

Child abuse not new story

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News
"By April of 1874, nine-year-old Mary Ellen Wilson had been beaten, cut and burned by her foster mother for more than seven years. She had never once been allowed outdoors, her keeper locking her inside a tiny, dark closet while she was away. In the coldest New York winters, the child slept on a piece of carpet on the floor, only a threadbare quilt to warm her."

Though neighbors heard the girl scream, says the book "Out of the Darkness: The Story of Mary Ellen Wilson," about the first recorded U.S. case of child abuse, no one was able to intervene, until Mrs. Wheeler, a nurse and a church worker tried. She was turned away by Mary Ellen's parents, the police, the courts and the church because there were no child abuse laws.

As a last resort, Wheeler went to Henry Bergh of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who sent two officers to the apartment. They took the child into their protective custody.

A lot has changed, and some things haven't, since the girl was, over 130 years ago, rescued by men granted power to protect the rights of dogs.

As part of Prevention and Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Month in April, a program to help people spot child abuse and neglect and know what to report and where will be held 7-9 p.m. Thursday at Buffalo Inn Convention Center in Goodland. Door prizes and snacks are planned.

During 2001, says Kansas Kids Count, the state had 42,686 reported cases of child abuse and neglect, almost 56 reports for each 1,000 children.

Kim Christensen, a lawyer who works for the Dodge City schools, will speak, and information will be handed out.

Diane Stithem, director of the Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center, said the event is being paid for by a \$750 Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect grant made to the center in June 2004 by the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund.

Among the items included in the packets are a blue ribbon for the campaign to educate people about child abuse, and a story explaining how a grandmother started the effort after her grandson was found dead.

A two-page excerpt from the Mary Ellen Wilson story is included, as is information on how to search the Internet for sexual predators in your county, how to recognize child abuse and what to report, how to distinguish accidental from non-accidental injuries, the costs of child abuse, laws requiring certain people to report abuse and a do-it-yourself saliva sampling kit. If a child is missing, the parents would have his DNA on hand.

Medical professionals, teachers, school administrators, child care providers, social workers, psychologists and therapists and emergency medical personnel are required to report suspected abuse, says a question and answer sheet from Sunflower House, a child abuse prevention center in Shawnee.

Tank tips over



The Goodland Fire Department's Hazardous Material crew turned out in force for the clean up Friday after a tank of anhydrous ammonia tipped over about seven miles north of town. The crew watched as a strong northwest wind dispersed the

hazardous gas. After the tank was empty, they removed it and doused the road with water to neutralize the spill. Officials said a farmer was towing the tank on County Road 74 about two miles west of K-27 when it tipped.

Photo by Kathryn Burke/Star-News

Kansas University awards students

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

More than 150 proud parents, teachers and school administrators crowded into the Goodland Elks Lodge on Wednesday night to honor top students.

Each year, the top 10 percent of high school seniors from nine northwest Kansas counties are honored with a banquet by the University of Kansas.

After dinner, the program started with entertainment provided by KU music students.

Next Kevin Boatright, associate executive vice chancellor for external affairs, talked about Kansas.

"In spite of the distance and in spite of the time zone," Boatright said. "I think we have a lot in common."

He encouraged students to continue their education even if they don't attend the university.

"The surest way to make a difference is to keep on learning," he said.

Next, Oberlin alumnus Kurt W. Vollertsen was presented the Mildred Clodfelter Alumni Award for his longtime volunteer efforts. He has helped organize the banquet



Boatright



Raymer



Neuenschwander



Eland

for 25 years.

The event continued with organizers recognizing each student and giving each a hardback college dictionary and a dictionary on CD.

Many of those attending were university alumni whose children now were being honored. The students got their pick of KU table decorations.

Hoxie High senior Bowe Neuenschwander carried out coasters, decorative pom poms and the table centerpiece, a paper stand-up KU Jayhawk.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said of his freshman year at the university. He said he plans to major in computer engineering.

Neuenschwander is following in

his father Karl's footsteps all the way to the university, where two of his cousins are currently attending classes. He said his uncles and most of his dad's side of the family went to the school.

Bradley Eland, the top student in his class at Hoxie High School, collected his dictionary and got a preview of what life will be like next year at the University of Kansas. Although he is undecided on a major, he knows he wants to go to school in Lawrence.

"Both my parents went there," he said, "and I really like Lawrence."

Ken and Peggy Eland both graduated from KU and went on to become a lawyer and a teacher. The Elands said they're glad Bradley is

joining their alma matter.

"We didn't tell him where to go," Peggy said. "We did tell him KU is the best."

Eland said he is a big college sports fan and looks forward to seeing some football and basketball games next year.

Other seniors said they don't plan to attend the university, but enjoyed the dinner anyway.

"I had an awesome time," said Goodland's Derrick Raymer, who said he had already used his dictionary to look up a few words by the end of the ceremony.

Raymer plans to attend Garden City Community College to play football.

"I can't wait to go," he said.

Renae Solko and Emily Wolters, seniors at Rawlins County High School, said they appreciated the award even though they don't plan to go to KU. Solko said she plans to attend Washburn University and major in forensic science. Wolters is still undecided but plans to go to Kansas State University, where she might major in physical therapy or communications.

corrections

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Parnership asks for cooperation

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

Can all agencies work together for the benefit of the county? Will community leaders volunteer to try to make an impact?

The Sherman County Community Partnership for Prevention and Education is asking, as volunteers prepare to launch a Communities That Care initiative for area youth.

Representatives of the partnership's organizations batted around ideas on how to launch the initiative at a meeting Tuesday, April 12. The initiative is part of the Communities That Care system, which gives a test to students in sixth, eighth, 10th and 12th grades to find out what teens say is going on in their schools, homes and communities.

The questions cover drug, alcohol and tobacco use, family history, exposure to violence and dedication to school. Students are asked for their experiences and perspectives and their parents' views.

The local initiative, says the booklet "Investing in Your Community's Youth: An introduction to the Communities That Care System," is a way to apply the information to benefit everyone. Its goals are to promote the positive development of children and youths and to prevent adolescent problem behavior, such as alcohol and drug use, delinquency, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school and violence.

Regional Prevention Center Director Diane Stithem encouraged coalition members to invite members of "stakeholder" sectors to a meeting to launch the initiative or

at least to have a list of people to contact by the coalition's next meeting on Tuesday, May 10.

These include elected officials, she said, youths, parents, law enforcement, schools, public health officials, agencies serving youths and families, churches, the business community, residents and the press.

After battling around ideas, members of the coalition thought it might be best to target the meeting for an evening in June and start talking to people they know to generate interest.

The meeting will probably be over dinner, Stithem said, and will last about two hours. A program will explain the system and help those who attend decide whether it's something they want to get behind.

It could take a year to get through the process, she said. This year's survey will be in May, and then a committee can compile information and bring it back to the group.

The initiative will need a vision and mission statement, Stithem said — What do we want to see five to 10 years down the road? And how can we make it happen?

One advantage of the initiative, Stithem said, is that when businesses and people are planning to move into the area, the Chamber of Commerce can tell them there is an active group working for the safety of young people and to build a better future for the area.

It will help unite various groups in the area, she said, rather than everyone doing their own little thing.

Goodland teens roll vehicle

Two Goodland teen-agers and a 10-year-old were taken to the hospital after their vehicle rolled near Brewster on Friday night.

Officers were called to Road 63 between Roads 34 and 35, just southwest of Brewster, about 8 p.m. Friday to find a 2004 Land Rover in the south ditch.

Kily Camille Miller, 15, and

Brenna A. Hernandez, 15, were taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby. Tomi Miller was taken to the same hospital by her mother.

Trooper Richard Hageman of the Kansas Highway Patrol said in his report that the vehicle was west-

bound when the driver, Kily Miller, lost control and it rolled into the south ditch.

The report says all three occupants were wearing seat belts.

The Land Rover was removed by Butch's Body Shop in Colby.

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