



Shown representing the Laureate Tau Sorority making a donation to the We Care Campaign are left, Pat Bullock, and Margie Goodson, right. Kathy Lenz, middle, was on hand to receive the donation. Lenz stated, "The We Care Campaign is progressing nicely. Our pledge dollars are close to \$370,000 with this nice donation of \$1,500 today from Laureate Tau Sorority. It's organizations like this one that have really helped with our campaign to keep rural healthcare alive and well in Crook County. We are presently applying for grants and are in constant search for funds available for our project."

## Council enjoys warm meeting on frigid night

"It's a good night to be in your nice warm home," was one of the statements overheard at the January meeting of the Sundance City Council and one which seemed to set the tone for the unusually quick meeting - warm and cozy. With the only exception being an executive session regarding a personnel matter called at the conclusion of the meeting, council members enjoyed a relatively relaxing and low brow evening.

In stark contrast to last year's impassioned debate over city appointments, 2004 started smoothly as council members unanimously voted to accept the status quo for each of the appointed positions without discussion. No significant changes in regard to any of the current positions were made.

Council members unanimously voted to extend utility payments for the Sundance Kids Daycare for another six months in hopes of helping the center regain its financial footing. Donna Zoller, Daycare Center head, informed the council that the center was currently able to make ends meet but expressed her concern that "if we had anything big happen, we'd be in trouble."

Mark Hughes reported to the council on the status of the Highway 585 area annexation noting he and the city engineer had some items of concern regarding land ownership in the area. Hughes advised the council that he and Goodson were working on identifying and notifying an unknown landholder(s) in the area as the proposal proceeds.

The relaxed atmosphere continued throughout the evening as members disposed of a number of issues requiring their attention:

- Franchise fees in regard to the Kinder Morgan natural gas franchise were considered with members ultimately deciding not to charge a franchise fee at this time but to add language to the contract which would allow the city to charge a fee at a later date if desired.
- Fire Chief Glen Engelhaupt asked the city to transfer title of the fire department's 1984 Dodge to the County to ease maintenance expenses incurred by the department and was given approval.
- John Kiplinger announced he was still in the process of gathering area cemetery charges and would like to put off a decision on changing city rates until he could gather more information.
- Council members voted to acknowledge having passed Resolution 5-2003, earlier last month outside of the regular meeting, regarding allowing fireworks in the city over the New Year's holiday.
- Mayor Miller informed the council that he would be speaking with Mr. Melanson regarding the Green Mountain Cemetery and asked for their guidance.
- Councilman Brooks asked the council members to take another look at the Kaski Subdivision plan as it related to septic systems and consider the possibility of providing a sewer line to the area in the future.

## Semlek prepared for upcoming legislative session

State legislature reconvenes February 9

When House District 1 Representative Mark Semlek heads to Cheyenne next month, he will be ready for anything... except a quiet 22 days. As the February 9 starting date for the 2004 Legislative session quickly approaches, one can easily detect the optimism and anxiety in Semlek's voice. An estimated \$1 billion state budget surplus will certainly add to the excitement within the Capitol as everyone with a state checkbook maneuvers to have a bigger deposit made to their accounts this year.

"That's a good challenge to have before us," smiled Semlek. "I think we're only one of four states in the union that are running in the black." While the state is poised to enjoy a huge financial windfall, Semlek remains guardedly optimistic. "I don't think anyone knows for sure how long it will stay with us, the dynamics of gas and oil can change rapidly," he noted. "I think it is prudent for the legislature to invest for the future when revenues may not be as bright as right now."

Some state agency requests have been expected to increase enormously from the last biennium and will likely draw a substantial amount of scrutiny this session as well. In response to the likelihood of increased budget requests, Semlek noted that when it comes time to consider them, "I will be looking for some compelling reasons why we should

fund those big increases." Semlek does stress however that he is not being critical of these agencies for developing more ambitious budgets as he added, "that's their



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passion, their job and it just requires determination on the part of the legislature to see how those priorities and increased budgets stack up against all the others that are out there." Not all agencies may find increasing budgets to be so difficult however. Semlek noted his desire to do what he can to keep the additional revenue flowing by taking a look at those agencies which help generate it by "taking care of those agencies who take care of us, so to speak." Semlek explained that "if it has to do with increasing the staff in the general audit department to make sure that we're collecting the fair amount of tax or the Department of Environmental Quality to help develop permits, we need to take care of the agencies which service that industry."

In terms of other large expenditures, Semlek notes that he is not expecting to see many specific proposals beyond those which have already been discussed - one time capital construction expenditures and investment in the permanent mineral trust fund being the highest profile issues.

On the subject of specific legislation Semlek expects to cover,

the 32,000 acre proposed Moskee land purchase remains high on the list of locally significant issues. The Moskee purchase issue has drawn strong criticism from opponents from around the region. Suggested use and management practice language included in the proposal have been called into question as has the concept of public land ownership in and of itself. The purchase proposal has, on the other hand, also enjoyed strong support from many constituents throughout the region. Semlek, who has remained publicly opposed to the draft proposal, noted that while he has yet to see an actual bill concerning the issue he expects one will come through the Senate. The representative goes on to note that he will not actively seek to work against the bill while adding that when and if the bill carries the Senate and crosses to the House he would then take a hard look at what is included in the bill's language. "I would like to make it as palatable to my fundamental beliefs and those of the many people that I have talked to about this as to what the state government should or should not be doing relative to the purchase of private property."

Another issue Semlek has been

working on is that of the Vore Buffalo Jump. Semlek noted he was continuing to work with the State Parks and Cultural Resources Department, WYDOT and the Wyoming Business Council to adopt a plan which could be funded through private, state and federal funds. "I truly believe that is a very unique cultural site and it has good educational and economic development opportunities for the county and the whole state of Wyoming," Semlek said. The proposed site would consist of a visitor center along with interpretive and educational facilities. Semlek hopes to have a strong business plan developed through the cooperation with the Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee soon and noted that he hopes to craft legislation which will create a partnership with the forementioned entities.

On issues of wider appeal, Semlek went on to note that he would be working with other representatives to draft and sponsor bills including a proposed local tax option to fund economic development and a possible subsidy for Title 19 patients which would allow rural communities to continue to provide obstetric care.

## Crook County Cares announces summit

Crook County Cares announced they would like to invite all interested area residents to participate in a statewide video conference summit aimed at building more opportunities for local youth. The video conference will be held January 14, 2004 from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at Bearlodge High School. Governor Dave Freudenthal and Superintendent of Public Instruction Trent Blankenship are expected to kick off the conference which is aimed at providing guidance and training to community teams towards assessing available activities and creating new ones. Anyone with an interest in kids who would like to assist in providing expanded opportunities is encouraged to attend.

Crook County Cares has been extending its services to many families and programs throughout the last year. The community group has served at-risk kids through their UPLIFT program, offered school-based drug prevention programs in Hulett and Moorcroft, donated \$3000 to the Sundance Destination Imagination program, led all three county elementary schools in participating in the Lights on After School program and has been active in helping to provide after school tutoring programs in each community.

## Peace of mind offered for parents

In the battle to protect our children, one more weapon is becoming more widely available. DNA sampling has been proven to be just as important as fingerprinting when looking for a missing child. The problem with DNA sampling is that most parents normally do not have a sample of their child's DNA when needed. That's where the Masons of Wyoming and The Wyoming Peace Officers Association come in. These two organizations have combined to help bring the "Project Life Print DNA Identification System" to families around the state.

Thanks to the Sundance Masonic Lodge #9, local families will now be able to utilize the program to safeguard their children as well. The local lodge has purchased a large number of DNA sampling kits to hand out, free of charge to area families with children up to age 18. The kits will be made available at Sundance High School during the high school basketball game in Sundance on Saturday, January 10 at 4:00 p.m.

The important process is painless, simple and confidential. The actual DNA sampling may be done at home and involves swabbing the child's cheek with the included swab then sealing the sample as directed by the kit's instructions. The DNA sample may then be stored by the family in the same manner as other important documents and information. Sealed DNA samples may survive for 80 years or longer.

## How does Crook County compare?

A recent report prepared by the Wyoming Department of Audit and Public Funds for the last fiscal year from July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003 compares costs of maintaining county governments across Wyoming.

Comparing Crook County with Weston County show some difference. The 2000 census shows Crook County with a population of 5887 and Weston County with 6644. The difference in average cost per person has Crook County at \$681 and Weston at \$560.

Looking at comparisons of individual county offices are as follows:

Office	Crook Co.	Weston Co.
Commissioners	\$ 83,518	\$ 57,562
Clerk	98,799	84,951
Treasurer	108,016	88,283
Assessor	114,424	91,109
Sheriff	382,300	248,402
Attorney	132,125	102,361
Coroner	11,395	8,787
Dis. Court	96,632	88,328
Road & Bridge	379,295	498,994
Civil Defense	17,557	24,258
Public Health	128,445	98,880

Another significant difference in the comparison was in the construction category showing Crook County at \$700,643 and Weston County at \$337,076.

Total overall costs were Crook County at \$4,008,930 with total revenues of \$3,816,314 vs Weston County with a total cost of \$3,719,906 and total revenues of \$3,547,552.

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