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Wednesday, December 31, 2025 - Thursday, January 1, 2026

Holiday Edition • trib.com

Gordon backs push to strip adoption award from convicted child molester

DYLAN FARRELL
Casper Star-Tribune

In a statement issued Monday morning, Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon voiced his support for an advocate's call to strip Steven Randall Marler of the National Award for Adoption Excellence.

In his statement, Gordon said he was writing to the a Denver-based Region 8 program manager of the Children's Bureau after the governor received a letter from a concerned Casper resident, Sharon Kassel.

"On behalf of the State of Wyoming, I respectfully urge the Children's Bureau to take appropriate action to formally rescind this award," the governor wrote.



Marler

Kristen Marler, received the award jointly in 2013.

Star-Tribune reports from the time indicated the family — which at the time consisted of the Marler parents, three biological children and six adopted children — received the award "for their

He said Marler's actions — which include convictions for sexually, physically and mentally abusing children under his care — "fundamentally violate the ideals, morals and ethics embodied in the award."

commitment toward the foster children living in their home" and "helping those children's families on the path to reunification."

A list of award winners issued by the Administration for Children and Families in 2013 described the Marlers as honest, integrous and compassionate.

Steven Marler, 50, was convicted by a jury in April of sexually abusing multiple children under his care at his home on Casper Mountain for years.

He was sentenced to at least 128 years in prison in August.

Marler filed an appeal of his sentence with the Wyoming Supreme Court in October.

Facts of the case

In his closing arguments to the court on April 22, Assistant District Attorney Brandon Rosty described Marler's tactics as creating "a culture of silence, obedience and fear."

Rosty noted Marler's wife was frequently away, presenting Marler with opportunities to abuse the children without oversight. He talked about "Daddy tax massages," exploiting the children's fears, adding Marler told one of the children "I know I shouldn't love you like this, but I do" in the midst of one assault. Court documents indicate the investigation into

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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU



ANDREW TOWNE, STAR-TRIBUNE

Casey Lunch, left, and Sean Lynch shoot baskets at the YMCA of Natrona County on Friday, Dec. 26, 2025.

Here's how to stay on track with your resolutions in 2026

ALLISON ALLSOP
Casper Star-Tribune

Every year millions of people set their goals for the upcoming year, and those goals often revolve around fitness or finance.

Statista, a data compilation company, found 48% of survey respondents made a resolution to exercise more in 2026. This trend is not new, at least not for Casper.

Both the YMCA and the Casper Recreation Center see jumps in membership and usage at the beginning of the year.

"The Casper Recreation Center experiences its highest usage and strongest membership sales from January through March, with January consistently being the peak month for memberships," Edwin Luers, aquatics supervisor at the Casper Recreation Center, wrote. "New Year's resolutions largely drive this trend, as many community members focus on fitness and wellness goals at the start of the year and increase their use of indoor recreation amenities during the winter months."

In 2025, the recreation center had 2,870 "uses" in January, the highest so far this year. The numbers start to trend back down after March.

The Aquatic Center memberships and uses do not see peaks like the recreation center does in January. Instead, the Aquatic Center's peaks relate more closely to spring and summer weather as well as school breaks, Luers said.

Risa Sabus, senior director of membership at the YMCA of

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Mayors reflect, look ahead to 2026

HANNAH WARD
Casper Star-Tribune

For the municipalities in Natrona County, 2025 was an eventful year, from bringing in new business to reckoning with an embezzlement scandal.

The Star-Tribune spoke with the mayors of Casper, Mills, Evansville and Bar Nunn to reflect on 2025 and hear what's on the horizon for each city and town this year.

With budget processes coming soon for everyone, a common concern is figuring out how to fund infrastructure replacements and repairs.

Casper

In 2025, Casper saw less property tax revenue and brought on a new city manager. Mayor Ray Pacheco said he is proud of city staff and council members who worked around the 25% property tax cut approved by the legislature in 2025.

"It's a great accomplishment within the community that we were able to do that and do some positive work in the Metro Animal Control new building, Washington Park, the fire department, all of those things that we did," Pacheco said.

Engaging with the public about the fifth-cent tax and how Casper uses those funds for infrastructure will be critical in 2026 as well as navigating the budget with possible property tax cuts and aging infrastructure, Pacheco said.

Pacheco added he is excited to work with City Manager Janine Jordan, who started in her new position Dec. 17.

"The council is ready to hit the ground running, and I think Janine is," Pacheco said. "We're really looking forward to see where she can take us in the next several years."

Mills

Mills created a system last year for its ambulance and EMT service, including

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The Grouch

Oh sure, this year I'll definitely stick to my resolution of becoming a morning person who eats kale and runs marathons, right after I finish this bag of chips at midnight.



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