

## Big crowd attends activities in park

By Norma Martinez

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Saturday brought the 104 degree weather for the Gospel Quartet's performance in the Bird City Park sponsored by the United Methodist, St. John Lutheran, Living Water Fellowship and Wesleyan Community Churches of Bird City.

Before 5 o'clock, people were all over the park sitting under tents, swinging, playing on the playground or sitting at tables or chairs visiting, waiting for the hamburgers and hotdogs to be cooked, and "The Down East Boys" performance.

These four gentlemen were set up on the stage and performed as they did 25 years ago with The Old Time Gospel Hour. They were well worth waiting to hear, and by the time they quit singing, the park was full of people who came from all over to hear them perform as well as hear what the Burpos, the authors of "Heaven Is For Real" had to say.

The quartet members are Tony Jarman from Jacksonville, N.C., Ricky Carden from Reidsville, N.C., Daryl Paschal from Ruffin N.C. and Stuart Cary from Ruston, La. They were just finishing off their last song, "How Great Thou Art" when the weather started to change. The quartet was set up with a table selling their tapes, and shirts. A group of teenagers who came with the Burpo's were manning their table with their books, tapes shirts and pictures of Jesus. Howard and Betty Skinner had a table with their book "Secrets to Our Supernatural Walk With God," and were offering their book for donations. Lightning was forming, the wind came up, and fire chief, Loren White was forming a plan with the guys that were grilling as a precautionary measure for fire hazards.

It looked like a storm that was going to subside in just a few minutes, so Pastor Dan Carson asked everyone to hold off leaving for 10 minutes. People were sitting under the tents or

umbrellas waiting it out. When the rain and wind got heavier, it was announced that they were moving to the Legion hall. Everyone worked together and set the chairs up and the hall was quickly full of folks. Lots of people came from various places in Nebraska after just seeing the flyer, as well as several former Bird City residents who came from St. Francis and other areas mainly to hear the guest speakers, Pastor Todd and Colton Burpo.

After their introduction and a brief talk on how the book "Heaven Is For Real" came about, Colton sang "The Great I Am," and then Pastor Dan, Pastor Burpo and Colton sat around a small table where Pastor Dan conducted a question and answer interview with the two guests. To finalize the service, Pastor Todd's sister in law, Becky Burpo, led the praise and worship at the end of the service.

During the introduction, Pastor Burpo said this book has been printed in several different languages and eight and a half million copies have been sold worldwide. "A movie is forthcoming," he said. Sony Pictures has acquired the film rights of the book "Heaven Is for Real" and he has been working closely with Randel Wallace, the writer of "Braveheart", "Dancing With Wolves" and "Secretariat", who is directing the film adaptation. Greg Kinnear is portraying Todd Burpo as the star lead in the film. The film is scheduled for release around Easter of 2014.

Pastor Burpo said one of the questions he has been asked the most is, "Why do you continue to live in the small town of Imperial?" His response is, "The bottom line for staying in Imperial is, it is a safe town to live in." Colton added he feels more comfortable telling his story to children in small towns as they are more eager to listen.

Colton was 4 years old when he became seriously sick and was dying in the hospital. Todd

Burpo was a pastor and he was unable to handle losing his son. He said, "I've seen a lot of people die as a pastor, and seeing my son dying, I felt so useless, I couldn't do anything."

This was the greatest nightmare I ever have had is just watching him suffer, he said. This feeling made him very angry with God, and he was pleading with him not to let him die. After Colton was well it wasn't until much later that he started talking about a sister his mother had miscarried years before, and his grandfather that his parents had never ever talked to him about. Then he started describing Heaven and how it was so peaceful and wonderful he didn't want to come back. He sat on Jesus' lap and Jesus told him, Colton, you have to go back, your dad wants you.

Among the table of books on "Heaven Is for Real" the Burpos have some pictures of Jesus. The story Colton told for this specific photo is: "I saw Jesus in real life." My dad wanted to see him so he would show me pictures of him and ask me, does this look like him, and what's wrong with how he looks. One day he showed me the 'Prince of Peace' drawing that was drawn by an 8 year old, "I said, that's him. That's what he looks like". Pastor Burpo said, there have been hundreds of people who have had outer body experiences where they saw Jesus and they all said that picture was right.

The setting was perfect for a gathering conducted by four different churches of faith; the music was perfect for the setting of the good ole days when old fashioned country revivals were common. Folks were leisurely lounging around doing what they did back then; eating hamburgers, hot dogs watermelon and anxiously waiting for the speaker to bring the word. It ended up being the perfect setting to make it worthwhile for everyone who attended this event.



MANY PEOPLE (above) enjoyed visiting while they waited for the program to begin. Pastor Dan Carson, Wesleyan Church, (below) interviewed Pastor Burpo and his son, Colton, on their book 'Heaven Is for Real,' asking Colton about his experience in heaven.

Times staff photos by Norma Martinez



## School secretaries considered valuable Cheylin employees

Last week, in spite of the extremely high temperatures in the 100s, children, parents, teachers and faculty settled into the routine of school. The Labor Day holiday weekend is over, and the teachers have had time to establish how much knowledge students held on to during the summer vacation. It is now time for them to get down to the yearly routine of planning, organizing and teaching a new class of students.

During the summer, new Superintendent Shelly Angelos, along with Jane Young, Loretta Rucker and Deanna Nelsen, have been working, ordering new textbooks, setting up records, answering phones and making sure all preparations are made for the new school year.

Mrs. Young, Mrs. Rucker and Mrs. Nelsen are the first people met by parents of first-time students who attend Cheylin school. They put in eight-hour days all year long. During the school year they are in the office answering the phone, answering questions, maintaining schedules, directing problems, typing information into the computers, keeping track of various funds, schedule changes, absentees, attendance, and many other duties involved with their jobs. Without them, the school would not operate as it does.

The three women have been dedicated to their positions for years. They grew up in the community, and graduated from the local High School. At the first of the school year, it seems like a good time to recognize them as valuable assets to the town of Bird City and Cheylin School.



DEANNA NELSEN, elementary secretary, chats on the phone while working at her desk.

### Deanna Nelsen

Deanna Nelsen is the secretary for the elementary school, and has been around the Bird City area all of her life. She graduated from Bird City High School and has worked at the school for 20 years, filling the position as assistant cook, head cook and elementary secretary.

She is married to David Nelsen, and they have three daughters; Dana Barnett, Denise Keltz and Darci Shields, who all graduated

from Cheylin High School. She has 12 grandchildren and all but one of them has attended or is presently enrolled in Cheylin schools. Deanna keeps busy attending the grandchildren's activities.

### Jane Young

Jane Young has held the position of District Clerk for Cheylin since 2009. She is married to Rod Young who also graduated from Cheylin High School. They have two children,



JANE YOUNG, left, and Loretta Rucker check out a scheduling book. Loretta is the high school secretary and Jane is the district clerk.

Times staff photos by Norma Martinez

Hayley Young, who graduated from Cheylin in 2004, and Ethan who graduated in 2012. Jane is the daughter of Rod and Beth Klepper. She also serves on the board for Cheyenne County Hospital.

### Loretta Rucker

Loretta Rucker attended all 13 years at Cheylin, and graduated in 1993. She has served as the secretary in the high school since

2003. She is married to Clifford Rucker and has one son and two daughters; Cory who graduated in 2012, Cassie, who graduated in 2013, and Haleigh who is a Cheylin freshman. Loretta volunteers at the Food Bank and is a Teens For Christ sponsor.

### Highlights

When asked what their highlights were while working for Cheylin, all three said,

"Working with the kids!" When former students are in town, all three of these ladies agree it is exciting to see and hear what they have done with their lives.

Mrs. Young, Mrs. Nelsen and Mrs. Rucker are very excited about being able to work with Shelly Angelos, Superintendent/Principal, and feel very positive about the new school year.