



Susan Thomas (second from right) explains the scholarship program of the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation to Powell High School guidance counselor Betsy Cowin (left) and guidance secretary Cindy Jacobs (right) as Thomas' assistant Annie Sanders listens.

Tribune photo by Don Amend

Foundation helps at-risk students advance education

BY DON AMEND
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A longtime teacher was in Powell last week in her efforts to help at-risk students succeed.

Susan Thomas, widow of the late U.S. Sen. Craig Thomas, traveled through Park County to visit with schools about the Craig and Susan Thomas Foundation, an effort she founded following the senator's death in 2007.

"Craig loved kids," Thomas said. "I wanted to honor his legacy by helping them succeed."

The foundation also reflects Susan Thomas' 36 years as a teacher, half of them in Casper and half in the Washington, D.C. area, and her special concern for at-risk students. These students,

though not lacking in intelligence, struggle in school for a variety of reasons.

As a result, they may not qualify for Wyoming's Hathaway Scholarships or other types of financial aid, and their family and financial situations may prevent them from achieving further education.

"The foundation is intended to help those kids," Thomas said. "They deserve a chance to reach their potential."

During her stop in Powell, Thomas visited with Shoshone Learning Center Principal Luke Danforth and teacher Shannon Blackmore and Powell High School guidance counselor Betsy Cowin and guidance secretary Cindy Jacobs about the foundation's program and helping Pow-

ell students take advantage of it.

Thomas said there are few requirements involved in applying for one of the foundation's scholarships. An applicant cannot be eligible for a Hathaway Scholarship and must be a Wyoming resident and a U.S. citizen. They must submit an application that is hand-written rather than word-processed because Thomas believes that provides a more realistic picture of the applicant's abilities and desire to succeed.

Successful applicants receive a \$1,250 scholarship good for one semester, and they must re-apply each semester. Thomas takes a personal role in helping them use the opportunity wisely, even though they may be scattered all over the state.

"I follow them around and mentor them in how to succeed in their study," Thomas said.

The foundation also offers grants to organizations that can be used for special programs for young people. Thomas said the average grant is \$2,000, and the money has to go directly for children.

The organization also presents an annual leadership award to someone who works with at-risk students. The award is presented on Ag Day at the Wyoming State Fair and includes a \$2,500 cash prize.

"The Leadership Award goes to an adult who really challenges at-risk children," Thomas said.

Thomas also made stops at the Meeteetse and Cody schools while in Park County.