

LARAMIE BOOMERANG

SUNDAY PROFILE: LARAMIE JUBILEE DAYS FAITHFUL SUPPORTER

Miss Laramie Jubilee Days 1951
Shirley Lilley's LJD history
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IN THE FIELD

Tips for the novice
camper
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SUNDAY | JULY 7, 2019 | LARAMIE, WYO. | LARAMIE'S VOICE SINCE 1881

\$2.00

WEATHER

Tornado touches down north of Laramie

By **STEVE KNIGHT**
Wyoming Tribune Eagle

CHEYENNE — Severe thunderstorms made their way through southeast Wyoming Saturday night, with at least one tornado touching down in Albany County, north of Laramie.

According to National Weather Service meteorologist Matthew Brothers, a tornado was reported by spotters near the Bosler area, prompting a tornado warning for the area. A tornado signature was seen on radar in that area.

Videos of the tornado also made their way onto Twitter from trained storm chasers and others.

A barn suffered damage from the tornado in the Bosler area of Albany County, Brothers said. No other damage was immediately reported.

"It was like the tornado last year that went north of Laramie," Brothers said. "It went through some fields, for the most part."

A NWS team will visit the Bosler area today to study the damage and determine tornado intensity, Brothers said.

Although a tornado signature was indicated on radar and warnings were issued near Horse Creek in Laramie County between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., no touchdowns were immediately confirmed, according to Brothers. "There were some reports of rotating wall clouds coming from the Laramie Range, but beyond that, there were no reports of tornado touchdown with that storm."

Jeanine West, manager for Cheyenne/Laramie County Emergency Management, said

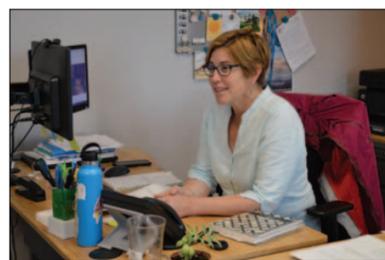
there was no damage immediately reported in the west-central area of Laramie County, where the tornado warnings were issued.

Followers on the NWS Facebook page sent various pictures showing quarter-size hail in Laramie and the south part of Cheyenne.

Brothers said more storms are in the forecast today for southeast Wyoming, although likely not as severe as Saturday's storms.

The area is under a marginal risk for severe thunderstorms today, Brothers said.

CLIMB WYOMING



WENDY PERKINS/LARAMIE BOOMERANG

Martha Doyle confers with Katie Hogarty about upcoming programming for the Laramie Climb office. The Climb model is evidence-based and proven to be effective through job training and placement. Data show 85 percent of participants are employed after completing the program and 74 percent remain employed two years after they complete the program.

WYOMING TERRITORIAL PRISON

Wyoming Territorial prison sees visitor numbers grow

First year of winter hours are 'hugely successful'

By **JORDAN ACHS**
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If she had known how many visitors would brave the winter weather to visit the Wyoming Territorial Prison this year, Superintendent Deborah Cease said she would've tried their winter hours a long time ago.

"The majority of those individuals were travelers," she said. "It has made a big difference being open in the winter."

Not that the prison needed the extra visitors — Cease said the number of visitors has "grown exponentially," with 49,000 people walking through the state historic site just from April-December.

"We've already beat our numbers from last year," she added. "Of course, you really can't beat January, February or March because we were closed (last year)."

One thing many don't realize is most visitors to the historic site are not local. Cease explained the travelers can range from international visitors — including a tour bus full of Russian people who listened to the tour guides via interpreter last week — to families stopping through on their way to other Wyoming cities and landmarks.

"We lovingly like to say that the Territorial Prison is the front porch of Wyoming," Cease said. "We're either the first stop that they're making, they're begin-



JORDAN ACHS/BOOMERANG STAFF

Visitors take photos at the main entry of the prison building at the Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site on Friday morning. The Territorial Prison has seen growth in visitors, especially as it was open in the winter months for the first time this year.

ning their vacation in Wyoming ... or we're their last stop before they leave Wyoming, so they tell us all of their wonderful experiences."

Even with the Territorial Prison's brown informational sign on the side of Interstate 80, Cease said the days of highway travelers stopping on a whim because of a sign are pretty much over. Google and other websites like

Google Business reign supreme, and she said the Territorial Prison's social media presence is strong.

Trip Advisor, a website where people rate and recommend travel destinations, recently gave the historic site an award for being a 5-Star destination for five years straight.

Despite the influx of out-of-state traffic, Cease said one of the

main aspects of the Territorial Prison's vision is to be "an integral part of the community." The site is open for private rentals, including weddings or corporate retreats, as well as frequently hosting popular, community-wide events like the Holiday Lights and Music Show or the Kid's Pumpkin Walk.

More **TERRITORIAL PRISON** | A3

Always climbing upward

New director seeks enhanced communication, integrated training model

By **WENDY PERKINS**
wendyp@laramieboomerang.com

The Laramie office of Climb Wyoming has new leadership.

Martha Doyle became program director in 2018, replacing nine-year veteran Katie Hogarty, who shifted to the assistant director of external relations for the statewide program. Doyle is the fourth program director for the Laramie office since opening its doors in 2004.

Doyle earned her bachelor's degree at the University of Wyoming and her master's in special education and juvenile justice at Arizona State University. After working as a special education teacher and administrator in private and public schools for several years, Doyle opened her own firm that coached and consulted teachers and administrators to use restorative practices in schools. Restorative practice is a process of responding to wrongdoing or harm not with punishment but as an opportunity to build healthy communities, repair harm and restore relationships. It was through her consulting business that Doyle connected with Climb.

More **CLIMB** | A3

MINES

State scrambles to deal with Blackjewel fallout

By **ANDREW GRAHAM**
WyoFile.com

Tuesday laid bare the chaos left by Blackjewel LLC's sudden shuttering of the Eagle Butte and Belle Ayr coal mines in Campbell County.

State officials, caught flat-footed by the capricious move, scrambled to secure the potentially dangerous facilities, identify and minimize environmental impacts and provide services to the nearly 600 miners suddenly left without work.

Industry observers expressed skepticism of Blackjewel since its arrival in the Powder River Basin in 2017. For those who have raised alarms over workers' fates and environmental cleanup throughout the coal industry's decline, Monday's specter of a company simply locking the gate and walking away is a nightmare come true.

More **BLACKJEWEL** | A3

ALBANY COUNTY

County finances better than expected

After budget approved, treasurer reports \$900K more than expected

By **DANIEL BENDTSEN**
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Albany County commissioners approved their 2020 fiscal year budget Tuesday with \$13 million of general fund expenditures, about \$140,000 more than the previous year, but the big news of the day was that the county's revenue picture is a lot better than when commissioners

"The last two budget years were heart-breaking and it was basic survival of this organization. We had to do some things that wouldn't have been sustainable over time in terms of staffing and pay. We were down to nothing, so we probably owe a thanks to the businesses and consumers for investing in this community because that's how the tax revenue flows through this organizations."

Commissioner Heber Richardson

began budget considerations this spring.

While she was originally expecting the county to have \$1.8

million in cash-on-hand at the end of the current fiscal year, Treasurer Tracy Fletcher reported instead Tuesday the county

has \$2.7 million in cash.

"It's been a number of years since we've been remotely close to this situation," Fletcher said. "My recommendation is to leave the money there. This will help us get our foot in the right direction for next year."

Fletcher did have one recommendation for how to use some of the extra money, an idea met with enthusiasm from commissioners and the county's chief budget officer, County Clerk Jackie Gonzales.

More **BUDGET** | A3



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Budget/*from A1*

At Fletcher's suggestion, the county set aside \$392,587 to create a fund that will allow the county to pay for some needed renovations at the courthouse, including a new door, security cameras and fixing a drainage issue on the county's east side.

That new account should also help the county pay for any change orders on the renovation of the courthouse's north entrance, which is being rebuilt this summer.

The improved revenue picture also triggered one other last-minute budget change.

Commissioner Pete Gosar said too many of the county's "community partners," like the numerous nonprofits that provide basic social services, went without the county funding they requested.

"There's a bunch of entities that we've given a fraction of what they asked for," Gosar said. "I think it's important to take care of hungry folks and people who need housing."

At Gosar's request, the county set aside about \$62,000 Tuesday in the 2020 budget so commissioners can review, in coming months, some of the funding requests made by the county's nonprofits and increase the appropriations to outside groups. The county had already just appropriated \$233,793 for those community partners.

The 2020 fiscal year budget was created after many hours of commissioners sitting through budget hearings with staff from the county clerk's office, department heads and other elected officials.

"The upshot of this budget is that this last year has been

good for Albany County in terms of economic activity," Commissioner Heber Richardson said.

Two years ago, a budget crunch led to layoffs and a 19 percent budget cut, including cutting 2.5 positions from Gonzales's office.

The favorable budget news Tuesday was enough to bring Gonzales, who's held her office for almost three decades, to tears.

"We were able to come to some real decisions that will benefit the people that we serve," she said. "I'm just humbled because we've never really been in the place where we've been able to have some funds available to put forward for future consideration. I'm a big-picture person, and I always like being able to look forward to what we'll be able to do in an emergency situation. And now we have some funds available, so these are tears of relief."

Richardson also expressed relief at this year's financial picture.

"The last two budget years were heart-breaking, and it was basic survival of this organization," he said. "We had to do some things that wouldn't have been sustainable over time in terms of staffing and pay. We were down to nothing, so we probably owe a thanks to the businesses and consumers for investing in this community, because that's how the tax revenue flows through this organization. ... We stick together and there's real stewardship here of public resources. I don't know if I could have handled another heartbreaking budget."

Climb/*from A1*

Doyle said the transition to Climb was a courageous step in her career and "the work is really different, but it is so aligned with who I am."

"How Climb runs as an organization is directly aligned with the principals of restorative practices," she said.

Although the core Climb Wyoming program is to move families out of poverty with career training and job placement, implementation can vary from office to office. Hogarty said the participants are often the drive for program changes, based on the graduates and their experiences, rather than from administration.

"It's important to me that each mom has a chance to come to the table and that their voices are heard," Doyle said.

The Laramie Climb office provides job training to two groups of 10 women each year. The recent programs offered through the Laramie office are a commercial driver's license (CDL) certification program, certified nursing assistant (CNA) and medical office skills and professional office career training. When determining the types of programs

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact information for the Laramie Climb office is 217 S. First St., 307-742-9346, www.climbwyoming.org. Office staff includes Martha Doyle, program director, Manuela Hofer-McIntyre, assistant program director, and Stephannie Teini, mental health provider.

to offer, Doyle and Hogarty said the needs of the community are assessed to see where Climb participants can successfully fill in employment gaps.

The CDL certification is in partnership with the Albany County School District No. 1, which provides the CDL training. That training includes first aid, CPR and forklift driving, opening the doors to jobs with heavy equipment or passenger bus driving.

Through the last two years, five Climb participants have been hired by the school district. Laramie County Community College-Albany County Campus and the University of Wyoming Information Technology Training Program have collaborated with Climb to teach courses for

both the medical office skills and the professional office career training.

In 2018, the United Health Foundation partnered with Climb Wyoming in a three-year, \$1 million endeavor to develop an innovative curriculum based on Climb's national recognized model. The project will also explore delivery partnerships in Utah and Colorado. With this partnership in progress, Doyle and Hogarty had no updates to report but are very excited about the opportunity for Climb to develop a curriculum-based approach to affect programs outside of Wyoming.

When asked about personal goals as the program director, Doyle said she would like to enhance communication on how Climb operates and integrate the training model into places of employment, instigating a culture change that is inclusive.

A striking moment for Doyle was on an application day for the program when a woman said, "Martha, I really don't want to be a truck driver, but I really want to be a part of this program." The woman was deeply encouraged by the future possibilities and opportunities offered by Doyle and Climb Wyoming.

Territorial Prison/*from A1*

Schools, too, frequently visit the Territorial Prison. More than just a typical field trip, Cease said the tours with the schools involve activities with a curriculum that follows Wyoming state standards, so "they actually have classroom time when they're here." It's such a huge draw, schools from Casper, Wheatland, Fort Collins and Greeley, Colorado, make a point to visit.

Even the gift shop has seen increased patronage, and Cease said it's an indication of the overall economic benefit the Territorial

Prison brings. Many, if not most, of the goods sold in the gift shop are Wyoming made.

"That's what people want — they don't want to buy something made in China," she said. "They want something that is unique that they can't get anywhere else."

Additionally, she added, many of the visitors stay in Laramie overnight, contributing to lodging taxes and spending money at other businesses in town.

What sets them apart the most, Cease said, is the Territorial Prison's constant desire to change, adapt and push forward. Her hope is to be the go-to recommendation

for locals to give tourists without hesitation.

Never slowing down, the site has plans for a variety of new exhibits, including one detailing Winchester rifles — commonly used by the prison guard — and a new, natural playground for children. There are also plans to expand the broom factory part of the museum, and Cease said the Wyoming Peace Officers museum will be migrating to the site from Rawlins soon.

"We're not stagnate here," she said. "We're constantly fixing things, adding things, changing things. We're trying to be a very live and moving body."

Blackjewel/*from A1*

Gov. Mark Gordon and his executive team rushed to Gillette as did Wyoming's senior U.S. Senator and former Gillette Mayor Mike Enzi. The governor and agency heads assured miners and local officials at a public meeting the state would help soften the blow of the jobs lost. Miners and a landowners' group meanwhile raised health, safety and environmental worries presented by huge open pit mines that aren't actively managed by trained experts — spontaneous coal fires, unsecured explosives and abandoned clean-up operations.

Joined by the director of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, the director of the Department of Environmental Quality and other agency personnel, Gov. Mark Gordon told local city and county officials his administration is doing everything it can, as quickly as it can.

DEQ inspectors are investigating the abandoned mines, director Todd Parfitt said. Even the Wyoming Department of Homeland Security was on hand, in case of unexploded mine ordinances or other security concerns. DEQ assured the community as well that the reclamation bonds for the mines were solid.

Blackjewel employees at the meeting directed many of their most pointed questions not at unemployment or mine reclamation but at a subject Gordon and his staff didn't at first address: Blackjewel CEO Jeffrey Hoops.

"Has anyone had contact with Hoops," one miner asked.

Gordon and Parfitt both answered that they had not. "I look forward to his call," Gordon said.

Workers at the public meeting asked when they might be able to return to the mines and gather personal effects they'd left behind. Campbell County Sheriff Scott Matheny said it wasn't yet certain when miners could return to the properties. Other miners worried about their most recent paychecks, which they said they had struggled to cash. They wondered if Hoops would be held accountable for what some said were unpaid obligations to the local community and its miners.

Meanwhile, the Powder River Basin Resource Council, which represents some neighbors of the mines near Gillette, asked how Blackjewel could walk away from two massive holes in the earth.

Who is minding the store, and potential piles of combustible coal that could catch fire, the group asked in an email to DEQ officials and a member of the governor's staff.

"Did Blackjewel provide DEQ with some notice that they were closing the mines and is there a requirement that they do so?" PRBRC executive director Jill Morrison wrote. The group provided WyoFile with the email. "How will the DEQ and the state address the immediate safety issues at the mines, specifically the status of uncovered coal that could spontaneously combust?"

A Blackjewel miner echoed those worries in an interview Tuesday evening. "Those mines can't just sit," said Lynne Huskinson, an equipment operator at Eagle Butte with 40 years of mine experience. "Things are going to happen," she said. "Environmentally it sucks."

Workers at the mines expend significant and constant effort to prevent

coal fires and other safety hazards, Huskinson said.

The DEQ sent inspectors to the abandoned mines Tuesday morning to look for safety issues. "The last thing we need to have happen is some kind of big environmental impact," Guille said at the time.

On Wednesday morning, DEQ spokesperson Keith Guille said the mine inspectors were still working. "They didn't find any immediate hazards," on Tuesday, Guille said. "They found some smokers, which is like the coal seams were smoking a little bit. It isn't uncommon. It's a maintenance issue to make sure that doesn't get out of hand."

The inspectors had not found explosives set in holes to loosen earth — part of the process of what miners call blasting — Guille said.

PRBRC members who live near the mine alleged that blasting operations continued after the closure.

"We know that Blackjewel blasted yesterday afternoon after the announcement about bankruptcy and mine closure," Morrison wrote in her email to DEQ. It's unclear who would have performed that work with miners sent away.

"We didn't have any reports of that," Guille said. "I'm not saying it didn't happen. There may be various reasons why maybe that occurred during or right after."

The Campbell County Sheriff's Department sent deputies to secure the mines after Blackjewel closed them Monday.

Guille did not know how DEQ was first notified that Blackjewel had abandoned the mines, he said. Word did not come from the company itself, he said. By Wednesday morning, the agency still had not had any conversations with Blackjewel, but had spoken with permit-holder Contura Energy, he said.

On Wednesday morning the bankruptcy judge rejected the latest Blackjewel plan for financing, dimming hopes that Hoops will secure fresh financing and reopen the mines. The operator is not the only corporate entity involved, however.

Officials noted that while Blackjewel initiated the closures, the actual permit to mine remains with Contura — an offshoot of Alpha Natural Resources created during that company's bankruptcy proceedings. That's because the Environmental

Quality Council — a DEQ citizen's oversight panel — delayed the transfer of the permit due to concerns about Blackjewel's environmental violations in other states.

"The permits remain under Contura," Guille said. "Blackjewel has a license to mine. The permit itself is under Contura. The bonds are the responsibility of Contura."

Contura's bonds cover the value of reclamation, Guille said. The company has bonded up to \$227 million for the mine, much of it with third-party guarantors, according to permitting information. Blackjewel has its own third-party bonds as well, for \$220 million. A \$27 million chunk of that bonding is in real property — two large ranches owned by the companies that would be deeded to the state if the company fails.

Still, some were relieved the name on the permits was still Contura, not Blackjewel. "Thank God they didn't [approve the permit] and kept Contura on the hook," Sen. Michael Von Flatern (R-Gillette) said of state regulators.

Were it not for the challenge to the permit transfer brought by the PRBRC,

however, and the subsequent delay in approval ordered by the Environmental Quality Council, the DEQ could have approved the permit. The EQC delayed the permit after PRBRC argued the regulatory agency had not done its due diligence in examining Blackjewel's environmental and regulatory compliance record in other states.

Hoops' affiliated coal companies had 42 violations in eastern states, according to evidence presented at a May EQC hearing. Blackjewel used a loophole of sorts to get through the permitting process without first settling the problems with eastern state regulators.

But that tangled proceedings might raise its own concerns in the event of permanent closures by Blackjewel. Guille on Tuesday said it wasn't completely certain Contura would have to pay for reclamation.

"I don't want to state as fact that it's only Contura that is on the hook here," Guille said, but "they are the permittee."

WyoFile is an independent nonprofit news organization focused on Wyoming people, places and policy.



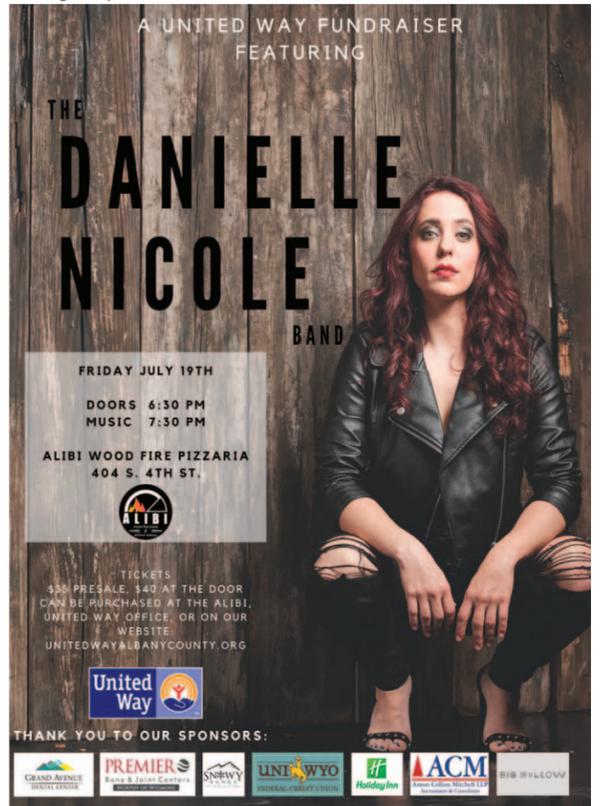
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