



**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

Chase County's Progressive Ag Farm Safety Day hosted 113 youths Monday for a day of learning that may save some lives some day.

That was the goal of the event, said coordinator Chris Tomky. She said children learned how to identify and deal with hazards they may face in an agricultural setting, along with other general safety information.

They gained the information by rotating through 10 different stations set up throughout the Chase County Fairgrounds, with snacks and a lunch in between.

"Over time, we hope that by sharing and applying the lessons learned at safety day, it will help reduce the number of rural children who die or are injured in farm accidents," Tomky said.

The success of Safety Day, she said, was due in large part to the support of the organizations and volunteers who put on the safety demonstrations.

The youths were divided into groups with leaders, and went from station-to-station.

The stations included:

Fire extinguisher use, Jaws of Life demonstration—Imperial Volunteer Fire Dept. (two sessions)

First aid kids and 911 simulation—Imperial EMS.

Farm equipment dangers—Imperial FFA.

Chemical safety—Crop Production Services.

Gun safety—Nathan Vitosh, 4-H firearm instructor.

Water safety—Imperial police officer Ryan Wisnieski.

Loud noise and hearing loss—Chase County Comm. Hospital hospital trauma team members, Jessica Skomp, RN and Michelle Pursley, RN.

Sun exposure—Sandy O'Neil and Tonya Bush, local educators.

ATV safety—Staff from the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Staff from Southwest Nebraska Health Dept. were on hand throughout the day making sure youths were safe during the day's events.

Local church members provided cookies and bars for the participants' snack times.

Seventy volunteers helped throughout the day, Tomky said.

The monetary funds provided last year by numerous sponsors for the first Ag Safety Day enabled the event to continue this year. Tomky said that shows great commitment to the community and its children.

Tomky said the Chase County 4-H clubs will look at another application for a 2012 Progressive Ag Foundation Safety Day.

### **Miss Nebraska USA makes appearance at Safety Day**

Miss Nebraska USA Belinda Wright, 22, kicked off the day's events with a short address to the Safety Day participants, leaders and volunteers.

Growing up in Scotia, Neb., she told the youngsters she, too, was from a farming community.

She also had a personal tragedy in her family. While competing at the pageant about a month

and a half ago in Las Vegas, her 55-year-old father was killed in a farm accident.

She said they aren't sure what happened, but he had been fixing fence and was using a skid steer. Her mother found him, she said.

"That's why I think this day is great," she said.

"Learning how to be safe and being educated on what you are doing" is important, she said.

Despite the death of her father, she returned to finish competing in the pageant, placed in the top 15 and was named Miss Congeniality.

Wright told the youngsters she has only been competing in pageants for two years.

She is a senior at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she is majoring in clothing and textile design and advertising.