

December 2017



The WyASFAA website is up and running! The site currently features an “About Us” section, recognizes our officers, has a place for the annual and regional conference information (including photos from previous years!), includes a page for the High School Counselor Workshop, and a resources page! People can join the mailing list, view our membership list, and review the newsletters. Some pages feature member-only access, while a majority of the pages are available to any site visitor. Since the workshop series ended, we made some updates and reset the “visitor counter” — we currently have 250 unique site visitors since November 16. Opportunities for the future include conference registration, “shopping” options to “build” our Wyoming gift for the RMAFSA conference, live chat, blog posts, and much, much more! Check it out at wyasfaa.wixsite.com/wyasfaa.

Mark your calendars for January 2, 2018! The **membership drive** will begin right after the start of the year. As a reminder, WyASFAA voted in September to **increase dues next year to \$75**. Membership is institutional. Payment can be submitted to the WyASFAA Treasurer, Brenda Haseman, at Sheridan College, 3059 Coffeen Ave, Sheridan, WY 82801. Brenda will send out invoices in January and one will be posted online.

The WyASFAA Board is **requesting nominations** for the President and Secretary positions. The Treasurer position is a two-year stint, so Brenda Haseman will be continuing in her role through April 2019. Please nominate yourself or a colleague to step up and take on a leadership position so we can continue the momentum we have started. Please note that nominations are NOT limited to director-level positions; any WyASFAA school member in good standing may serve in elected Board positions. WyASFAA also needs an Affiliate Member Representative and would welcome nominations to fill the current vacant position as well as to continue as the representative to the Board next year.



The Conference Committee has been working on lots of plans to make the **2018 conference** great! Conference will be **April 26-27** (with the annual Hathaway Meeting scheduled for April 25) in Casper. The theme is **Kickin' it Old School**. A conference survey was emailed to members in early November, but if you still have session suggestions, please let Conference Chair Shelby Garner know: shelbygarner@caspercollege.edu

We will also have a **philanthropy project** this year in lieu of state gifts. The Board chose **Seton House in Casper** for our endeavor.

Seton House opened in Casper on December 5, 1989 as an emergency shelter consisting of three apartments. Since that time, it has grown to 30 apartments, a learning center for children's services, and a donation center. From the Seton House website: *Our mission is to support single-parent families in their journey towards independence. Seton House provides its residents with programs and tools to achieve independence. Each family that goes through our program will live in a fully furnished apartment supplied with basic living needs. An on-site case manager then works closely with the families to empower them. Each parent is encouraged to engage in a job training program **or pursue higher education for increased success**. Eren and Sharon, who are both featured on the website, credit Seton house with helping them **stay focused on their college endeavors** during their stay at the facility.*

In order to generate more donations, we would like to start early compiling supplies. Start now gathering extra items like canned goods, cleaning supplies or personal hygiene items you may have around, or get your staff, department, or whole school involved (with permission from your administrators, of course). For example, Casper College is going to allow an extra one or two days a week of allowing staff to wear jeans for each item donated per week. There is a complete wish list of items on the Seton House [website](#).

**Enjoy the
holiday break!**



It is with great sadness that I share information about the passing of recently retired UW director Kathy Bobbitt. Kathy had been at UW for 27 years, most recently as their financial aid director. She retired October 31 and passed away in her sleep the night of November 5/6. For obituary and memorial donation information, please see: www.legacy.com/obituaries/southbendtribune/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=187200347, and keep her colleagues and family in your thoughts and prayers.

If there are items you would like to see in next month's newsletter, please let Susan Stephenson know by the 10th of the month: susan.stephenson@ewc.wy.edu.

Now onto our fifth **school spotlight!**



Northern Wyoming Community College District

Year established: Sheridan College: 1948, Gillette College: 1969,
and Sheridan College in Johnson County – Buffalo: 1994

Financial Aid Staff:

- Heidi Balster; *Director of Financial Aid*
- Christina Grammens; *Assistant Director of Financial Aid* (R2T4, PJs, and loans)
- Aaron Odom; *Financial Aid Senior Counselor* (SAP, Verification, and Dual Enrollment)
- Brenda Haseman; *Scholarship Coordinator* (Scholarships, Hathaway, and Consortium Agreements)
- Chanda Richards; *Financial Aid Counselor* (Athletics, Work Study, and WYIN)

Tell us a bit about your school: Enrollment for 2016-2017 was 4,143 and enrollment for fall 2017 is 2,722. We have a lot of great programs on both campuses, so that's a tough question to answer.

What is a favorite event or activity at your school? I really enjoy our SOAR (Student-Orientation-Advising and Registration) events for our first-time students. SOAR is a daylong event held several times throughout the late spring and summer months, which allows students to complete orientation, meet with financial aid, meet with an advisor and register, get to know staff and other new students, and tour the campus. There are also sessions for parents and family members to attend. Gillette has a similar event called START (Student-Testing-Advising-Registration and Tours), which also takes place throughout the summer months.

As the FA Director, what do you like about your institution? The continuous improvements on both campuses, and our focus on student success and student involvement. On the Sheridan campus, construction is going strong on updating and expanding our Technical Education Center, which should be available to students sometime in early 2018. We are also enjoying the new facilities of the Mars Agricultural Center and the Whitney Center for the Arts. In January, 2017, the Gillette Pronghorn Center opened, which is their brand new athletic and health science facility. Area 59, Gillette College's new STEM center, is in the process of opening in the near future. The facility will support Science, Technology, Engineering and Math for students and community members. It is a creative and innovative space providing access to state-of-the-art equipment including: two robotic arms, six large 3D printers, a 3D scanner, three laser cutters/etchers, 20 laptop workstations, classroom space, and a woodworking and metalsmithing shop.

I also appreciate the support from Student Affairs and other divisions across the district that work to continuously make improvements for the benefit of our students. We have a lot of great opportunities for students to get involved on both campuses through clubs, organizations and student employment opportunities, which plays an important role for student success at NWCCD.

What's the best (or worst!) thing about working in your Financial Aid Office?

For both campuses, the best thing about our office is each of our members of our financial aid team. We are all content experts in many areas, and together we work hard to help our students be successful. Also, for the Sheridan crew, our office was moved next to the Advising Office and Testing Center. With a few months of construction over the summer months, we now each have our own office and I can say we are really enjoying our new space and location!

Are there any unique or unusual facts/stories/legends about your school or in its history?

Northern Wyoming Community College District is a multi-campus college including Sheridan, Gillette and an outreach center in Buffalo. When Sheridan College was established in 1948, we were known as Northeast Agricultural Junior College. At that time, we did not have a building, but were using what is now Sheridan's Junior High School. In 1959, we became the Sheridan College Generals and also moved to where we are located today. The first athletic team, the Golden Eagles men's basketball team, was established in 1949–1950. We also had the first woman collegiate rodeo coach in the United States, Pat Hamilton, who coached from 1958-1990. Pat coached two national champions, Chris Ledoux and Wally Badget, as well as two CFR Canadian Champions, Rod Hay and Glenn Keeley.

What is unique about Gillette College is that over the years, the college has been built on community partnerships. For example: the Health Science Building (City of Gillette, Gillette College and Campbell County Health), the Tech Center (Campbell County and Gillette College), Rodeo/Ag (Campbell County and Foundation), and Area 59 (private donor and our Foundation), and the Pronghorn Center (Campbell County and private donors). In July 2006, the NWCCD board of trustees unanimously approved renaming the "Gillette Campus" of the NWCCD to "Gillette College." In 2007, rodeo was the first athletic team, both men's and women's, and were named the Gillette College Pronghorns. A year later, cross country was added, followed by men's and women's basketball in 2009. The Gillette men's basketball team took third during the 2015-2016 season, and in 2017-2018, the Gillette Pronghorns added both men's and women's soccer teams.

Our Buffalo campus is located in the old elementary school in Buffalo; part of the building is listed on the state historical register. The campus is centrally located and serves as a community center as well. The campus had one of the highest percentages of concurrent enrollment within the state this past year. Also, Rope for Knowledge Scholarship Team Roping is going into its 10th year. The event is the main fundraiser for the Johnson County Scholarship, which is awarded to Johnson County residents attending college at any of the NWCCD campuses.

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This month's member highlight is Financial Aid Senior Counselor, **Aaron Odom!**



How long have you been in financial aid?

I began in higher ed and financial aid on Dec. 17, 2012. So, I'll be celebrating five years working with students this month! Based on my previous work experience, I answered an (FA job) ad. Having come from an oncology clinic, where I assisted patients and families relieve the financial burdens of treatments, the transition was actually fairly easy. In our office I do Verification, SAP Appeals, Dual Enrollment Grants, etc. I'm often referred to as the "Financial Aid guy," quite literally; I'm the only male member of our office!

What is your favorite/least favorite thing about your job?

Favorite thing: I love to see the cycle of who a student becomes during their time at our institution. I feel so much pride watching a student go from ambitious and a little bit frightened to a more fully-realized member of society that has

realized at least some of her/his potential. Watching a student walk across the graduation stage, I know that I had a part of that success, and I'm so excited to see what these people become!



What are your hobbies, talents and/or quirks?

I have a master's degree in theatre, and I started my own production company in my hometown: Trident Theatre. Trident has hosted and produced several events since its creation in January 2016, and we've got some fun plans for the future. Our most recent production was "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) [Revised]," which received a lot of local appreciation.

Beyond that, I'm a full-time husband and a father of two wonderful boys. All of us were involved in my most recent production with Trident, as we all love getting to tell stories on stage.



What fictional character would you choose to be and why?

Questions like these are so funny to me, because so often a person will choose to be some sort of hero, or noble character in whatever fiction that the person chooses to follow. As an actor, I've often been told that I make a good villain, and I don't think enough people consider the benefits, and just how much fun it would be to be an iconic villain. I suppose if you asked me today, I would say that I would love the chance to be the Joker. What a fun character! Always laughing, always has something devious planned, always seems to have the means to do what he wants, and is just as influential as his nemesis. Here's to (some of) the bad guys!

What was a favorite thing you had as a kid that isn't around anymore?

I don't think I appreciated just how much fun I had on merry-go-rounds on playgrounds as a kid. I know that they've become pretty unpopular in recent years due to safety concerns. I was lucky enough to not be one of those kids that got hurt on a merry-go-round. So, I don't have any bad memories! Just thinking about this reminds me of the thrills of the speed that always seemed just out of control, the inertia that made me feel like I couldn't stand straight up, and how I always felt like a mighty survivor if I was able to ride until the ride stopped spinning!



What could you give a 45-minute talk on with absolutely no preparation (other than financial aid)?

As you may have guessed, I'm a big fan of the Batman universe, and I could probably go toe-to-toe with any other self-appointed expert out there. I often use Batman references as metaphors in my daily life, and have very strong opinions on the mythology. Feel free to challenge me! Bring it on!

When asked about Aaron, Director Heidi Balster had this to say: Aaron is an important team member of the Financial Aid Office and is well known across the district, with our students and within the community. Not only has he become the content expert with verification and satisfactory academic progress, he is also the point of contact for Campus Logic and Financial Aid Self-Service. Aaron is currently working on setting up SAP and professional judgement appeal processes within our Campus Logic system. Having both integrated into Campus Logic will streamline the appeals process for our students and our office. He also attends the RMUG conference each year and has shared his knowledge with others across the region as well as our state. Within the last several months, Aaron has taken the lead in training our front line Enrollment Service Specialists on financial aid and serving our students with basic financial aid information. I look forward to watching Aaron grow in his position as a Financial Aid Senior Counselor.