



The Kansas National Guard crew and citizens waiting to get a close look at the Blackhawk helicopter which landed on the grass playground at Central School Saturday morning paused and saluted the American flag, presented by the Veterans of Foreign Wars color guard, as the national anthem was sung as part of a short program about thier drug awareness effort. The chopper flew in from Salina for the Flatlander Fall Festival.
Photos by Tom Betz / The Goodland Star-News

Blackhawk a hit at Flatlander show

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

A Kansas National Guard Blackhawk helicopter swooped down onto the grassy playground at Central Elementary School during the Flatlander Fall Festival, delivering a drug awareness message.

The crew had landed at Colby earlier in the morning to pickup Sherman County Commissioner Kevin Rasure, Sheriff Doug Whitson and Deputy Roger Studer for the flight to Goodland.

The helicopter circled Main before landing about 9:30 a.m., and once the rotors had come to a stop, the crew opened the helicopter to allow kids of all ages get a close look and even sit in the pilot's and co-pilot's seats.

The helicopter is being used as part of a drug awareness and reduction program, and an Army special-

ist who is working with Central School this year to teach kids about the damage drugs do to people and the environment.

Police Chief Ray Smee told a small audience the program is part of a drug awareness effort sponsored by the Quad County Drug Task Force with a special emphasis on informing people about the meth problem.

Sheriff Whitson said he has completed a special program on meth labs, which included information about the dangers these pose to the environment as well as to the people who use the drugs.

Deputy Studer, who is assigned to the drug task force, said the education program is aimed at the young people who will be facing the decisions about drugs, hoping to educate them and their parents.

The pilot said he was glad to par-

ticipate in the program on behalf of the National Guard. He told the children that if they thought they would like to fly a helicopter or plane, they had to stay away from drugs.

Commissioner Rasure said he enjoyed the flight, and thanked the National Guard for bringing the helicopter to the festival.

"It is a great day, and looks like a wonderful crowd," he said.

Part of the drug program involves red ribbons, which are a symbol of not using drugs, and Rasure, Whitson, Studer, Smee and the National Guard members handed them out to everyone.

After the kids got a chance to see the helicopter, the crew went up Main to the drug prevention area, where they talked to visitors. The crew returned to the Blackhawk and left about 12:30 p.m.



Once the Blackhawk helicopter had landed and come to a complete stop, the crew, opened it to allow kids a chance to get inside and check out the pilot seats (above) and the cabin area. County Commissioner Kevin Rasure (left) flew over in the Blackhawk along with the crew and other officials. He was handing out red ribbons as part of the anti-drug program which was the reason the helicopter came to the Flatlander Fall Festival.