

# You can still get an "almost annual" subscription to the Cheyenne Herald

The article below was run in the September 20, 2011 issue of the Cheyenne Herald. Several readers suggested it be run again for those who may have missed it earlier. Minor edits/updates were necessary to make it timely.

An annual subscription for the Cheyenne Herald includes 24 issues. The publication is printed on a bi-weekly basis - most of the time. There are also occasional three weeks gaps between publication dates.

This particular issue is No. 228. The final numbered issue will be No. 250 (for ease of historical memory) and will be published just before the 2012 general election. The plan is to print one final issue AFTER the election - without a number.

For some time after I began to publish the Cheyenne Herald, I did not offer subscriptions. One objective with this piece is to get people to move away from computers and into the public domain to access the print version of the Herald.

My good friend Phyllis Atchison was adamant that I should offer subscriptions. As usual, she had thought of reasons which I had overlooked.

First, there are some people who do not get out every day - due to health issues, transportation or simple choice. Phyllis rightly believed that there were also readers who would like to "help" keep the publication alive and had nothing to advertise. Apart from nondeductible "donations," a subscription would be a means to allow those readers an opportunity to participate and support this endeavor.

Some will send a check in the amount of an annual subscription and ask that no paper be mailed - that they will pick one up from racks around town and in the county. Some enter gift subscriptions for friends or family members out of town - some of whom had lived in Cheyenne and moved away, others who just have

an interest in what goes on here.

Most importantly, most of those who entered a subscription early on have renewed as every anniversary came around. Few have let their subscription lapse. I send out one renewal reminder. That's it. And I have often suggested to people who called in to enter a subscription where they might pick up the Herald conveniently and have actually discouraged their paying for a subscription.

I print 5,000 copies of each issue. Since Joe Morelli's passing, one volunteer and I distribute the print versions throughout Cheyenne and out into the county, including Pine Bluffs and many places in South Cheyenne and at the Borderline lottery outlet. Few issues remain when the new issue replaces it. Several access points have my white cabinets and the lower shelves hold previous issues for those who may have missed them. Those papers are also taken by many. All in all, there is little overage or waste from the 5,000 copies that are printed.

In addition to the print version, the Cheyenne Herald website attracts great interest. Not Drudge-like numbers, but impressive for a Cheyenne offering. If there is another webpage with more traffic, including the daily paper, I'd like to see their facts.

I have a "stats" report that tells me much about number of visits, views and which pages are being read and by how many. I'm provided a great deal of information but the most important is how many people visit the website and what they read. From that data, I know what subject matters mean most and least to those visitors and can extrapolate that to readers as a whole.

Consistently, there are 6,000 to 8,000 visits each two week period. Interestingly, one of the most viewed stories continues to be one on Warren National University that appeared in a February 2009 special posting to the website. Since that story appeared, several of the most viewed articles on the website have involved the degree selling businesses, Kennedy-Western University and Warren National University. Another highly viewed article involved Jessica Venable - another was about Tara Vreeland. And, of course, the LCCC exposes. That 2009 WNU article has been viewed over 6,500 times and continues to draw huge interest more than 2 1/2 years later.

The bottom line? The Cheyenne Herald website has attracted interest from all over the United States,

and some from around the world.

The level of interest in, or attention to, the Cheyenne Herald had no part in my decision to end publishing after the 2012 general election. I have no profound reason. Nothing earth shattering. I just decided to end on top and move on to something else for the remainder of my working life.

To those who have supported the Herald financially over the past nine and a half years, I offer my profound thanks. For those who have considered doing so but haven't, you can still subscribe for the remaining issues - 22 after this October 25th issue. The last full subscription was for Issues No. 227 - 250 (24) and that time has passed. Now, subscriptions will be for a partial year at the prorated price of an annual subscription - \$3.125 / issue.

## Jessica Venable

Several months ago, when Jessica called to let me know she was being transferred from the Women's Center in Lusk to a halfway house in Gillette, she was very excited and I was very optimistic. Optimistic that her living conditions would dramatically improve and that she might soon be freed from an imprisonment that I have always considered unjust. Jessica stays in touch with me regularly by telephone calls and letters.

While it seemed that the Volunteers of America (VOA) facility in Gillette would have to be an improvement over the confinement of Lusk, I'm not so sure anymore. While the keepers may not be armed, the restrictions on "residents" sound almost as harsh and unbearable as being in prison. The communal aspect of a couple dozen women with different habits, hygiene and hours in the same berthing area can be intolerable but the worst of all is the demand on residents to pay for their confinement. The threat of return to Lusk or whichever federal institution they would be sent back to is constantly held over their heads. Gaining and holding a job, under the circumstances of the residents (VOA holds both men and women but no contact is allowed between sexes), is difficult. Jessica has held several jobs. Employers do not honor commitments made when hiring the residents and not all pay for the work done - challenging the institution to try to make them pay. The resident can't. And once a resident begins to fall behind the unrelenting and unforgiving balance due to VOA, the hammer of "we'll return you to prison" reappears, without compassion or relief.

Confinement at VOA and similar halfway houses does not appear to be about preparing residents for re-entry into society but about profit. About cash flow. State and Federal governments do not pay all for this holding. It is the responsibility of residents, most without outside family or friends willing or able to help, like Jessica. Readers of the Cheyenne Herald have been generous to Jessica Venable over the last two years. Some may think VOA is state-paid and Jessica only needs money for personal items. Unfortunately, that is not the case. And, in her case, the landlord does not threaten to evict, he threatens to return her to prison. No rules violation - just not paying enough money. There is a magic figure at VOA. If a resident reaches or passes that number, threats resume. Jessica has reached that number. She has a new full-time job at a motel but her pay won't come soon enough or sufficient to relieve the immediate pressure. If you can help, donations can be sent directly to her or via the Cheyenne Herald, P.O. Box 2208, Cheyenne WY 82003. Donations of cash (less than \$50.00) can be used for personal items. Again, your generosity is appreciated.

**Jessica Venable / P.O. Box 1346 V.O.A. / Gillette WY 82717**

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