

Gillette News Record

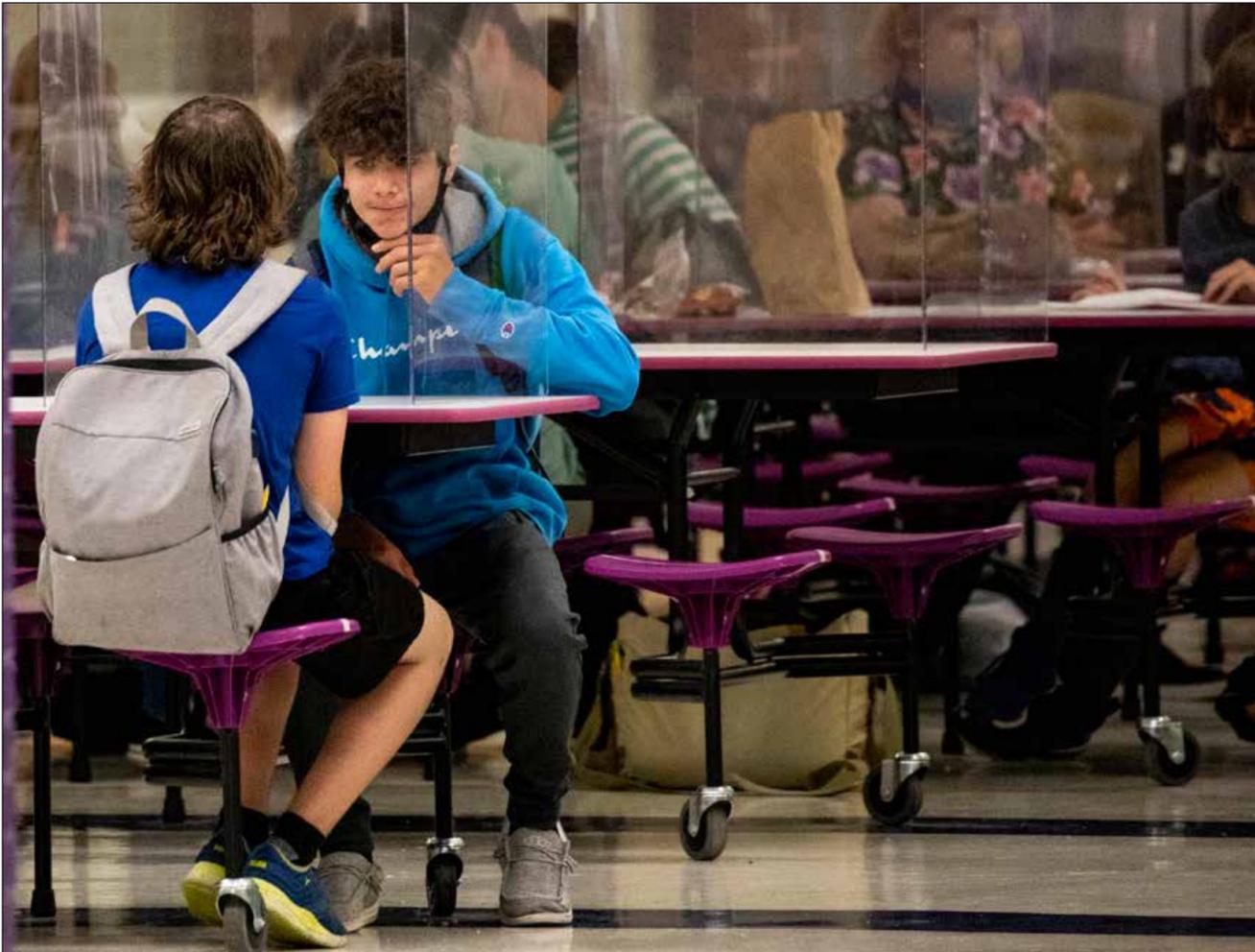
TUESDAY EVENING, SEPT. 1, 2020 * 75¢ * GILLETTENEWSRECORD.COM



SAME GAME, WITH SOME DIFFERENCES

CCHS, TBHS kick off a very different prep sports season with home openers, **B3**

PATRIOT GAMES Save the Fourth group is back with new name, big plans, **B1**



Students chat through clear dividers while eating lunch at Campbell County High School on Friday in their first week back at public school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

News Record Photos/Mike Moore

3 candidates file for hospital board vacancies

Trio files on last day to come in under deadline

By **JAKE GOODRICK**
NEWS RECORD WRITER

jgoodrick@gillette newsrecord.net

Randy Hite, Kristina Leslie and Tom Murphy all filed to become Campbell County Health Board of Trustees candidates before last week's deadline, making all three eligible to join the hospital board in this November's election.

The candidates are running for three board seats that will be vacated at the end of this term. Seats for Trustees Dustin Martinson, Ronda Boller and Chairman Dr. Ian Swift are all expiring, making the three new candidates vying for them an uncontested race.

No one had filed to run for the board vacancies until Aug. 24, the day of the deadline when all three candidates applied.

Each of the candidates bring either a history of public service or personal experience in the health care field.

Hite brings both. After serving on the hospital board of trustees since 2012, Hite resigned in August 2019 for personal reasons, but now wants to rejoin in the upcoming term. He is a physical therapist with Gillette Physical Therapy who, in his seven years as a board trustee, spent two years as chairman.

Leslie was in consideration when the board looked to fill Hite's vacancy in late 2019, but ultimately was not selected when Martinson was appointed instead.

She is the Campbell County School District's board-certified behavioral health analyst. She has a master's degree in clinical psychology and a doctorate degree in clinical health.

"I feel like my knowledge base in behavioral health and integrated care could be an asset," Leslie said.

As a behavioral health specialist and local resident, Leslie said that she sees potential for a more integrated health care approach, where behavioral health and primary care are more combined than separate, with communication between medical care specialties improved as a whole.

"I think the hospital does a great job in serving our community," Leslie said. "I just think there are a lot of things moving in the preventive and proactive directions, and how amazing would it be for us to be ahead of the curve?"

The final candidate, Murphy, is a former Gillette mayor who also served on the City Council for six years. Most recently, he lost in the August Republican primary election when he ran for the state House of Representatives District 53 seat against incumbent Rep. Roy Edwards.

At 62, Murphy carries the perspective of a health care outsider. Still, with his years of experience on the City Council and working with large-scale budgets for international corporations, he said that he is well-versed in economics and will bring a watchful eye to the hospital's budget, looking for ways to cut expenses.

See **3 FILE**, Page A10

1 week down

First week of school during pandemic relatively uneventful

By **CARY LITTLEJOHN** * NEWS RECORD WRITER

clittlejohn@gillette newsrecord.net

After the Campbell County School District announced its reopening plan July 15, questions remained about what the school year would look like for stakeholders of all sorts — students, parents, teachers, administrators and anyone else connected to the district.

Those questions were answered last week as district schools completed their first week of the 2020-21 academic year, and they did so in person, in classrooms for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic caused the closure of schools in March. Nothing is considered set in stone just yet, but students and parents and teachers have a better idea now about what a profoundly different (or weird, as some would say) school year will look like.

See **1 WEEK DOWN**, Page A8



Sierra Yanzick smiles through her Chicago Bears-themed mask while walking through the commons area of Campbell County High School on Friday. Most students say they're happy to be back in class, even if it means wearing a mask.

NTEC lays off 80 previously furloughed Antelope mine workers

Laid off worker was hopeful to get job back, says Cloud Peak, NTEC great to work for

By **GREG JOHNSON**
NEWS RECORD MANAGING EDITOR

gjohnson@gillette newsrecord.net

When he got the call Thursday, Aaron McAllister was hopeful he'd be going back to work nearly three months after being furloughed from the Antelope coal mine.

Instead, he got his severance package with the news that furloughs for himself and 79 other coal mine workers are

now permanent layoffs.

"I had hopes we were actually going to go back to work today," McAllister said Friday. "We were hopeful, because there's nothing to lose, so you might as well be (optimistic)."

He and his girlfriend both worked at the mine located south of Wright in Campbell County and were both among 93 hourly Antelope employees who were furloughed May 21, along with the layoff of eight salaried employ-

ees. Friday morning, the previously furloughed Antelope mine coal workers were officially laid off.

In the months since they were furloughed, mine owner Navajo Transitional Energy Co. reports that some of those workers have retired or moved on to other jobs, which puts the total layoffs at 80.

Although the company wanted to find a way to bring the furloughed workers back, the company doesn't anticipate business picking up anytime soon, according to an NTEC statement about the layoffs.

"As we continue to evaluate markets

amidst the coronavirus and economic recovery, we do not anticipate an increase in orders from our Antelope mine through the end of the year," the statement says. "Based on this information, we have moved the previously furloughed employees to a laid-off status."

The company also acknowledged it's a blow for the workers who had held out hope to eventually return to their jobs.

"While we regret the hardship this causes, we want to be transparent with our employees and give them every opportunity to move forward and do what is best for them and their families," according to the statement.

The layoffs also don't preclude the potential for rehiring people if business picks up, NTEC said. "We will monitor conditions and rehire as the opportunity arises."

The layoffs bring the overall loss of Wyoming Powder River Basin coal jobs this year to nearly 570, a drop of more than 12% from the 4,578 full-time employees the mines reported at the end of 2019, according to the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration.

Conversely, coal production in the basin is on pace to produce 24% less coal this year. At the Antelope mine,

See **LAYOFFS**, Page A10



WEATHER, A2
HIGH 79
LOW 54

ENERGY: Mine cleanup program offers glimmer of hope for Wyoming operations, **A6**

INSIDE
BLOTTER, A2
CLASSIFIEDS, C1-C3
REAL ESTATE, C1

OBITUARIES, A4
OPINION, A3
SPORTS, B3-B4

