



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Kristi Ruth said she wasn't being careful when her arm was pulled into a power take-off (PTO) two years ago in Iowa.

The recently-graduated high school senior told youths and volunteers at the opening session of Saturday's Progressive Agriculture Safety Day that her accident forced her to make a lot of changes in her life.

She didn't cry immediately after the accident, but said she did nine hours later when she was told she may lose her left arm up to the shoulder.

Following five hours of surgery, however, her arm was saved after surgeons used a vein from her leg to reattach the artery that was severed.

She came out with 250 stitches and staples on the outside of her arm, and three times those inside holding her arm together.

In addition, she now lives with a plate in that arm and a hinge in the elbow to help it bend.

She said she was lucky, though.

"Most who are in farm accidents with a PTO don't make it," she told the youths as she passed around photos and told of other acquaintances in accidents.

What probably saved her, she noted, was that the power had actually been shut off on the PTO and it was winding down when she got caught.

Still, the force pulled her forward, as her arm became wrapped around inside.

After being pulled out of the PTO, Ruth said she was in so much pain and went into shock.

"The worst pain you can imagine," she said.

As she recovered for months afterwards, Ruth, originally left-handed, had to relearn to do things with her right hand.

She still can't bend her arm completely.

She missed a lot of important high school activities, too, as she recovered, but was able to attend Prom.

Ruth's story served as an appropriate kickoff to a full day of safety presentations, in which the 135 youths moved in smaller groups to 10 different stations throughout the fairgrounds.

Some early morning showers forced Ruth's presentation inside in the 4-H building. It had originally been planned for the grandstand area.



Ten stations offer variety

Ten stations provided youths information on how to identify and deal with the hazards in rural settings.

Coordinators Chris Tomky and Lisa Schilke said the day's goal was to help children learn how to take responsibility for their own safety, respect parents' rules and share what they learned with friends and family.

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

The stations the youths age six to 14 learned from were:

Proper use of fire extinguishers—Imperial Volunteer Fire Department.

Electrical dangers—Southwest Public Power.

Grain safety—FFA Advisor Jason Speck and students.

Safety around animals—Silver Spurs 4-H Horse Club, Gene and Tracy Heathers.

PTO safety—21st Century Equipment, Tom Rau, Tim Schilke, Bill Sullivan.

Lawn equipment safety—Dan Hughes.

ATV safety—Rod Thayer.

Chemicals—Crop Production Services, Dan and Shannon Kuhlmann and Tara Oxford.

Meth lab—Imperial Police Department, Officer Ryan Wisnieski.

Safety skit (for younger participants—Christy Boggs.

Youngsters also had the chance to view an Imperial EMS ambulance on the grounds, also there for first aid if needed.

The Nebraska State Patrol also provided a demonstration of a rollover accident at the day's conclusion in the grandstand area.

The medical helicopter that was also scheduled to land at the end of the day was unable to make the trip.

At noon, the participants enjoyed a lunch prepared by the Imperial Jaycees.

The Progressive Agriculture Safety Day was made possible with a grant from the Progressive Agriculture Foundation and additional support from the Imperial Community Foundation, several business, organizations and individual contributions.

The Chase County All Stars 4-H Club were the day's sponsoring organization.