

# HORNS FOR HEROES

By Caitlin Tan

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**PINEDALE** – Guns, antlers, American flags, soldiers and dog tags are painted brightly on the side of a trailer sitting in the Ridley's parking lot.

The words on the design read "Horns for Heroes" and "Native American Horns for Heroes." Ben Barto of Dubois buys antlers across Wyoming with the mission to help veterans.

"If people donate horn to me, 100 percent of the profits go to the local American Legion or VFWs," Barto said. "Otherwise, all the antler product is made or assembled by



The trailer adorned with designs are the face of Horns for Heroes.

veterans, a son of a veteran or an auxiliary member."

In just one morning at Ridley's Barto bought \$9,000 in horns. At the time of the interview, there were no donations yet to the local VFW.

"If I get one to two horns from everybody that wants to donate that's a pretty decent amount of money for the local legion," he said.

The previous week Barto collected \$1,520 in donated horns to give to the Dubois VFW Post.

Even if the horns are not donated, Barto and his veteran employees turn them into knives, dog chews, jewelry, chandeliers and ornaments. Although his team is less than 10 people right now, Barto said his goal is to employ veterans all over the country.

"A lot of your retired vets don't have a lot of money and they need other jobs, and some of them can't work because of disability, but even so this is something they can do," Barto said.

"If they can tinker with little stuff and be crafty – it's just really important," he said.

In order to begin the process of making antler products, Barto goes through a lengthy process to buy horns. He travels all around western Wyoming in his trailer, but he also has five buyers placed around the state.

When a seller brings Barto antlers he divides it into three groups – fresh brown, hard white and old white cracked horn. He then

weighs each group of horn on his certified scale – which is recertified yearly.

Barto pays \$14.50 per pound of fresh brown horn; however, he said prices tend to drop after the Jackson antler sale.

Barto said he has bought horns for more than 40 years, but only started the Horn for Heroes company two years ago.

"The amount of horn I can buy now has shrunk so low because of out-of-state buyers running over the top of us local buyers – we have to do something about it," he said. "Being a member of the American Legion, I decided Horns for Heroes was a good idea."

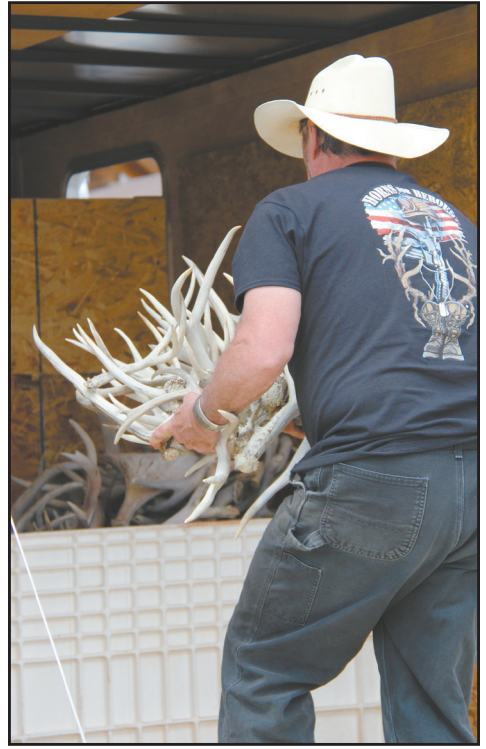
Barto compared many out-of-state buyers to "traveling pawn shops," because they buy horns for cheap prices, often when people need the money fast.

So Barto said he started Horns for Heroes as a way to give people an incentive to sell to him.

The other name of his business, "Native American Horns for Heroes," is a special importance to Barto.

"I live 2 miles inside the Native American reservation," he said. "If it hadn't been for code talkers in WWII the war could've taken a couple more years. There's a lot of other races that we don't think about that get thrown into our military, so I like to honor them as well."

His vision for Horns for Heroes is to set up an antler buyer in every city in the country, as well as employ veterans nationwide to



CAITLIN TAN PHOTOS

Ben Barto loads recently purchased horns.

make antler products.

"If there's something we can do to funnel horn to veterans, and they can incorporate it into their lives and it helps them – well, that's just great," Barto said. ■

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### To the Pinedale Community

This letter of thanks is long overdue.

During the months and weeks leading up to Keith Raney's passing, the members of the surviving family were humbled and appreciated the many little and big kindnesses offered. The Pinedale Volunteer Fire Department offered help and support during the last two years, and during the memorial. Kickin' Cancer provided moral and financial support. The Sublette Center stepped in and provided a hospice bed. Staff of Pinedale Elementary School provided the family with meals during the week of Keith's passing. The Pinedale Bible Church was able to pull together a memorial service in a very short amount of time. Chauncey Goodrich of Pinedale Properties helped Keith arrange real estate issues in his last days and provided guidance to the family afterward. Many business owners and staff were patient and understanding when it came to settle accounts that had been neglected, with a shrug and a, "We weren't worried. We knew it would be taken care of." Many friends offered hugs and support. Covill Funeral Home was able to guide the family and help them pull together the memorial in a short amount of time.

Be assured that we have forgotten someone else out there.

There are times this community can seem a bit too small, and then there are

other times when its smallness allows us to know one another and to help each other out. There were many community angels that helped hold up Keith's family.

With gratitude and appreciation,

*The Raney Family*

### To the editor:

I have always thought the planned hospital for Sublette County was out of reach and too expensive. However, the lady Mrs. Werner came to town and told us how to proceed. Her common-sense approach should be heeded if the project is to ever become reality.

She stated that everyone should have some skin in the game and that the present clinic on the hill should be part of the proposal to cut costs. Makes perfect sense doesn't it? Don't do anything to the present clinic except use it for the administration offices and as a clinic. Then build a hallway to the new and separate hospital like you see at the University of Utah for instance.

The ball fields can possibly be handled in the following manner. South of the present skating rink building there is acreage owned by John Sulenta. South of his property and just north of our 33 Ranch fence on Par Avenue is a 10-acre tract that is owned by the school. They don't seem to pay much attention to this property as we have to call them to spray the weeds, etc.

Since they did not build the grade school on this property, I have to think they have no longterm plans. Maybe they would lease it for 20 or 50 years for a minimal amount. Then the school would have skin in the game! Possibly one of our big taxpayers like Ultra would take on the responsibility of installing one of the new fields for the naming rights. Then Ultra would have skin in the game! Possibly Jonah Energy or some other entity would do the same! Maybe the school FFA would be interested in doing the third field, for instance. It would be called the New Dudley Key Complex. It could be done in stages of years because obviously the new hospital won't use all that property. All the town has to do is deed over the needed land. That would be their skin in the game! Now for the county! Why do they need paid for the clinic facility? They don't! They are trying to maintain their distance and rightfully so. They need not take on any responsibility that puts the taxpayers on the hook if the hospital fails.

What would be the big deal though if they made a one-time gift of \$4 or \$5 million so the total cost is less than \$20 million? Do the Sublette County taxpayers really care if the county investment monies only total \$155 million instead of \$160 million? Anyway, I hope this letter promotes a discussion. I'm sure there are as good or better ideas out there. If this project doesn't move

along quickly, we are taking the chance that international events will change the dynamics and make the building of a hospital in Sublette County a moot issue.

*Bill Johnson*

### Dear Editor,

As a business owner in Pinedale for the past 18 years, I have experienced the booms and busts and am fortunate enough to still be operating. I am appalled to find out that the Chamber of Sublette County has chosen, apparently with feedback from businesses and community citizens, to move all of the vendors for Rendezvous to Veteran's Park. This will eliminate the valuable foot traffic that businesses on main (Pine) street have prospered from during past Rendezvous. The whole community of Pinedale benefits during these four days, including motels, restaurants, bars, clothing stores, art stores, coffee shops, etc. When I spoke with the Chamber's director Jennifer Zook, she said the consensus was that vendors interfere with local businesses. I say the opposite; the vendors bring the foot traffic that then brings visitors into our establishments. If this is how the Chamber chooses to help my business prosper then I will spend my dues helping myself next year.

*Thank you,*

*Pat Bozner, co-owner  
World Famous Corral Bar*

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