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# Sidney Herald

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## End of Sidney tradition

### Full-service station to close for business on Friday

BY BILL VANDER WEELE  
SIDNEY HERALD

For many area residents, getting fuel for your automobile won't quite be the same after this week. Some of the residents have drove up to Thogersen Oil, a full-service gas station, every day since they started to drive. The station's final day of business is Friday.

Residents have grown accustomed to seeing two or three men racing out to fill a vehicle with gas while also washing the windshields and checking the tire pressure. It might be the last full-service station in Montana. Gem City Motors has purchased the business.

"That's what they tell me," Dean Thogersen, who opened the station in 1955, said about being the last full-service station. "I don't know, I never go anywhere. There's not many in the state, I know that."

Dean purchased the H. Earl Clack station after his return from four years of active duty in the military. Shortly after Thogersen acquired the shop, it became a Husky service station and remained Husky for 30 years. Since then, it has been a Sinclair. For many years across the street was Thogersen Motors, run by Dean's brother, Ed.

"I just wanted to make a living," Dean said. He made a living by being open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. He jokes that his wife saw him "once in a while." After many years, Thogersen Oil and the other service in town agreed to rotate Sundays so the other could have a day off every other week.

Almost 60 years later, Thogersen Oil has the same amount of pumps as it did at the beginning. The station still offered oil changes and tire repair. "Not much has changed at this joint," Dean said.

He said the business never considered having self-service pumps. "People don't like to get out and do it - especially older people," Dean said.



Tim Thogersen, left, Dean Thogersen, back, and Dwight Houchen waiting on a customer at Thogersen Oil during 2002.



Dean Thogersen under the hood in 1985.

Along with offering gas, oil changes and tires, Thogersen also had the business of transporting bulk fuel out to area farmers.

Tim Thogersen, co-owner of the business since 1990, told the Herald that his father, Dean, said when transporting bulk fuel started, Husky would give

farmers from spring to fall to pay their bill. "Now, you have seven days. Times have changed," Tim said.

The dedication at the station, however, never changed. Tim said between himself, his father and Dwight Houchen, who has worked at the station for more than 30 years, they

have taken about five sick days through the years.

"It's either luck, stupidity or a combination of both," Tim laughed.

Neither Tim or Dwight have any concrete future career plans. After coming to the station since 1955, Dean has an idea. "I'm going to lay down. I'm taking it one day at a time."

Tim jokes that his wife, Loni, probably won't let him hang around the house for too long. But he thanks her for serving as the station's bookkeeper since 1991. "I know I would be lost without her. I'm not much for the books part of the business."

The three men agree that they will miss their dedicated customers.

"All the loyal customers, that is what's bad," Dean said. "You feel bad and the old people especially."

Tim added some customers' attitudes of needing things done in such a hurry has been a turnoff, but he will miss the great people of the community on a day-to-day basis. He said it's going to be strange seeing people that he now sees daily or weekly and now bumping into them only about once in six months.

"I'll miss the people, that's for sure," Tim said.

editor@sidneyherald.com

## Billings man pleads guilty to drug charge in Bakken

The U.S. Attorney's Office announced that during a federal court session in Billings on Tuesday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Carolyn S. Ostby, Sean Michael Vaira, a 30-year-old resident of Billings, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Sentencing has been set for March 13, 2014. He is currently detained.

In an Offer of Proof filed by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph E. Thaggard, the government stated it would have proved at trial the following:

In early 2013, the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration and Sidney Police Department began to investigate a drug trafficking network operating in Sidney and Fairview. That investigation revealed Vaira was involved in the drug trafficking network.

On Aug. 7, when interviewed by agents, Vaira stated that, in approximately December 2012, he met a methamphetamine dealer based in Sidney. Vaira said between approximately late December 2012 or early January 2013 and mid-March 2013, he drove that drug dealer to meetings in Butte and Missoula at which the drug dealer obtained a total of approximately one and one-half pounds of methamphetamine and which the drug dealer then distributed in Big Timber and Sidney.

Vaira stated in approximately mid-April, he obtained approximately seven grams of methamphetamine from a drug dealer in Fairview and distributed the methamphetamine.

Vaira said that, several days later, at the behest of that drug dealer, he drove to Butte and obtained one-half pound of methamphetamine. Vaira said he drove that methamphetamine to Sidney and distributed some of the drugs to the Fairview-based drug dealer and some of the drugs to others he knew in the Sidney area.

Vaira said that several days later, he drove to Butte and obtained another half-pound of methamphetamine, which he later distributed to the Fairview-based drug dealer and other drug dealers in the Sidney area.

He faces possible penalties of a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison and could be sentenced to life, a \$1,000,000 fine and three years supervised release.

"Today's change of plea is a product of diligent work by the very dedicated agents who have been joined together under the banner of Project Safe Bakken," U.S. Attorney Michael W. Cotter said on Tuesday. "As the work of this team - which includes law enforcement professionals from all branches of local, state, and federal law enforcement - goes forward, the people of Montana and North Dakota can expect more cases from affected communities. That is the mission and commitment of Project Safe Bakken."

This investigation was a  
**SEE GUILTY, PAGE 11A**

## Bulletin Board

### Children's shopping

Sidney High School Business Professionals of America is hosting the annual Children's Christmas Shopping Day on Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon in the Sidney High School cafeteria. Students will help youngsters shop for their parents and relatives.

People can drop off donations for the project at the school through Monday.

### Taxes due

The Richland County treasurer reminds taxpayers that the second payment of 2013 mobile home taxes and first payment of real property taxes are due by 5 p.m. on Monday. Payments and payment coupons may be mailed or brought to the Richland County Treasurer, 201 West Main, Sidney, MT 59270. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays.

For your convenience, payment drop boxes are located in the courthouse lobby. Tax payments postmarked or brought to the treasurer's office after 5 p.m. on Monday will be assessed penalty and interest charges.

### Craft bazaar

The St. Matthew's craft bazaar is 4-8 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Lunch will be available.

### Gift from the Heart

The shopping day for Gifts from the Heart is Dec. 14 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Masonic Lodge.

All Richland County residents with children, ages 0-18, can participate who feel they are in need.

### Coats available

Sidney Kiwanis coat drive project is underway. The coat drive was started to assist the children of Sidney who may be in need of warm clothing this winter.

If you would like to make a donation or are in need of winter clothing, please stop at the Edward Jones - Nick Lonski office, 611A S. Central Ave., Sidney.

## Drilling rig count

**Montana 12 N.D. 168**

Source: Baker Hughes sponsored by

## Inside

Agriculture.....5A	Learning.....8A
Around Town.....2A	Religion.....2C
Births.....3A	Sports.....2B
Classifieds.....3-6B	



## County to provide funds for recreation projects

BY BILL VANDER WEELE  
SIDNEY HERALD

Richland County commissioners agreed to provide funds for some recreation needs during a visit from three members of the Sidney park board Wednesday.

The county had supplied funds for recreation projects during a three-year span. The city did not request more funding in the last two years because previous projects were still being conducted.

Blinda Larsen, chair of the park board, noted the funds are for volunteer organizations and for capital improvements only. Funds are not for purchasing equipment for the activities.

The county has put aside \$150,000 for recreation and park expenses. Groups throughout the county can apply for those funds.

City and county officials agreed to use the same procedures where successful requests are determined by Sidney's park board.

County Commissioner Loren Young



noted that it is tough for the county to listen to individual club's requests. "It mushrooms," Young said.

Rick Norby, Sidney's mayor-elect, said he wishes the funding will be used for a couple of bigger projects. One project mentioned was Sidney High School activities director Ross Hall's suggestion regarding a multi-court area by either the swimming pool or Sidney Middle School where basketball, volleyball or badminton could be played.

"I look at it as a great deal," Norby said.

Commissioner Duane Mitchell said he's been approached regarding funding to improve the shooting range. Larsen answered that the shooting range has received funds in the past and can apply again.

"There are as strong as the people who keep them going," Larsen said of volunteer groups in the area.

Discussion was held regarding the benefits of having a recreation coordinator. Larsen said either the city or county must be committed to having the position.

Norby said a lot of good things was done when the county had a recreation coordinator in place, but he feels the coordinator needs to get more involved with the different programs.

Mitchell noted such a coordinator needs to have good communication with the Sidney Area Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture so there are less scheduling conflicts.

Young asked the city's park board to put together a job description for a recreation coordinator.

editor@sidneyherald.com

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