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WYOMING RURAL ELECTRIC NEWS


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COVER PHOTO
Snow-covered berries create splashes of color on a bush in Powell.
PHOTO BY ILENE OLSON, LIGHTWEAVER PHOTOGRAPHY
COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

First of all, I hope everyone had a happy Thanksgiving, and since it’s the end of the year I hope you and yours have a very Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a great new year.

I know in the past I’ve written about the Seven Cooperative Principles and probably specifically one of my favorite principles: Commitment to Community. But given the time of year, when we give thanks and hope for a better tomorrow, I felt compelled to write about it again.

We “in the biz” often refer to people involved in the cooperative as a family. That includes everyone from the board of directors to the employees to the members or owners of the cooperative, and even the communities where we serve. That’s because we often function like a family.

We have the matriarchs and patriarchs who have been around for a long time (some even since the day the lights came on), who garner our respect and whom many of us turn to for advice and a historical perspective. Then there are the parents; the ones trying to keep the family functioning and out of trouble. Next come the kids and grandkids. These people have all the newest gadgets and great ideas of how to change and make things better … and who can’t understand why the parents and grandparents don’t “get” them. I could go on about cousins and in-laws but I think you get the idea.

Despite the drama that can occur with this family, one thing that remains constant is that we all want what’s best for the family, or in the cooperatives’ case, our communities. That’s why you’ll find the most kind and giving people out in rural Wyoming, willing to give their time, talent and money to help their families, their neighbors, their neighbor’s neighbors, their communities and yes, their cooperatives.

That’s why, beginning next year with the February issue of the WREN, we’ll be highlighting what each of our 11 Wyoming electric cooperatives mean to the communities where we serve and what they mean to our state as a whole. One thing our cooperative family doesn’t do all that well is talk about ourselves, and I get it: humility is in our DNA. But sometimes it’s helpful to reflect on all the good that we do, in order to keep doing it.

So cheers to our cooperative family and our continuing commitment to it. We’ll see you next year, which is the year of the Earth Pig according to the Chinese Horoscope … for whatever that means. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the co-op family to yours.

SHAWN TAYLOR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Linemen play a critical role in our mission to provide reliable, affordable electricity. Tough training and a focus on safety is behind everything they do. Simulated field operations and emergency-response training are ways Basin Electric invests in their safety and in providing reliable power to you.
Michelle Pastor, education program advisor for Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, is seeking participants for two programs, the National Energy Education Development (NEED) Project and the Story Behind the Switch.

The NEED Project offers a three-day summer energy conference for 4th-12th grade teachers. During this event educators receive professional development credit, STEM curriculum training and a classroom kit to keep. The conference will take place June 18-20 at Tri-State headquarters in Westminster, Colorado, and most expenses are covered. Wyoming teachers who are or who teach electric co-op members in Tri-State’s association can apply at www.tristate.coop/NEEDapplication.

The Story Behind the Switch is an ongoing activity that Pastor and local cooperatives bring to the classroom. The presentation can be adjusted to meet student age level and is available for elementary, junior high and high school classrooms.

For more information contact Michelle Pastor:
303-254-3187
mpastor@tristategt.org

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GRASSROOTS NETWORK

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ENERGY SHARE

Winter has arrived and Wyoming’s cooperatives are once again collecting funds to provide heating help. Energy Share is a nonprofit organization that helps residents whose other means of assistance have been exhausted.

Last winter, the program paid $47,468 to help 155 households with utility bills.

Those in need may contact the local Salvation Army to apply for assistance.

TO DONATE

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NRECA BOARD
SEEKS REPRESENTATIVE

The Wyoming Rural Electric Association nomination committee will be accepting nominations for candidates to represent Wyoming on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) board of directors.

Board members will vote on the Wyoming NRECA Board representative at the annual NRECA Wyoming Membership Meeting on January 31.

Those interested in serving or nominating someone should submit names in writing to:

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WHERE IN WYOMING?

Light Your Christmas Tree Starting from the Top Down

Are you one of those people who believe in starting at the bottom and working up? Well, when it comes to lighting your Christmas tree, don’t! That’s the advice of Eve Freyer, home lighting consultant for the Westinghouse lamp division. Start at the top of the tree, she advises.

Electrical strings come in varying lengths containing from seven to twenty-five bulbs. Miss Freyer points out, so that you should figure out how many you need before you buy it. For a striking full look, a six-foot tree requires about 80 bulbs. Stringing lights can also lead to an unattractive, spotty appearance.

Before you start to trim the tree, straighten out the strings of lights along the floor, removing all kinks.

Make sure all bulbs are burning brightly and that none of the cords are fried or sockets damaged. Then unplug the strings and arrange the colors alternately if you are going to have a multicolored tree. For a more contemporary look, the bulbs of all one color. For a starting effect, try pick on a white tree. Make sure you have replacements on hand for each color used.

Stringing your lights around the tree, starting at the top and working down. Place the lights on the inside bottom first, and work from the trunk outward to the tip of the branches. After each string is in place, light it and stand back to check your work before proceeding with the next string.

After the strings are all in position, disconnect them before beginning to hang your ornaments, again working from the top down.

These rules also apply to outdoor trees where symmetry and balance is every bit as important. Another hint, white or colored spot and flood type light bulbs can be used to get a vantage to dramatic, accent or highlight a tree, either indoors or outdoors. One caution, be sure to use outdoor type bulbs when lighting an outside tree to prevent breakage from rain or snow.

The O & S Department of Agriculture says 81 percent of every dollar Americans spent for food in May 1957 went to people who bought, handled, sold, processed and packaged it. The rest of the dollars—29 percent—went to the farmers who produced the food.
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Years of work by innovative engineers have resulted in a mobility device that’s truly unique. They created a battery that provides powerful energy at a fraction of the weight of most batteries. The Zinger features two steering levers, one on either side of the seat. The user pushes both levers down to go forward, pulls them both up to brake, and pushes one while pulling the other to turn to either side. This enables great mobility, the ability to turn on a dime and to pull right up to tables or desks. The controls are right on the steering lever so it’s simple to operate and its exclusive footrest swings out of the way when you stand up or sit down. With its rugged yet lightweight aluminum frame, the Zinger is sturdy and durable yet convenient and comfortable! What’s more, it easily folds up for storage in a car seat or trunk— you can even gate-check it at the airport like a stroller. Think about it, you can take your Zinger almost anywhere, so you don’t have to let mobility issues rule your life. It folds in seconds without tools and is safe and reliable. It holds up to 265 pounds, and it goes up to 6 mph and operates for up to 8 hours on a single charge.

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What you should know about radon

Radon is an odorless, colorless, naturally occurring gas that can cause lung cancer with long-term exposure. The highest levels of radon are found in the lowest level of a house. If your house has a radon level over 4.0 pCi/L, fix it!

**TEST YOUR HOME**

The Wyoming Cancer Program offers short-term home radon test kits for purchase. Each test is $7 for one or $12 for two kits. The radon test kits cover roughly 2,000 square feet and should be placed in the lowest, regularly used level of your home. To order a kit, contact the Wyoming Radon Program at 307.777.6015.

**FIX HIGH RADON LEVELS**

Testing your house for radon is the easiest and fastest way to see if you have high radon levels. If you have a high level of radon, a radon mitigation system has to be installed in your house in order to reduce your exposure to radon. A certified professional can install the system, or you can do it yourself. Fixing high radon levels can save lives.

Questions about radon?
Visit www.health.wyo.gov/radon

The Wyoming State Fair board has voted to return to a five-day schedule for the 2019 fair. The decision was made after board members discussed feedback from participants, as well as budget concerns.
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YOUR SOURCE OF POWER. AND INFORMATION.
Between 1840 and 1869, more than 500,000 pioneers traveled from Kansas City to Portland on the Oregon Trail, crossing the entire state of Wyoming along the way.

The span of the trail along U.S. 26 from the Nebraska State Line to Interstate 25 is the designated Oregon Trail Historic Byway, and the trail ruts near Guernsey are its crown jewel.

These trail ruts, accessible via a plank walkway, are cut into solid rock by thousands of wheels that passed through. It’s easy to imagine pioneers pushing and pulling their wagons over the unaccommodating landscape.

The designated byway includes Register Cliff and Fort Laramie National Historic Site, both east of Guernsey. Fort Laramie was a military outpost, Indian trading post and major resupply point for emigrants on the trail. Old Bedlam, a barracks building on the fort grounds, is the oldest structure in Wyoming.
**Meet the Quaking Aspen**

**Scientific Name**

*Populus tremuloides*; Aspen trees belong to the large genus *Populus*, which also includes cottonwood trees. Wyoming is home to several native cottonwood species, but there’s only one aspen.

**Appearance**

Aspens can become quite tall, up to 70 or 80 feet, and 2 feet across. Except for the oldest trees, they have smooth, white bark, with very distinctive black scars where the branches have fallen off. The leaves are bright green in the summer, turning yellow to gold, orange or red in the autumn.

Aspens tremble, or quake, because the leaf petiole (the stalk that attaches a leaf to a twig) is flat, and perpendicular to the leaf blade.

**Groves**

We usually see aspens in groves; many (or all) of the trees in a grove may be connected by their roots, and are really a single individual, called a clone. In fact, an aspen clone in Utah may be the largest organism on Earth! The clone, named Pando by the scientists who study it, is estimated to weigh 6,600 tons and be 80,000 years old! Research by Cheyenne Central High School students showed that aspen clones in the Laramie Range are much smaller, and groves usually contain more than one clone.

**Distribution**

Quaking aspens have the broadest distribution of any tree in North America—across Canada from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts, south into the eastern United States and down the Rocky Mountains into Mexico. In Wyoming, aspens are found in moist areas, especially in the foothills and mountains.

**State Trees**

Quaking Aspen is the State Tree of Utah.

Wyoming’s State Tree is the Plains Cottonwood, a cousin of the Aspen.

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*Image by Sierra Sauskojus*
DOORS OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

OPEN

CENTERPIECE

PHOTO BY KELLY ETZEL DOUGLAS

BY GAYLE M. IRWIN
Projects worked on by faculty in the school’s recently-established laboratories have the potential to support and enhance the work of Wyoming ranchers, farmers, miners and communities, and therefore, the state. For example, the Carbon Engineering Lab has more than a dozen ongoing projects looking at various ways to utilize coal and extend the mineral’s use beyond fuel and energy products. These include creating soil amendments for use in agriculture and carbon fibers that can be used to reinforce lightweight items such as tennis rackets and golf clubs.

The SER also provides support funding for nine Centers of Excellence, which includes the Center for Produced Water Management and the Wyoming Reclamation and Restoration Center.

“The School of Energy Resources was created to enhance energy-related education, research, and outreach through targeted programs,” said Scott Quillinan, director of research for the SER. “The most recent targeted initiative is carbon engineering. The goal of carbon engineering is to develop new and additional uses for Wyoming coal.”

Established in 2006, the school is funded by the Wyoming legislature at approximately $10 million annually.

“This work is important to the future of Wyoming’s natural resources and energy industry and could be utilized on a global scale,” said Wyoming governor Matt Mead.

“The carbon engineering initiative has stimulated a lot of excitement and interest across the state and beyond,” he said. “It is interesting not only because we are passionate about coal and its future in Wyoming, but because there are clear synergies that support the ENDOW Initiative, which seeks to expand and diversify Wyoming’s economy over the next twenty years.”

continued on page 18
NEW USES FOR COAL

The Wyoming Legislature funded UW’s recently-established Carbon Engineering Lab under special appropriation. Three components are involved: equipping the lab with state-of-the art capabilities, which started about a year ago; funding the capital equipment needs; and financially supporting cutting-edge research.

“We’re in the project implementation stage; in a year’s time it should all be complete,” said Richard Horner, director of special projects and emerging technology at the university.

The research involves all three aspects of transforming coal decomposition products, whether they are solids, liquids, or gases and turning them into products that have more value than the energy content of the coal itself, at this time around $15 per ton, Horner said.

“What we’re trying to do is find things we can make with the coal decomposition products, whether solid, liquid or gas, using a unique approach which employs thermo-chemical processing, a technology for which UW recently applied for a full patent,” he said.

Research involving solids include making soil amendments, construction materials, and carbon fibers. Projects involving liquids include road paving and roofing materials, making engineered resins, coatings and polymers, and formulating carbon-rich additives that enhance oil production.

“The reason we’re able to do some of these things which have not been possible in the past is because of the uniqueness and properties of Wyoming Powder River Basin coal that has allowed us to specifically generate the intellectual property which we call thermo-chemical processing of coal. That allows us to produce and extract precise molecules from coal in very different ways than people have been able to do in the past,” Horner said.

BENEFITS OF NEW USES

Wyoming and society will benefit from the research and from new products that may arise from these studies.

“One of the benefits is the potential economic prosperity for Wyoming,” Mead said. “More specifically, some of the coal-based products that are being developed support industries that already exist in Wyoming, such as new construction materials and products for agriculture that improve soil fertility and crop yield.”

He added, “Another example is the formulation of carbon-based additives that can be used in local oil industry to improve productivity. In general, by making these coal-based products, which all have a high carbon content, we are avoiding coal converting into carbon dioxide. Regardless on personal beliefs that CO2 plays a role in climate change, the markets believe it does. By taking the concern of CO2 out of the use of coal, we can ensure Wyoming’s coal industry remains strong and create products the world finds useful.”

For example, carbon fibers fabricated using Wyoming coal may have new uses and properties that are discovered in the lab.

“Carbon fiber is one of the strongest materials in the world,” said Kaspars
Krutkramelis, senior technician and laboratory coordinator for the SER’s Carbon Engineering Lab. “People build planes out of this material; it’s lightweight, durable, and basically indestructible. People can make just about anything out of it.”

Some of the current industries using carbon fiber include sporting equipment, military aircraft, civil engineering and advanced materials, and the automobile industry.

“There is so much more potential for coal than as a fossil fuel to make energy,” Krutkramelis said. “Coal brings a new aspect of possibilities through science, engineering, and manufacturing to the state of Wyoming, which actually permits coal to diversify from the energy industry into chemicals and materials industries, and by doing so, creating a more well-balanced economy.”

Earlier this year, The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) awarded UW nearly $10 million to research the possibility of a commercial-scale carbon capture and storage site in the state.

The DOE program is called CarbonSAFE, which stands for Carbon Storage Assurance Facility Enterprise.

“It’s the DOE’s flagship program for carbon capture and storage,” said Scott Quillinan, director of research at UW’s School of Energy Resources.

In partnership with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Environmental Research Center and others, the project seeks to demonstrate that over 50 million metric tons of CO2 could be stored underground close to Basin’s Dry Fork Station near Gillette.

The two-year project, totaling more than $12 million, will involve drilling a deep test well and collecting rock material to evaluate geological, geophysical, geochemical and other characteristics of the layers. The data will help determine the suitability of storing commercial CO2 underground at the site, located about ¼-mile from the Wyoming Integrated Test Center.

“What we’re doing at SER (through CarbonSAFE and other programs) … is working on carbon management solutions, looking for new ways to use coal through carbon engineering, and looking for new ways to use carbon dioxide though CarbonSAFE to promote the current use of coal and natural gas,” said Quillinan. “It’s like this one-stop shop for low-carbon research.”

DOE GRANTS UW FUNDS FOR IMPORTANT CARBON STORAGE RESEARCH PROJECT

Carbon fiber is one of the strongest materials in the world. People build planes out of this material; it’s lightweight, durable, and basically indestructible.

FIELD TESTING

One of the new projects being tested outside the lab is using coal as a soil amendment. A demonstration took place this year at UW’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension Center (SAREC) near Wheatland. Approximately 20 land plots were prepared and cultivated in different ways. Results on crop yield improvement should be known soon, Horner said.

“The objective of the demonstration is to understand the impact of coal char chemistry, type and quantity on crop yields, quality and soil fertility,” he said.

More tests are planned in other types of Wyoming soil. The demonstration project will likely continue for at least three years, he said.

Additionally, researchers are looking to collaborate with area sugar beet cooperatives.

“The local sugar beet cooperatives have the same objectives as we do: to improve crop yields and quality,” said Horner. “While our interests consider different soil types, circumstances, and crops, both entities have acquired valuable insights and knowledge on impact of high-carbon-content chars impregnated into soils. Crafting strategies together makes perfect sense, and while we are currently at the early stages of evolving the collaboration through information exchange, it is anticipated that we might conduct joint trials in the near future using carbon-based soil amendments made from Wyoming Powder River Basin coal.”

Such a collaboration could eventually assist other types of farmers and ranchers growing other crops, as well as mineral exploitation industries who need to effectively and efficiently reclaim and restore land after recovering natural resources.

continued on page 20
Wyoming can lead

Wyoming’s Powder River Basin (PRB) coal is unique, and therefore, new product possibilities and the founding of local industry to make them in the state is a worthy goal. Early indications are that such ventures are highly probable, Horner said.

“We can do this because of the uniqueness of PRB coal – the things we’re trying to do are either not possible with other coals or would be more expensive or difficult to do,” he said. Not only is PRB coal cleaner (i.e. low ash and low sulfur) than that found in the eastern United States, there is also plenty of it.

“There’s a lot of coal in the state and the chemistry is favorable too,” Horner said. “Some of these things we’re doing to make these products – it makes a lot of sense to build those assets at the mine mouth or adjacent to a coal-fired utility plant where we can leverage existing assets and infrastructure, such as coal handling silos and the rail network, because it’s a lot cheaper to do so than to build a standalone site elsewhere where the coal would need to be shipped in and incur added expense,” Horner said.

He went on, “It is a lot more inventive and compelling to sell the products from the coal rather than sell the coal itself and make these products elsewhere. That means new jobs, it means new industry, and it means all the other attributes you might imagine around prosperity. This is now creating a sustainable industry which the future of Wyoming can gain from.”

Mead agreed.

“Once there are demonstrations that the technology works, industry and investors will take interest and allow Wyoming to start the process of thinking about how we will commercialize it and bring it to market,” he said.

Possibilities and opportunities appear endless.

“We’re able to do things with coal which people have not been able to imagine could be done with coal, and make things that were not possible in the past as we had not applied latest science and engineering to coal conversion,” Horner said. “Our dream and the purpose of the state-funded carbon engineering initiative are potentially very realize-able.”

The outgoing governor’s vision is similar.

“Utilizing coal’s byproducts to make new products can create new markets for coal,” Mead said. “This could create a whole new industry in Wyoming. It helps grow our existing economy, stimulates new investment and growth in new companies, and the creation of more jobs.”

Gayle M. Irwin is a freelance writer based in Casper.
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Winter
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ENTRIES DUE BY FEBRUARY 10
One entry per household, please.

LIFE ON MUSKRAT CREEK
A HOMESTEAD FAMILY IN WYOMING

DESCRIPTION BY BARBARA LOVE

Life on Muskrat Creek: A Homestead Family in Wyoming is a series of first person narratives, originally woven together by my late sister, Frances Love Froidevaux, about ranch life 1910-1925 on the Love ranch near Moneta. Our grandmother, Ethel Waxham Love, wrote vignettes about her experiences on the ranch, and our father, J. David Love, provided later recollections of growing up in such an isolated place. Some of the family history was previously published in Lady’s Choice: Ethel Waxham’s Journals & Letters 1905-1910 (University of New Mexico Press, 1993) and was included in the Ken Burns/Steve Ives’ PBS series “The West” (1996). Sadly, rural electrification never reached the Love ranch.

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Publisher: Lehigh University Press

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One of our recent dinner guests introduced me to the term, "radical neighboring." I've been mulling over this term: how it applies to our farm and to our lives on the ranch.

I've decided that using people's most natural instincts and abilities to their fullest extent to, in turn, create a symbiotic community, defines "radical neighboring." It applies to animals just as readily as it applies to people.

On our ranch, we practice multi-species grazing. In its truest form, here's how it looks: the cattle graze the pasture first, followed by the chickens. The chickens scratch through the "fertilizer" left behind, finding grass seed and bugs, redistributing it as they go along. Next, the pigs come in the pasture and root in the soil, turning over the dirt to incorporate and aerate it back into the ground. In essence, the cattle provide the fertilizer, the chickens act as manure spreaders, and the pigs plow. Each animal brings their own unique gifts to the table and, trust me, we utilize them to the fullest extent.

This method brings out the best in the land and the pastures, too, because each species prefers to graze certain plants. Our sheep and goats favor weeds and other plants that cattle don't eat. This reduces parasites because different pests tend to bother different herds, not concentrating any one problem in any one area. We experience increased revenue from more efficient grazing as well as decreased fertilizer or weed control costs – all things we avoid as much as possible.

The challenges we face include fencing, predators, working facilities (corrals and loading chutes), and the care and treatment of different kinds of animals. We use electric fencing with cattle, because it is easily moved when we move the herd, which happens every day or so during peak grass season, to keep the pastures growing heartily and to maximize efficiency. Electric wires must be low for the pigs, who are very smart and easily trained. But because pigs are so smart (and so low to the ground) if there is way out, they will find it. In our "home pasture"
we have to reinforce the pens with more permanent hog wire fencing, and constantly keep a close eye on any gaps and gates. We frequently need equipment, facilities, and expertise that can be used across species whenever possible — and some of those solutions aren’t cheap. Knowing how to pull a calf does not make you qualified to pull a piglet. Requiring a little knowledge of many different species can be intimidating, but it allows the opportunity to work with a team of people that evolves based on their areas of interest. There is always room for more creative thinkers. We recently expanded our sheep herd because our interns are passionate about managing sheep. If you are passionate, you are a welcome contribution to this operation.

Even in protecting each other we use the concept of radical neighboring. We have an ornery donkey that hates all the ranch dogs, chasing and kicking them. He stays with the sheep at night to protect them from coyotes. And, as far as we can tell, none of the local predators can figure out what the heck those big mama sows are. They only know they don’t really want to mess with them. So we keep the pigs handy to ward off skunks and anything else that might want to kidnap chickens or turkeys or get into mischief at the barn. Just a snort from one of those big mamas sends wild animals running! And all the animals like to be close to the brooders and the heat lamps, serving as natural barriers to wind as well. Constantly keeping ahead of threats to any given breed requires a lot of problem-solving and teamwork, from both the animals and from our family.

This is a term we explored actively this summer when we hosted farm-to-table dinners. We created an experience centered around food and found that those adventurous souls longing for connection with each other. And they were ready to be open and receptive, allowing the experience to unfold. It was magical. When we brought out the best in our food with ingredients that maximized the flavors, and worked with local producers to bring to the table the best of what they were raising, it was successful beyond our wildest dreams.

This holiday season we are embracing the diverse gifts all of our animals and all of our friends and family bring to the table. As we break bread together, we are thankful for the community that we have built and look forward to more unique opportunities to bring out the best in each other. As radical as it may seem, it is all about being neighborly.

Gina Sigel and her husband Matt own Black Market Farm on Hecht Creek near Centennial. To learn more about the Sigel’s animal adventures, visit Gina’s blog at www.blackmarketfarm.com.
“He’s dedicated to the Lingle school—he even has the Lingle school abbreviation on his license plate,” said Schilreff, who is a former Lingle assistant wrestling coach and whose children attend school there. “He does a great job of getting our kids to reach their potential. He really engages with the kids.”

Being a math teacher wasn’t what Lashley set out to do. After graduating from the small farming and ranching community of Melbeta, Nebraska, he headed to Western Nebraska Community College to major in engineering. While there, he realized he had a knack for relating with other students and helping them understand math and science concepts when he worked as a tutor in the school’s independent learning center.

His junior year he started at the University of Wyoming and was still majoring in engineering. Sitting in an engineering dynamics class during his first semester at UW, he realized he wasn’t where he was supposed to be. “It was like someone tapped me on the shoulder and said this is not where you belong,” he said. While walking home to his apartment, he passed the college of education.

“Anything we need to do to help students he will do without hesitation.

Numbers mean more to a math teacher. Numbers like:

29 YEARS
17 DIFFERENT MATH AND SCIENCE CLASSES TAUGHT
7 FORMER STUDENTS EARNING MATH TEACHING DEGREES
2 CHILDREN FOLLOWING IN HIS EDUCATIONAL FOOTSTEPS
1 SCHOOL DISTRICT
1 MAN

That one man is math teacher and dean of students Mike Lashley of the Lingle-Fort Laramie (LFL) school district, who has taught in the same school since he started his career. He recently realized he has taught 17 different classes over the years, and one of the things he is most proud of is that he has seven former students who teach math after learning to love it in his classroom. He is also proud that both of his children chose education as their profession, with his son Skyler teaching high school math in Cheyenne and his daughter Danielle teaching sixth grade in Hemingford, Nebraska.

Wyrulec Company in Torrington nominated Lashley as a notable educator with CEO Ryan Schilreff explaining why Lashley deserves the recognition.

His junior year he started at the University of Wyoming and was still majoring in engineering. Sitting in an engineering dynamics class during his first semester at UW, he realized he wasn’t where he was supposed to be. “It was like someone tapped me on the shoulder and said this is not where you belong,” he said. While walking home to his apartment, he passed the college of education.

“Anything we need to do to help students he will do without hesitation.

“Twy a left turn and walked right in and started looking at that as a possibility,” he said. His many math and science classes helped him choose a math education degree with endorsements in chemistry, physics and general science.

He has taught in Lingle ever since earning his degree, teaching a variety of math and science classes. His enjoyment of teaching is apparent. He said he loves when he sees his students’ eyes light up when they understand a new concept, and...
he likes to see students continue to work their way through a difficult process.

“With the technology that we have available today, students can find any piece of information they need online,” Lashley said. “Consequently, the teacher’s job is to make the subject matter real and help students see how it applies to their daily lives. It isn’t so much about knowledge and pedagogy anymore. It is more about building personal connections.”

One way he has built those personal connections is the many hours he has spent on sports buses over the years. He is a tireless coach and athletic director, having coached nearly every high school and middle school sport, with track and volleyball being his main focus.

“The thing I really like about coaching is that’s when you really get to know students,” he said. He added he often quotes another coach who once told him: what better job can you have than playing games with kids? His boys and girls track teams have earned a combined seven state championships, and in 2013 he was inducted into the Wyoming Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

“I’ve had phenomenal coaches that I’ve worked with at Lingle, and also hard-working dedicated athletes,” Lashley said. “That’s how you earn awards and honors—you can’t do it by yourself.”

LFL recently re-configured to have one principal for K-12, and Lashley stepped up as the dean of students, which is basically a vice-principal role supporting the principal. Principal Cory Gilchriest knew Lashley was the right man for the job. He’s known him for years—in fact, when

Gilchriest was a senior in high school at Lingle, Lashley was embarking on his first year of teaching there.

“Anytime we’ve had a challenge or needed to think outside of the box, he’s been willing to try anything to help the kids,” Gilchriest said. “Anything we need to do to help students he will do without hesitation.”

LFL science teacher Brandon Gifford said the school’s students know if they need help with math, Lashley is always in his classroom waiting to help before school starts.

“They know if they come in in the morning he’s going to be there and be able to help them,” Gifford said. “He will do whatever it takes to help them succeed, and that’s both academically and athletically. He’s just an awesome guy in general, let alone just as a teacher and coach.”

As Lashley and his wife of 31 years, Karla, an elementary paraprofessional, look to the future in Lingle, his goal is to continue serving the LFL learning community the best that he can. “I have been very fortunate throughout my career to work with some amazing colleagues and teach some outstanding students,” Lashley said. “I have learned a great deal through the years, and I hope to continue learning about this profession each and every day.”

Elizabeth Sampson is a freelance writer living in Cheyenne with her husband and two young daughters.

**CO-OP SPOTLIGHT**

Mike Lashley, right, speaks with track athlete Chastin Hill in 2015.

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UNC Extended Campus helped me advance my career while juggling busy work and family schedules. I was so glad to find the options of face-to-face, online, or even hybrid classes to continue my education.

**UNC Extended Campus**

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RANGER’S CHRISTMAS

It was the first Christmas with our young German Shepherd, Ranger. Like a child, Ranger’s excitement rose as the decorations were put out and new packages appeared under the tree. But, the source of most of his joy and fascination was a wreath hung over the fireplace. It was a gift from a friend who had used ribbon to tie on a variety of dog treats. Ranger soon learned that by standing with his front paws on the hearth and pointing his nose at the wreath he could usually entice someone to untie a Milk Bone for him.

The heavy snow that year made Christmas a wonderful time of sledding, snowshoe hikes, and visits to family and friends. By the end of the season all of the dog treats were gone and the wreath was discarded.

Christmases passed and Ranger grew to adulthood, assuming his duties as watchdog and best friend. At night he slept in the hall outside our bedroom. It was our firm rule that the bedroom was off limits to him due to my allergies.

Then, early one November morning Ranger appeared beside my bed and pushed his nose under my arm. I thought he must be sick and hurriedly got up to let him out of the house. Instead, he ran to the window and, excitedly wagging his tail, looked out into the back yard. The first snowfall of the season had come during the night and the yard was covered with a blanket of white. I headed for the door still thinking Ranger needed to go out, but was surprised to see him run into the living room. There I found him with his front paws on the hearth, nose pointing to where years ago his wreath had been hung.

DAVY FRANZ ★ NEWCASTLE

THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN OUR TOWN

Our town park had lights on this year
What a sight for all to see
It looks like a fairy wonderland
Snow is glistening, it’s beautiful to see

The lights are white, blue, pink and green
You can’t get enough of that sight
If Santa comes riding in his sleigh
It would be such a perfect night

You can see the tree on top of the hill
They light it on Thanksgiving eve
The tree can be seen on the interstate
It’s hard for the travelers to conceive

Christmas lights can be seen all around
On the light poles through our little town
People’s houses are shining with lights
I love all the sights and the sounds

I’m so thankful to live where I do
In this town and our little place
Where people embrace the concept of love
And you know all your neighbor’s faces

LOUISE DAVIS ★ MOUNTAIN VIEW

Put Your Pen to Paper!
Please include your name, address, and phone number.

wren@wyomingrea.org | (307) 772-1968
214 W. Lincolnway Ste. 21C Cheyenne, WY 82001
wyomingrea.org/wren-submissions
Send complete recipe by February 10! Please include your name, address and phone number.

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**BRUNCH**

**MARCH'S DISH:**

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**MOLASSES BALLS**

1/2 CUP CORN SYRUP
1/2 CUP MOLASSES
1 CUP SUGAR
2 TBS BUTTER
2 TBS VINEGAR
7 CUPS PUFFED RICE

Combine vinegar, molasses, corn syrup and sugar in a saucepan. Bring to a boil: 240 degrees, or “snap” stage. Remove from heat, add butter and stir. Pour over the puffed rice and form into balls. Put on waxed paper to cool.

RUTH ZELLER ★ LOVELL

**GINGERBREAD SCONES**

Cut 1/4 CUP COLD BUTTER into flour until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Mix together in a separate bowl:

- 2 CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1/2 CUP MOLASSES (DARK OR LIGHT)
- 1/2 CUP MILK
- 1 EGG YOLK (SAVE EGG WHITE)
- 2 TBS BUTTER OR MARGARINE
- 1 PKG YEAST

Stir molasses mixture into flour mixture just until moistened. Knead on lightly floured surface 10-12 times. Pat into an 8-inch circle. In separate bowl, beat egg white. Brush over circle. Sprinkle with raw sugar. Score the circle into 12-16 wedges. Bake 12-15 minutes at 400 degrees until golden brown. Serve warm with your favorite jam or lemon curd.

CARLIE OTTO ★ POWELL

**PUMPER-NICKEL BREAD**

1 CUP WATER PLUS 2 TBS
2 TBS MOLASSES
2 - 1/4 CUPS BREAD FLOUR
1/2 CUP RYE FLOUR
1/2 CUP WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR
2 TBS COCOA
1-1/2 TSP SALT
2 TBS BUTTER OR MARGARINE
1 PKG YEAST

This recipe is designed for a bread maker with a setting of basic or basic rapid (I find the rapid setting works better in high altitude). The finished product is a dense, textured bread with lots of flavor. The cocoa gives it that nice brown color. Makes a 1 - 1/2 lb. loaf.

JOYCE KENNEDY ★ RIVERTON

Thank you to all our Country Cooks, who sent a total of 12 recipes this month! We’ve printed a selection of recipes in this special two-page section.
APRIL’S SNOWY DAY COOKIES

3/4 CUP SOFTENED BUTTER
1 CUP SUGAR
1/4 CUP MOLASSES
1 LARGE EGG
1 TSP VANILLA
2 CUPS FLOUR
2 TSP BAKING SODA
1 TSP CINNAMON
1 TSP SALT

For topping: 1/4 cup sugar mixed with 3 teaspoons cinnamon, stirred together in a small bowl.

For dough: Cream butter and sugar until light. Add molasses, egg and vanilla, mix. Whisk dry ingredients together. Then add gradually to the wet, beating smooth. Refrigerate dough for an hour.
Roll walnut-sized balls of chilled dough in sugar/cinnamon and place on ungreased baking sheets 2 inches apart.
Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or just until set.
They need to rest on the pan for about 10 minutes before lifting them off.
Store in a tightly covered container if there are any left.

This recipe makes any day a holiday!
And it reminds us of our friend, April, at the Gathering Place Tearoom in Fort Laramie.

DANIELLE WILSON ★ WHEATLAND

GINGERBREAD MUFFINS

1 CUP BUTTER
1 CUP SUGAR OR HONEY
4 EGGS
1 CUP BUTTERMILK
1 CUP MOLASSES
4 TO 4-1/2 CUPS FLOUR (PART/ALL WHOLE WHEAT)
2 TSP BAKING SODA
1 TSP BAKING POWDER
1/2 TSP CINNAMON
1/2 TSP NUTMEG
1-1/2 TSP GINGER
1/2 CUP RAISINS AND NUTS (OPTIONAL)

Cream butter and sugar or honey. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add molasses and buttermilk. Combine flour, soda, baking powder, and spices and mix into egg batter. Add raisins and nuts. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes.
Makes 3 dozen, bake only what you want; the batter stays good in a tightly covered container in the fridge for weeks.

JANET LAKE ★ SUNDANCE

BAKED BEANS

1-3/4 CUPS BEANS
5 CUPS WATER
1/4 LB SALT PORK
1/8 TSP PEPPER
1/4 CUP MOLASSES

Soak beans overnight. Cover and boil in same water until tender. Skim any foam that may have accumulated on the beans while cooking. Drain the beans but reserve the bean water. Put in 2-quart casserole, bury pork in beans. Combine additional ingredients, add to bean water to make 2 cups. Pour over beans. Bake at 300 for 3 1/2 hours, covering the pot for the first 2 1/2 hours.

This recipe is from my mother, Roberta Wilkes.

JEAN HARM ★ SHERIDAN

HOMEMADE BROWN SUGAR

1 CUP WHITE SUGAR
1 TBS MOLASSES

In a mixing bowl, combine sugar and molasses until mixed together over medium speed. Alternatively, you can mix together in a bowl with a fork until all combined.

**Add more molasses for dark brown sugar.
Place in an airtight container in the pantry for storage.

AUBREY MEDOW ★ SHOSONI

GINGERBREAD MUFFINS

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1 CUP SUGAR OR HONEY
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JANET LAKE ★ SUNDANCE

GRANDMA NORLING’S ROLLED GINGER COOKIES

3/4 CUP SHORTENING
1-1/2 CUPS WHITE SUGAR
2 EGGS
3/4 CUP MOLASSES
4 TSP SODA, DISSOVED IN 4 TSP WATER
4 CUPS FLOUR
1 TSP CINNAMON
1 TSP GINGER
1 TSP SALT

Mix first five ingredients, beat until smooth. Add flour and seasonings, mixing until thick. Chill half hour, then separate into four parts. Roll each part flat to 2/8-3/8 inch thick on a floured cloth. Cut with a 2 1/2 inch round cookie cutter.
Bake at 360 degrees (high altitude) for 10-12 minutes. Makes 40 cookies.

My grandma made this for us grandkids. Now I make them for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren!

JUNE HUSS ★ CENTENNIAL

APRIL’S SNOWY DAY COOKIES

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1 CUP SUGAR
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1 LARGE EGG
1 TSP VANILLA
2 CUPS FLOUR
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For topping: 1/4 cup sugar mixed with 3 teaspoons cinnamon, stirred together in a small bowl.

For dough: Cream butter and sugar until light. Add molasses, egg and vanilla, mix. Whisk dry ingredients together. Then add gradually to the wet, beating smooth. Refrigerate dough for an hour.
Roll walnut-sized balls of chilled dough in sugar/cinnamon and place on ungreased baking sheets 2 inches apart.
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JANET LAKE ★ SUNDANCE
01 | SOUTHEAST

CENTENNIAL

FEB 11-15
Pokes 'n Plainsmen: Scenes, songs and dances by performers from UW Theatre and Dance and Laramie High School. 7:30-8:30p, Buchanan Center for the Performing Arts, $14, $11 senior, $7 student, info 307-766-2100.

CHUGWATER

DEC 31
New Year’s Eve Live Music: The Dakota Country Band will play at the Stampede Saloon & Eatery, info 307-422-3200, stampedefun@aol.com.

ENCAMPMENT

ONGOING
Grand Encampment Museum: Main Gallery and GEM Store open Mon-Fri 10a–4p, info 307-327-5308.

SARATOGA

JAN 19-20

FEB 9

TORRINGTON

SECOND TUESDAYS
Business Roundtables: Topics are: Alternative Wellness Flu Season on Jan 8 and Multi Generational Workforce on Feb 12. Meetings from 12-1p with lunch provided. 2042 Main Street, info 307-532-3879.

02 | NORTHEAST

CLEARMONT

ONGOING
Historical Center: Center open Thursdays 2-4p, 1250 Front St, free. Historical Group meets 2p first Mondays of the month at Clearmont Library, 1p third Mondays of the month at Sheridan Library, info 307-758-4430.

GILLETTE

TUESDAYS

THIRD SATURDAYS
Winter Farmer’s Market: 9a-12p, Nov.-June, Gillette College Tech Center Building.

HULETT

ONGOING
Hulett Museum and Art Gallery: 8a–4p Mon.-Fri., free, info 307-467-5292.

RECLUSE

JAN 26
Recluse Chili Cookoff: 5th annual event to support Recluse Community Hall with food, live music, pie auction and gun raffle. 5-7p, Recluse Community Hall, $10, $30 family. Info 307-202-2029 or Facebook.

FIRST DAY HIKES

JANUARY 1

BOYSEN STATE PARK – 10A
Bring good boots and dress warm for a 1-mile hike through moderate to difficult terrain. Hike begins and ends at park headquarters.
INFO 307-876-2796 • JOHN.BASS@WYO.GOV

SOUTH PASS CITY HISTORIC SITE – 11A
Wear good boots and dress warmly for a 2-mile hike. Meet at the dance hall.
INFO 307-332-3684 • SOUTHPASSCITY.COM

SINKS CANYON STATE PARK – 1P
Bring snowshoes or good boots for a 3-mile hike on the Canyon Loop Trail. Meet at the nature trail parking lot in the Popo Agie campground.
INFO 307-332-6333 SINKSCANYONSTATEPARK.ORG
SHERIDAN
JAN 6, 13, 20, 27
Western Film Series: 2p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.
JAN 8
Martin Taylor & Laurence Juber: 7:30p, WYO Performing Arts & Education Center, $24, $21 senior and military, $15 students, info 307-672-9084, wyotheater.com.

FEB 2
CANTUS: Men’s vocal ensemble will perform. 7p, Whitney Center for the Arts, info whitneyarts.org.

FEB 16
Whitney Center Jazz Orchestra: Concert by 19-member professional jazz ensemble, lead by composer-arranger-trombonist Eric Richards, Director of Bands and Jazz Studies at Sheridan College. Whitney Center for the Arts, info whitneyarts.org.

SUNDANCE
ONGOING
Library Events: Story time for toddlers and preschoolers 10:30a Wednesdays; Lunch Bunch book discussion group 11a fourth Thursdays; Quitting @ the Library 6-8p last Mondays. Crook County Library, info 307-283-1006 or crookcountylib@rangeweb.net.

UPTON
JAN 26

WEDNESDAYS
All You Can Eat Buffet: Drinks and desserts included, 5-8p, Upton Golf Course, $10, $7 seniors, info 307-468-2847.

MONDAYS & THURSDAYS
Zumba: 4p, Senior Center, $5, info 307-391-0223.

ONGOING
Upton Gun Club pistol shoots: 7p on Jan 1, 18 and Feb 1, 15 at indoor range, 705 Ash Street, $5, info rrothleutner@yahoo.com.

WRIGHT

FIRST SUNSDAYS
Wright Winter Series Buckle Roping: Team roping series featuring drawpot team ropings, open team roping, breakaway steer roping. Jan 6, Feb 3. Open at 12p, roping at 1p. Southern Campbell County Ag complex, free to watch, info 307-391-0555.

03 | NORTHWEST

CODY
JAN 20

DUBOIS
JAN 29

ONGOING
Library Activities: Lego Club for grades K-5, 3:30p Tuesdays; Story time for birth-5 years 10:30a Fridays; and Lego Duplo Club for toddlers and preschoolers 11a Fridays. Dubois Public Library, info 307-455-2992.

ONGOING
Dubois Wildlife Viewing Tours: By appointment only, National Bighorn Sheep Center, info 307-455-3429, bighorn.org.

LANDER
JAN 29-31

JAN 31

THERMOPOLIS
JAN 28-30

SECOND FRIDAYS
ArtStroll: Stroll on Broadway Street in Historic Downtown Thermopolis. 5-8p, info 307-856-3964, thermpoliscasino.com.

TUESDAYS
Winter FREE ASSOCIATION

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THIS MONTH: TREES

WE HAD SO MANY SUBMISSIONS THIS MONTH WE PRINTED THREE PAGES OF PHOTOS! SEE MORE READER PHOTOS OF TREES AT WYOMINGREA.ORG/WREN-MAGAZINE/JUST-PICTURE-IT.

01 Blair-Wallis/Vedauwoo, Jim Alsop, Laramie
02 Aspens in full fall dress near Shell Creek in late September, Marion Dickinson, Greybull
03 Holding on to some color, Sandy Pokorney, Gillette
04 Shades of fall, Juanita Mair, Mountain View
05 Remains of the Britannia fire, Sandra Price, Wheatland

JUST PICTURE IT
Beauty even in death,
Brenda Harrison, Laramie

Peaceful after a snow,
Sandy Pokorney, Gillette

Swarm of bees hanging out in our tree,
Linda Torczon, Cody

Misty morning, Rebecca Syler, Sheridan
About snow, James Lehr, Kinnear
Autumn at its finest, Virginia Parker, Encampment
Trees, Carrie Miller, Laramie
Frosty morning at sunrise, Nick Biltoft, Riverton
Frost in the trees, Raymond Cramer, Lyman
02|FOR SALE

Two registered WY brands: “Rocking B” and “Lightening D”, $3,000 each. 307-680-7557.


Surplus Equipment New and Used: Generators, air heaters, engine driven pumps, (all sizes), solar pumps, 3” and 4” polypipe, etc. A variety of types and sizes available. Call for pricing and details: Premier PowerPlants & Pumps, Farson, WY 307-273-9591.

04|LIVESTOCK

24 coming 2-YO Limousin and Lim-Flex Bulls. All Black & Polled. Great dispositions & balanced EPDs to compliment any program. After 30 years of selling at Public Auction we are now marketing our bulls Private Treaty. We invite you to the ranch in Pavillion, WY to take a look! Call 307-856-4268 to inquire directly, or find us on Facebook. Thank you for your interest in Stoll Limousin.

07|WANTED

Antique Collector Looking For Oil Company Gas Pumps, Globes And Signs. Will pay fair market value! Please call Jeff Wandler 307-680-8647 jwandler@LNH.net.

Want to purchase minerals & other oil/gas interests. Send details to: PO Box 13557, Denver, CO 80201.

We Pay Cash For Mineral & Oil/Gas Interests producing & non-producing, 800-733-8122.

10|MISCELLANEOUS

Gillette Saturday Winter Farmers Market. Held every 3rd Saturday November thru June inside the Gillette College Tech Center from 9am to 12pm. You will find at winter market fresh local produce, locally raised beef, pork, goat meats along with whole chickens. Homemade pies, breads, jams, jellys, pickles and so much more! Interested in being a vendor (no mileage radius rule) contact Hannah at 307-682-7281.

20|FREE

Soon Church/Government uniting, suppressing “Religious Liberty” enforcing “National Sunday Law.” Be Informed! Needing Mailing address. TSBM Box 99, Lenoir City, TN 37771, thebiblesaystruth@yahoo.com, 1-888-211-1715.
is the season for gift-giving. Children especially love this time of year, anticipating what presents may be under the Christmas tree as they send letters to Santa and drop big hints to parents and grandparents. Those of us who are older may reminisce about those “days of yore.”

For some people, such childhood memories are sweet and rich, for others, not so much. I’m fortunate to be in the first category. I remember Barbie dolls and clothes, a rocking horse and cowboy hat, and baby dolls with strollers, especially a rubber dolly called Miss Peep. In the days before electronics, such treasures brought great joy, particularly those that came with sets of clothes, homespun yet delicately designed. Miss Peep remains a fond remembrance for she remains with me after more than 50 years.

Memories of holiday dinner gatherings with grandparents still linger as well. Images and aromas of those Christmases, including food, such as turkey, venison, sweet potatoes and Grandma’s German Christmas cookies, and the tall woodland pine decorated with red and silver garland, reside in my mind and heart.

Whether recollections are of holidays, vacations, or outdoor explorations, those remembrances grow more vivid with each passing year. Perhaps because I’m now closer to my grandparents’ age than I was 20 years ago, such cherishings swell deeper than Yellowstone Lake.

THE GIFT OF NATURE

Yellowstone – one of my favorite childhood memories. Camping, hiking, observing bison and bears, watching geysers, and smelling paint pots – for a girl from Iowa, these vacation encounters became an Etch-a-Sketch on my mind and heart. The greatest gift I ever received during my youth was a love for the outdoors. My parents taught me the joy of spending time in nature and appreciating the landscape, no matter the season of the year. Surrounded by forests
and fields on our 14-acre property, I discovered delight while walking through woodlands filled with wildlife, helping Mom tend a vast vegetable garden, and lingering around our two-acre pond. Whether hearing an owl hoot in the cedar and oak trees, watching earthworms do their work in the rich Iowa soil, or observing mallard and wood ducks teaching their youngsters how to swim, I found wonder in the nature around me.

That marvel grew as I entered my teens. My parents and I visited the vast parklands of Yellowstone and Grand Teton parks, and we eventually moved west because we fell in love with the remoteness and rugged beauty of Wyoming and Montana. We chose – and continue to choose – to make the Rocky Mountain region our home.

My ardor and awe of nature has stayed with me for more than half a century. In fact, those feelings have deepened as I’ve grown older.

I still visit Yellowstone, and not just during the tourist season. I’ve taken snow coach adventures and traveled by snowmobile through this historic wonderland. All seasons in Yellowstone are breathtaking; however, visiting during winter is amazing. Remoteness seems more vast, blue skies more rich, and the animals more inspiring. I’ve witnessed snowy-feathered swans glide along the ever-flowing Madison River; observed bison swing their heavy, wooly heads through deepening snow piles in search of food; smelled nose-burning sulfur of the region’s thermal features; and felt the heat on and around the boardwalks while watching geysers gush their steamy heights from the snow-clad ground. Yellowstone is a magical winter wonderland!

A GIFT IN ALL SEASONS

No matter the season, our public lands are a treasure. Whether one is cross-country skiing in Grand Teton, snow-coaching in Yellowstone, fishing a stream in the Big Horns, wildlife watching on the Thunder Basin National Grassland, photographing wildflowers in the Shoshone National Forest, camping at Keyhole and other state parks, or elk hunting in the Wind Rivers, being outdoors on land available to all citizens is a joy and a privilege. Nature is a gift we are given, and one we can share with our children and grandchildren – just as my dad and mom shared with me.

If your parents didn’t bestow that special gift, you can give it to yourself. We live in a state with tremendous natural beauty: waterfalls, mountain meadows, prairies teeming with wild creatures, and trails, streams and rivers beckoning exploration. Don’t ignore the call of the wild – spend time in nature’s beauty, either on your own or with those you love. No matter your age or theirs nor the season of the year, nature is a gift bestowed upon us all.

Gayle M. Irwin is a freelance writer based in Casper.
All WY Quality Counts activities are supported by the Wyoming Early Learning Foundations and Guidelines, as well as the Domains of Development, which include:

- **COMMUNICATION**
- **SENSE OF SELF & RELATIONSHIPS**
- **CURIOUS MINDS**
- **STRONG & HEALTHY BODIES**

WY Quality Counts, housed in the Department of Workforce Services, helps Wyoming parents and child care providers identify and create quality learning experience for children, thanks to the funding of the Wyoming State Legislature.

Research shows that reading with your kids starts to benefit their long-term language development when they are about six months old. Reading helps children recognize letters and numbers in everyday life, helps them to make associations between words and concepts, leads them into writing, impacts their vocabulary and so much more.

**COMMUNICATION IS KEY**

**READ TOGETHER**

Download our Winter Reading Guide for fun, seasonal stories to read, act out and make up with your kids! [WYQUALITYCOUNTS.ORG/WREN](http://WYQUALITYCOUNTS.ORG/WREN)

- **BIRTH – 6 MONTHS**
  - Even though they may not understand the words, your voice is like music to your baby’s ears! Choose books that have high-contrast pictures (black and white or really bold colors), and hold them about 10 inches away while you read.

- **6 – 12 MONTHS**
  - Add reading into your daily routines, like before bedtime or after a bath. Choose board books or books made of cloth or vinyl – your baby will definitely be chewing on these stories!

- **12 – 24 MONTHS**
  - Have your kids interact with the stories you read together by asking engaging questions like, “Where’s the puppy?” Let your kids choose which books to read – picking their own favorites encourages self-expression (and shows their personality).

- **2 – 3 YEARS**
  - At this age, it’s fun to come up with activities to go along with books your kids love. Try acting out the story or describing the pictures together instead of reading the words.

- **3 – 5 YEARS**
  - Do your kids have their own library cards with their very own names printed on them? This is a great time to get them one!