child pick out the perfect corner in your house.

Then: Gather!

Find a few soft things for lounging on:

- pillows
- blankets
- beanbag chairs

Next: Organize!

Arrange your books so they're easy to reach. If you face them out, your child will be able to find their favorites easily!

Finally: Read!

Update and change your reading nook as needed, but always, always encourage its use.

h
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**FOR A FUN WORD GAME
TO PLAY TOGETHER, VISIT:**

wyqualitycounts.org/wren

**WY
Quality
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.org**

WY Quality Counts, housed in the Department of Workforce Services, helps Wyoming parents and child care providers identify and create quality learning experience for children, thanks to the funding of the Wyoming Legislature.



All WY Quality Counts activities are supported by the Wyoming Early Learning Foundations and Guidelines, as well as the Domains of Development, which include:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  COMMUNICATION |  SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS |
|  CURIOUS MINDS |  STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES |