

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Next weekend's Progressive Agriculture Safety Day in Imperial will be a good start to communicating and educating youths in multiple areas of safety.

According to organizers, the opening speaker Saturday morning, June 13, will kick off the day of safety-related learning as she tells of a life-changing accident she experienced.

Kristi Ruth of Chariton, Iowa, will be in Imperial for the event.

In March, 2005, Ruth's uncle was tragically killed in a tractor rollover accident. That's when she became an FFA public speaking advocate for farm safety.

Then in February, 2007, Ruth herself was injured when her arm was entangled in a power-take-off shaft and she nearly died. Her arm was broken in six places and she suffered a severed artery.

Despite being warned of an extended hospital stay, the sophomore at the time spent only 11 days there, and continued speaking about farm safety.

In April, 2008, she joined the Farm Safety 4 Just Kids Youth Network, and is reaching thousands of people in the Midwest with her safety message.

The recent graduate from Chariton High School did lose some of the use of her left arm following the accident.

But, she uses the accident as a tool for education. She has been offered the chance to have plastic surgery to mask her scars, but refuses, saying, "They're here and it's a part of me now."

She plans to continue using her life experiences and sharing with others through college. She will enter Iowa's Kirkwood Community College this fall, then plans to transfer to Iowa State University to study ag education and communications.

She hopes to become an ag teacher and FFA advisor, as well as continuing her involvement with Farm Safety 4 Just Kids.

Parents are invited to attend Ruth's opening session with their children, which starts at 8:45 a.m. at the fairgrounds' exhibit building.

Parents can also attend the day's concluding event at 3:30 p.m., when the Nebraska State Highway Patrol will provide a demonstration of its vehicle rollover simulator in the grandstand area.

Following the simulator, organizers have planned for a medical helicopter landing at the site. Youths will be able to view inside the copter if they choose.

In between the morning and afternoon presentations, the youths will be visiting 10 different learning areas that emphasize safety.

If parents have difficulty transporting their children to the Safety Day activities, the county's handibus will be available.

However, parents interested need to make a contact with the county by next Thursday, June 11, to request the service. Call 308-882-7520 or 883-0184 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Registration still open

Chris Tomky, co-chair for the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, said registration is still open for children ages six to 14.

Those interested in registering a child for the event can contact Tomky at 308-883-6513 or co-chair Lisa Schilke, 308-883-8651.

There is a cost of \$8 per youth.

The event is being sponsored by the Chase County All-Stars 4-H Club in conjunction with the Progressive Agriculture Foundation.

The Imperial Community Foundation also provided the club a \$2,500 grant to help put the event on, and the Upper Republican NRD donated \$2,000, Tomky said.

She also noted business support with donations has been great.