

## **WATCH East: Initial concerns unfounded**

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A year after opening its doors, the state Department of Corrections' alcohol treatment facility, WATCH East, hasn't created the problems residents in the area were initially worried about.

The facility offers programs for felony DUI offenders, individuals who have four or more offenses.

David Senvold, a Hillcrest resident who lives about a block from the facility and had expressed concern when the facility was proposed, said the first year of the facility has gone smoothly. "It's like the place isn't even there. It's gone off without a hitch, in my opinion," David Senvold said. "It's been fine."

Dave Dorwart, a member of the work committee that initially handled issues relating to the facility, said he feels ambivalent about it. He said putting the facility in never bothered him; his primary concern was having administrative rules to limit the type of facility and the types of inmates who could be put in there in the future. Dorwart said he has never even seen a resident of the alcohol treatment facility.

Homeowners in the Hillcrest and Georgetown areas were worried the presence of the facility would cause property values to decrease.

Tami Freas, sales associate with Montana East Realty, said she has not seen a reduction in property values in that area. She doesn't think the facility has had any effect, and prices for houses in that area have been good and the homes are selling quickly, she said. They've had the same kind of increase as everyone else has in the last 18 months, Freas concluded.

Joe Fabian, a broker with Realty One, said realtors there haven't seen a reduction in property values in any area of town, including the Hillcrest/Georgetown area.

The presence of WATCH East hasn't affected any of the buyers he has shown homes to in that area, he said. "We're looking forward to continuing a good relationship with (WATCH East)," Fabian noted.

Although the Glendive Police Department has handled a few calls at the facility, Chief Alan Michaels said the incidents turned out to be "minor, very minor."

"The program has done very well from what I can see," Michaels said. "There has not been any problem at all."

County Attorney Scott Herring said to date he hasn't had to handle any cases relating to residents of the WATCH East facility.

The police have come to the facility on two occasions to transport family members to jail and two other times, said Deb Dion, program coordinator. The two other times related to incidents involving mountain lion sightings. They've also come out to serve legal papers, such as for divorce, on family members, she added.

Occasionally, when a family member violates the rules, a hearing has to be held with the probation officer at the facility, Dion explained. Depending on the result of the hearing, the probation officer may sanction the family member and require them to spend time in jail. Typically, the jail time served varies from two to 15 days.

When a family member is taken to jail, it is required that the staff member who transports the family member is of the same gender. There have been a couple of occasions when there hasn't been staff available to transport the family member to the jail and the police officers have come out to pick the person up, Dion said.

Another issue of concern from Glendive residents was who would pay for the times a non Dawson County resident may spend in jail.

Dion said the Department of Corrections pays for the time the family member spends in jail. Once the person completes the program, he or she is required to reimburse the DOC at a rate of \$60 per day, she added.