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First responders overcome COVID-19-related adversity to serve community

By Margaret Austin

Wyoming Tribune Eagle

The jobs of first responders have always included some level of risk, so when COVID-19 reached Laramie County, the police officers, firefighters, paramedics and EMTs went about work as usual, just with more personal protective equipment.

But along with the health risks posed by the coronavirus, the pandemic brought economic hardship along with it. With businesses closing their doors and residents staying home, municipalities felt the squeeze from decreased sales tax revenue and uncertainty for the future.

That led to budget cuts across the board in the city of Cheyenne, with both the Cheyenne Police Department and Cheyenne Fire Rescue losing funding and positions.

Even with the challenges at hand, first responders have risen to the occasion during the pandemic for the sake of their community. According to Cheyenne Fire Rescue Operations Chief Byron Mathews, the firefighters have worked incredibly hard to continue providing the same level of service.

"There's been the budgetary challenges, there's been the uncertainty of COVID and the uncertainty of the times and all of those challenges. The great thing about all of our firefighters is they figured out a way to step up and get the job done, and they continue to do a great job every day," Mathews said.

Losing two positions during the initial round of city budget cuts in April, even Mathews has had to step up where it's needed, taking on some responsibilities formerly carried out by the public

information officer, which was cut along with an administrative assistant.

"The hardest part of all of this is when you don't have the folks here to support and continue the hard work of the organization, vou start to spread the workload over less people. and you have more folks doing more jobs," Mathews said. "It's difficult because they're working harder and thev're having additional responsibilities. but every day, they show up, they do a great

job, and they continue to provide the highest level of service."

For the Cheyenne Police
Department, the city's initial
reduction in force cost them
two filled positions – a records
technician and a police services
technician – and three vacant
officer positions. Police Chief
Brian Kozak said with the growth
of the city and tight resources,
there are some areas of town that
don't have regular patrols.

Still, Kozak said his force has maintained the standard of care Cheyenne residents are used to.

"We always wish we could do more if we had more staffing and those more resources. But we're able to do the things that are important to the community," Kozak said, noting the continued focus on community policing.

While the main mission of



Cheyenne Police Chief Brian Kozak talks to the media during a 2016 tour of the new Public Safety Center in downtown Cheyenne. Wyoming Tribune Eagle/file

both the Cheyenne Police Department and Cheyenne Fire Rescue is ultimately to protect the community, they also took advantage of every opportunity to bring more smiles to residents in the midst of the pandemic.

Kozak said the amount of car parade birthday parties they were invited to attend got overwhelming at one point, but they always made sure to make an appearance.

"We were just glad that made the kids happy," Kozak said.

Mathews said the same was true for Cheyenne Fire Rescue.

"It was an example of figuring out a creative solution to stay within the health recommendations. We were still able to socially distance, and we were still able to provide that interaction with the people that we serve every day," Mathews

said.

The community showed up in an equally strong way to show their support for first responders. Whether it was colored-in thank you cards or coffee and doughnuts, the police officers and firefighters surely felt the gratitude of Cheyenne residents.

"We have a lot of community support; it's almost on a daily basis that people are bringing food down the station to give to the officers or thank you cards. So that's really great to see, and I'm really proud to work in a community like Cheyenne because of that. We just have tremendous support here," Kozak said.



Laramie County dispatchers prepared as first line of response in crisis

By Tom Coulter

Wyoming Tribune Eagle

The COVID-19 pandemic didn't change much for Laramie County's emergency dispatchers. who already had plenty of experience navigating uncertain situations.

The team that comprises the Laramie County Combined Communications Center, for example, continued to work from the team's hub at the local Public Safety Center after the pandemic began in March.

Though some aspects, such as drop-in visits from field officers, were temporarily halted by the novel coronavirus, the

center's mission, which includes communicating with Chevenne and Pine Bluffs police, Laramie County Sheriff's deputies and several fire districts, largely remained the same.

"I do believe that we are the first of the first responders. because without obtaining a clear picture of what's going on, the units don't really know what they're stepping into," said Amber Young, director of the Laramie County Combined Communications Center.

Dispatchers at the Laramie County center follow a stringent training process, typically lasting six to nine months, to learn how to respond to the different

situations and ask the questions that officers in the field need to know.

"Anything with a violence situation, we obviously have more questions, because we want to ensure the safety of our responders: Are they armed? Are they under the influence of

drugs or alcohol? Are they acting violently? That type of thing," Young said.

The details gleaned from those types of questions are crucial for people like Chevenne Fire Rescue Operations Chief Byron Mathews, who said 911 dispatchers play a crucial role in firefighters' responses to a given situation.

"They're looking at what signs and symptoms that you're presenting with, which dictates the levels of personal protective equipment that we wear and all of those things," Mathews said. "Everybody is evaluating the folks that we're going to see, taking the necessary precautions to ensure that the person we're seeing, as well as the firefighters that are responding, are both protected."

Upon passing their final test, new dispatchers are immediately sent to the call center to observe their colleagues for two hours to "see what it's actually about,"

Chuck Trimble, assistant director of the Laramie County Combined Communications Center, talks about how the dispatch desk works inside the new \$26.75 million Public Safety Center during a 2016 media tour in downtown Chevenne. Wvoming Tribune Eagle/file

headlights' look." The sheer volume of calls received by the center could intimidate a newcomer. In August, the center in Laramie County received roughly 14,500 calls, which involve a wide range

Young said. "That way, when it's

time to actually start, they don't

have that first-day 'deer in the

of situations.

"That's one of the hard things about our job is we can goxs from severe emergency with an infant non-breather, and then the very next call can be a parking complaint," Young said. "Part of the magic is being able to transition from one call to the next seamlessly."

"When they have a traffic stop, and they need help, we're the first person to hear that and get that help to them ... it's all big chain, and without one link, the whole thing falls apart."



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Cheyenne Fire Rescue

In a salute to Cheyenne Fire Rescue, and the great men and women who come to work to protect the community, 2020 was a hard year. The year started with COVID-19 and brought many challenges to both the community, as well as the department and city.

Some of the challenges were in the way that the members had to

respond with increased levels of personal protective equipment. The requirement for masks and social distancing changed the "face" of many of the firefighters.

Then came the economic downturn and its impact on the city budget, leading to a reduction in staff for the department. This reduction was hard felt throughout the

department, and, in many ways, is still affecting business every day. The loss of staff and the challenges of COVID-19 certainly made it difficult for everyone working.

As we reflect and show some of the events that Cheyenne Fire Rescue responded to and work through, it is also a time for us to remember all of the challenges and provide a huge Thank You to those who respond, as well as everyone in the community who supports the fine work that occurs each and every day.

Thanks to Cheyenne, and thanks to Cheyenne Fire Rescue for all that each of you does every day.



Chevenne Fire Rescue staff work to assess victims at the Chevenne Regional Airport exercise.



Cheyenne Fire Rescue extinguishes a fire in a residential area.





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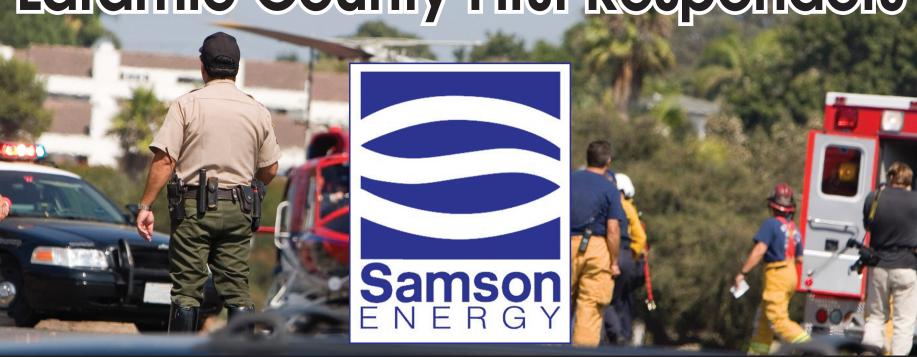
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Laramie County Detention Center

By Corporal Flint C72

Laramie County Detention Center

As I walk through the doors at 0500 hours, I reflect on the things I need to do for the day. How many people must I be? How many times will my role switch in a heartbeat or less? An unimaginable number pops into my head as I place my weapon and magazines into the locker for the day (no guns or ammunition allowed in the iail).

As I assign deputies to their posts, I reflect what it is to be a deputy in the housing units; I spent six-and-a-half years working there before I was promoted. I consider them the most formative years for me, and I would not trade them for

anything.

I remember the days of being "Chief, Cook and Bottle Washer," as my grandfather used to say, referring to the many hats one must wear to get through the day and finish the endless duties. I remember hearing: "CO (short for Corrections Officer) or Deputy" and answering to these titles as if someone had called: "Mom or Dad." It becomes one's name; one's identity.

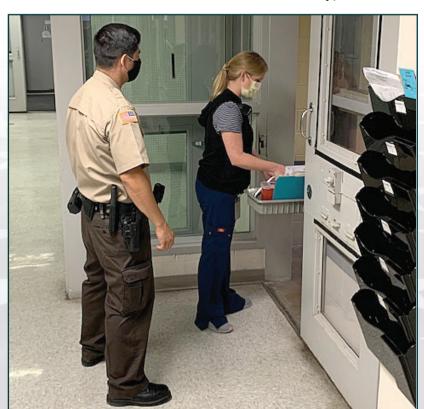
The day of a detention deputy is not an easy one, by any means. One will travel, at the very least, somewhere in the vicinity of 12,000 steps a day; serve three meals; prepare people for court; mediate tensions between people; tell stupid jokes to maintain levity; assist with

paperwork; make sure people get their medication; ensure safety and rule compliance; monitor games, cooking, room cleanliness, personal hygiene, emotional state, attitudes, etc.; and sometimes get in the middle of situations which are bound to happen when so many people live together. There are so many other things the deputies do; there is simply no way to list them all.

As a supervisor of said deputies, I trust them. We are all here for one purpose: to take care of those placed in our charge for whatever reason. I trust them, I rely on them, and I appreciate them more than one can imagine.

They are perfectionists. They are true to their badge and their oath. They are brave. They are irreplaceable. They are hard workers; supervisors, mental health workers, umpires, mediators, meal servers, custodians, secretaries, pencil pushers, prize fighters and so many other jobs all rolled into one.

My many hats are tipped to you, detention deputies, and my debt of gratitude I will never be able to fully repay. What would this place be without our "Chiefs, Cooks and Bottle Washers"? I hope I never find out.



Laramie County Sheriff's Department Detention Deputy Martinez and Nurse Martinez on med rounds.



Laramie County Sh

The Laramie County Sheriff's Department K9 unit is currently comprised of six K9 teams. A K9 team consists of a police service dog and their assigned handler. The department has three dual-purpose K9s assigned to the patrol division working various shifts

As the most utilized K9s in the organization, the dual-purpose K9 is utilized in locating the odor of narcotics. The K9's are trained to detect marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin.

In addition to narcotics detection, they are trained to smell disturbances in the ground and human odor – this is known as tracking. Given the most ideal of weather conditions, K9s can track someone who has run for many miles. These dualpurpose K9s can be called upon to enhance the safety of deputies and the public by physically apprehending suspects and holding them until it is safe for deputies to approach and apprehend.

These K9s are also fiercely loyal to their handlers, and are trained to assist in protecting their handler, should the need arise.

The department also has two explosive detection K9s trained to detect and locate the odor of more than eight families of explosives; within these families are several subcategories. These K9s are trained to search for explosives and work great distances away from their handlers because, in some instances, it would not be safe

for the handler to be too close to potential explosive devices.

There is also one K9 assigned to the Laramie County Detention Center. The Laramie County Sheriff's Department is the first law enforcement agency in Wyoming to have a dedicated narcotics detection K9 assigned to a detention facility. This K9 is a single-purpose K9, and is trained specifically to detect illegal narcotics in a jail setting.

The department's K9s consist of three male German Shepherds, one female Shepherd, one female Belgian Malinois and one female Malinois/Lab mix.

The K9 handlers are required to train a minimum of 16 hours per month, but dedicate a far greater amount of time training both on-duty and off-duty. Handlers and their K9 partners train in all aspects of their duties to keep their K9 proficient and ready at any time to be called upon. The K9s live at home with their handlers and handler's families. The K9 handlers are responsible for keeping their canine clean and well groomed, ensuring they get adequate exercise to maintain a healthy state of readiness, and ensuring they receive timely and proper medical care.

Selection to the K9 Unit consists of several steps, beginning with a mandatory minimum number of years of service as a deputy assigned to patrol. The handler must have a proven and extensive working knowledge of constitutional laws, department policy and must demonstrate the ability to make responsible decisions.

Members of the K9 Unit then test volunteer deputies to

assess their readiness for the responsibility. Once selection criteria are met, and a handler is selected, they are sent to a K9 training facility in Peru. Indiana. to select their K9 partner and attend K9 handler school. The school is iust under two months long, and the new handler must stay in Indiana throughout the course.

It is difficult for the handler to be away from their families for this long, but it is the first step in the K9 team relationship. Without family or friends around, the new handler can use this time to bond with their new partner, and the two to bond as a team. At the conclusion of training, the K9 team returns for duty as a strong, bonded team, ready to perform the tasks they are called upon to accomplish.



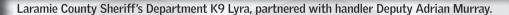


eriff's Department

Laramie County Sheriff's Department K9 Tyr, partnered with handler Deputy Ryan Lee.

Laramie County Sheriff's Department K9 Hilde, partnered with handler Sgt. Jason Gilmore.





◆ Laramie County Sheriff's Department K8 Teca, partnered with handler Deputy Adam Wright.

Laramie County Sheriff's Department K9 Arie, partnered with Deputy Jesse Grimm.









Cheyenne Police Department

Officer Sean Smith has been an officer with the Cheyenne Police Department for more than nine years. Officer Smith was selected as the "2019 Officer of the Year."

Officer Smith is currently a K-9 officer with the department. In 2019, Officer Smith and his K-9 partner, Jano (pronounced "Y-AH-NO"), completed 59 drug searches, which resulted in the seizure of 318 pounds of marijuana, 14.9 grams of methamphetamine, 0.1 grams of heroin, 28.5 grams of spice and \$10,660 from narcotics sales.

Officer Smith's detailed investigations led to three felony arrests for sale and

delivery of marijuana and two felony arrests for possession of methamphetamine. When Officer Smith and K-9 Jano were called to assist other law enforcement agencies, they were responsible for helping to seize more than 750 pounds of marijuana, and those investigations also led to eight felony arrests.

As a Field Training Officer (FTO), Officer Smith was responsible for training several new officers in 2019. Officer Smith understands the value in exposing new officers to as many different types of calls for service in order to ensure the newer officers are fully equipped to

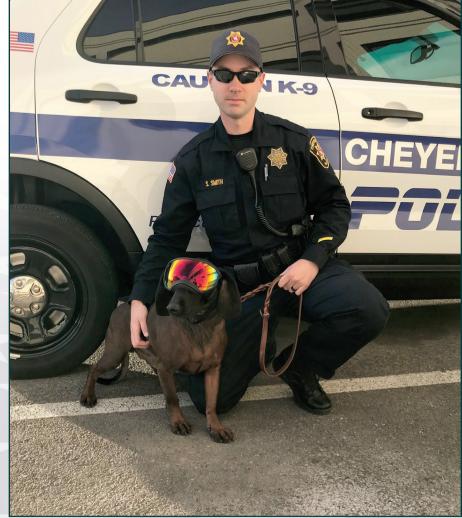
handle any situation when they complete their training. Officer Smith voluntarily changed his schedule in 2019 to help train a new officer, which is another example of his dedication to the field training program.

Officer Smith has a stellar reputation as being a leader and great teammate among his assigned squad. Officer Smith does not shy away from any task and is always willing to jump into any situation to help a fellow

officer or citizen. Officer Smith, along with the entire K-9 Unit, were awarded a "Unit Citation Award" in 2019 in relation to the overall amount of narcotics and narcotics sales proceeds seized during 2019.

Officer Smith demonstrates the type of character and work ethic that is valued by the Cheyenne Police Department. His dedication to the Cheyenne community and its citizens is greatly appreciated!





Cheyenne Police Officer Sean Smith with K9 partner Jano having a little fun.

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Heroic actions of state trooper support Cheyenne Police case, save lives

By Lt. Tim Romig, Division "A" SupervisorWyoming State Highway Patrol

On the afternoon of April 4, 2020, Trooper Joshua Gebauer overheard a Cheyenne Police Department officer call out a wrong-way driver heading southbound on Interstate 25 from Exit 7, with the CPD officer following, trying to get the driver to stop.

With only about a quarter of a mile separating them, Trooper Gebauer attempted to set up spike strips to deflate the wrong-way driver's tires. As he was setting up, Trooper Gebauer looked up and saw the CPD officer and wrongway driver enter the I-25 Port of Entry in the exit lane.

As the driver proceeded south toward the entrance, which would have put him back into the wrong direction of travel, Trooper Gebauer first attempted to block the vehicle, then ultimately instituted a Tactical Vehicle Interception (TVI) when the driver sped up and went around him. The TVI was successful, with a partial spin, and the driver was pinned to, and high centered on, the

edge of the asphalt, coming to a grinding halt

Trooper Gebauer displayed the character traits of alertness, courage, decisiveness and boldness. His immediate action prevented the driver from re-entering the interstate highway and causing a crash, with the potential for catastrophic consequences.



Wyoming State Trooper Gebauer.





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Wyoming Highway Patrol: Serving with conviction and optimism since 1933

The Wyoming Highway
Patrol officially began in
1933 with a captain and six
patrolmen, far removed from
the 208 sworn troopers of
today's patrol. The Wyoming
Highway Patrol that the
Laramie County communities
know continues its tradition

of service, despite changes to technology, equipment, staffing and responsibilities. From its Communication Center to its Ports of Entry, from troopers to support staff, it has weathered many changes, but always strives to protect that which is most valuable - the people of the great State of Wyoming and those that travel our highways.

The Wyoming
Highway Patrol,
located in Cheyenne,
is broader than most
residents know. The
headquarters of
the WHP is located
within the Wyoming
Department of
Transportation, and
its assigned troopers

range from the colonel of the patrol to specialty sergeants overseeing lifesaving and educational programs. It houses numerous support staff that are responsible for data entry, records storage, equipment, technology and commercial

carrier compliance, all supporting statewide operations.

The Highway Patrol's trooper academy is housed at the Laramie County Community College, and is proceeding with its inaugural year at its new home. The

Center is integral in keeping not only law enforcement officers, but motorists, hunters, wilderness and recreational visitors safe all around the state. The center is the communication lifeline to not only the troopers, but wardens, agents, rangers

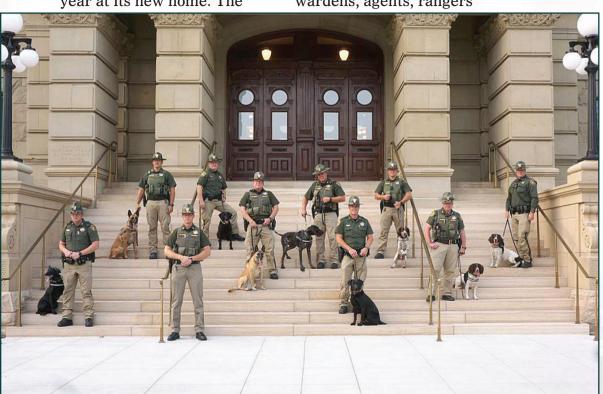
alert program and Safe To Tell, a school safety tip line, are also coordinated by the Communication Center. Thousands of phone calls are received every year in the center, which, in turn, creates service calls for the

> various agencies that ultimately save the lives of untold hundreds of residents and visitors all over the state, and it is all done right here in Laramie County.

Troopers assigned to the Chevenne area work in one of two sections. the Capital **Protection Services** division or the **Field Operations** division. Troopers working in Capital Protection work tirelessly to protect not only the governor and his family, but the state's investment in the Capitol

buildings and governor's residence by overseeing all security and law enforcement on the premises. Troopers are responsible for keeping the peace while our state legislators are sitting in session.

Two specialist canines are housed within Capital



Serving with conviction and optimism, Wyoming State Trooper handlers and their K9's.

academy not only trains the new troopers, but will offer advanced training to the remainder of the troopers stationed throughout the state, a possibility created by an invaluable partnership with LCCC.

The Wyoming Highway Patrol's Communication

and inspectors for the
Wyoming Game and Fish
Department, Division of
Criminal Investigation, State
Parks, brand inspectors,
livestock investigators and
Board of Outfitting, along
with the Bureau of Land
Management and the U.S.
Forest Service. The AMBER

13

Protection, Scout and Duster. The two canines are certified explosive detection dogs, and they and their handlers are available to respond anywhere within the state of Wyoming. During the course of the year. both teams regularly train and deploy, surpassing 200 deployments and 225 hours a year training to become proficient. Along with the drug detection canines, our two explosive detection dogs are certified twice annually. Nine troopers and a supervisor maintain the division.

Troopers assigned to the Field Operations division, are responsible for all law enforcement on state highways that fall outside a municipality within the county. With full, statewide peace officer authority, troopers actively

support other law enforcement officers within the county, regardless of whether they are on a state highway, in addition to their own tasks and responsibilities.

Throughout the daily patrol of a Laramie County trooper. he or she may find themselves working with a park ranger. Laramie County sheriff's deputy or helping wrangle cattle while providing traffic control for a fire department. Throughout the year, the troopers will work numerous crashes and road closures, and drive into the winter storms looking for stranded motorists. They will dig countless vehicles out of the snow, and stop even more vehicles for violations of traffic law while working to stop impaired driving and the transportation

of illicit drugs and human trafficking. Twelve troopers and a supervisor provide that dedicated 24-hour service 365 days a year.

Rounding out the Wyoming Highway Patrol in Laramie County are three Ports of Entry, strategically placed along Interstate 25. Interstate 80 and U.S. Highway 85. The three Ports of Entry in Laramie County are staffed by 24 officers and are responsible for commercial vehicle highway safety and infrastructure protection. In 2019, more than 2.5 million commercial vehicles traveled across Wyoming highways. with a large contingent crossing through Laramie County. The WHP Ports of Entry are key in making sure these commercial vehicles get to their destinations safely

and legally. The officers work to not only inspect driver qualifications and vehicles, but their loads for size and weight, along with keeping a watchful eye out for those who would use our county and highways as a means to promote human trafficking.

Despite all of the challenges we see in our world today. the men and women of the Wyoming Highway Patrol continue putting a foot forward every day. We strive to keep our state and communities safe, recognizing that in order for progress to be made, we must keep our highways safe and accessible while lines of communications remain open so that we might answer the call for help with the best service possible. We are your Wyoming Highway Patrol!

Thank you, first responders.

Your dedication to Laramie County is what makes our community a great place to live. Your commitment to service does not go unnoticed. I salute you.





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AMR is the leading ground transportation provider for the Global Medical Response family of companies. Global Medical Response is the industry-leading air, ground, specialty and residential fire services and managed medical transportation organization.

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compassionate, quality medical care, primarily in the areas of emergency and patient relocation services, in the United States, the District of Columbia and around the world

AMR has been serving Chevenne and Laramie county for more than 20 years. Some AMR Chevenne paramedics and EMTs have been serving this community since the start. At AMR Chevenne, our commitment as health care providers is to keep abreast of the latest medical procedures and practices for our patients.

The team at AMR Cheyenne has a single mission of caring for the community at a moment's notice. We respond



surrounding counties and states.

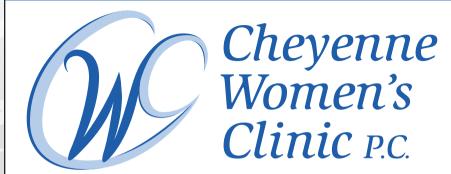
AMR Chevenne's highly trained paramedics and EMTs' sole responsibilities are to provide premier care to those in need. Treating our patients, customers and teams with respect is our top priority.

Our paramedics and EMTs are active in the community, participating in and providing medical standby for special events. You may have seen us at the Laramie County Fair Horse Show, Central and South High School football games, the Great Bison Shuffle and more

Serving our family, friends and neighbors in Chevenne and Laramie County is our honor and privilege. Come say hello the next time you see us in the community.

If you would like to learn more about AMR Chevenne. please contact us at 307-634-8533.

THANK YOU TO EACH FIRST **RESPONDER FOR TAKING CARE OF OUR COMMUNITY! WE APPRECIATE ALL YOU DO!**



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Left to right: Samantha Smith, Terra Forsythe, Ivan Maxfield, Chase Miller, Jacob Johnston, Justin Middelstadt, Sandra Galipeau, Amber Merritt, Sydney: Photo Credit: Kelly @ Rugged Grace Photography



Jon and Bridgette Radomsky and the staff of Wiederspahn-Radomsky Chapel would like to thank the community of Cheyenne and the surrounding area for the confidence and trust you have instilled in us in allowing our family to take care of your family.

THANK YOU TO OUR FIRST RESPONDER WORKERS!

We want to take a moment to thank all of the dedicated first responder workers that are keeping our community safe and functioning. We see you. We appreciate you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Wiedersein Radomsky Chapel of the Chimes

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