

STOPPED COLD

"Freeze" fights ID theft. **3**

BUYER BEWARE!

Avoid investment scams. **7**



GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Company benefits from older, but more skilled, workforce. **8**



Jennie Martinez, a cook at the senior center in Cheyenne, prepares Swiss steak. Efforts have been made to improve nutritional standards for seniors in the state. (LARRY BRINLEE)

Changing the menu

Dietician creates nutritious food program for seniors

BY JESSICA LOWELL

Kathleen Thomas stumbled across a big problem when she started teaching diabetes nutrition classes in Rock Springs.

Her diabetic students, who came to her to learn how to change their diets to manage their disease, could not eat at the local senior center.

She did a little digging and came up with a solution, not only for her students and those who come to the Young at Heart Senior Center, but also for people who take a meal at senior centers

across the state.

Now, the impact of her work – the Wyoming Menu Project – may reach well beyond state borders.

The registered dietician and certified diabetes educator started looking at the menus for the center and found them to be high in fat and lacking in fruits and vegetables. So she started tinkering: removing fat from recipes, adding salads and vegetables and adjusting them to meet

Continued on page 16

Retiree insurance debated

Health plan would aid former state employees

BY JESSICA LOWELL

A plan to increase the coverage that Wyoming state government offers its retired workers faces an uncertain path during the upcoming budget session.

The Legislature's Joint Appropriations Interim Committee in late January voted 7-5 (with one abstaining) against including funding for the retired state workers' health insurance premiums in the budget that goes before lawmakers this month.

Health insurance for retired state employees is no small consideration on either side of the equation.

As of Jan. 25, the Wyoming Retirement System counted 18,136 retirees. They include workers from state, county and city or town government, firemen, policemen, judges and teachers, among others.

"The average payout to a retiree is less than \$900 a month," state Sen. Rae Lynn Job, D-Rock Springs, said. "When they are also paying for health insurance, that's not very much."

According to the state Division of Administration and Information, the average retired state

Continued on page 13

Survey solicits views of Riverton members

AARP wants feedback on workshop topics

BY SAGE STAFF

If you are an AARP member living in Riverton, chances are you received a survey in the mail last month intended to gauge the wants and needs of AARP members in Riverton.

“The Riverton chapter of AARP wants to know how they can best serve their community so we thought it only made sense to ask those members for their opinion,” AARP Wyoming associate director for outreach Renee Gamino-Diaz said. “There are many things we are willing to offer members, and we wanted to know which they would prefer.”

One proposal is to offer local workshops on topics like protecting your identity, planning for your retirement, working past retirement or completing an advance health-care directive.

The chapter also is asking AARP members if they would like to help out with community service projects such as helping the elderly and disabled prepare their homes for winter or if they would like to take part in a walking group or other physical fitness activity.

“We really want to hear from others in the community about what they want from us,” AARP Riverton Chapter acting president Ned Case said. “Plus we would like to host some activities that would appeal more to the younger generation of AARP members – those in their 50s and 60s.”

Surveys were mailed Jan. and may still be returned to be included in the results, Gamino-Diaz said. Riverton members wanting to participate, but who didn't get a survey or would like another copy mailed to them, may call (866) 663-3290 and ask for Renee Gamino-Diaz.

55% of Wyoming AARP members who are currently employed plan on working past 65 because they enjoy it.

Are you one of them?
www.boomersandbusiness.com



GROW OLD. EVERYBODY'S DOING IT.

Baby Boomers are settling in Wyoming. In fact, boomers make up one of the fastest growing age groups in the state. With 92,000 members, AARP Wyoming is ready to serve the next generation. Join the crowd. Call (866) 663-3290.



THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION OF YOUR LIFE.

Make your wishes known now. Before it's too late. Visit us at www.aarp.org/wy to download Wyoming's new Advance Health Care Directive.



The Wyoming Sage is published by AARP Wyoming 2020 Carey Ave. (mezzanine) Cheyenne, WY 82001

Publisher

Rita Inoway

Editor

Joanne Bowlby

Art Director

Eric Rohr

Copy Editor

Dave Kingham

Contributors

Bret Baugh

Renee

Gamino-Diaz

Tim Summers

Questions or comments

about this newspaper should be directed to Joanne Bowlby at (866) 663-3290 or by e-mail at jbowlby@aarp.org.

This publication is funded by AARP Wyoming and does not accept paid advertisements.

Copyright 2006

Contact AARP Wyoming for permission to reproduce any content contained herein.

NEED INFORMATION IN A HURRY?

www.aarp.org/wy



COMMENTARY

'Freeze' puts identity theft on ice

Legislation takes pre-emptive action when personal information is disclosed

BY MARY WALLACE

These days you cannot pick up a newspaper without hearing of the latest incident of a credit card company or other data-collecting agency "misplacing" the financial or personal information of unwitting consumers who placed their trust in these companies.

Mary Wallace works in the State Affairs office of AARP. Thousands upon thousands of unsuspecting customers, just like you, have been

informed that their most confidential information, which determines their fiscal well-being, is missing. It has been inadvertently misplaced in the system, accidentally "shared" with third parties to whom it should not have been sent, or outright stolen by clever identity thieves knowledgeable of how to hack into supposedly secure data collection systems to steal your information, hence your identity. With this information, they can tap into your resources and appropriate them for their own use, leaving you with a depleted account and big bills that you really don't owe.

The problem is that you may never know if your information has been stolen or has merely disappeared into cyberspace with little or no ill effect. The data collection agency to whom you entrusted this information may not know this either, but the effect is still the same. Your privacy has been violated and you must take measures to re-secure it. One way to do this is to make sure that the companies that you deal with only use "encrypted" account information on all correspondence, and that you

also abide by this precaution when rendering payments or engaging in any other correspondence with regard to your account. This means that only the last several numbers of your account – the ones that really identify you to the company – are visible to anyone viewing the information. Most reputable financial entities, particularly credit card companies, have adopted this practice in response to the growing threat – and reality – of identity theft and its devastating consequences.

This risk should not sit lightly with consumers at a time when so much of our most private data is electronically processed.

Another problem is that you may not know that your data has been lost or stolen for weeks or longer. Your financial information may already be benefiting an identity thief while you remain unaware. States that have addressed the problem of missing data have granted a certain degree of latitude to business entities legally in possession of your information to delay sharing the bad news with you until law enforcement agencies have a chance to determine the scope of the data breach and measures have been taken to restore the integrity of the system.

Another area of discretion afforded the business or other entities holding your personal financial data is that they are allowed to determine the likelihood that you will actually be harmed by the "data breach," which

means the loss of your information. Laws vary from state to state, but we are seeing a tendency to increase the power businesses have to determine when and if they notify you of a breach – and because these decisions are based on human judgment and not a unified process, they may not always be correct. This risk should not sit lightly with consumers at a time when so much of our most private data is electronically processed.

What are we as consumers empowered to do about this

dilemma? Well, two Cheyenne legislators, Rep. Bryan Pederson and Sen. Wayne Johnson, are sponsoring House Bill 44, which requires reasonable notification when a consumer's financial data has been breached and requires notification when a consumer's credit report is requested, which should help prevent a breach from happening in the first place. It's called a "security freeze," and is a precaution that consumers may elect to take in an effort to put their private information beyond the reach of those who might abuse it. In earlier bills that were introduced in other states, this option was only available to consumers after their data had been breached, to avoid additional financial hemorrhaging. Now, however, state legislatures, including Wyoming's, have seen

Contact them

To find your local legislators, visit <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/> or call the Wyoming Legislative Service Office at 777-7881.

the benefit of using the freeze as a proactive and preventive mechanism. This approach is reflected in HB44.

What is a security freeze and how does it work? According to the language of the bill, a "security freeze means a notice is placed in the consumer's credit report, at the request of the consumer, that prohibits the credit rating agency from releasing the consumer's credit report or any information from it without the express authorization of the consumer." Consumers may request the freeze in writing by certified mail, or in any other secure manner authorized by the agency. Five days after the receipt of the request, the agency must place the freeze on your data, and 10 days after placing the freeze, the agency must send a confirmation notice to the consumer enclosing a unique personal identification number or password. The PIN is used by the consumer to authorize the release of their credit report to a requesting party, like a mortgage company, bank or credit card company.

There may be instances when you will want to lift the freeze for a brief period of time, and then resume the freeze. An example of this might be if you want to buy a car and must apply for credit on the spot, at the

Continued on page 13

Get a LIEAP on those heating bills

Program helps Wyoming's low-income population manage skyrocketing energy costs

BY SAGE STAFF

About 14,000 Wyoming residents are expected to get help paying their home heating bills this winter, according to Jeff Dockter, administrator for the Wyoming Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIEAP.

"That's 4,000 more people than last year," Dockter said.

The increased demand for energy assistance is the result of what some in the energy industry refer to as "the perfect storm."

"Last fall's record hurricane season impacted energy supplies, and when you mix that with unprecedented global demand for energy, due largely to China and India's booming economies, and then you throw in unrest in some petroleum producing regions, the results are an increased cost to energy customers," AARP Wyoming associate director for advocacy Tim Summers said.

Home heating costs are up by 60 percent or more in some areas of the country, and in Wyoming natural gas

costs have jumped as much as 40 percent higher than where they were last year at this time, Summers said. "For some, especially people living on a moderate- or low-fixed income, the record-setting cost to heat their home is just too much of a financial burden to bear."

"For ... people living on a moderate- or low-fixed income, the record-setting cost to heat their home is just too much of a financial burden to bear."

That's why AARP is asking legislators to approve the budget recommendations made by both Gov. Dave Freudenthal and the Joint Appropriations Committee to increase funding for LIEAP. The proposed recommendations would give LIEAP \$5.5 million to meet

the needs of the additional 4,000 households that apply for help this winter immediately upon conclusion of the session in March.

Additionally, the proposal calls for \$12.5 million for the next biennium so LIEAP can serve the same number of households over the next two years. It includes just under \$1.5 million over the next two and a half years for weatherization assistance to help low-income families make their homes more energy efficient.

The proposal goes before the Legislature during the budget session beginning Feb. 13. Other legislation to increase funding for weatherization assistance and to open the program to more Wyoming residents is expected to be introduced this session.

"The program has enough funding for the remainder of this year," Dockter said, "and I encourage those families and individuals who have not yet applied, to take a moment and fill out the application, if they feel they are going to need help with their utility costs over the next couple of months."

Do you qualify?

The Wyoming LIEAP program helps residents pay home heating bills, and also assists them in weatherizing their home to make it more energy efficient.

If you are single and your 2005 income was \$17,705 or less, you qualify for help through LIEAP. A couple that earned \$23,736 or less in 2005 would also be eligible, as would a family of three with a combined household income of \$29,767 or less in 2005.

There are additional income guidelines for other family sizes.

Applications must be submitted by Feb. 28 in order to get assistance this season.

For more information to see if you qualify for LIEAP, call (800) 246-4221.

Check out the **2006 National Senior Spelling Bee** in Cheyenne, **June 16-17**. The bee is open to anyone age 50 or older.

Registration is free but required. Visit **www.seniorsspellingbee.com** or call **(877) 926-8300** for more information.

SIT DOWN FOR A SPELL.



Medicare drug plan paying off in state

Organizations provide guidance to those trying to decipher prescription program

BY MARY ANGELL

Figuring out the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan may seem daunting to seniors, but plan experts and seniors who have signed up for it say it's worth investigating. Help is widely available and enrolling is easy, they say. And best of all, the plan's new participants are paying a fraction of what they used to pay for prescription drugs.

"Most seniors don't want to deal with the confusion," said Joyce Corcoran, outreach coordinator at the Young at Heart Senior Center in Rock Springs. "But the people who are signing up right away are saving money."

The new Prescription Drug Plan – or Medicare Plan D, as it is also called – helps Medicare beneficiaries pay for their prescription medications. All Medicare recipients are eligible for it, regardless of income, age or current health. The benefit is offered through private insurance organizations, and in Wyoming, there are 41 different plans available. Plans vary in deductible and premium amounts as well as the drugs covered.

The Wyoming State Health Insurance Information Program and other nonprofit organizations – as well as medical clinics – have overseen the training of volunteers who can help seniors sift through the various plans and make an informed decision on the right one for them.

Corcoran has been trained on Medicare Part D and has helped more than 80 seniors in her community figure it out.

"It's not that difficult to get help and not that difficult to sign up," she said. "They can go to almost any senior center and (find) volunteers ready to help (them)."



Joyce Corcoran, outreach coordinator for the Young at Heart Senior Center in Rock Springs, helps Virginia Hart navigate through the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan offerings in Wyoming. (KATHLEEN THOMAS)

It takes about 30 minutes at the most to enroll, Corcoran said.

"I go to www.medicare.gov and put in all the medicine and information and the plans pop up that fit their situation," she said. "We print pages that compare the first three plans, and they choose what they want to do. If the first three are not what they want, I pull up the others. It's really not a difficult process. Once they get into it they say, 'This is so simple, and I've been struggling with all this mail, trying to understand.'

"Most people are saving money," she added.

Residents benefiting

Shirley and Bill Davis of Basin, for example, are paying much less for their prescriptions since they signed up for the benefit.

Shirley's medicines, which totaled \$578 a month, will now cost her \$195.

Of Bill's medications, one dropped in cost from \$91.97 a month to \$28 a month; another from \$56.94 to \$28 and the last from \$25.21 to \$5 a month.

"It's just unreal to us," Shirley said. "The nurse at our clinic we go to is the one who helped us. She showed

me three different plans and talked to me and made recommendations. We're very happy."

"I help people make choices," said Kathy Anderson, a registered nurse at the Big Horn Clinic in Basin. "My biggest fear is that people will look at the paperwork and think they can't understand it and they don't need to sign up – but they should. They may take little medicine now, but they could have a car accident. They could get sick and need to be on a program without a penalty."

Continued on page 6

Medicare assistance is available

Continued from page 5

Anderson herself is benefiting from Plan D.

Her husband's prescriptions will now cost the couple less than \$300 this month – a big improvement over the \$1,057 a month they previously paid. Her son, who suffered brain damage and a partially paralyzed left arm in a car accident, is eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare Part D. His medications total more than \$10,000 a month, but with the plan, the premium and deductible are both paid for by the government, and his co-pay on medicine is \$1 to \$5 each.

Bess Arnold, a Cheyenne senior who signed up for Plan D so recently she has yet to realize the savings, said getting information on it is easy.

"There are all kinds of resources," she said. "Walgreen's will help you with prescription drugs. There have been meetings organized by United Medical Center and AARP. You can go to www.medicare.gov.com, and there's a Medicare 800 number if you're not computer savvy."

Arnold used the planner on the Medicare website to input her prescription drug information and print out the plans that covered



Bess Arnold of Cheyenne looks over materials from Medicare that explain the new prescription drug benefit available to seniors. (MARY ANGELL)

doctor put me on a prescription drug in September that was too expensive, so I didn't take it. I took an over-the-counter. Now I can take that."

to start."

"You make choices. I have a lot of people who do that," Anderson said. "They're not low enough income to qualify for special programs, but they don't have the income to afford their medicine. From a nursing prospective, when people can keep taking their medication, they can stay in control and don't have to come to the doctor as often. It's going to save money in the long run."

Open enrollment for Plan D began in November, and the benefits took effect Jan. 1, 2006. Medicare recipients have until May 15 to sign up for it. After that date they will have to wait until Nov. 15, 2006 to sign up and pay a penalty for late enrollment.

"I have friends who say, 'I'm not going to get that. I don't think it can help me at all,' and I say, 'You'd better

"You make choices. I have a lot of people who do that. They're not low enough income to qualify for special programs, but they don't have the income to afford their medicine."

her medications. She compared deductibles, premiums and the cost of various drugs on different plans. Then she called the Wyoming Senior Health Insurance Information Program office in Cheyenne to enroll.

"If I figured it right, we'll be saving \$1,338 a year," Arnold said. "My

Arnold's experience is common, volunteers said.

"One couple had a total income of \$1,500 a month, which makes them (ineligible) for (financial) help," said Corcoran. "Their medications were astronomical. They had literally not been taking their medicine like they should. This is going to enable them

Drug plan help

- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). The line is staffed 24-hours a day. If you did not receive the booklet "Medicare & You 2006" or would like one mailed to you for free, call the 800 number.

- Visit www.medicare.gov or www.medicare.gov/MPDPF to go directly to the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder.

- Call AARP at 1-800-687-2277 for the free publication "What You Need to Know about the New Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage." You may also download a copy from www.aarp.org/medicarerx.

- Talk to your pharmacist.

- Call the Wyoming Department of Insurance at 1-800-438-5768.

- Check with your local senior citizens center for a volunteer trained in Medicare Part D.

- Call the Wyoming Senior Health Insurance Information Program at 1-800-856-4398 for information about Plan D or the name and phone number of a volunteer near you. In almost 50 communities across the state, WSHIIP has volunteers trained in Medicare Plan D who will meet with you, face-to-face, free of charge. A list of towns with a WSHIIP volunteer is online at www.wyomingseniors.com/wshiip.htm.

look into it," Shirley Davis said. "They say, 'We don't have hardly any prescriptions,' and I say, 'You're lucky, but you might someday.'"

When fraud is on the line, hang up

Find out how to avoid the many investment scams lurking in Wyoming

BY KAREN MOCKLER

Investment scams are becoming more and more sophisticated nationwide, and Wyoming is no exception. In the year to come, The Wyoming Sage will highlight several recent frauds that succeeded – for awhile – in the state. Though each was eventually uncovered, they duped enough people for enough time to do serious financial damage.

The Wyoming Secretary of State's Web site identifies 11 types of fraud, including the case of high-tech fraud described below.

Broadcast

“Satellite Broadcasting Corp., from Irvine, Calif., was selling an investment in direct TV to Wyoming citizens by phone. The promoters claimed they had agreements and support from Direct TV®, and were applying to be a member of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, which are real companies that provide satellite television to subscribers using a “dish antenna.” Both claims were false. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the company did not have an exclusive broadcast area as claimed, and the California company could not engage in the business for which it was collecting money.”

This scam was shut down by a joint state-federal action, but new scams pop up every year. One of the most common is the pyramid scheme, where money is received not by selling a real product or useful service, but by recruiting new participants. A current incarnation of the pyramid scheme is the “airplane” pyramid, in which “passengers” pay to ride, in hopes of eventually becoming “pilots.” People who start pyramid schemes are often the only ones who receive money.

Like pyramids, Ponzi schemes also use the money of new recruits to pay off earlier investors.

Metals

Gold, silver and other precious metals have always been popular operating areas for con artists and shady dealers. The private or skeptical nature of many individuals who buy precious metal investments is a benefit to the crooks. Promoters typically claim that the precious metal they are selling is sure to go up in value due to increased demand, world conflict, or some other economic or political factor. Purchasers usually receive a receipt as evidence of ownership, but not the metal itself.

Oil

When it comes to oil wells, potential investors should be particularly cautious if they hear any claims emphasizing oil shortages, fears of anticipated OPEC actions or blockades. Scams often stress the urgency to act now. If people do invest, they should verify with the county clerk that their ownership is actually recorded in the county land records.

In order to avoid fraud, a potential investor has to know when an offer is too good to accept. According to the Wyoming Secretary of State's Web site, “There are usually three characteristics typical of every fraud or scam: a promise of higher than normal returns, a promise or guarantee that you can't lose money and pressure to act quickly. If you sense any of these warning signs, lock up your checkbook! Get more information and really check out the offer before you go any further!”

The Better Business Bureau's Web site also offers six “resolutions” for

2006 to help avoid fraud:

1. Look before you leap. “Don't sign anything without reading and understanding what you're doing. If you sign a contract, it is legally binding and probably cannot be broken. If the paperwork doesn't say the same thing told to you verbally, trust only what is written. Verbal promises are very hard to prove!”

2. Listen carefully to what's said – and not said. “Understand the terms. If you don't, ask again. Some cons glide over pertinent facts in such a glib way that you cannot charge them for misrepresentation. They told you; you just didn't understand.”

3. Keep private information private. Never give it to anyone who contacts you. “Too many callers tell the BBB after they have given out credit card or bank account numbers or other private information that can be used for fraud. It doesn't do any good to shut the gate after the horse is out.”

4. Investigate before you invest. Do your homework with official agencies – not just Aunt Martha.

5. Learn financial basics like contracts, mortgages and interest payments. Recognize you'll never get something for nothing, so don't send money to collect “your millions.”

6. If you have a financial dispute that needs resolution, consider a mediator. Talk to the BBB to find out more.

Finally, Tom Cowan, the secretary of state's director of securities, offers some additional red flags for securities investors to watch out for:

1. If you call a broker and he is never there, if she doesn't return your phone calls, if he makes a lot of chit-chat but never answers your question, beware.

While the Secretary of State's office doesn't give advice on investments, it

can answer specific questions about a specific stockbroker. Staff can look up anyone in the United States and find their record, how long they've worked, or whether they're even registered. If they're not, Cowan says, what they're offering an investor may not be legal.

2. “In no circumstance does a securities agent issue his own statement to the clients ... those statements go out at a minimum on the company's letterhead or a monthly statement as required by law.”

Investors can also contact the broker's manager – most statements now have a 1-800 number, and they should feel free to call.

3. “If it's too complicated to understand,” Cowan says, “they shouldn't invest in it. Stock is pretty straightforward. It goes up or down in price. Plain vanilla.”

That doesn't mean legitimate investments are without risk, he adds. You can buy a legitimate stock and still lose. But at least the game's not rigged.

“The best advice I can give right now is, if you can read about it in the Wall Street Journal or Barrons or Money Magazine, it's probably real. If you can't, it probably isn't real.”

In the end, Cowan says, investors have to know themselves and their limitations.

“If I'm the average person without

Continued on page 12

Have a story to tell?

If you've been the victim of financial fraud, tell us your story. Contact The Wyoming Sage editor Joanne Bowlby at (866) 663-3290 or send an e-mail to wyaarp@aarp.org.

Buying into an older work force

As young hires became harder to find, one company turned to an untapped resource

BY KAREN MOCKLER

Back in 1989, Joann Schrader and her husband Gene sold everything they owned to buy the heating, air conditioning and metal roofing company from their former boss. They started with six employees, but wanted to build the business.

For years, they overlooked applications from older workers, wondering why they were looking for work and thinking that something must have gone wrong for them to be looking for a job now. Besides, the Schraders saw their work force aging. Shying away from older hires seemed to make good business sense.

“If you wanted your company to be viable and be able to sell it,” Schrader explained, “you had to have a work force that was worth buying. A work force of average age 50 wouldn’t be nearly as attractive to buyers as average age of 25-30 years.”

Of course, a young work force that’s unskilled or unsteady isn’t attractive either. But building a team both competent and young has been a challenge, she said.

“As the years went by, we had a terrible time finding anybody.”

She kept posting her job openings at the local community college, at the high school and in the paper, but she could not find reliable and committed workers. Some couldn’t even fill out an application. In the space where applicants were asked their sex, one wrote, “not recently.” Some would quit when work conflicted with skiing, or they’d show up late, and were unable to read a tape measure.

“There is skill involved in what we do – 1/16 of an inch of metal has got to be precise. It’s got to fit. If you know your basic math and can read and write, it’s fine,” Schrader said. But as it turned out, too many of the



Bill Reed and Virginia Belisle share duties at Schrader Metal and Design in Cody. (JOSH BOUDREAU)

young hires did not.

The Schraders’ dilemma is not uncommon. In a recent AARP survey, Wyoming business owners and managers said they are seeing a shortage of qualified job applicants. Over half of those surveyed say it is harder for them to find qualified applicants for nonmanagement or nonsupervisory positions now than it was five years ago, and just over 40 percent say it has become more difficult to find both qualified supervisory and management applicants. Very few of the businesses surveyed – 5 percent or less – say finding capable workers is actually easier now than a few years ago.

These same businesses also report that they see a significant loss of

knowledge when their workers retire. But retirement comes with age, and Wyoming is aging fast. In 2000, the state ranked 38th in the nation for percent of population age 65 and older. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2010, Wyoming will be ranked 17th; by 2030, with more than 25 percent of its residents age 65 plus, Wyoming will be ranked third only to Florida and Maine.

Combined with a steady out-migration of young people from the state, the likelihood of labor shortages in Wyoming becomes more evident. Yet with the right mindset, Schrader thinks these statistics can work for the state, not against it.

“When you tell people that Wyoming’s workers are aging faster

than other states and a lot of retirees are moving in, they look at it as a negative thing. And really, it can be a very positive thing. Baby boomers have a huge resource of skills we can tap. I’m just trying to tell people, hire the older worker. It’s a big deal.”

Try, try again

Her big deal was Bill Reed, who Schrader hired in his mid-50s. “When he came in he was dressed in a three-piece suit, carrying a briefcase and shaking,” she recalled. “He seemed very nervous throughout the whole interview.”

For good reason. Reed was college-educated, highly trained and

Continued on page 9

Flexibility a benefit for everyone

Continued from page 8

well-qualified, but for an entirely different line of work.

His first career was as an engineer. When Reed picked his major at the University of Wyoming, he knew his home state didn't have many businesses producing projects that required those. "You almost had to go out of state – I knew that when I graduated," Reed said.

And go he did, from a six-year stint in the Air Force that took him overseas, to engineering jobs as far flung as Seattle and New York City. He found a job in Indiana as an engineer for Bendix Corp., but when they downsized, they laid off engineers.

"The thing about design engineering," Reed said, "is once you release the plans, the drawings and the specifications, you're basically done with it. When these companies need people, they hire them. When they're done with the job, they let you go."

After Bendix, Reed moved south of Chicago to design electric ranges, ovens, broilers and griddles for General Electric. But his flexibility within the engineering field wasn't enough to save him from the era's economics. In time he moved to Florida, but one company sold out to another company, and that company downsized. He found another job with a company making ship radars near D.C., but in 1991, when they'd finished the design for the big contract, his job was finished too.

Big corporations were buying up small ones. The country was in the midst of a rash of layoffs. Reed started looking around – again – but companies were hesitant to hire. And Reed wasn't getting any younger.

When his dad needed a heart operation, Reed returned to Cody to be with him. Once there, he found other reasons to stay. His son lives nearby,



Bill Reed does filing at Schrader Metal and Design. (JOSH BOUDREAU)

and Reed had come to appreciate the animals and rugged mountains he'd discounted as a kid. When his wife mentioned the Schraders were looking for an office manager, Reed interviewed.

“I knew our older employees had a better work ethic. I knew they'd show up to work every day. A lot of the younger ones really think they can get a job anywhere. They don't think it's important to be stable.”

The Schraders retrained him. He's been at the job now 14 years.

"I was pretty flexible," Reed said. "You can change and still make a go of it. Just because you lose your job doesn't mean it's the end of the world."

The Schraders were flexible too. Reed has adjusted his schedule and duties a couple of times to ease him into retirement. Now 70, he only works 12 hours a week, but because he knows the system so well, it's

enough to get the job done.

In the midst of seeking out young hires, Schrader found herself creating flexible scheduling and shifting job duties in order to keep her older workers like Reed on the job and

happy. This holiday season, Reed disappeared for six weeks to visit his daughter in Michigan. The Schraders were able to let him go because Reed has been training another employee to take his place.

Like Reed, many baby boomers don't want to retire completely, but they want to travel or go visit grandkids now and then. In order to keep their older workers around and producing, many businesses surveyed said they are willing to consider non-

traditional work arrangements.

"Work during our busy time, then you can go to Arizona for the winter," Schrader said. "We're so willing to do that now."

A business epiphany

Yet at the time Schrader hired Reed, she wasn't looking for older employees – quite the opposite. "What influenced my hiring decision was his situation – I'm kind of a bleeding heart. I saw this guy who'd been a professional all his life and now had nothing."

She kept him on for different reasons. "He's always on time, loyal and hardworking and has done a fabulous job for us. I wish we could have a few more 'Bills'."

By the time Schrader was appointed to Wyoming's "Ahead of the Curve" work group a couple years ago, she knew what she was seeking: an older worker.

"I knew our older employees had a better work ethic. I knew they'd show up to work every day. A lot of the younger ones really think they can get a job anywhere. They don't think it's important to be stable."

Many of the top qualities employers want in a worker overlap with those that Wyoming businesses believe older workers possess: a commitment to doing quality work; dependability in a crisis; customer-service orientation; a solid, reliable performance record.

When Virginia Belisle applied last spring, Schrader hired her without hesitation. Belisle, like Schrader, is 57. She came from Oregon because her daughters wanted to go to college in Wyoming. She followed.

"I took basic math and English to see if I could handle it. I could handle it. You're the oldest one in classes, but I realized some of the professors loved having me there."

Continued on page 10



Joann Schrader found stable and experienced older workers to help her meet her staffing needs. (JOSH BOUDREAU)

Better work habits

Continued from page 9

She had a math teacher who took away the calculators to ensure students knew how to add and multiply. A lot of kids floundered, but not her.

“Every time my English teacher handed me an assignment she said, ‘I know what to expect from you. A lot of detail, not just a brief little sentence.’ I could tell her how to get to a place, what’s on the block, what’s the color of the house next to it.”

You learn in life how to give good directions, Belisle said, by getting enough bad ones.

She earned a two-year administrative assistant degree and put in applications before she graduated in spring 2004. But for her first year out of school, every job she landed was temporary.

“I’d get interviews, then nothing more. It gets discouraging,” she said.

“She honestly thought it was because of her age that she wasn’t getting hired, and that’s exactly why I hired her,” Schrader said. “She’s extremely dependable.”

Since Belisle has come on, she’s been learning parts of Reed’s job. This helps Reed, who can take time

off now more easily. It helps the Schraders. It helps Belisle, too.

“Bill’s been fantastic in training me. I’ve learned more from this man than you’d ever dream. Older people have a lot of knowledge to pass on. If people don’t take it, you lose out.”

As for the Schraders, they’re not so concerned about maintaining a young work force nowadays. They have 25 employees. They’ve found several key younger people. And they consider the work habits of older staff like Reed and Belisle a good thing to pass on to the younger work force.

In fact, Schrader would like to actively seek older employees the way she once sought young ones. But it’s not as easy.

“There really isn’t a way right now in the state of Wyoming to actively recruit older workers,” she said, though “Ahead of the Curve” is working on a place to go for just that kind of worker.

In the meantime, she said, “We just don’t actively toss the application of a man who’s 45 or 50 now. You know, we were part of the problem before ... actually it’s better for us now than when we were agonizing over trying to find the right 25-year-old guy.”

Need help controlling your drug costs?

Call Wyoming PharmAssist

Finally, there’s a reliable resource to help you lower your drug costs. Wyoming PharmAssist provides a one-on-one pharmacy consultation to review your medications. A local PharmAssist working with the Wyoming Department of Health and the University of Wyoming will recommend generic and less-expensive drug alternatives for you to discuss with your doctor. All it costs is \$5. The Health Department pays the rest.

at (877) 246-4114



BE HEARD. LOUD AND CLEAR.

Let AARP Wyoming keep you informed on the issues you care about. Change is possible if we stand together. Get national and state policy updates at www.aarp.org/getinvolved.



Working parents may get state's help

Health benefit reserved for children may now also assist those who look after them

BY JESSICA LOWELL

An innovative program that allows children in the state to have health insurance could be extended to the people who care for them – including some grandparents – under a bill that's being proposed at the Wyoming Legislature's budget session.

It's especially critical when grandparents step in during emergency situations to take on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren, advocates say.

"A lot of times, relatives caught in a family drama don't realize the stress and strain involved," director of the Laramie County CASA program Lindi Kirkbride said. CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocate, volunteers act for neglected and abused children in the court system.

She said that if the caregiver isn't in good health it not only impacts the care the children receive, but it can cause the caregiver to miss work, often resulting in missed pay and a loss of productivity for the employer.

"If the caregiver isn't in good health, there ain't nothing going on," she said.

Sen. Mike Massie, D-Laramie, brought a possible solution to the Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee in 2005 that calls for an expansion of the Wyoming Kid Care program to include parents and legal guardians of children taking part in the program. The committee agreed to sponsor Senate File 58.

Massie took part in a study on health insurance availability in the state and he said the results were eye-opening.

The University of Wyoming Healthcare Access Study, completed in 2003, found that more than 70,000

people in the state – 14 percent of the population – did not have any kind of health insurance.

Nearly 10 percent of the population had been without health insurance for more than one year.

About three-quarters of Wyoming employers offer health insurance to full-time employees, but less than 10 percent offer it to part-time workers. Fewer than half of small employers, with rosters of 10 workers or less, offer any kind of health insurance to their workers.

Finally, most of the uninsured in the state didn't have health insurance because they are underemployed or their employers don't offer it.

"The study looked at why there's no access," he said.

"The families that these kids are coming from don't take care of themselves."

It also proposed solutions, he said, and this bill is one of them.

The study found that approximately 20,422 of adults without health insurance in Wyoming are the parents or guardians of children in the Kid Care health insurance program for low-income families. Creating a means for these parents and care takers to access health insurance at a reduced cost may radically decrease the number of Wyoming residents gambling with their health.

Massie sees three more good reasons to expand the program:

- If the people taking care of kids – parents including college students, guardians or grandparents – aren't healthy, they are not productive

members of the work force.

- Employers, many of whom are struggling to continue offering health insurance to their workers as prices continue to rise, can get health insurance through this program for employees who qualify at half the cost. Depending on their income level, employees would contribute a share, as well.

- Providing health insurance for more people in the state will slow the process of cost-shifting – a term used to describe what happens when health insurance companies and medical providers raise the rates that the insured pay to balance the losses suffered when treating the uninsured.

"A key feature – and this is an important one – is that this is not an expansion of the Medicaid program," Massie said. "It's not an entitlement program."

The bill calls for incentives to be offered to businesses to participate in the program, and would cap the number of people allowed to take part at 3,720 for the 2007-08 budget cycle. If the program is put in place, lawmakers would establish the number of people who could take part in the future.

What's more, state officials can control the size of the program by determining the number of people who are eligible. And unlike Medicaid, the federal government will pay two-thirds of the cost, while the state pays the rest.

Kirkbride said her organization also supervises the Kinship Advocacy Project, which is run by grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

"This is more critical for them because this can be the true sandwich generation, taking care of their parents and their grandchildren. A

About the bill

To get a copy of Senate File 58, visit <http://legisweb.state.wy.us> or call the Wyoming Legislative Service Office in Cheyenne at (307) 777-7881. You can also get a list of legislators from these two sources.

If you would like more information on the Wyoming Kid Care Program, visit <http://kidcare.state.wy.us/> or call (877) KIDS NOW.

program like this encourages wellness and keeps people healthy," she said. "Maybe this would be a factor in helping people step up and take care of their relatives."

Both Massie and Kirkbride say they see another benefit.

"The families that these kids are coming from don't take care of themselves," Kirkbride said. "To encourage preventive care is the right thing to do."

Because the focus of the 20-day session is the state's spending plan for the next two years, any bill that's not the budget must earn the approval of two-thirds of the members of the chamber in which it's introduced.

"We'll see how the idea floats in the budget session," Massie said.

If the bill is derailed this year, Massie is confident it will come back; it has the unanimous support of the Labor Committee.

Even if it passes, it faces another hurdle. To allow parents and grandparents to take part, Massie said the state Department of Health will have to negotiate a waiver with the federal government, and that process could take up to nine months.



All revved up and ready to go



Students from Western Wyoming College's auto maintenance and repair program give a free multiple-point check up on the cars of older Rock Springs residents as part of the first AARP Sweetwater County and Young At Heart Senior Center's October 2005 "Honey Do Garage." Seniors who took part in the community service project received free auto-maintenance and winterization tips, as well as a vacuum and cleaning of their cars. (R.J. PIEPER)

More resources

For a free investor awareness booklet, call (307) 777-7814, e-mail svanco@state.wy.us or download at <http://soswy.state.wy.us/security/investor/modules.htm>.

Visit BBB of the Mountain States at www.mountainstates.bbb.org or call (970) 484-1348. Visit BBB of Eastern Idaho & Western Wyoming at www.idahofalls.bbb.org or call them at (208) 523-9754.

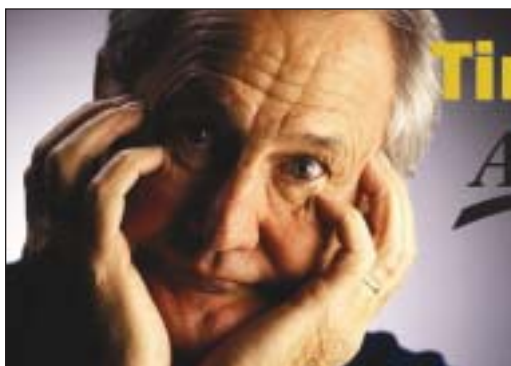
Avoiding fraud

Continued from page 7

a lot of money, why go into a complex financial strategy? Not every person in the world is destined to buy commodities contracts. If I'm retired from civil service, I wouldn't know about that kind of thing, and what makes me think I can beat the big boys? Maybe my money is better kept in a bond or CD. What do I know about gold mining or oil and gas? But as a civil servant, I know the state of Wyoming is always issuing good quality bonds. I know the state is good for it. The state isn't going to rip somebody off. Maybe that's a better place for me to invest."

Cowan says the biggest problem he sees in investments is not actually fraud but suitability – that is, the sale of investments to people which are much too risky for them, for perfectly legitimate reasons. For instance, a woman in her 70s or 80s buying long-term securities or very complex commodities simply may not live long enough to see her investment pay.

"These people aren't sophisticated investors who've worked in the finance industry. They're in over their head. They bought based simply on a purported rate of return – they see they can make 20 percent in a year, but oftentimes those people are the ones who lose their money."



Tired of searching for senior services?



knows a place where you can find information on senior services in Wyoming. It's called **senior pathways** and best of all - it's free to use 24 hours a day.

Log on today to <http://wind.uwyo.edu/pathways/seniors>

State retiree health insurance debated

Continued from page 1

employee pays about as much for the monthly premium on the state's health insurance plan as they receive in their pension check, which is why legislators like Job want to take action now.

"We see requests like these every year," Sen. Philip Nicholas, R-Laramie, said. Nicholas, like Job, serves on the Appropriations Committee.

From his perspective, the problem with the proposal the committee heard was that Gov. Dave Freudenthal had recommended providing additional money to a few retirees.

"It doesn't deal with the other public employees," he said.

Last year, state lawmakers set aside \$85,000 to study funding state retiree health insurance benefits, including allowing unused sick leave benefits to pay for retiree health insurance.

The report, issued in November, said more study needs to be done before including retired teachers and others in the proposal. Each of the state's 49 school districts has a different policy on whether they fund health insurance for their retirees. Some paid more than this proposal, while others paid nothing. The report calls for better analysis of those plans before including retired teachers in any proposal. The report also calls for deeper study of long-term options for funding.

The question at the forefront of the debate now is whether or how to provide help in the short term while planning for the future.

"Retirees need help now," Job said.

Wyoming state government does not currently

subsidize retiree health insurance premiums. Retired state government workers take part in the state's group health insurance plan and pay the full premium.

Retiree premium rates are subsidized in part by pooling retiree costs with those of active employees.

Fifteen states, including five of Wyoming's six neighbors, make no contribution to state employee retiree health insurance. Nebraska, like Indiana, pays retiree health insurance until the person reaches 65 and is eligible for Medicare.

"It's definitely a growing topic and it can be controversial," Richard Cauchi, health program director in the National Conference of State Legislatures' Denver office, said. "State contributions are a true spectrum. They go from tiny to 100 percent and there are always questions about adjusting that. It's a true dynamic."

When the budget session convenes, lawmakers will be wrangling over a host of funding requests, thanks to the record amount of income the state has seen from energy development.

The idea of funding retiree health insurance may return during the session in the form of a bill, but probably as an amendment to the budget bill.

In addition to whether funding health insurance premium is a good idea, lawmakers may also debate how to pay for it.

Prefunding the program is one idea, which would set money aside for future retirees; but the problem of funding insurance for the current pool remains.

"How do we get from Point A to Point B? I'm kind of fuzzy on that," Job said. "And I think we

Effort to increase benefits

The proposal put forward by Gov. Dave Freudenthal would cost about \$6.7 million for the next two years. That is less than half of the previous proposals the Legislature has considered. The proposal would pay a portion of retired state workers' premiums based on their years of experience if they are currently signed up for the state health insurance plan. The proposal rejected by the Joint Appropriations Committee called for the premium support to be reduced once the retired worker reached age 65 and became eligible for Medicare. An electronic copy of the proposal is available online at <http://personnel.state.wy.us/EGI/Index.htm>.

It is unclear what a potential proposal before the Legislature this February and March will look like. But Wyoming residents can track the work being done during the 2006 Wyoming Legislative Budget Session online at <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/> or by calling the Wyoming Legislative Service Office in Cheyenne at (307) 777-7881 or by contacting their legislators.

all are."

The program, if adopted, promises to be expensive. And while Wyoming is collecting record revenue now, that's not always the case.

"This has to be something sustainable," Job said. "We can't give them something and then pull the rug out from under them."

Bill allows for permanent removal of freeze

Continued from page 3

dealership. In this instance, you would use your personal ID number or pass code to allow the dealership to access your credit report for a defined period of time after which the freeze will resume. Lifting the freeze still restricts unwanted access to your information while allowing the designated business only to obtain the information they would

need to approve your loan.

As the bill is currently written, it allows a window of three business days between the receipt of the request and the lifting of the freeze – other states require the freeze to be lifted within 15 minutes of your request – and this may be something that you ask your legislators about.

Since every good service has a price attached to it, you will not be surprised to hear that nominal fees

are associated with this process.

Each placement, removal or temporary "lift" of a freeze may cost up to \$12 dollars, but this is a small price to pay to avert identity theft.

If passed, the bill would allow you to permanently remove the freeze at any time, using your personal identification code. It also would continue to allow legitimate agencies, like law enforcement, to access your personal information.

The scope of this exemption also will be scrutinized by AARP Wyoming to assure that it is not so broad as to defeat the protective purpose of the proposal.

There are things that you can do to protect yourself from having your personal financial information end up in the wrong hands. Be proactive on your own behalf, and tell your legislators that you want protections like those in House Bill 44.

A lifetime lending a helping hand

Lander woman has served in a variety of roles during seven decades of volunteering

BY MARY ANGELL

Helena Sheldon was 8 years old when she helped her mother roll bandages for the Red Cross during World War II. Seventy years later, she still volunteers for the Red Cross, teaching lifeguarding, water safety and CPR.

During her lifetime of volunteerism, Helena has served as PTA president, Sunday school teacher, Boy Scout troop leader, AARP chapter board member and chairman, Rebekahs officer and volunteer swim instructor at the YMCA. Over the years, she's dedicated her time to being an active member of the American Legion and VFW, serving as precinct ward captain and Campfire Girl leader and teaching weaving and pottery classes.

"I don't really feel like I have done very much, really. I just enjoy myself and have helped where I could," she said recently. "If you can help somebody, do it. If not, maybe you can find someone else who can. You can use your ability to do that."

In the tight-knit community of Missoula, Mont., where Helena grew up, people helped their neighbors and took care of each other. She was one of nine children, but her parents also raised an additional three children — two cousins and one boy who was abandoned by his father.

"They always found room for one more, and one more and one more," Helena said.

She remembers her mother giving canned food to those who needed it and her father loaning his tent to a family who had lost their home in a fire and rounding up other supplies from the neighbors to get the family through until they got back on their feet. Helena was about 8 years old



Lucinda Sheldon (left) learned volunteerism from her mother, Helena Sheldon (right). (WAYNE NICHOLLS)

Quite an honor

Helena Sheldon was honored by the Lander chapter of AARP in December, where she was recognized for being nominated for AARP's most prestigious award for volunteerism, the Ethel Percy Andrus Award.

when she started cooking dinner every evening for a 95-year-old neighbor, Mrs. McDonald.

"When you lived on a farm, you started working on the farm at 5 or 6, and by the time you were 8, you were a pretty dependable human being,"

she said. "Mrs. McDonald was a dear old soul, but she couldn't be near fire."

"There were all sorts of opportunities in the 1930s to do volunteer work," Helena added. "Nobody had much, but what they had, they shared. I think that is where this volunteerism came in. When I grew up, I started working for the Red Cross."

After she married, she and her husband, Angier, moved to Montana's capital.

"My mother was one of the last people in Helena to get polio," her daughter Lucinda Sheldon said. "When she was hospitalized, they told her she would probably be in a

wheelchair the rest of her life. She started helping the children who had polio at the crippled children's hospital. Mom was a certified nurse, but when she contracted polio, she had to do aquatic work. She was doing therapy for herself and she wanted to learn more about it."

"There was a little girl down the street in Helena who had cerebral palsy," Helena said. "Her folks were older when they had her, and neither one drove. She needed special treatment at the children's hospital in Helena. I would take her down for treatment. People in town got wind of the fact that I was working with

Continued on page 15

Volunteerism runs in the family

Continued from page 14

her and asked me if I would take over a similar program.”

So she received her Physical Therapist Assistant training and began volunteering for the school system, where she started a swimming class for handicapped kids at the YMCA pool. Her students had various disabilities: multiple sclerosis, amputations, blindness.

Eventually the swim class was relocated to the Carroll College pool, and college administrators decided it should be taught by a paid, certified teacher – who received her training from Helena. Undaunted, Helena volunteered to establish a class at the college for disabled adults.

All the while, she volunteered at the Red Cross. A Red Cross volunteer for 58 years now, Helena said she was a paid manager for the organization for two years but found she’s happier as a volunteer.

“I don’t see any sense in making money for the sake of making money,” she said. “I never have.”

In the mid-’80s, after her son and daughter were grown, Helena earned her degree in psychology and



Helena and Lucinda Sheldon enjoy a warm day. (WANYE NICHOLLS)

sociology, then worked for several years at Eastmont Human Services in Glendive. Hearing about its therapeutic pools brought her finally to Lander.

Helena has passed on her spirit of volunteerism to her children. Her son, Jay Sheldon, does maintenance work

for the Helena school system, YMCA and his church. Lucinda volunteers primarily for the Red Cross.

“She learned (volunteerism) at her mother’s knee and I learned it at my mother’s knee,” Lucinda said.

“I helped out with a fire at Fort Washakie,” she said. “We had to evacuate a nursing home. We set up a shelter at Wyoming Indian High School. If they need someone to help with assessing, sometimes I go out with Mom.”

Helena finds helping a family that has lost its home to fire particularly rewarding.

“One family lost all their toys at Christmas time – six children, and they lost everything five days before Christmas,” she said. “We went around to businesses who donated toys. (The parents) said they had the best Christmas they’d ever had.”

“We took care of them,” Helena said. “We found beautiful people who could help. If you look, you can do some really wonderful things.”

In addition to her dedication to the Red Cross, Helena has also volunteered for years for the Rebekahs, the female auxiliary of the

Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

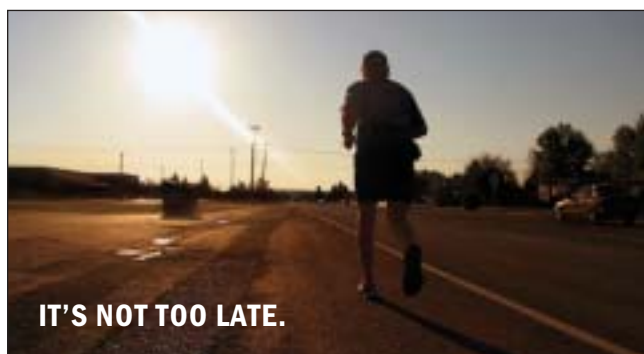
“I served, I don’t know how many years, on the board of that organization,” she said, adding that she supports it because its guiding principles are family, country and God.

“I don’t see any sense in making money for the sake of making money. I never have.”

Several years ago, the Rebekahs awarded her the Decoration of Chivalry for a lifetime of community service, and though Helena didn’t mention it, there’s a tree in Lander’s city park dedicated to her.

“I am very proud of her,” Lucinda said of her mother’s undying devotion to helping others.

“It’s an expression of her faith. You’re not going to get into heaven by your works, but the Lord wants you to help your neighbors if you can.”



If you are on Medicare and need help paying for prescription drugs, call (800) MEDICARE to see if you qualify for assistance. If you want more information on Medicare and Social Security, call AARP Wyoming at (866) 663-3290 to request a speaker to come to your community.



THINK YOU’RE TOUGH?
Test your strength at the Wyoming Senior Olympics, Aug. 18-20, at the Campbell County Parks and Recreation Facility in Gillette. The event is open to anyone age 50 or older. Call (307) 682-7406 for more details.

Finding a better way for seniors to eat

Continued from page 1

current nutritional standards.

The result is meals that most people can eat – those who have diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure or some other health problem.

“The program was started because people were underweight and undernourished,” Thomas said about the creation of senior center noon-meal programs. “Now they are nourished and overfed.”

The goal is to have people who eat at senior centers leave full, but not stuffed, she said.

The transition, in most cases, was fairly easy under Thomas’ direction.

“I don’t believe in taking away any foods,” said Thomas, who has Type 1 diabetes herself.

She’s never weighed her food, as some methods require, and she’s never given up something that she likes.

Instead, she uses the Idaho plate method: she divides a plate into quarters, and that gives people an idea of the proportions they should have. She also added a salad or vegetable soup to the mix.

“Some people try to make this so very hard,” she said. “I say, show me what you eat and I will show you how to do it.”

Thomas didn’t do this all alone.

She credits senior center director Jeanine Cox, who had the imagination to see how this could be applied to senior centers across the state, and Nicole Halsteadt, who reviews the recipes and makes sure they will still work in their lightened form.

“There is a need for this statewide,” Thomas said, “and it would not have gotten off the ground without Jeanine.”

They applied for, and received an innovative grant from the Wyoming Senior Services Board, which funds proposals that improve senior centers and their offerings in the state.

“One of the things that will put an



Cook Jennie Martinez serves up a plate at the senior center in Cheyenne. (LARRY BRINLEE)

older person in a nursing home is poor nutrition,” Senior Services Board Chairwoman Izetta Foster said.

The multiyear grant, which totals about \$120,000, has paid for menus from all senior centers in the state to be revised.

Thomas, with help, has put together one cookbook of menus, and she plans to do two more. Because a registered dietician has to sign off on the menus, that represents an additional cost to senior centers. But because Thomas is doing the work and can approve the

menus that go into the cookbooks, the centers save money.

Now other states are interested in the project, including Idaho.

“We’re debating: Can we share this, how do we share this? It’s important not to reinvent the wheel, because it won’t be done as well,” she said. “We really hope to be able to share the cookbooks, and they are already signed by a registered dietician.

While they are debating that, they are working on another project.

More information

More information on the diabetes management program known as the Idaho plate method is available at www.platemethod.com.

The Wyoming Senior Services Board was created in 2003 to oversee the administration of \$1.75 million in funding, including the innovative grant monies, available to Wyoming’s 40 senior centers and 80 senior project sites.

Senior center directors must submit an application detailing their proposal to create an innovative program or project that will benefit seniors or the future of their senior center. Projects funded in the first two years range from the healthy menu project to the creation of Web sites for five senior centers to better communicate with seniors and the public.

Several centers have received money to aid in fund-raising efforts and others got money to help them recruit more volunteers.

This year, the Legislature is considering a significant increase in the money available for grants and to meet the growing needs of Wyoming’s senior centers and projects.

Planning is under way for the Food for a Healthy Future convention May 11-12 in Riverton, during which there will be cooking demonstrations and discussions on how to make these changes and still stay on budget.

More information on the convention is available by calling the Young at Heart Senior Center in Rock Springs at (307) 352-6737.