



LOVELL Chronicle

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Despite COVID-19 measures, students report school as being back to normal

BY RYAN FITZMAURICE

The first day of an extraordinary school year appeared to feel mostly just ordinary to students of Big Horn District No. 2.

"I was really surprised when I got here. They did a good job of keeping things as normal as possible," Lovell High School student body president CJ Lindsay said. "It's been a normal looking day."

As students walked into buses and the school building, they

were met with thermometers and kiosks to have their temperature read. As they walked through the hallways, or anywhere where six feet of distance couldn't be maintained, they wore masks. Classrooms were spread apart. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been spread throughout the school, and according to student Keaton Mollett, none of these measures really impacted the day all that much.

"It's not like it's totally different. It's not like I showed up and everything is completely different. It's weird to get used to the mask, but it feels normal," Mollett said. "I mean not like the masks are normal, or the hand sanitizing and washing the hands and everything, but it's not that much different."

There's only one real gripe to be had about wearing a mask, according to Mollett.

"For me it's especially annoying. It's hard to keep my glasses from fogging up," Mollett said. "But it's not too weird."

Classroom instruction has been largely undisturbed by the new measures, according to high school students interviewed.

"The way it looks in a lot of classrooms is the way it looks in a standardized testing day," Lindsay

SEE 'BACK TO SCHOOL' page 6

Schroeder to step down as hospital CEO

BY RYAN FITZMAURICE

It was supposed to happen at the end of July, but COVID-19 changed that. This December, North Big Horn Hospital CEO Rick Schroeder will be retiring and leaving his post.

His replacement is already waiting in the wings.

Eric Connell, the current CEO of Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center in Scobey, Mont., has been hired and will begin his tenure at the hospital in October.

Similar to NBHH, Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center is a partner with Billings Clinic. Also similar to NBHH, Daniels Memorial is a rural hospital, overseeing 25 beds in a town of 1,017.

Connell has overseen the operations of Daniels Memorial Healthcare Center since August of 2018. In his past experience, he has also worked in larger healthcare systems as an administrative fellow in Sanford Health in Bismarck, N.D., and as an administrative intern at University of Utah Hospitals and Clinic in Salt Lake City, a healthcare center that oversees 528 beds.

It's this wide range of experience, Connell said, that has made him certain that rural healthcare is where his heart lies.

"I recognized early on in graduate school that I wasn't interested in spending my day in meetings with other suits," Connell said. "That doesn't appeal to who I am at my core. I know rural healthcare is where I can be involved and connect with my staff on a regular basis. That's what fills my cup as a leader."

Connell said his focus as an administrator is to be patient focused while empowering the employees of a hospital. While he grew up in Bozeman, Mont., his mother made her living as a nurse. It engrained him with a respect for those working on the ground floor, Connell said, a factor that still actively plays a role in his decisions as an administrator.

Just as importantly, he's been on the front lines himself. From 2009 to 2015, he served as a senior phlebotomist in Bozeman, Mont. Tasked with taking morning blood samples on the morning shift, as early as 4:30 a.m., he was just about the most unpopular person within the hospital.

"That's not a great way to wake up," Connell said.

That experience led to a revelation that still guides him as an administrator.

"I learned quickly that the people doing the work often have the best solutions to the problems," Connell said.

As that man walking into a sleeping patient's room with a needle, he found himself in a unique position to learn what it means to prioritize the patient's experience.

"What I was thinking about that the CEO wasn't thinking about was how to minimize this disruption to the patient," Connell said. "Solutions as simple as not turning on all the lights so the patient doesn't fully wake up. Getting there, doing the work and getting done. We've been organized over the convenience of the providers. That's how healthcare is organized. If I can do anything, I can help my healthcare team make care more convenient and easy for the patients."

COVID-19 has caused many disruptions to healthcare, but it also has forced medical providers to provide healthcare in ways that are more accessible and friendly to the patient, a trend he hopes to encourage as NBHH's CEO.

SEE 'NBHH CEO' page 7

BACK TO CLASS



DAVID PECK

Clair Mumford parallels Rocky Mountain Elementary School on her bicycle before donning her mask to enter on the first day of school Wednesday morning.



DAVID PECK

The first day of school often provides emotional moments. Here, Ashley Mangus kisses her son Mac as he enters the grounds at Lovell Elementary School Tuesday morning.

Races develop as filing concludes for special districts

BY DAVID PECK

Although confusion about the filing deadline led to some uncertainty early this week, filing for nonpartisan school board, hospital board and other special district boards has concluded, though a final and official list could not be confirmed by press time.

The Wyoming Secretary of State website states on an election calendar that filing for the spe-

cial district seats ended at 5 p.m. Monday, Aug. 24, but filing forms issued by the Big Horn County Clerk's office listed the filing deadline as 24 hours later - 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 25, and county officials confirmed that deadline in an exchange with Big Horn County Newspapers on Tuesday.

An official in the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's office stated Tuesday morning

that the deadline was Monday, but subsequent emails sent to Secretary of State Ed Buchanan and the Elections Division went unanswered by press time Wednesday.

Whatever the case, races have developed for school board seats in north Big Horn County. The positions will be elected at the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 3, along with council, commission, legislative and congressional

positions nominated in last week's primary election.

There are three school board seats coming open in Big Horn County School District No. 1, the at large seat currently held by Brett Crosby, the designated Deaver-Frannie seat held by Joan Zier and the designated Byron seat held by Ed Riding.

SEE 'FILING UPDATE' page 7

Local teacher has close encounter with a curious bear

BY DAVID PECK

Ilene Henley was enjoying a good book at her family campsite on the Big Horn Mountains on July 12 when she saw something out of the corner of her eye.

It was a black bear - and, fortunately, a friendly one - with an apparent interest in what Henley was reading.

"It was a little before 8 p.m. and my father and husband had left to get water at the ranger station off (Forest) Road 14," said Henley, a Title I reading and math teacher at Rocky Mountain Middle/High School who resides in Lovell.

"I'd just settled into reading in my lounge chair behind our camper. In my peripheral vision I saw movement, but by the time I looked up, I'd started a new book club with a yearling black bear," she said. "He was very friendly as he loped over to the chair, placed his paws on my thigh and seemed to be reading along."

"The black bear leaned in



Ilene Henley

closer to check out the book I was reading (Clive Cussler) and decided he liked it, so he placed his paws on my thigh and seemed to be reading along."

SEE 'BEAR ENCOUNTER' page 7



COURTESY PHOTO

This yearling black bear, pictured a week later, had a friendly encounter with Rocky Mountain Middle/High School teacher Ilene Henley on the Big Horns in July.

