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'No limit' on potential for Gillette College virtual reality classroom, **B1**

BACK TO HER ROOTS
CCHS alum and former Bolts coach takes over Camels hoops program, **C1**



BIG BOYS TOYS
Flying drones, gunsmithing and an electric pickup, **B3**

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News Record Photo/Mike Moore

Windows double as large-scale hiring advertisements at the McDonald's at the corner of South Douglas Highway and Camel Drive on Thursday afternoon. Although unemployment rates for the state and Campbell County have dropped considerably in recent months, many businesses report trouble hiring and retaining people willing to work.

Legacy extends limits on visits again

Earliest in-person visits can resume is June 28

By **JAKE GOODRICK**
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Another positive COVID-19 case associated with the Legacy Living and Rehabilitation Center has extended the facility's clampdown on in-person visitation and other restrictions until at least June 28, barring any new positive cases.

Since re-entering Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services outbreak protocol again May 25, six positive COVID-19 cases have been picked up by the facility in its now routine weekly testing of staff and residents.

The facility must go two consecutive weeks without a positive test result to reinstate in-person visitation.

Campbell County Health will no longer identify whether positive cases are from staff or residents, citing that the outbreak protocol restrictions would be the same either way, said Dane Joslyn, CCH spokesperson.

"We hate the fact that we have to lock down the Legacy," said Mary Lou Tate, CCH chief financial officer. "The restrictions that are placed upon us as a licensed facility are very extreme for COVID. Until the federal and state governments change their policies and allow us more leniency, there's nothing we can do, otherwise we jeopardize the risk of being shut down. Then what would we do with our residents?"

"We can't ship 100 or so residents back into the community with no place to live. That's our concern, walking the fine line of complying with the very strict and extreme rules and regulations that are placed upon us versus trying to take care of the residents and help them have a great quality of life. We're really walking that fine line as much as we can."

At the Legacy, 36% of its staff is vaccinated, which is about half as much as the 73% of Legacy residents who have received the COVID-19 vaccine.

"While we're disheartened that more of our staff have not elected to choose the vaccination, it is in line with what the general population is doing," Tate said. "Just like the government can't force the residents of Campbell County, we're not going to force the staff at this time given the fact that it's still an investigational drug."

"There are rules and regulations out there that we follow and we just don't feel comfortable that we can mandate the employees to take the vaccine. We feel like if we do mandate, given others in the county and city and nation haven't mandated, we would be losing staff, which would once again restrict our ability to take care of patients."

After more than a year of lockdown from the pandemic, the Legacy brought back in-person visitation March 17. From there, the first positive COVID-19 test connected to the facility popped up April 21, putting it into CMS outbreak protocol.

Since then, the facility has gone through a series of ups and downs, with each week without a positive test drawing it closer to reopening as each positive extended the restrictions

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Workers wanted

Gillette businesses fishing to fill jobs, getting few nibbles

By **JAKE GOODRICK** * NEWS RECORD WRITER
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You may have seen more "help wanted" signs flapping in the breeze around town lately. Maybe you even noticed reduced business hours at some local stores or restaurants. Or perhaps the wait time in the drive-thru line has been taking longer than it used to.

Around Gillette, and throughout the country, businesses are struggling to hire employees after more than a year of cutbacks, shutdowns and a problematic pandemic. And while diagnosing what's becoming an employment crisis is simple, explaining it is much more complicated.

"(There's) a lot more jobs now. A lot more jobs," said Rick Mansheim, manager of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services Gillette office. "The jobs have gone up, unemployment's gone down, but there still seems to be (unfilled jobs) and I personally don't understand that and can't figure that out."

At the end of June 2020, there were close to 2,000 Campbell County residents filing claims for unemployment insurance benefits. Nearly a year later as of May 21, that had fallen to 324 people filing unemployment claims, Mansheim said.

For reference, before the pandemic took hold, the week ending March 14, 2020, yielded 207 claims, according to Wyoming Department of Workforce Services data.

With unemployment shrinking close to pre-pandemic numbers, employers and officials are concerned there hasn't been a corresponding increase of people getting back to work and filling those job openings.

In Campbell County, there are about 760 available jobs, Mansheim said.



Evelyn Rebaza carries a load of cups and napkins to a drive-thru window at Taco John's on Boxelder Road on Thursday afternoon.

Recently, Gov. Mark Gordon announced that Wyoming will pull back federal unemployment benefits, initially added as a supplement to state unemployment aid in response to the pandemic.

Gordon said that while the weekly \$300 federal benefit was initially meant to help people through financial crisis related to COVID-19, it evolved into an incentive to not go back to

work because people were making more on unemployment than they could working regular jobs.

The federal benefit now is "hindering the pace of our recovery," Gordon said in a press release. "People want to work, and work is available. Incentivizing people not to work is just plain un-American."

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