

American Red Cross
blood drawing
Dec. 28, 12 to 6 p.m.
Choteau LDS Church

CHOTEAU ACANTHA

CHS hoops teams each notch pair of non-conf winsPAGE 7

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 29 2010

Dutton EMS eyes rejoining county system

By Nancy Thornton
Acantha reporter

Two members of the Dutton Emergency Medical Services and Training Center Inc., attending the Dec. 6 Dutton Town Council meeting, announced that they are exploring the feasibility of merging with the Teton County EMS.

"The community has been more supportive than anyone could hope for," began Dutton EMS Board President and crew chief Shawn Ostberg as he described the challenges the four-member crew has faced after losing two long-time crewmembers, Sue Dunning to retirement and Tim Tharp to relocation during the past year.

Ostberg and Colleen Campbell told Mayor Susan Flesman and councilmen Tom DeMars, Bob Dauwalder, Lanny Christman and Chuck Proff that they wanted the blessing of the council and the community to explore the idea, which they said would position the medical emergency and ambulance service for the long-term and might have huge benefits if the merger were to work out.

Four local residents, Ostberg, Campbell, Lora Bryant and Gwen Larson, are trained emergency medical technicians-basic with endorsements. They respond to about 30 to 35 calls a year in the area from Larson's home east to the Teton County line including Interstate 15 accidents. Ostberg said the interstate's crossing at the Teton River and the rest stop there are prone to having deer-vehicle wrecks.

Dutton EMS founders Dunning and Larson were members of the Midway Quick Response Unit and the Teton County EMS a decade ago. They made a decision to break away from the county EMS organization "to remove themselves from the politics that have, in their opinion, stressed the county EMS system," according to an Oct. 22, 2003, Acantha article.

Together, the women established an IRS 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation a month later, calling it the Dutton Emergency Medical Services and Training Center Inc. The crew had eight members at the time and stored the ambulance in the heated Dutton fire hall garage.

In May 2007, the Dutton EMS purchased an old teacherage and triplex apartment building from the

See EMS, page 2



Acantha photos by Vonnice Jacobson

Choteau Elementary Christmas program

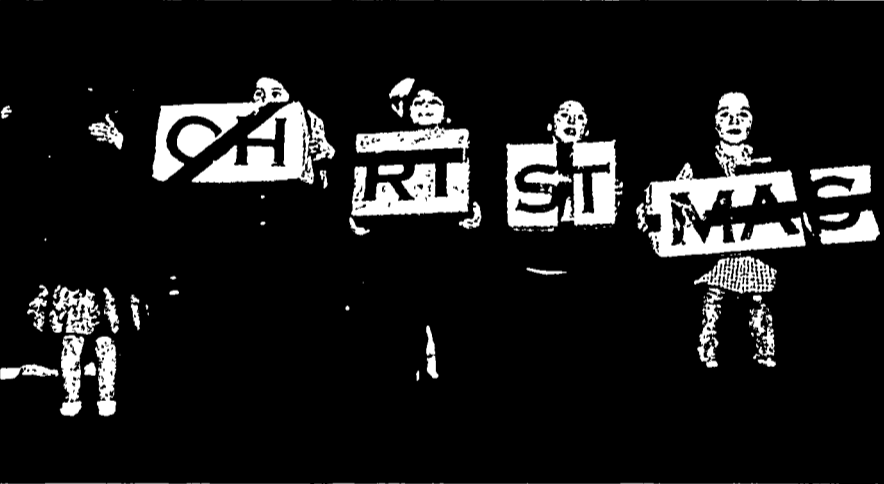
Choteau Elementary School music teacher Jeanette McCormick leads the kindergarten through sixth-grade student body in a Christmas song during their school holiday program on Dec. 21.



Busy elves make toys in Santa's Workshop.



Choteau Public Schools music teacher Lorrain Depner conducts one section of the elementary school band in a few Christmas tunes during the program.



Greenfield program

Greenfield students wished the audience Merry Christmas during the holiday production held in the school gym just before the holiday break.



Acantha photos by Vonnice Jacobson
Mrs. Santa Claus, Berit Bedord, helps out a couple of the elves, as part of the Christmas program held at Greenfield School.

County seeks public comment on plan

By Melody Martinsen
Acantha editor

The Teton County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Committee is taking comment until Jan. 10 on the proposed boundary designating the county's "wildland-urban interface" or WUI in the draft plan.

The committee members, who are working with the consulting firm of Northwest Management Inc. to revise the county's CWPP, unveiled options for the proposed boundary at public meetings in Choteau and Fairfield earlier this month and are seeking input from potentially affected landowners along the Rocky Mountain Front.

The committee's next regular meeting will be Jan. 11 at 1 p.m. in the USDA Building, Farm Service Agency meeting room, in Choteau.

The Teton County commissioners sent letters to more than 74 landowners along the Rocky Mountain Front whose property could be affected by the establishment of the WUI in the new plan, and about 14 landowners came to a public meeting on the draft plan held in Choteau on Dec. 9. An earlier meeting in Fairfield drew only a couple of firefighters and no landowners.

Northwest consultant Tera King presented an overview of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan update process and invited landowners to give their comments at the meeting or to send written comments on the plan to the county commissioners.

Under state and federal law, the county is required to update its CWPP every five years, and Teton County is going through that process, she said. The new plan will help the county and allied agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation protect businesses and residences from the threat of wildfire.

When completed, King told landowners, the plan will identify risks to forest and rangeland, increase public awareness, comply with state law, and help bring money into the county for equipment, training and fuels reduction projects.

This plan, she said, will help the county do as much as it can to be prepared before a wildfire happens. "Anything we can do ahead of time to lessen those impacts will be a good thing."

See PLAN, page 10

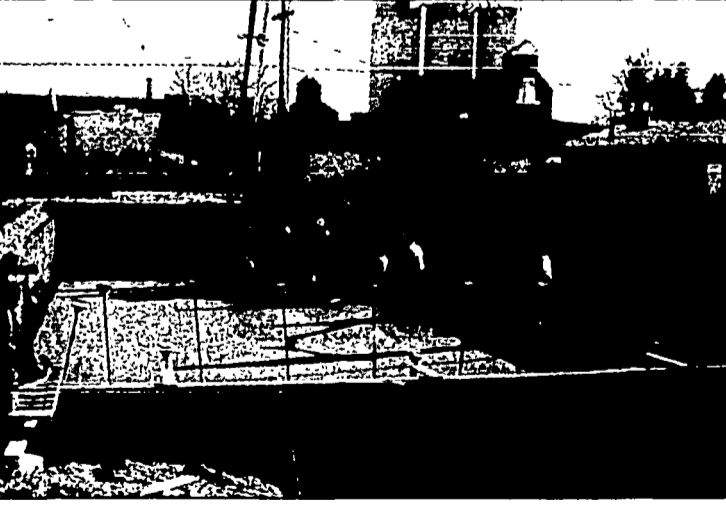
"Casino Night" bash Dec. 31 to raise funds for Lions pool

By Melody Martinsen
Acantha editor

The Choteau Lions Club with help from the Soroptimists is putting on a "Casino Night" fundraiser for the new swimming pool on New Year's Eve at the Choteau Pavilion. The doors will open at 7 p.m. and various poker, cribbage and bingo games will be played, starting at 7 p.m. and concluding at 11 p.m.

All the proceeds from this event will go into the pool fund. The Lions have raised more than \$500,000 so far on their way to a goal of nearly \$1 million needed to replace the 75-year-old public swimming pool in Choteau. The fundraising effort for the pool started about two years ago. The new pool will be located on city-owned property just north of the existing pool and bath house.

The Casino Night entry fee is \$10 per person, which entitles players to \$10,000 in imitation money (chips). The entry fee includes tickets for door prizes and raffles. Cash prizes will not be given to winners. Instead, merchandise prizes will be awarded through raffles. Additional chips may be purchased separately. Chips from winnings at the games may be exchanged for raffle tickets at any time. Prizes will be displayed around the room and raffle tickets may be deposited into containers



Acantha file photo

Workers with Talcott Construction pour concrete at the new pool site this fall.

placed in front of each prize. At 11 p.m. prizes will be drawn for lucky ticket holders.

Many prizes have already been obtained, mostly from local businesses. Their generosity is greatly appreciated because they are continually asked to donate to nearly every cause that comes along. Everyone who attends Casino Night will have a chance to win something. The more raffle tickets a person has, the better the odds to be a winner.

The purpose of this Casino Night is to provide a few hours of fun and

entertainment on New Year's Eve for people of the local area as well as raising funds for a much-needed new swimming pool. It is not meant to be a big payout for those lucky in the games.

Casino Night is meant for adults (18 years and older). Those who do not play cards or bingo can still purchase raffle tickets and have a chance at winning prizes. A portion of the area will have tables and chairs for those who would like to sit and visit. Snacks will be provided throughout the evening and are part of the \$10 entry fee.

Choteau cafeteria project recommended for funding

By Nancy Thornton
Acantha reporter

A Choteau Public Schools food service area renovation project ranked 15th on a list of 30 projects that Gov. Brian Schweitzer recommended for funding in his proposed budget for the 2013 biennium.

The Quality Schools Grant Program is an \$11 million competitive grant program created from federal stimulus funds to provide infrastructure grants, matching planning grants and emergency grants to public school districts in Montana. The deadline to qualify for funding in the 2011 legislative cycle was last June.

The state Department of Transportation

the program. Although the program

funding 30 projects, the 2011

what projects to fund between

final budget and the

applications totaling \$20 million

Choteau Schools

remedy safety issues

food service facilities

The program

claim involved the use of

public health or

Adjudication grinds ahead

By Nancy Thornton
Acantha reporter

Montana Water Court Senior Water Master Douglas Ritter will not predict an end date for the adjudication of the Teton River, but in a recent e-mail he said, "All the easy stuff is completed," which amounts to more than 50 percent of the cases he is managing.

The Teton River basin has more than 2,500 claims of water rights that have a date of first use before the state's new water law went into effect on July 1, 1973. The Montana Water Court issued a temporary preliminary decree of the pre-July 1, 1973, water rights in

the Teton basin in December 2005.

Since that time Ritter, who is based in Bozeman, has been using telephone conference calls and in-person conferences with claimants to resolve "issue remarks" or problems with various claims and to gather information on the nature of the objections that claimants have to other claims on the streams that flow east in the 200-mile-long basin through Teton County and east through Chouteau County.

"The next 30 percent is well underway and will probably be completed within the next year. These are cases with some controversy that will probably settle without a hearing. The final 20 percent are

cases that will probably go to a hearing. Given the nature of these cases, it may take some time to get through this process. All of the cases are moving forward, some are moving better than others. All in all, I think it is going fairly well," Ritter said.

Among the recent developments, Water Court Judge Bruce Loble affirmed and adopted Ritter's decision regarding the oldest water right on the upper Teton River, that of the Choteau Cattle Co. (CCC).

The claim involved the use of the Bateman ditch to convey the water to the CCC's diversion at the Burd ditch, a short distance down-

See WATER, page 10