

Accident injures Colorado woman



An Aurora, Colo., woman and her two cats were rushed in an ambulance to Goodland Regional Medical Center at 4 p.m. Friday after a rollover accident on Interstate 70. The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Gina D. Gitto, 28, was traveling east on I-70 when she lost control of her 1999 Saturn sedan on a curve about eight miles west of Goodland. The car went into the median, where it slid up a small hill, rolled and came to rest on its top facing south. Trooper Troy Smith said Gitto was in a caravan with her husband, who followed the ambulance to the hospital. Sherman County Sheriff's Department Undersheriff Kevin Butts and Deputy Jason Showalter were on the scene to assist and to direct traffic. The Saturn was towed to a Goodland lot by Alex's Radiator and Repair.

Photos by Kathryn Gurfinkel
The Goodland Star-News

Neighborhood watch ready to reach out at fair

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

Armed with \$5,600, Goodland's Neighborhood Watch program plans to reach out to educate residents about home safety and security.

The group, revived by a Goodland crime victim, received a grant from a Homeland Security organization and hopes to find ways in the next year to teach crime prevention to county residents used to assuming the area is safe.

Following a 12-hour scramble to apply for a Citizens Corps grant at the last minute, the organization was awarded \$5,625 a week later.

Judy McKee, who pushed for the Goodland organization after burglars hit her home, said Police Chief Ray Smee called her and told her about the grant and said Neighborhood Watch could apply.

McKee said she had help from the chief, Cris Lovington, director of the Regional Prevention Center, and LeAnn Taylor, a secretary at the police department.

Lovington has applied for grants before, McKee said, so her help was crucial, especially with a lot of competition.

Organizations in 18 counties applied for more than \$900,000, she said, but there was only \$364,000 for the state to give out.

McKee said the application went in June 10, and she had word on the amount awarded by June 18. It was pretty quick, she said.

The money will pay for workshops and guest speakers, McKee said, to raise awareness of home safety and security.

McKee began the campaign to educate area residents in November.

She looked up information and found out how to start a Neighborhood Watch group and began holding meetings in her home.

So far, the group has relied on donations, including \$1,000 from Wal-Mart, and volunteers.

McKee is looking forward to having the grant to continue educating people.

The group plans to start having fund-raisers as well.

The group's board includes Greg Stover, Cynthia Strnad, Cris and Art Lovington, Anne Middleton, Melanie Daise and McKee, but the group would like other individuals, groups and businesses to join.

McKee has brochures and stickers to hand out in a fair booth, including stickers with 911 and non-emergency numbers to call for help, and information about how and when to use the numbers.

McKee said when she toured the county communication center, she heard that the center gets a lot of calls on 911 that aren't emergencies. It would help for people to know what numbers to call, she said.

The group will hand out home security checklists, hold a watch-awareness sign-up, and give out information on solicitors and on what is considered suspicious behavior.

Visitors to the booth can enter a drawing for motion lights. When you come home, McKee said, they detect motion and come on, lighting your way in. And they deter potential burglars.

McKee said she found out firsthand the financial and the psychological costs of a home burglary and wanted to keep it from happening to others.

"I didn't want anyone else to be a victim themselves," she said. "I wanted to put a stop to this rash of burglaries."

She said she found that insurance doesn't cover some personal property, and besides, collectibles and family heirlooms can't be replaced.

It's a good idea to update insurance policies, she said.

It's important to visit with neighbors, McKee said, and let each other know when you'll be gone and talk about it when someone you don't know has been driving around the neighborhood or is in a neighbor's yard.

Fixing doors and making sure locks work, installing lights and getting involved in Neighborhood Watch are little ways to deter crime, McKee said.

The group has had quarterly meetings this year, she said, but is working toward meeting every other month in the coming year. There will be workshops and guest speakers for everyone.

The fair booth will be a good way to reach the whole county, McKee said, to talk one-on-one with people about crime prevention and what they can do.

Citizens Corps, part of the Homeland Security measures started after Sept. 11, 2001, held its third national conference last Tuesday in Denver.

McKee said she will be attending a meeting in Emporia at which a state representative will share what she learned at the conference in Denver.

McKee said she can then bring the information back to help the Goodland Neighborhood Watch program.

Crossmen corps to perform 'thank you' for city

By Greg Stover
The Goodland Star-News

The Crossmen Drum and Bugle Corps will give a free performance to Goodland from 7:30 to 9:30 Wednesday night at Cowboy Stadium as a way of saying "thanks" for the city's hospitality.

The Corps plans to stop here Wednesday morning for rest and practice while on its way to Denver to compete in the 2004 Drum

Corps International World Championships Aug. 5-7. The main competition will be held at Invesco Field with Divisions II and III at All City Stadium.

After breakfast, the Corps will hold a three-hour practice in Max Jones Fieldhouse, break for lunch then have another three-hour session in the afternoon. The sessions will be open to the public.

The corps, a program of the Youth Edu-

cation in the Arts project, has about 135 members between 16 and 21 from all across the country. It includes a brass section, percussion section and a 35-person color guard. The group, based in New Jersey, travels throughout the country in three buses and two semi-trailers. Along the way, it makes stops like the one here.

School Superintendent Marvin Selby said he contacted last week by a staff mem-

ber who was looking for a place for the group to stop on their way to Denver. He said he called Goodland because staff members knew the reputation of music teacher Tremon Kizer.

"We're excited to be able to help them out," Selby said.

Selby said he offered the Corps use of the high school's cafeteria for their meals while they are here.

The corps is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. It has been a Drum Corps International finalist 19 times, including each year since 1989.

Selby said the gates at Cowboy Stadium will open about an hour before the performance. The concession stands will not be open but guests are welcome to bring their own food and drinks.

For information, go to www.yea.org.

Board looks at benefits of speedy response to patient complaints

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

One unhappy patient can cost a hospital \$400,000, Director of Patient Relations Brenda McCants told the Goodland Regional Medical Center board on Monday, and they need to respond swiftly and completely when a patient is disappointed.

In a presentation about the role of patient relations, McCants listed the ways she receives complaints, the steps she takes to resolve problems and what the board can do to help.

She went through figures showing how one dissatisfied customer can cost the hospital money because that person tells others who tell others about the problem.

The hospital had 15 complaints registered with patient relations in the past year, McCants said, with a potential loss of \$1.6 million.

"In my book," she said, "one complaint is too many."

McCants said it is better to know about the complaints and do something about them than to think there are no complaints.

"I would like zero," she said, "but would rather have these and know concerns are being met. This is part of quality."

Looking at the census and con-

sidering the changes the hospital has been through, McCants said, she thinks the number of complaints is low.

McCants said the complaints reach her by phone, in surveys, during patient visits, and from community members, staff and board members. She said she worries that people are complaining to others but not reporting the problems, so they aren't being dealt with.

"I often hear," she said, "I don't want anyone to get in trouble. Will they treat me differently when I come back for care?"

McCants said she hopes the staff would be more professional than that, and she would take measures to prevent such a response. That would definitely be a problem, she said.

The director said some people send anonymous letters rather than reporting an incident. She said she appreciates the input, but would like a chance to deal directly with the complainant.

"Anonymous letters are great," McCants said. "They give us food for thought, things we can work on. But they are hard to respond to."

Most of the concerns, she said, have been about confidentiality and attitude, and communication is an issue.

McCants said when she receives a complaint, she contacts the patient right away to let them know the hospital takes the complaint seriously and will do something about it.

Then there is an investigation, she said. Among the questions, she said, are: What is the desired outcome? Is additional information needed? What other staff members should be involved in resolving the problem?

Efforts are made to come up with

a solution, McCants said, between what the patient's ideal outcome would be and what the hospital can do. The information is compiled in a monthly report for hospital staff and administration to use to improve future care.

Figures are compared to previous months, she said, and suggestions are made to possibly change policy.

Some patients may contact board members, McCants said, hoping that action will take place immediately. If that happens, she told the board, they should contact her or Administrator Jay Jolly about it. She said they will contact the patient to let him know they are investigating the complaint.

It's important to create good, positive public relations, McCants

said, considering the potential loss from one dissatisfied customer. She went through a formula, showing that if one patient complains to nine to 10 other people who then tell others, it can affect up to 63 people.

If one-fourth of those who hear about it choose to go elsewhere for care, she said, then 16 people are affected. Assuming that each of those people will need \$25,000 of medical care in their lives, she said, that complaint would cost the hospital \$400,000.

Among the patient relations-related issues the hospital needs to deal with, McCants said, is understanding people's values. The patient's view, she said, is "if they are poking inside my body, I want to know what they expect to find."

She said good patient relations are also important for the hospital to compete with others in the area.

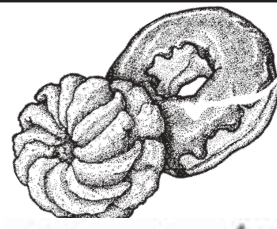
"It's easier for the competition to imitate what we do than how we do it," she said.

McCants said she encourages those who have complaints to become part of the solution. If they volunteer to work, she said, they can have an impact at the hospital.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record.




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