

Gillette News Record

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CRITICAL HIT

Tabletop games, like Dungeons and Dragons, foster a sense of community, **B1**

A BONDING EXPERIENCE High school welders compete, **A10**

Search for hospice solutions expedited

Group will forego study to work on solutions

By **JAKE GOODRICK**
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Health care officials have agreed to push the pace on developing a plan to possibly resume inpatient services at Close to Home Hospice Hospitality House after recently compiling a task force to assess its options.

The first step will be to forgo the initial idea of conducting feasibility studies on the hospice facility's operations and get straight to work on a business plan that could bring patients back to Close to Home.

The task force created last month at the board's retreat met recently and after deciding to ditch the feasibility study, hashed out some of the broader questions it would like to have answered in proposed business plans.

"We would like some questions answered on both sides of how much is it going to cost?" Trustee Alan Stuber said at last week's regular hospital board meeting. "How much is the loss going to be, what can the loss be and who is able to afford what in order to see if we can make this thing happen and reopen."

The Campbell County Healthcare Foundation has said it is willing to cover some of the operational losses for inpatient hospice services at Close to Home. The amount it is open to paying is dependent, in part, on how much the facility expects to lose under a changed business model.

A report commissioned by CCH this year found that Close to Home could run on an altered business model with expected losses of \$170,000. CCH CFO Mary Lou Tate projected that loss could be closer to \$300,000.

The task force was initially charged with commissioning a feasibility study to see what kind of modified business plan the hospice facility could sustainably support. Since then, the group decided to forgo the study and get straight to work on developing a business plan.

"After speaking about what was really needed for this task force to be successful ... we discussed more of a business plan than a feasibility study," Stuber said.

Nachelle McGrath, the executive director of the Healthcare Foundation, agreed.

"As much as a feasibility study should have been done at the beginning of the project, it's kind of irrelevant at this point in time because we have the facility," she

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Greenhouse Group Home to close as fallout from state cuts

By **JAKE GOODRICK**
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The Greenhouse Group Home will no longer house residents beginning July 1 as a result of statewide budget cuts that reduced funding for behavioral health programs throughout the state.

The six-bed group home in Gillette, operated in partnership between the Council of Community Services and Campbell County Health, will relocate its residents and lay off its seven full-time workers by the start of July, said Mikel Scott, executive director of the Council of Community Services.

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News Record Photos/Mike Moore

Katie Lynde of Katie J's Bakery prepares items to go on display Saturday morning along Gillette Avenue. Her bakery is one of a handful of new eateries to open in Gillette despite the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today's special

Gillette sees growing number of new restaurants during pandemic

By **JONATHAN GALLARDO** * NEWS RECORD WRITER
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Opening a restaurant at any time is risky. Opening one during a pandemic is even riskier. But despite the risk, Gillette has seen a handful of new restaurants open their doors in the past year.

The Sherpa Indian Kitchen opened in spring 2020. Philly Shop and Co. opened in the summer. Last fall, Mrs. C's Catering opened a cafe in the Gillette College Technical Education Center and Frida's House opened in Camel Plaza. Last month, Katie J's, a vendor-run market, opened on Gillette Avenue.

And later this spring, Ranch and Roost,

a fast casual restaurant selling burgers and chicken sandwiches, will open next to Big Lost Meadery.

Jessica Seders, executive director of the Campbell County Convention and Visitors Bureau, said that during the pandemic, especially last summer, Campbell County residents showed support for local restaurants.

"I think our locals really stepped up and ate out more when they could to keep restaurants in business," she said.

Seders said having a diverse selection of places to eat benefits the community, not just by giving people more options, but also in drawing visitors to Gillette.

Chain restaurants are still popular, but increasing numbers of people are looking for a unique dining experience.

"More and more, people are asking, 'Where do the locals eat?'" Seders said.

If a town's residents are eating at a certain restaurant, "that's the best place to eat," she said. This summer, the locals have more options.

Ranch and Roost

When Ranch and Roost opens its doors, it will offer smash burgers and southern-style chicken sandwiches. Owner Aaron Cannon moved to Gillette from Raleigh, North Carolina. He'd spent years in the catering side of the food industry, which is much less risky than opening a restaurant.

"With catering, you only work when you're making money," he said. "The problem with restaurants is, you have to be there even if you're not making money. It's an industry that's just brutal. It demands you all day, every day. In return for that, it usually gives you financial ruin."

But when Cannon visited Gillette last year, he was surprised with the number of restaurants here.

"It punches so far above its weight class," he said of the local restaurant scene. "The folks in Gillette do enjoy eating out. They eat out quite a bit. There's way more restaurants than you'd expect for a town this size."

The decision to sell burgers and chicken sandwiches came from looking at what Gillette loves, and what it could grow to love if given a chance.



Ranch & Roost owner Aaron Cannon displays a cup from his new restaurant opening on Warren Avenue.

"Every restaurant in town sells a burger. I've never seen anything like it before," Cannon said. On the flip side, KFC is the only place that specializes in fried chicken.

"We're from the South, we know fried chicken really well. We could make a really fantastic chicken product for the folks here that they're missing," he said. "I feel like I can win over a lot of people."

Ranch and Roost is located at 101 S. Warren Ave. next to Big Lost Meadery's new location. One of Big Lost's top requests since it opened has been for it to offer food, Cannon said, so this is a move

that will benefit both businesses.

For Cannon, this is a chance to showcase his food's quality.

"If you make a good product, made well, made with skill, tastes great, the folks are willing to spend a little more on it," he said.

He said Pizza Carrello is a good example of this. Its pizza is two or three times the price of Little Caesar's or Domino's, but the restaurant stays busy and has built a loyal following.

"I tip my hat to Pizza Carrello. They make a great product," he said. "They would be successful in any city in the U.S."

Cannon said he's trying to keep it as local as possible. If he can't find a food or a product in Gillette, he'll try to get it from someplace in Wyoming. If he can't do that, he'll look for a regional option.

"We're attempting as best as we can to keep the money in town," he said.

Cannon plans on keeping the menu small, so don't expect to see seafood or salad anytime soon. With just 700 square feet of space to work with, "if we're going to make the best possible food, we can't have a big menu."

Katie J's

In March, Katie Lynde, a local baker who had a mobile bakery, opened up a storefront, Katie J's, on Gillette Avenue. It's not a full-fledged bakery, but

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