

Bus goes off road into ditch

By STEVE HAYNES
s.haynes@rwkansas.com

When a Golden Plains school bus carrying 16 students slid into a ditch on a muddy county road north of Rexford last Tuesday and rolled onto its side, blocking the main door, the driver, the bus monitor and all the kids knew just what to do.

Superintendent Mary Ellen Welshon said later that day their reaction made her proud, and it also made her glad the the district has all its students practice bus escape procedures every year.

"Fortunately, it was not too serious," she said. "There's going to be bumps and bruises."

She said all three students taken to the Citizens Medical Center emergency room in Colby later returned to class.

The incident occurred about 7:40 a.m., the Kansas Highway Patrol reported. The 2008 Freightliner bus was being driven eastbound on County Road Y when it slid off the roadway to the right, struck a culvert and overturned onto its right side.

The bus, driven by Gary Lee Hibbs, 63, Rexford, was only a couple of miles from the high school in Rexford, but carried students mostly from Thomas County for that school and the elementary school in Selden.

"Gary said the bus started to fish-tail and then slid into the ditch," the superintendent said. "It just leaned over on its side, Everybody said it was kinda like slow motion."

She praised the way both the adults on the bus, Mr. Hibbs and Mary Theresa Luna, 46, a school employee acting as the bus monitor, and the students reacted. With the main door blocked, she said, the kids knew how to get out the emergency exit at the rear.

"Gary said the kids were great," Mrs. Welshon said. "The bigger ones helped the little ones."

The superintendent said she was on her way to her office in Selden when she got a call about the accident. The adults had called both the school office and 911.

Mrs. Welshon said she turned around and sped to the scene. She told one of the troopers working the accident that she probably would have gotten a ticket if he hadn't been busy. By the time she arrived, though, school employees had come out with vans and picked up most of the students, taking them to the high school.

There, she said, they got breakfast and waited for their parents to come in and check them over. The muddy spot on Road Y is about a mile north and a mile and a half west of the high school, she said.

"They were there, and everybody had been checked over, and they were eating," she said. "I just want to commend our staff and the local citizens who helped. The Thomas County sheriff's officers and the highway patrol were excellent."

"One thing about our small community is everyone is family. You don't have to be related to be family. In the emergency room, they said that. They said, 'Your school district is like a family.'"

She praised two students, Cole Ziegelmeier, 14, and Nick Brown, 12, for helping the others out the back door.

"I'm sure there were other kids who helped," the superintendent said. "Mary mentioned those two. They said at first, some of the little kids were scared, but everyone calmed down."

Afterwards, she said, both the Oberlin and Colby school districts called to offer the loan of a bus if needed. She said the district didn't have school Wednesday because it's the host for the Western Kansas Liberty League forensics tournament, so the bus wasn't needed.

The wayward bus looked fine after it was pulled out of the ditch, she added, but was to get a thorough inspection before it goes back on the road.

"You know what?" Mrs. Welshon said. "We were very fortunate."

Students on the bus, as listed by the Highway Patrol, included:

Kassie M. Garrison, 6; Brown; Ziegelmeier; Baylee J. Lippleman, 11; Luke C. Wessel, 14; Josie Franz, 13; Brittany N. Fringer and Tori L. Fringer, both 14, Georgia K. Juenemann, 5; Wyatt E. Higerd, 6; Cheyanne Hills, 3; Braydan L. Fringer, 11; Rolis Loya, 8; Caleb Hills, 6; and Tessa Hills, 9, all of Rexford.

Tori Fringer was the only one listed by the patrol as possibly injured. Mrs. Welshon said she had a skinned-up knee.

Serving lunch



ON GOOD FRIDAY, Carrie Morford helped serve fish and burgers during an Oberlin Business Alliance feed at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

County health department schedules fair for Friday

The Decatur County Health Department plans to hold a communitywide health fair Friday at the Golden Age Center.

Karen Eskew, who works at the department, said the free fair will be open from 2 to 7 p.m. Results for those who had their blood drawn in March will be available.

Mrs. Eskew said people signed up for 15 booths, including the hospital, hospice, Stevens Hearing of McCook, the Twin Creeks Extension office, the Oberlin Lions Club, Parents as Teachers, one for health shakes and others.

The department holds the fair every other year. There is no admission.

Man, 20, agrees to diversion

A case against a 20-year-old former Oberlin man has been disposed of in Thomas County District Court on a diversion agreement.

County Attorney Kevin Berens agreed to drop four of five counts against Jacob Lynn Fortin involving an altercation at the home of a former girlfriend in Colby on Feb. 20. A felony count of making a criminal threat was reduced to a misdemeanor charge of criminal damage to property, under \$1,000.

Adjudication of that charge was deferred under the agreement. Mr. Fortin is required to report to the county attorney's office over the next six months. If he completes the term without violating any laws, the charges may be dropped.

Misdemeanor counts of criminal damage, battery, criminal trespassing and disorderly conduct were dismissed by Judge Richard Ress, leaving just the one amended charge. The agreement, signed Fri-

day, March 30, was filed in court last Wednesday, the day Mr. Fortin had been scheduled for a preliminary hearing.

The agreement requires him to be in school or maintain employment, obey all laws, have no contact with the victim, report monthly and not leave the state without permission. He is to pay \$200 to the county attorney's diversion fund and \$160 to the court for costs.

*Smoke detectors wake up father

(Continued from Page 1A) sponded to the call with three trucks. Firemen were back at the station by 12:44 a.m.

Both the city pumpers and one other truck were at the scene. Firemen laid hose to a hydrant south of the house. The fireman knocked the flames down from the outside of the house and then entered it.

Richard Valentine, who lives next door at 603 N. Wilson, said this fire was at least the third or fourth one in the neighborhood. A house across the street burned last year and was removed, the city's main transformer burned up last year and a couple years ago there was a fire at

the laundry at the Star Motel. "This is getting to be scary," he said, adding that he wasn't sure he could sleep, worrying that the fire might flare back up.

Mr. Jensen said he thought he and the kids had everything they needed right now.

The firefighters were called out again around 11:35 p.m. Saturday to Ron Beachel's home at 117 S. Beaver, where a chest-type deep freeze caught on fire. Chief Cathcart said wiring on the compressor caught on fire and the homeowners smelled smoke.

After the freezer was unplugged, the fire went out.

Tickets still available for local ArtFest gala

There's just a week left to sign up for the eighth annual High Plains ArtFest gala reception at The Gateway at the end of the month.

The ArtFest brings in work from artists, young and old, from all over the area. So far, said Connie Grafel, a member of the finance committee, 84 pieces have been entered in the show and 32 people have signed up for the Friday night gala.

Ms. Grafel said more schools are involved this year than in the past.

This year, she said, the ArtFest hasn't received any financial support from the Kansas Arts Commission. Supporters hope to raise \$6,000 to cover the costs of holding the event, she said, and as of

Monday, the committee had raised \$3,000.

She said she had received more calls about the event that morning.

The gala will run from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, April 27, at The Gateway. It costs just \$100 for two people to attend, but that money can then be used toward the purchase of a piece of art.

Hors d'oeuvres, wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Those attending the gala will also be able to vote on the "People's Choice Award."

People can mail in their sponsorship for the gala to 104 S. Penn., Oberlin, Kan. 67749 or call 475-2901, she said.

Community Hospital Offers 30-plus Medical Specialists for Advanced Care, Close to Home!

Advanced care can be found close to home.

We encourage you to keep this directory close at hand.

Appointments may be made with these specialists by calling their private clinics

Ear, Nose, Throat

V.R. Bowen, M.D. 800-348-0368
M. Keller, M.D. 800-348-0368
Tuesdays: 308-345-2902

General Surgery

W. Eskildsen, M.D. 308-345-7878
B. Kopriva, M.D. 308-344-8376

Infectious Diseases

D. Brailita, M.D. 402-461-5358

Nephrology

G. Bodonyi-Kovacs, M.D. 308-382-1634

OB/GYN

T. Foote, M.D. 800-742-3305
T. Pankratz, M.D. 800-742-3305

Ophthalmology

T. Clinch, M.D. 800-657-2112

Orthopedics

S. Franssen, D.O. 308-344-8376
M. McCarty, M.D. 308-344-8376
B. Bissell, M.D. 308-344-8376
C. Gates, M.D. 308-344-8376

Orthopedics-Hand/Wrist

S. Carroll, D.O. 308-344-8376

Podiatry

R. Hinze, D.P.M. 308-345-3773 or 877-345-FOOT

Pulmonology

K. Ganatra, M.D. 402-460-5787
M. Stritt, M.D. 402-460-5787

Urology

D. Halsted, M.D. 877-635-3332 or 308-345-3074

Vascular/Thoracic

B. Steffen, M.D. 308-865-2141

Call 308-344-8285 for appointments with these medical specialists:

Cardiology:

BryanLGH Heart Institute
S. Krueger, M.D. 308-344-8285
K. Miller, M.D. 308-344-8285

Nebraska Heart Institute

R. Heirigs, M.D. 308-344-8285

Platte Valley Medical Group

S. Denney, M.D. 308-344-8285

Dermatology

J. Bunker, M.D. 308-344-8285

Ear, Nose, Throat

R. Simpson, M.D. 308-344-8285

Endocrinology

V. deVilla, M.D. 308-344-8285

Neurology

J. Cardenas, M.D. 308-344-8285

Oncology

M. deVilla, M.D. 308-344-8285

Pulmonology

D. Cantral, M.D. 308-344-8285

Rheumatology

L. Baca, M.D. 308-344-8285

Spinal Orthopedics

D. Benavides, M.D. 308-344-8285



1301 East H Street, McCook, NE 69001

This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.
Updated January, 2012

308.344.2650

www.chmccook.org