

Community for farm safety

By TIM WHITE

FARM safety camps for Putnam County youngsters start with a dramatic ATV accident scene, but that is just the beginning. During a two-hour period, the students rotate among four buildings and tents set up at the Gerding farm and learn about many aspects of farm safety and home safety in general. The whole community lends a hand.

"We think third grade is an impressionable age," says Ruth Gerding, safety camp host and coordinator. "Teaching them in a hands-on, fun way gets their attention and makes the learning easy."

Involving various parts of the community makes the process easier for all and spreads the information around. "We've got a very good crew," Gerding says. "We had immediate buy-in from Extension and Farm Bureau and our suppliers. After 10 years, everyone knows their role, and it goes pretty smoothly."

Container confusion

Clearly the kids enjoy the demonstrations, which are dramatic, meaningful and to-the-point. In the pretty poisons session, an array of household products brings home the point that a can of Comet cleanser looks almost exactly like a container of Parmesan cheese, and an ant killer spray could easily be confused with a vegetable cooking spray.

Presenter Marge Kohls, from St. Rita's Ambulatory Care Center, notes that the containers do have poison identifi-

more profitable in the future, he adds.

Dave Lotz, who farms in Hardin County, was one of the first Ohio farmers to enroll in a carbon credit-trading program. He's done it for four years and finds it surprising that more farmers don't enroll — especially those with land in CRP. "I really believe in it," he says.

Lotz, who raises corn and soybeans, switched to continuous no-till because of the conservation benefits. He's been impressed by the improvement in soil structure over the past seven or eight years, he explains. "It starts out ugly, but it turns into something really, really good. The longer I do it, the easier it is to farm."

The soil quality benefits alone give him plenty of incentive to stick with no-till, but he likes knowing his no-till is helping reduce greenhouse gases, he adds. "Getting paid for doing it is more of an incentive yet."

Key Points

- Putnam County safety camp is a community-supported activity.
- Third-graders learn about farm and home hazards.
- Making the process fun helps students learn and remember.

cation on the label and a phone number you can call.

"And when you or Mom go to call the poison center, you are going to take the container with you," Kohls repeats several times. "And you are going to be the calm one if your mom gets upset."

Leo Schroeder, a certified crop adviser with Glandorf Warehouse Inc., handles the farm chemical presentation. A former vocational agriculture teacher, Schroeder holds the students' attention with a black-light presentation that shows how chemicals can cling to the skin. He passes around containers that show the degrees of danger.

"The vast majority of the chemicals we sell say 'caution' on their label," he notes.

Jason Hedrick, with Ohio



ACCIDENT SCENE: Deputy Randy Weller is first to arrive at a mock ATV rollover scene. Students note that the helmet came off, indicating the dummy was not wearing it correctly.



State University Extension, demonstrates what can happen when someone climbs into a grain wagon or grain bin and the grain starts to flow. "See how fast the model is covered over," he explains. "And the grain is so heavy, a farmer couldn't pull you out even if he saw you."

When he asks the best way to prevent grain bin accidents, the students shout in unison, "Don't climb into grain wagons or bins."

Jenny Smith, Putnam County Farm Bureau director, captures the students' attention by telling them a lawn-mower blade is moving at 200 mph. When she asks why they should pick up sticks and rocks and golf balls before they mow, she hears, "So you won't get hit."

Smith says more than 9,000 mower-related accidents were treated at the children's hospital in Columbus last year.

Not many sheriff deputies are as funny and fun as Marv Schwiebert. Teaching kids about farm pond safety, Schwiebert pulls out a variety of tools, balls and decoys, and asks the kids if they could be used to help pull someone out of the water.

"Sure they can," he says. "So



ATV FLIP: Seeing an ATV injury strikes home for students because about one-third say they have access to such a vehicle at home. Students watch paramedics from the Glandorf Fire Department and Putnam County Heavy Rescue Unit lift the ATV off the dummy.

look around and find something like this broom to reach out and get them to hang on to."

Sparks fly at the electrical model Dee Renollet, Paulding-Putnam Electric Co-op safety and compliance manager, provides for the students. Renollet shows students what could happen if they are grounded and touching an electric line.

"Why can the birds sit up on the power lines without getting electrocuted?" he asks. When the answer, "They aren't

grounded," comes out, he shows the kids a hawk's claw found hanging on a wire. "This guy probably reached out and touched the pole while he was on the wire, and that grounded him," he explains.

The two-and-half-hour visit goes by quickly, and at the end the students receive a T-shirt before they climb on their buses and take what they have learned back home with them.

"These people all have busy schedules, but they take the time to come and help us out for two days," Gerding says. "We try to take as little of their time as we can, but the more people who are involved, the more the community learns about farm safety and puts it into practice."

EQUIPMENT DANGERS:

Explaining the danger of a PTO shaft is part of the demonstration provided by Tony Schroeder of Northwest Tractor. Using an electric drill, he shows kids how a shirt can be wrapped up in the spinning shaft instantly.

POND SAFETY: Wearing a snug-fitting life jacket is critical, says Deputy Marv Schwiebert of the Putnam County Sheriff's office. Schwiebert entertains kids as he shows them how to swim safely or help someone who has fallen into a pond.

