

***By Russ Pankonin and Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican***

Tragedy hit the Elsie, Imperial and Enders communities Monday afternoon when a collision between a farm sprayer and a mini-van claimed the life of 28-year-old Debra Palser of Elsie.

Debra was the daughter of Dave and Pam Ridlen of Enders.

Palser, her infant son, Gage, and her cousin, Stacy Reasoner, 33, of Imperial, were returning from medical appointments in North Platte that included Gage's six-month check-up, when the accident happened at approximately 2:47 p.m. MT.

According to State Patrol Officer Dan Thompson of Imperial, Palser was westbound on Hwy. 23 near mile marker 38 about 2.5 miles east of Elsie when her vehicle, a 2004 Ford Windstar, was struck by a farm sprayer unit at an intersection with a county road.

Thompson and the Perkins County Sheriff's Department assisted the investigation led by State Trooper Eric Hesser of Ogallala.

The sprayer, driven by Ben Pelster, 32, also of Elsie, was southbound on a county road and failed to see Palser's vehicle, Thompson said.

Thompson said the sprayer hit the van broadside and the force of the collision hurled the front of the van under the sprayer. The van and sprayer came to rest on the other side of the intersection.

Rescue units from the Perkins County Ambulance in Grant and the Wallace EMS responded to the scene. Fire departments from Grant, Elsie and Madrid also responded.

Palser, who was driving the van, was pronounced dead at the scene. Her son, Gage, and Reasoner were transported to the Perkins County Community Hospital in Grant.

Reasoner was later transported to the hospital in North Platte with fractured ribs and a collapsed lung. She remains hospitalized there.

Reasoner had traveled to North Platte with them for physical therapy, which she has been undergoing following back and neck surgery two months ago.

Gage was flown to the regional hospital in Scottsbluff, suffering a broken arm and a slight concussion. He was released Tuesday.

Thompson said seat belts were in use when the accident occurred.

Palser is a native of Chase County, growing up in Enders. She was a 1999 graduate of Chase County High School and celebrated her 10-year reunion with the class in late May.

She is survived by her husband, Troy of Elsie; their son, Gage; parents, Dave and Pam Ridlen of Enders, Neb.; and brother, David Ridlen and wife, Cheryl, of St. Joseph, Mo.

All arrangements are pending.

Liewer Funeral Home of Imperial is in charge of arrangements.

Debra active at CCHS, college

While a student at Chase County High School from 1995-99, Debra was active in athletics and the dance team.

She played volleyball, was on the cross country and track teams and was a cheerleader. She also served as a mat assistant for the Longhorn wrestling team.

She earned a degree in art with an emphasis in two-dimensional art and a minor in marketing from Chadron State College in 2005. While at Chadron, she was also on the college dance team, which qualified for nationals in California during her tenure.

Her mother said she lived in Chadron a year or so after graduation, then moved to Fort Collins,

Colo., then on to Windsor, Colo. She and Troy Palser were married in August, 2006.

The couple moved to Elsie in late 2008 after they lost their home in the tornadoes that hit Windsor in May, 2008.

Her mother said Debra so enjoyed her life right now being a stay-at-home mom. Gage has her eyes, she said.