

## **Whitney Benefits supports fire science program**

SHERIDAN, Wyo.— A partnership between Whitney Benefits, Sheridan College and Sheridan County School District #1 enabled SCSD #1 to create a new vocational program in fire science. The \$9,702.50 gift from Whitney Benefits provided the necessary equipment to certify young people and enable them to apply for employment with many organizations including the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The program is available to high school students, age 18 or older, attending either Big Horn High School or Tongue River High School. The curriculum is one semester long, and is built into their regular school day. Offered one semester per year, the first class to participate in the training will complete the course this spring. A second group of students will complete the program during the 2013-14 school year.

The curriculum was created in collaboration with the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. Upon completion of the program, students will earn a red card certification, which qualifies them to become a wildland firefighter. According to the National Park Service website, their fire program employs 600 seasonal employees.

“Allowing young people in our area the opportunity to develop their skills and explore potential career options is a key piece of our strength in education,” said Whitney Benefits Board member, Sam Scott. “For those who enjoy the outdoors, this can provide seasonal employment as they complete their high school and college careers.”

According to the NWCG website, trainees must have a minimum number of hours of training and pass a physical fitness test.

“A key strength in this program is really the collaboration between the high school, the college and Whitney Benefits,” said Vice President for Academic Affairs, Jon Connolly. “This program will offer students a nationally recognized certification that is meaningful in many ways. Once again, Whitney is bringing together the necessary pieces in order to help develop the young people of Sheridan County.”

Whitney Benefits has played an important role in establishing and helping grow the Sheridan College campus and its programs. This includes the first gift of land on which the campus is built and which now encompasses 140+ acres – all given by Whitney Benefits. In total, Whitney Benefits’ generosity and gifts to Sheridan College exceed \$47 million. Whitney Benefits was created under the Last Will and Testament of Edward A. Whitney, a Sheridan County resident, who passed away in 1917. For more information about Whitney Benefits, please visit their website at [www.whitneybenefits.org](http://www.whitneybenefits.org).

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