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News Record Photos/Mike Moore

Ray Burger, 59, chats with nursing school classmate Eliza Shippy, 19, at Gillette College during a recent class. Burger opted to enroll in nursing school after he was locked out from his job after 37 years of mining Powder River Basin coal.

Arch hasn't ruled out sale of PRB mines

Workforce is down more than 17% at Black Thunder and Coal Creek mines in first quarter

By **GREG JOHNSON**
NEWS RECORD MANAGING EDITOR
gjohnson@gillette-newsrecord.net

An accelerated plan to exit the Powder River Basin continues for Arch Resources Inc., which reported this week that it's on pace to stop producing coal from its Coal Creek mine by the end of the year and to account for about 80% of its reclamation obligations at the mine by mid-2022.

"We are methodically harvesting value and cash from our legacy thermal assets, while working down our long-term closure obligations in a systematic and measured way," said Arch Chief

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307 Horse Racing scores big win with new county resolution

Commissioners give live horse racing operators control over local off-track betting on races

By **JONATHAN GALLARDO**
NEWS RECORD WRITER
jgallardo@gillette-newsrecord.net

Campbell County finds itself in the middle of a fight that pits horse-racing businesses against each other. The standoff also could lead to a short-term shut-down in off-track betting and loss of tax revenue to the community.

The Campbell County Commissioners passed a resolution this week to foster the development of live horse racing in Campbell County.

The resolution gives the live horse racing operator control over off-track betting and simulcasting in the county. It also allows that written permission for simulcasting and off-track betting can be given to groups that aren't putting on live horse races.

After more than three hours of public comment and a 20-minute executive session to discuss potential litigation, the commissioners passed the resolution on a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner D.G. Reardon voting against it.

307 Horse Racing recently signed a five-year exclusive contract to do live horse racing at Cam-plex. There are 16 race dates scheduled at Energy Downs over six weekends in May and June. Wyoming Horse Racing has one off-track betting site in Gillette — the Horse Palace in the Sundance Lounge — and Wyoming Downs has two.

Off-track betting has been popular in Gillette. Under the law, some of the money that is gambled

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A miner transition

Former coal miner pursues nursing at Gillette College in response to seismic changes in energy industry

By **JAKE GOODRICK** * NEWS RECORD WRITER
jgoodrick@gillette-newsrecord.net

Ray Burger sits in a college classroom with his wire frame glasses resting upside down on the table in front of him. His deskmate, Eliza Shippy, 40 years his junior, sits beside him as a guest lecturer boots up a presentation on dementia.

In the sea of laptop screens raised in front of his Gillette College nursing school peers, Burger sits beside a pen and paper. Usually known for the colorful shirts that his wife, Dawn, makes for him, he's instead wearing a light blue nursing school polo with a face mask almost the same color.

The lecture begins and eventually brain plasticity, or the ability for the brain to continuously rewire itself, comes up. The speaker tells how learning and stimulating the mind with new information and skills throughout the aging process is important for brain health.

For a man approaching traditional retirement age yet trying to squeeze a new profession into the twilight years of his career, the subject matter is particularly resonant.

Burger, 59, and Shippy, 19, have sat beside each other in many of the classes they've shared since they started at Gillette College in the fall of 2019. She enrolled as a natural progression after high school and he after 37 years mining Powder River Basin coal.

Several times throughout the class, Burger raises his hand above his head of gray hair to ask a question or offer an answer.

As the oldest member of a nursing school cohort of Generation Z classmates, age and aging are concepts Burger thinks about often, which may even help when he becomes a nurse, relating to and reflecting the experiences of those he is studying to care for.

"I can empathize with the way that these older people feel because I am one," he said. "The challenges of growing older are things that are front and center right in front of me every day of my life."

Burger will be 61 when he graduates from



Ray Burger reaches for his glasses before joining a group discussion in his nursing class at Gillette College.

Gillette College as a registered nurse in May 2022. It's a career change that came unexpectedly, but that he's embraced as a continuation of the education he gave up when he entered the coal industry in the 1980s.

For decades, Burger made the drive west from his home in Moorcroft to work at the Eagle Butte and Belle Ayr mines in Campbell County.

Now he makes a similar commute. Driving along Interstate 90 on his way to school, he moves parallel to the same tracks that carry trains to and from PRB mines like the ones he used to fill.

It's been almost two years since he lost his job with the coal company he gave nearly 40 years to. Watching the coal cars pulled along the rails, he sees the life he used to have.

"For a while, I felt like the loaded coal trains were mocking me," he said. "That hurt. Not anymore, but it did for a while."

37 years to a halt

It was a slow morning at the Belle Ayr mine on July 1, 2019. Burger was working overtime and waiting on a coal train to arrive. Many

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