

Gillette News Record

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HOLDING A STRONG HAND

Impact from booming card-collecting craze reaches Gillette, **B1**

HOW HOT WAS IT? Weekend temps set records, **A10**

The state of COVID: What to expect going forward

Campbell County continues to post state's lowest vaccination rate as cases rise again

By **JAKE GOODRICK**
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More than a year after COVID-19 entered the public lexicon, Campbell County is returning to the long sought and oft-mentioned "normalcy" missing from so much of the past year and change.

Summer traditions suspended in 2020 are returning, travel is picking up and the sight of face masks is becoming less and less common.

But with lagging vaccination rates and a rise in new cases over the past month, the question remains about where Campbell County falls into the post-pandemic landscape.

"My message is just that COVID is still here and just for people to be careful and protect themselves the best they can," said Misty Robertson, Campbell County Health's chief nursing officer. "It hasn't gone away. It's still here, as tired as we are of the whole thing."

One primary form of protection against COVID-19 is the vaccine, which

is now widely available to those age 12 and older. But Campbell County and Wyoming at large has lagged behind other counties and states in vaccination rates.

Through June 1, Campbell County stands as the least vaccinated county in one of the least vaccinated states. About 16% of Campbell County's population is fully vaccinated, the lowest rate in the state, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

The state vaccination rate was about 29% as of June 1, with Teton County leading the way with about 54% of its county fully immunized.

With about 37% of the state having received at least one shot, Wyoming is among the least vaccinated states in

the country, according to data from the Mayo Clinic.

And as Campbell County has distinguished itself near the bottom of the pack for vaccinations, it also is seeing an increase in new cases over the past few weeks. Following months of low, single-digit daily new cases, Campbell County saw a rise in new cases and hospitalizations last month.

"When we were seeing the high vaccination rates in March and April, we were also seeing the lower incidence of infection," said Jane Glaser, Campbell County Public Health executive director. "Now I'm hoping with the higher incidence again, if we start getting a higher rate of vaccination again, maybe our rate of positivity will go down again."

Through February, March and April, Campbell County added 159 new confirmed COVID-19 cases and averaged about 1.79 new cases per day. From May 1 through June 1, the county added 195 new cases for an average of more than six new cases a day.

There were seven COVID-19 hospitalizations at Campbell County Memorial Hospital to begin June, the most since late January when the county was on a decline from the worst of its most severe COVID-19 wave. As of Thursday, Robertson said that number had dropped to four COVID-19 inpatients.

"We do monitor the positivity rates in the community," Robertson said. "We're

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Totally pawwsome!

Dog lost on visit to Gillette finds way back to Nebraska owner

By **CARY LITTLEJOHN** * NEWS RECORD WRITER
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Lossing a pet can leave a hopeless feeling. It brings about a surge of adrenaline in those first few moments of searching, which turns to a dull ache as the hours stretch into days. Some animals seem rugged enough to survive these kinds of adventures, and other pets seem particularly ill-suited to being helped.

When Manny, a 4-year-old rescue dog, ran away from his owner more than a week ago, he seemed like he was in the latter camp. He's very scared of humans and missing some toes on his right rear foot that causes him to carry that leg sometimes. But a week after Manny went missing, he was back in his owner's loving arms, thanks to the help of some selfless Gillette residents.

A family's graduation celebration in honor of a Thunder Basin High School student turned from harmless fun to frantic worry when Doris Spear's 4-year-old rescue dog, Manny, escaped from her son's home.

The little guy scampered from the home when someone opened a door, and though they gave chase, he was too fast.

"He is some kind of a terrier mix," Spear said.

Spear's family in Gillette lives just off Shoshone Avenue on Dakota Court, not far from the Maverik station at the intersection of Highway 59 and Shoshone.

Doris and her husband had to return home last Tuesday so he could get to work Wednesday. The couple made the nearly 10-hour drive to Wahoo, Nebraska, without Manny. It was a long drive, she said.

"We were scared that we'd never see him again," Spear said. "I just put all my faith in the Father, in God. 'Father God, please keep this little dog safe and help him not be so scared of people.' He doesn't trust strangers. He's a little rescue dog in the first place, and we've only had him for about a year. He's really skittish."

Spear reached out to the Gillette News Record's advertising department after days of searching for Manny with no luck. An advertisement went up Wednesday, May 26, on the News Record's Facebook page, and Gillette residents responded with updates and Manny sightings.

The Maverik station was the place he'd last been spotted, according to the ad. The comment section for the post on Facebook served as the best way of tracking his movements.

"I saw him yesterday I think near south fork apartments ...," wrote one commenter May 27.

Another on the same day said she "saw a small dog with a harness ... walking on the sidewalk by the college soccer field. It was headed toward Thunder Basin but then turned and headed back toward the field or houses to the east ..."

A day later, another commenter said, "I think I say (sic) him Wednesday on Sinclair street too. I'll keep an eye out by the college and have the college staff to keep an eye out too."

Gillette residents and pet-lovers were obviously invested in Spear's story and hoped to see Manny returned to his owner safely. Almost a week after he scooted out the door,



Courtesy Photo/Doris Spear

Manny, a 4-year-old rescue dog, ran away from his owner more than a week ago before being successfully reunited with his owner, Doris Spear, who drove from her home in Wahoo, Nebraska, to retrieve him once found.



An active local Facebook community helped reunite Manny with his family.

Manny wandered into an open garage door on South Emerson Avenue. A person could walk the main roads of Shoshone Avenue, 4J Road and Boxelder Road to reach South Emerson Avenue in a little more than 3

miles. It's impossible to know how much distance Manny covered, but he'd covered a lot of ground for a pup missing multiple toes.

Brenda Bundtrock said Manny wandered in while she and her longtime partner, Dion Kowalczyk, were packing for an upcoming move.

"Dion goes, 'Well there's this little dog that's been coming in the garage and going out of the garage and hanging out underneath the truck.' About that time, he was starting to come in the garage again," Bundtrock said.

They put up a small fence that they use for their dogs, Dino and Lily, so they can hang out in the garage, she said.

"He was like crouching in the corner," Bundtrock said. "Just scared to death."

Manny was too scared and nervous to take any of the food or water that Bundtrock put out for him.

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Adult Treatment Courts to get new substance abuse provider

After years of working with Personal Frontiers, commissioners award bid to another company

By **JONATHAN GALLARDO**
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Campbell County Adult Treatment Courts will have a new substance abuse treatment provider for the next two years.

Personal Frontiers has provided the service to the program for a while. Program coordinator Chad Beeman said the contract comes up every two years.

Personal Frontiers and Step Stone Counseling submitted bids, and the latter was awarded the contract. Beeman said the Treatment Courts board formed a subcommittee to review the bids.

Step Stone Counseling is a for-profit counseling service that was started by Dr. Lori Dougherty, who used to work for Personal Frontiers. When Dougherty was there, "that was some of the best treatment we were getting," Beeman said.

When she left Personal Frontiers, "we were still getting great treatment," but it wasn't at the same level, Beeman said.

Step Stone is working toward getting accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Beeman said it usually takes six to eight months for an organization to get its CARF accreditation. The state Department of Health has said it will give 18 months leeway for the transition.

Step Stone Counseling will begin serving Adult Treatment Court participants July 1, and Beeman said things are being worked out so that the participants have a smooth transition between providers.

The Wyoming Department of Health, from which Adult Treatment Courts gets most of its funding, awarded about \$250,000 to the program for the next fiscal year. This will be matched by \$93,547 from the county commissioners.

It will be enough for 26 slots, Beeman said, which is down from the previous year. He's applied for 40 slots the last two years. The program had been approved for 30 slots for the current fiscal year, but that was cut down to 27 after the state made cuts because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program has had 249 graduates, including 215 on the felony treatment court side and 34 from the DUI court.

Beeman said he can probably serve a few more participants than the allotted number of slots, but that if the state cuts any more in the next few years, he'll be worried because "we're at bare bones right now."



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