

Winnett Times

Winnett Montana Community Newsletter



Katie Lund in her new Punchy Paint business in Winnett, serving coffee, pastries, ice cream & other items.

Punchy Paint: Faith, Community and Connection

Written by Diane Ahlgren

WHERE DID THE UNIQUE NAME COME FROM?

I have always looked at myself as being a little unconventional. I like bright colors, wild designs and things that are "different" from your average person. It's kind of a running joke in our family, because I LOVE Appaloosa horses! I have almost every other critter that you could want on a ranch, but I haven't yet been able to convince JR into an Appaloosa (although, one day he'll cave)! Punchy means lively and impactful, making a statement, so of course I wanted to go with something different and bright.. Unfortunately, Appaloosa didn't go with the Punchy name (although it goes well with the theme), so I settled for Paint, which is second best!

HAS IT ALWAYS BEEN YOUR DREAM TO HAVE A COFFEE SHOP?

I worked at a coffee shop in high school and I loved it! It was one of the most fun jobs I've ever had. I have thought about doing something like this for years, but never have been quite in a position to make it happen with all the "things" going on in life. There had been some discussions about the 55 Main building and the hopes and dreams for it. I was throwing some ideas around and ultimately decided that I couldn't make it all happen on my own. It just so happened that God had another plan and placed my partner, Ron Redd in my life. Such an unlikely duo we are, but he has been so amazing and we have so many of the same values and visions. Ron is an Engineer in Colorado, owns land south of Winnett, and hopes to retire here someday, so it will be a lifelong friendship for sure!

WHAT IS YOUR VISION/GOAL FOR YOUR NEW BUSINESS?

Our vision is to be the heart of the hometown, known for its unique flair, authentic experience and fostering of community values. Our mission statement is to deliver a punchy cup of coffee with a wild western spirit - fueling faith, community, creativity and connection. We have big dreams and really the sky is the limit! Our primary focus and the heart of the business is to make sure that this is a welcome, faith-fueled space for community members.

HOW DID YOU PREPARE FOR OPENING THIS BUSINESS?

There were lots of things to do, lots of decisions to be made and a lot of money to spend! A lot of it felt like it came pretty naturally to me. Having a business/finance degree definitely helped and I've had a lot of experience with different organizations throughout the past few years. That really prepared me for many of the basics of the start-up and it didn't feel quite so overwhelming because I knew how to do most of it. The decorating and designing were so much fun! I spent many of hours on the computer and the phone making sure all the logistics were worked out and that we opened up being "prepared." There are so many things, just with life in general that you can't prepare for, but I feel like it went pretty well!

Continued on Page 10

In This Issue:

Punchy Paint	1 & 10
Winnett School News	2-3
WGR Sports	4
Senior Class Spotlights	5
Kid's Korner	6
Winnett Happenings	6
Lund Spotlight	7
Iverson Spotlight	8-9
Winnett Times Survey	11
Newsletter Pause	12

WINNETT SCHOOL NEWS



WINNETT FFA COMPETITORS

In November, FFA Advisor Emily Standley took seven Winnett FFA members to Bozeman to compete at Ag Expo, an event that hosted more than 1,900 students from across the state. Winnett FFA students competed in several events and earned impressive results at both the state and district levels.

In Senior Livestock Evaluation, 348 individuals competed statewide. The Winnett team (Cami Ahlgren, Gracie Lang, Johnnie Schultz, Aubrey Grant, and Rebecca Rowton) placed 16th overall out of 51 teams and earned 1st place in the district. Individually, Cami Ahlgren placed 24th overall and 2nd in the district in the senior division. Although she was eligible to compete in junior livestock, she moved up to complete the senior team and would have placed 2nd overall in the state in the junior division. Johnnie Schultz placed 47th overall and 5th in the district, while Gracie Lang placed 125th overall and 12th in the district in the senior division.

In Senior Veterinary Science, 305 students competed statewide. The Winnett team (Shaylie Ahlgren, Cami Ahlgren, Charlie Johnson, Gracie Lang, Aubrey Grant, and Rebecca Rowton) placed 23rd out of 46 teams statewide and 3rd in the district.

In Senior Farm and Agribusiness Management, 108 students competed statewide. Shaylie Ahlgren and Charlie Johnson represented Winnett as a two-person team. Shaylie earned an on-stage award for placing 2nd in the state and 1st in the district, while Charlie placed 68th overall and 9th in the district.

In Senior Agricultural Technology and Mechanical Systems, Johnnie Schultz competed as Winnett's sole participant among 287 competitors, placing 161st overall and 17th in the district.

In Senior Food Science, 114 students competed statewide. The senior team (Shaylie Ahlgren, Charlie Johnson, Johnnie Schultz, and Gracie Lang) placed 6th out of 33 teams statewide and earned 1st place in the district. Individually, Shaylie placed 11th overall (1st in the district), Charlie placed 26th overall (3rd in the district), Johnnie placed 59th overall (5th in the district), and Gracie placed 69th overall (7th in the district).

In Junior Food Science, 63 students competed statewide. The Winnett junior team (Aubrey Grant, Rebecca Rowton, and Cami Ahlgren) earned 6th place out of 24 teams, despite competing with only three members and placing above multiple four-person teams. Individually, Aubrey was recognized during the awards ceremony for placing 6th overall and 2nd in the district, Becca placed 12th overall and 3rd in the district, and Cami placed 19th overall and 4th in the district.

Overall, Winnett FFA students demonstrated exceptional preparation, teamwork, and dedication while competing against schools from across the state.

Superintendent's Notes

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! The first semester of the 25-26 school year has been one of the busiest and most successful in recent memory. We ended the quarter on December 23, 2025, and began the 3rd quarter on January 5, 2026. It was incredible and heartwarming to see how hard our kids worked to play in the 6-man Class C Championship and to see former graduates, parents, grandparents and school staffs come together to cheer, celebrate the effort and demonstrate school pride which will have a long-lasting impact for students. The 4-8 basketball season was fast, furious and ended in a District Championship for the WGR girls. The boys won their first game, losing out to the eventual District Champions. The biennial Yellowstone Expedition for grades 5-6, an event that has been happening for 40+ years, was successfully executed the first week of December. The WGR high school basketball teams will have two weekends of tournament play before regular season games begin just before the holiday break. I am grateful to be working with talented committed teachers who truly care about student learning, coaches who develop work ethic, teamwork, integrity, respect and other character traits necessary for success in life, and a community that has always supported education. Holiday Blessings, *Tori Harris*

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations to Shaylie Ahlgren for receiving a \$1,000 SAE grant from National FFA! Only five students in all of Montana were selected for this national grant!

Photo Credit: Reba Ahlgren



Jasper Tholt, 8th grader, competed in December at the American Kennel Club (AKC) circuit, qualifying for a major event in Florida with his Chinese Crested dog, Boomer. Jasper placed 1st for the Junior Handler (Chinese Crested Specialty).

Photo Credit: Nicole Tholt

JAN 2026 2

ELEMENTARY NEWS



5TH/6TH - MRS. THOLT'S CLASS

Expedition Yellowstone 2025 -The 5th and 6th grade class went on their Expedition Yellowstone trip Dec 1 - 5, 2025. We were the first class back after the government shutdown, so the Rangers were excited to see us. While there, we saw many animals, made

1ST/2ND - MRS. JOHNSON'S CLASS

What a wonderful first half of the year it has been! Multi-digit number addition was a breeze for the second grade and we are crushing multi-step problem solving. First grade has been hammering away at mastering facts and problem solving. As a class, we've been learning about dogs, pumpkins, super storms, families, turkeys, and so much more. We were reading machines in November—reading and passing quizzes on 319 books. Check out the size of our turkey! We also disguised our Thanksgiving turkeys so they wouldn't get eaten this year, too. We love our feathery friends! We had a wonderful Christmas play, "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever," that included our whole elementary school along with community members. How blessed we are to live in such a cooperative community!

breakfast and dinners, learned about Native American games, had an indoor campfire, and played a game like Family Feud called Pod Feud. Each pod got to cook at least one breakfast and dinner. Cooking the meals was fun. All the meals were really tasty. However, we didn't enjoy cleaning up nearly as much. Our favorite part of the indoor classroom time was Pod Feud. The Bushytailed Woodrats (Brody, Mason & Sadie) beat the Old Faithfuls (Mrs. Tholt & chaperones)! We also learned how to identify skulls, created our own animals and National Parks, and made commercials.

We saw lots of animals throughout the week. We saw Deer, Squirrels, Rabbits, Antelope, Bald Eagle, Ravens and MANY Bison and Elk. We even got caught in a Bison Jam while driving the bus back to camp from Lost Lake. Brady was most excited to see 'Larry', the first squirrel we saw. We hiked many miles each day. We hiked to Lost Lake, the Petrified Tree, an ice cave, a frozen waterfall, all through Mammoth Terraces/Hot Springs and to a Wikiup. On one hike, we found some hair stuck on a tree. We think it was from a Bison.

KINDY - MRS. GRANT'S CLASS

We have been chasing Mr. and Mrs. Gingerbread through December! They have led us through England, Germany, Australia, Brazil and more! We try to learn about a new tradition and a little about each country as we "visit". As we start a new year, I asked each kid what they are looking forward to in 2026.

Riley said, "Going swimming in the summer."

Blaze said, "Go to the jump park and the pool!"

Evy said, "Go sledding in the snow."

Hope everyone has an amazing holiday season and Happy New Year!

We ate lunch on the trail each day which included an interesting trail mix we created.

Our favorite activity we did on the trail was finding a lost wolf collar. We use an antenna to track the radio waves that the collar gives off. It took a little while to find the correct direction. In the end, Jade found it by a sagebrush. On the last night, we had an indoor campfire since it was so cold and windy outside. While sitting around the campfire, we read our legends that we wrote before going to Yellowstone. We also got to share what we enjoyed most about the trip. We are very thankful to the Petroleum County Endowment Fund for the grant to help us attend this amazing trip.



3RD/4TH - MRS. THOMPSON'S CLASS

The 3rd and 4th grade have been working on making a book! Studentreasures Publishing sent us material to make a book, I will return completed book by mid-March and then it will be published! The title of the book is Montana History (because that is what they are studying with Mrs. Flint in Social Studies!). Each student picked two subject/events to research, then write about, then draw a picture for each subject/event. They have really enjoyed it!

If anyone would like to purchase a copy of the book after it is published, please contact me, Mrs. Thompson, and you will receive a copy before the end of the school year.

GRW FALL SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

The 2025 season was a much anticipated one. We knew that we had a group of great boys on the team, but getting good athletes to mesh together is the real trick. Never have I seen so many nervous boys as when we played our season opener on the road down in Terry. Within a few minutes it was clear that we were going to have a very special team. We put a leash on the Terriers and never looked back. Over the next several weeks the focus was on being disciplined

and mastering the little things. We worked hard on our athletic agility. Getting quick feet. Learning how to break down in preparation for a tackle. Never over pursuing the ball Carrier. The boys excelled. It is what led to the team having the biggest point spread of any six-man team in the state. That is the gap between points we allowed vs points we scored. Our defense rivaled that of the Steelers of old! A rare thing to find in 6-man football.

The true highlight of the season was knocking off the number 1 team in the state DGSG. There is a deep rivalry there. The boys applied a diligent effort and came out on top. It was a surreal moment for everyone. We soaked it in... It was also when we realized that we now had a target on our back.

The wins continue to pile up and before we knew it, we landed in the playoffs, barnstorming right into the championship game. Pushing a tough CJI into double overtime where we came up short settling us into the 2nd place spot.

Plenty of meat on the bone for next season! We'll come back with a vengeance and build on the lessons and successes of this year. A state championship victory still in our sights. The community supported the program in full force. We look forward to the continued tailgate parties and crowded sidelines! See you next season.

-Coach Taxon Allen



Photo Credit: Shoni Melton



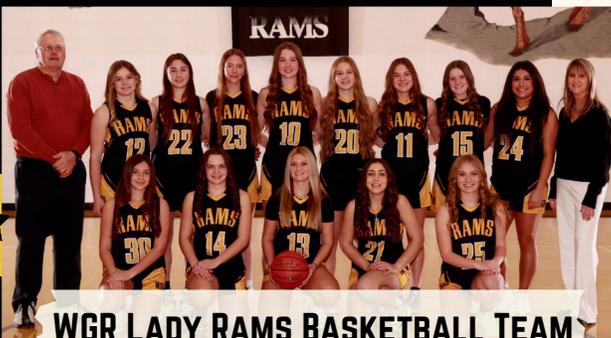
Photo Credit: Jada Bantz

Congrats to Jace Bantz for being recruited to the Montana State University Football Team after he graduates this spring. Jace signed December 3rd. Go Cats!

WGR BASKETBALL



WGR RAMS BASKETBALL TEAM
Coached by Brandon Bantz & Mitch Thompson



WGR LADY RAMS BASKETBALL TEAM
Coached by Vic Westphal & Kate Johnson



JH Girls' Basketball team took home the 1st place District trophy!
Coached by Katie Lund & Jada Bantz



JH Boys' Basketball Team during the awards banquet.
Coached by LJ Olson and Adam Tholt

2026 Senior Class Spotlights

Shaylie Ahlgren



What do you remember about kindergarten?
I went to kindergarten in Roundup - I remember going to Mrs. Larson's house on the last day of school to have a squirt gun fight.

What is your favorite Winnett School lunch?
Chicken wraps

What's your best memory of your time at Winnett School?
Getting 3rd at divisional volleyball my junior year.

What will you do next year?
Attend Montana State University (Bozeman) & major in Ag. Business & minor in Finance.

What do you hope to accomplish still this year?
Get enough scholarships to pay for college & get my diploma

What advice do you have for younger students?
Always stay humble & kind - Tim McGraw

What do you remember about kindergarten?
100 Day Party.

What is your favorite Winnett School lunch?
Walking Tacos

What's your best memory of your time at Winnett School?
Going to state 2 years ago.

What will you do next year?
Work and Hunt.

What do you hope to accomplish still this year?
Finish my senior year of basketball and go to state again.

What advice do you have for younger students?
Be good and pay attention in class.

Danner Hanson



Trey Jassak



What do you remember about kindergarten?
100 Day Party

What is your favorite Winnett School lunch?
Walking Tacos

What's your best memory of your time at Winnett School?
Getting second in football at GRW alongside my brothers I've made on the way.

What will you do next year?
Find work

What do you hope to accomplish still this year?
Graduate

What advice do you have for younger students?
Enjoy it while it's here, time flies, don't take anything for granted.

What do you remember about kindergarten?
I went to kindergarten at Ross School and remember coming to Winnett for library days.

What is your favorite Winnett School lunch?
Ham and Cheese Sliders

What's your best memory of your time at Winnett School?
My best memory at Winnett would be the Christmas party my Junior year.

What will you do next year?
I will either go into the radiology program or become an early education teacher. I will most likely be attending MSUB.

What do you hope to accomplish still this year?
I hope to still accomplish graduating with a 4.0

What advice do you have for younger students?
Don't take short cuts through life, live it to the fullest.

Charlie Jo Johnson



Wyatt Melton



What do you remember about kindergarten?
I remember being Mrs. Lesh's, my teacher, favorite student.

What is your favorite Winnett School lunch?
Sweet & Sour Chicken

What's your best memory of your time at Winnett School?
Getting second place in the State Football championship with my brothers.

What will you do next year?
Go play basketball in college.

What do you hope to accomplish still this year?
I hope to win a state title.

What advice do you have for younger students?
Read your bible, stay close to God and all things will be easier.

By Katie Lund

Mrs. Kate Johnson said what she loves the most about the 1st grade class, is "they are energetic and love to learn!"



1st Grade Class

"The wonders of Christmas through the eyes of 1st graders"
What are you the most excited about for Christmas?

Rex Thompson: "Going snowmobiling"

Joni Hoge: "My friends & family are coming"

Percy Rowton: "Getting all the presents I wish for"

Malcolm Miller: "Getting a Distortus-Rex; it's a hybrid."

What is your favorite Christmas treat?

Rex: "Cinnamon rolls, chocolate milk, cookies & cupcakes"

Joni: "Grandma's homemade chocolate chip cookies, they are so good!"

Percy: "Probably steak"

Malcolm: " Cookies & hot chocolate"

Besides presents, what do you love most about Christmas?

Rex: "The snow!"

Joni: "Seeing my friends and family"

Percy: "Getting to see my whole family"

Malcolm: "Sharing with Santa"

If you could have one Christmas miracle, what would it be?

Rex: "Snow as big as me!"

Joni: "To see Rudolph!"

Percy: "To fly!"

Malcolm: "Getting to ride Rudolph!"

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS



The Petroleum County Players and Winnett elementary put on: "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" December 9.

Thank you, Terry Lewis, for putting this all together!

Lions Club ladies handing out Holiday Poinsettias. Thank you for all you do!



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

J.R. & Katie Lund & Family

J.R. and Katie Lund, young ranchers near Winnett, Montana, founded Rockin L Genetics in 2008. They started with a few registered Black Angus cows on leased land. They met in college, with J.R. involved in rodeo events in Miles City and Katie attending school in Missoula. Their love story took them to the University of Montana-Western in Dillon, where they both graduated with business degrees, Katie's with a finance emphasis. After graduating, they moved to Lewistown in 2008, where J.R. took on the role of managing a ranch north of Grass Range. This opportunity allowed them to run a specific number of cows as part of J.R.'s wage, marking the beginning of their herd with the purchase of four registered cows.

The Lunds gradually built their herd. In 2012, they had the chance to purchase 130 registered cows from the ranch owner and lease his ranch, continuing to expand until the property was sold to the neighboring Hutterites. The couple then had to find a new place to live due to mold issues in their home, compounded by Katie's Lyme disease diagnosis in 2014. Mold and Lyme disease do not coexist well, so they realized they needed to move. After some challenging conversations and a lot of faith, they found 1,300 acres near Winnett and purchased the land in 2017. There, they built a new house to serve as their base for winter feeding and calving.

They put up silage from their hay ground, which works well in their mixer wagon, as they home-raise all their bulls. However, their summer pasture relies entirely on leases. If the year is favorable, they can keep their heifers on their own land, but otherwise, all their pasture is leased. This poses a significant challenge due to pricing, as they struggle to compete with larger operations. The uncertainty and temporary nature of leases add to the difficulty. Most of these leases are owned by absentee landlords, leading to business-only relationships. Nonetheless, some key individuals have stepped up to help during tough times, for which the Lunds are immensely grateful.



As first-generation ranchers, they started from scratch. J.R.'s family had some ranching background, but his grandparents sold out during the 1980s. They inherited his grandparents' single-iron brand, a cherished family legacy. Despite having no safety net, they continue to persevere through financial challenges, especially during drought years and downturns in the cattle market. Their faith has been crucial, guiding them through tough times and helping them trust in God's provision.

Currently, they manage 250 cows, with about 150 registered. Every March, they hold a bull sale in partnership with another rancher near Judith Gap, selling around 30 bulls. While their enterprise has been successful, it has also presented significant challenges. Establishing clientele in the early years was difficult, and the day of their bull sale coincided with the government shutdown due to COVID, turning it into a disaster. The Lunds face the unpredictability of the market and Mother Nature. Their first calving season on their property was marked by February temperatures that never rose above zero degrees. Finding leases is another daunting task, with the constant need to move cattle around. At one point, they were spread

Reflecting on their journey. They express gratitude for the blessings they have received and the achievements they have made on their own.



across five different counties, a stressful situation that required constant travel and coordination. "God has always provided for us, and He knows exactly what He is doing, it's up to us to continue to trust in His plan." Fortunately, both J.R. and Katie have other jobs, and their operation includes multiple ventures. They custom-calve heifers for a rancher from Lewistown, and J.R. runs an AI business, breeding about 1,000 head every spring. Katie works as a fiscal manager for several organizations, with clients around the state and locally in Winnett. With five children, their lives are incredibly busy. J.R. coaches football, while Katie coaches basketball, and they both engage deeply with their community and youth.

Their children—Bodie, Nash, Oakley, Blaze, and Kort—are eager helpers and play a significant role in their ranching operations. Despite all the trials and challenges, they have managed to sustain their business through hard work, a very strong faith, innovative revenue generation strategies and... a little stubbornness.



Katie has recently partnered to open a coffee/ice cream shop in Winnett and sells beef directly to consumers. Although juggling multiple responsibilities is challenging, it is also highly rewarding, especially in agriculture and this lifestyle. They take pride in having built their life from the ground up and find immense satisfaction in witnessing projects from inception to completion.

They advise young people starting out to never give up, emphasizing the importance of staying true to one's word and maintaining faith. They recount how bankers doubted their ability to succeed, motivating them to prove the naysayers wrong. Although some in their generation inherit ranches but lack interest in maintaining them, they encourage aspiring ranchers to reach out to those who wish to see their lands remain in agriculture. The Lunds have taught their children the value of hard work and the importance of earning their way.



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:

The Iverson Family

Journey to the Dovetail Area

Thomas Iverson, originally from Norway, made his way to the United States because he wasn't the eldest son and had no interest in military service or fishing. Around 1897, he accepted an invitation to work on the Teigen ranch. In 1906, he married Annette Rutieg, and drawn by the excellent grazing prospects in the Dovetail area, he explored the region in 1910. By 1912, he relocated his family to their homestead.

How did the Iverson Family come to the Dovetail area?

The Iverson Family made their way to the Winnett area around 1897 when Thomas Iverson was invited to Teigen to work on the ranch. Thomas originally came from Norway. For those who may not know, Norway's inheritance law states that the eldest son shall have priority inheritance of agricultural property. He had limited options for pursuing a career in agriculture since he was not the eldest son of the family - his options were military or fishing. In which case, he was not interested in either.

Thomas married Annette Rutieg in 1906. He had heard that there was good grazing in the Dovetail area so he went to check out the area in 1910. He moved his family to the homestead in 1912.

How has the ranch changed over the years?

There are a total of six generations who have and currently reside on the ranch. Thomas Iverson had three children who went to Lewistown for school. His son, Isaac, had five children who attended school in Winnett. Lee had four children who, also, attended school in Winnett. Craig and his wife, Leslie, currently live on the ranch. The fifth generation to be living on the ranch is Gage and his wife, Brandi, and three children. Gage and Brandi's children are the sixth generation.

Craig Iverson recalls that the ranch has been relatively stable since the 1940s. The ranch raised and managed sheep until the early 1940s then cattle came to avoid the predation of coyotes. Lee, Craig's dad, started farming in the early 1970s and Craig stopped farming around 2018. A significant update to the ranch was drilling a well in 2012 and integrating around 22 miles of pipeline for water infrastructure to several areas of the operation.

Craig and Leslie got married in 1988 then moved to the ranch in 1989. Leslie was Craig's sister's (Marlee) roommate at the time that they met. Leslie's first visit to the ranch at Dovetail was when she and Craig were dating. She recalls needing to get

clearer directions the first time out. The nearly 29 mile drive off the highway was interesting to get used to, especially during inclement weather. The road has improved since that time, thankfully! Leslie recalls such enjoyment raising their children out

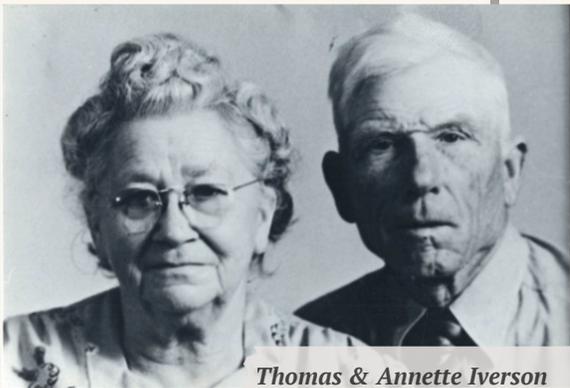


Craig & Leslie Iverson

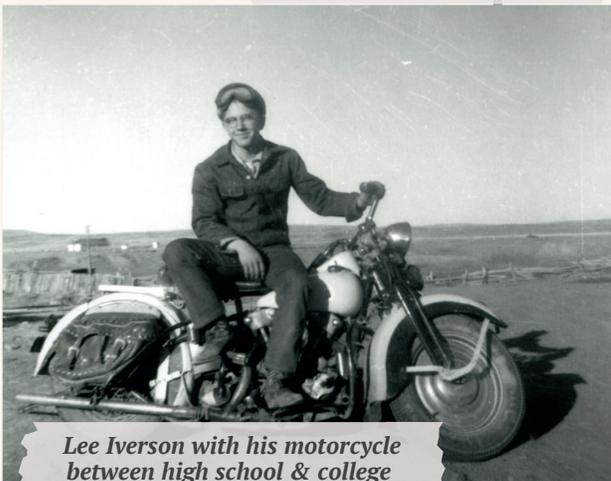
on the ranch. Even though she came from the mountains, she remarked that the prairie in the spring is one of the most beautiful sights!

Craig and Leslie have four children who have chosen different paths. As noted earlier, Gage is on the ranch with his family. Shy is an English teacher in Laurel, Montana. Jake and his wife, Cailey, live in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. Jake is in construction and Cailey is a physical therapist. Pari is a clinical pharmacist at Billings Clinic.

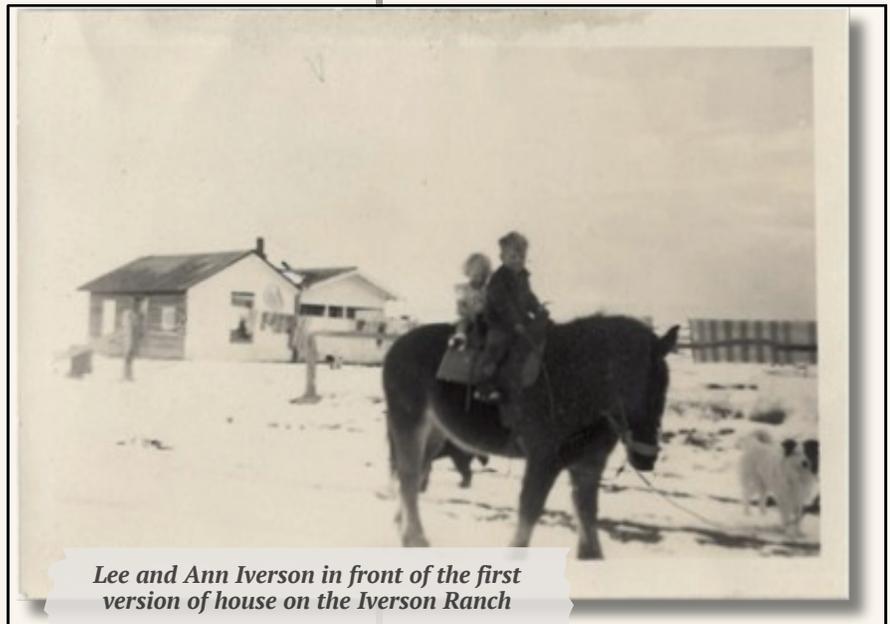
“ Craig and Leslie have enjoyed living out on Dovetail and being a part of the Winnett community. The isolation is rarely a detriment. It's just a short drive to be involved in all sorts of community activities. ”



Thomas & Annette Iverson



Lee Iverson with his motorcycle between high school & college



Lee and Ann Iverson in front of the first version of house on the Iverson Ranch

Is there a humorous and/or memorable story that you would like to share with readers related to living on the ranch?

Craig: I found a clipping in a Winnett Times edition about my dad, Lee, as a baby. When he was about nine months old, my dad swallowed an open diaper pin and it lodged in his throat. Isaac and Ruth loaded Lee up and headed for the doctor. The car broke down at Rondal Brady's and they commandeered a vehicle to continue the hurried journey to the doctor in Lewistown. Thankfully everything turned out all right and we are here as evidence.

Craig included that weather related events have been the most memorable related to living on the ranch. His dad, Lee, went through the eighth grade at the Dovetail School house and then boarded in Winnett for high school. When it was Craig's turn to start school, the bus was



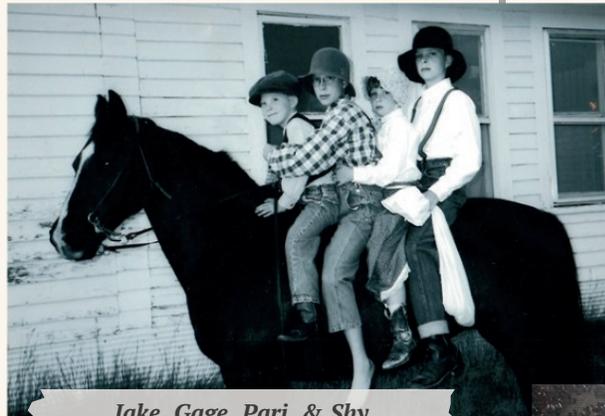
*Left to Right:
Craig, Andrea, Marcia, Lee, Angela, & Marlee Iverson*

coming from Winnett to the door step for the hour ride to school. He was always frustrated that he got to help Ronny Olson dig the bus out of a snow bank so they could get to school. The drifting of snow during '78-'79 caused students to stay in Winnett for about two months so they could go to school. The county plowed the road on Monday so the kids who lived north could get to school and then plowed on Friday so they could go home for the weekend.

Leslie: When Craig and I were still living in the old ranch house (Craig's parent's house) with a sandstone foundation, I had an encounter with a rather large bull snake. I heard something drop and went to investigate. I found the snake stretched out over the washer and dryer. The snake started making its way down a drain pipe in the laundry room. Pat Weingart and Marcia Iverson, both, attempted to grab it to try & remove it from the house.



Bob & Pat Weingart, snake wranglers, with the unwanted visitor



Jake, Gage, Pari, & Shy Iverson sitting on Colleen

Meanwhile, I am trying to get ahold of Craig to come get this snake out of the house. Bob Weingart finally stepped in and successfully grabbed the snake out of the drain pipe then took it outside to end the chaotic event. We had eight snakes visit us in that old house!

By Jennifer Self



Gage with his kids Axtel, Zel, and Emery



Craig branding at the ranch



Craig & Leslie at a Bobcat game



What has been the biggest or most unexpected challenge in starting the business? It's hard to wait on other people to finish the things they need to do in order for the next step to happen. This was especially challenging when I was trying to coordinate others to work around those deadlines and I couldn't

give a definite open date. I kept telling myself, it was all in God's time and we would open when we were meant to, but there were days when my patience was running thin :) Staying within budget seems to prove challenging with any new business, new build, new anything. Between Marketplace, Goodwill, Amazon and garage sales, we really lucked out. I was always told to never

skimp on your coffee machine or your grinder, so I found other ways to stay within budget, so that I could "splurge" on those two things. This took a lot of time away from my family, but they were very supportive and very helpful and I am extremely grateful to them. The kids will hopefully have a fun place (outside of the ranch) to work for many years!



What has been the most rewarding? Seeing the vision come to life and having an overwhelming gratitude whenever I walk in the door has been very special, but I think being able to provide a few of the locals with opportunities has been the most rewarding. It is hard in small communities when jobs and resources are limited, but it is also crucial to keep them present. God truly knew what he was doing when he put these people into my life. Meeting Ron has also been such a fun and rewarding experience. We instantly clicked and he is always up for my antics and he makes me feel so valued as a partner.

Who is the staff for your business? We have a full-time Barista; Jeannette. She is one of the most faith-filled, kind, hard working woman I have ever met. Lesley is our weekend warrior. She is full of ideas and energy and a really sweet gal. Kayla is our head Bakeress. She makes some delicious goodies and I'm really looking forward to what she is going to bring to the table (literally)! I have had some interest from a few other locals who have offered to fill in here and there, so that is exciting and very welcomed!

What is the menu now? Will there be changes? We currently have most any specialty coffee you could imagine, tea, smoothies, Lotus, Acai (come try it, if you're not familiar), chocolate & vanilla soft serve ice cream, as well as twelve alternating flavors of Wilcoxson's ice cream. Other things include fresh pastries (and yes, some store-bought ones for days we run low) and locally sourced beef! We are getting our inventory stocked up with swag, baby blankets, apparel, stickers, purses, gifts and more! We will also soon have helium balloons for any type of celebration. Coming in the next couple months, we will have our sandwich menu put together and will be offering grab'n'go breakfast & lunch sandwiches.



What is the most important thing you want your customers to know about your business? The most important thing we want people to know is how appreciative we are of their support! We had the most humbling donation from some anonymous supporters and I will tell you that was something I would have never expected in my wildest dreams. It was a gamechanger for our business and I am forever grateful. There is just a lot of generosity in this community and I am hopeful that we can be a huge part of giving back. We also want to hear feedback; the good, the bad and the ugly. It's all part of running a business and although not always what we want to hear, it is necessary for continued success. We value our employees and we value our customers. We ask that everyone treats each other with respect and kindness, as that is what our mission encompasses and our space is fostering. Matthew 7:12 says it well!

 **Winnett Times Reader Survey**

Help shape the future of our community newsletter!

The mostly volunteer team at the Winnett Times is taking a 6-month break to regroup, recruit help, and secure funding. Your feedback will guide what the newsletter looks like when it returns.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to fill this out!

Please return the survey to Winnett ACES, P.O. Box 11, Winnett, MT 59087 or return to office located in the Petroleum County Community Center

1) How often do you read the Winnett Times?

- Every issue, cover to cover
- Most issues, but I skim
- Only certain sections
- Rarely or never

2) Which sections do you usually read? (check all that apply)

- Community news & updates
- Community spotlight / featured residents
- School news & student highlights
- Special interest feature articles
- Local business/agriculture updates
- Community calendar & event announcements
- Photos
- Kids/youth page
- Other (please describe): _____

3) Which sections are the most important for us to keep? (select up to 3)

- Community news & updates
- Community spotlight / featured residents
- School news & student highlights
- Special interest feature articles
- Local business/agriculture updates
- Community calendar & event announcements
- Photos
- Kids/youth page
- Other: _____

4) Are there any sections you rarely or never read?

- No, I read most of it
 - Community news & updates
 - Community spotlight / featured residents
 - School news & student highlights
 - Special interest feature articles
 - Local business/agriculture updates
 - Community calendar & event announcements
 - Photos
 - Kids/youth page
 - Other: _____
- Comments: _____

5) Are there certain topics that you would like to see more of?

(Write your own ideas)

- Other topics: _____

6) How do you prefer to read the Winnett Times in the future?

(check any that apply)

- Printed paper
- Digital PDF emailed or available online
- Both print & digital
- Text/email news notices with short links
- Facebook or other social media announcements

7) If printing costs require fewer pages, which format would you prefer?

- 8 pages, full color
- 8 pages, mix of color + black & white
- 4 pages, black & white
- I would support higher subscription or donation rates to keep current format

8) Would you be willing to support the Winnett Times in any of these ways?

(check any that apply)

- One-time financial donation
- Monthly supporter / subscriber
- Business sponsorship or advertisement
- Writing, contributing stories, or photographs
- Helping with layout or proofreading
- Distribution/ mailing help
- Not at this time

If yes, please share your name & contact info:

9) Any other ideas, concerns, or hopes for the future of the Winnett Times?

Thank you for helping shape the next chapter of the Winnett Times!

Your feedback will help us return stronger, more sustainable, and more meaningful to our community.

Please return the survey to Winnett ACES, P.O. Box 11, Winnett, MT 59087 or return to office located in the Petroleum County Community Center

Winnett Times Newsletter taking a Pause

With this January edition, the Winnett Times crew is going to take a pause. We would appreciate the return of the enclosed survey (previous page 11) to help us focus on what might work best when we get rolling again. The survey may be completed and submitted online at the following web sites: www.visitwinnett.com or www.winnettaces.org.

With donations down and costs creeping up, we want to make sure everyone has input on what is important and most enjoyed in the newsletter. Making the best use of grant and donated dollars, along with volunteer and staff time is important to us. The cost to produce 375 printed papers for each edition is approximately \$3.75 each with many additional hours of content development done by volunteers. Some discussions have included changing to quarterly editions, looking at selling subscriptions and ads (which would require more volunteer time), using some black and white pages vs all color, and various other options. Grants from the Petroleum County Endowment Fund and Carrell Donor Advised Fund in addition to the donations and fundraisers are what have kept the newsletter going for the last 4 and a half years. One way or another, and with your survey input, we will continue with this fun and beneficial project.

We encourage anyone who is inclined to do some writing to contact the Winnett Times. You know, with all the great technology, you can write from anywhere! As always, donations are welcome and can be made to our fiscal sponsor, Winnett ACES with the memo of Winnett Times Newsletter.

I will take this opportunity to thank Trish Smith for all the layout editing, formatting, addressing/ mailing, the writers who have produced great content for the past editions, those who have donated funds, and those who have approved grant requests - Thank You!

And thank you, readers, for your patience with our pause and please send the survey back with your responses and suggestions. Again, the survey may be completed and submitted online at www.visitwinnett.com or www.winnettaces.org if that format works better for you. We'll be back in production as soon as possible!

By Diane Ahlgren



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