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SUV pulled from river



LAWRENCE PIERCE | Gazette

Members of the Charleston Fire Department's Water Rescue Team examine the SUV that plunged into the Kanawha River on Thursday before a wrecker hauled it ashore Sunday. By 6 p.m. Sunday, officials confirmed John Damron was inside the recovered SUV.

Firefighters confirm identity of driver in submerged vehicle

By Megan Workman
Staff writer

After strong storms on Saturday and a snapped strap on Sunday, police confirmed John Damron was still inside the sport utility vehicle that plunged into the Kanawha River Thursday evening.

While firefighters were using a wrecker to pull the white SUV out of the river, one of the

straps broke, Charleston Police Lt. Shawn Williams said. The broken strap didn't stop firefighters from safely getting the Jeep Cherokee to the top of the riverbank on MacCorkle Avenue Sunday evening.

Supervisors from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, where Damron worked as a mine inspector, confirmed Damron's identity, Williams said.

Damron, 30, of Charleston was driving the SUV with green state-government license plates on Thursday when it ran through the traffic light at the intersection of Corridor G and MacCorkle Avenue. The SUV smashed through a guardrail and landed in the river at about 5 p.m.

Williams said the Charleston Fire Department's Water Rescue Team found the SUV Sat-

urday and marked it with GPS coordinates, but harsh weather conditions prevented them from taking any further action. Since Thursday, divers faced high water, limited visibility and severe storms.

"The fire department located the vehicle yesterday and marked it. They waited for the water to recede [and for] water conditions to improve, which they did. Water condi-

tions were not at best yesterday, according to divers," Williams said at a news conference Sunday evening at Magic Island.

When firefighters began their search on Thursday, they spent several hours in boats searching for the SUV and its driver, but the current was too fast for divers at that time.

SEE RIVER, 11A

Deer limits raised

New regulations aim for more female kills

By John McCoy
Staff writer

The people who set West Virginia's hunting seasons have finalized a set of regulations designed to have hunters kill many more female deer.

Members of the state Natural Resources Commission on Sunday approved regulations for the state's 2012 big-game seasons, including those for deer. The new regulations seek to reduce deer populations in most counties by increasing bag limits for antlerless deer and creating incentives for hunters to kill antlerless deer instead of bucks.

One of the new regulations' most salient features includes a requirement that hunters in counties with very high deer populations must kill an antlerless deer before they're allowed to kill a second antlerless buck. The change will be in effect during both the archery and firearm seasons.

SEE DEER, 3A

Gazette Charities



Send-A-Child-To-Camp Fund

Donation form 11A

4-H camp instills confidence

By Kathryn Gregory
Staff writer

A young girl who was being bullied at school found the self-confidence to stand up to her abusers after attending a Kanawha County 4-H camp.

Last year, classmates were bullying the young girl at her school. Her parents decided to pull her out of public school and enroll her in private school to get her away from her attackers.

After a year of stress, the young girl decided that she wasn't going to let a few mean classmates make her leave her friends and school. Her mother said the only change her daughter went through was attending the Kanawha County 4-H camp at Camp Virgil Tate in Sissonville — one of the many camps supported by donations through the Gazette Charities Send-A-Child-To-Camp Fund.

The camp helped the young girl find new self-confidence while becoming more active in sports and doing more tasks independently.

4-H camps focus on develop-



LOGAN COUNTY: 6,000 DIABETICS BUT NO DIABETES EDUCATION ... YET

Hardest-hit county determined to 'do something'

By Kate Long
Staff writer

LOGAN — Once a week, Anise Nash drives to Logan County, home of Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, Landau Eugene Murphy, Jr., and at least 6,000 diabetics.

At Chapmanville's Coalfield Health Center, she meets with one diabetic after another. Grandmas, young mothers and coal miners spill out questions about foods, symptoms, medicines, and the high cost of blood-test strips.



"I have never been anywhere where I've seen people so hungry for information about diabetes or so receptive to information," Nash said.

"These are very genuine people, and they just soak up any information you give them."

One in six of Logan County's 36,700 residents is a dia-



KATE LONG | Gazette photos

Four-year-old Zachary Rein played pretend pitcher in the stands at Logan County High School's Friday night game. His mother, Missy Rein, is one of Logan County's estimated 6,000 diabetics. "There are diabetics all through our family," she said, "and I don't want my kids getting it, so I keep them as active and healthy as I can. I wish we had diabetes classes here. I'd definitely sign up." Meanwhile, she signed Zach up for T-ball.

body ever told me that.' "Almost everyone in Logan County knows of somebody

SEE LOGAN, 11A

SEE CAMP FUND, 11A

LOGAN

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who has lost a leg or gone blind," she said. "People say things like, 'My mom lost her leg to it, so I guess I will too.' That really gets to me, because type 2 is so preventable."

Despite the need, Logan County has no public classes to help people learn how they can avoid the disease or control it. "We have the highest rate of diabetes in the nation, but no diabetes education at all, as far as I know," said Patricia Mullins, staff nurse at the Logan County Health Department.

In 2010, ABC News said Logan County had the highest diabetes rate of any county in the nation. Logan County's rate is now nearly 18 percent, according to CDC, more than double the 2010 national rate of 8.3.

Yet Logan Countians must drive to another county if they want a class. "Lots can't afford the gas or don't have a car," said Dana Wright, WVU Extension agent. "They need help here, where they live."

Nash is a certified diabetes educator. She works for Marshall University, part sponsor of the Coalfield Center. "A prevention campaign could make a huge difference here," she said.

A high number of Logan County children have symptoms of future diabetes. By the latest West Virginia University screening measurements:

- Thirty-eight percent of Logan fifth-graders have high blood pressure, compared with 24 percent statewide.

- Forty-five percent — almost half — are obese, the highest percentage in the state. The statewide average is an already-alarming 28 percent.

'I wish we had some classes around here'

Logan resident Missy Rein is one of the county's 6,000 diabetics. Her twin sister is diabetic, and so is her mother. "It's all through our family," she said. "I don't want my kids getting it."

She tries to keep her kids active, she said. "I've read that physical activity helps keep them from getting diabetes," she said.

Friday night, Rein's son Joshua played left field for the Logan County High School



"People say things like, 'My mom lost her leg to it, so I guess I will too.' That really gets to me, because type 2 is so preventable."

ANISE NASH
Coalfield Health Center

Wildcats baseball team. Missy and four-year-old Zachary Rein were in the stands. Zach, baseball glove in hand, pitched and caught imaginary balls the entire game. "Zach just started T-ball," his mother said. "He's crazy about baseball."

She wants to learn a lot more about ways diabetics react to different foods, how to cook healthy meals and "all the things you have questions about."

WVU Extension is going to offer a diabetic cooking class in the fall. "But there's lots of questions I have besides cooking," she said.

She has tried to learn as much as she can from the Internet and other sources, but "I wish we had some kind of diabetes classes around here people could go to," she said. "There's lots of people I know would come."

So what can Logan County do?

Two years ago, neighboring Mingo County formed a diabetes coalition of doctors, pharmacists, school people, churches, and WVU extension agents. Working together, they got a five-year grant this year for \$50,000 a year through Marshall University.

They plan to create more classes, expand their community walking program, work in the schools, and target isolated areas of the county for public awareness.

"People in Logan want a coalition too," WVU's Wright



"We don't know exactly how we're going to do it, but we know we've got to pool our efforts if we want to get anywhere."

SHANNON MEADE
Coordinator, Logan Family Resource Network

said. She and Nash have started meeting with a small Logan group to try to make that happen.

"We don't know exactly how we're going to do it yet, but we know we've got to pool our efforts if we want to get anywhere," said Shannon Meade, Family Resource Network coordinator.

"There's a lot of energy for this," Wright said. "People see the impact diabetes is having on their health and the health of people they love, and they're saying, 'You know what? We don't want to be this terrible statistic. We are good people, and we can reverse this if we work together.'"

At their first meeting in January, at the United Mine Workers headquarters, ideas flew around the table. Classes and public awareness top the list. Billboards cost money, but maybe a billboard company would donate space.

Radio and TV and a website might be doable. "Maybe Southern [Community and Technical College] could help," Wright said. Maybe the local cable TV station would run ads as a public service.

"We could plaster the county with fliers that say 'Did you know you can prevent diabetes?'" somebody said.

They talked about walking



"We can help guide Logan through the organization process and tell them what other counties have done, but they've got to do the community organizing themselves."

RICHARD CRESPO
Associate Professor, Marshall University; W.Va. Healthcare Authority Diabetes Panel

groups that compete or challenges to see which group can lose the most weight. Maybe the newspaper would run stories about local people beating diabetes. Maybe they could get the schools and the nursing students at Southern involved.

Nash said she would mentor local young people who want to become Logan County diabetes educators. "I'd want to find people who grew up here and plan to stay," she said.

"Once you start talking together, you realize there are lots of possibilities," Meade said.

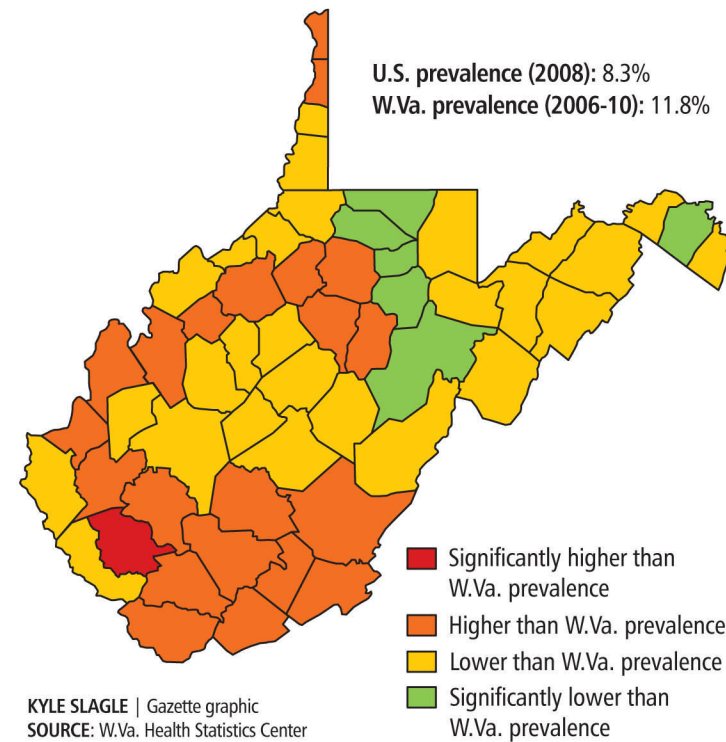
Since January, more people have come to meetings, including representatives of the hospital, health department, Logan Chamber of Commerce, the Chapmanville town council, the Recreation Center. A local radio host has started doing interviews with Logan Countians about their struggle with diabetes.

They have started testing people's blood pressure and blood sugar free at public events. Soon, they will meet with Marshall's Richard Crespo, who helped the Mingo coalition get organized.

Crespo has helped more than 60 counties in nine Appalachian states organize diabetes coalitions. "We can help guide Logan through the organization process and tell

LOGAN LEADS W.VA. IN DIABETES

Diabetes rates are so high statewide that only one county — Logan — has a rate higher than the state average at a statistically significant level. Ten years ago, Logan had more company, but the state average has risen. "It's important to remember that our state average is much higher than the national average, so if we were comparing our county rates to the national average, most of the map would be red," said Jim Doria, statistical services manager for the state Department of Health and Human Resources.



them what other counties have done, but they've got to do the community organizing themselves," he told the Gazette.

Coalitions offer a wide range of activities, he said. Besides the things the Logan coalition mentioned, they have built walking trails, offered free weight-loss groups or yoga, and summer camps for kids at risk. In a few states, local coalitions have joined forces into a statewide coalition.

The Logan group plans to apply for Logan Healthcare Foundation funding next fall, Meade said. Crespo's program has a \$2.6 million grant from Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation to help launch coalitions in 10 more counties. Mingo County got one of their first grants. Next fall, they will award \$50,000 a year to five more counties. "Logan could certainly apply," he said.

Crespo's staff can also train local people to lead the evidence-based, four-week Diabetes Self-Management class. That training is free, since the state funds the group to offer it. Af-

ter local people are trained, Crespo said, "they can offer the course to the public."

The class follows a prescribed curriculum, he said. People who take it learn how diabetes works in the body, how medication works, and what various foods do to the body. They plan specific ways to weave physical activity into the realities of their day and adjust what they eat. The course has been taught in churches, senior centers, volunteer fire departments, and community health centers.

"But everyone won't come to a class," Crespo said. "A coalition can attack diabetes from many directions."

"This is something that's needed to happen in Logan County for a long time," Meade said. "It's starting to feel like we've got a chance to make this into something."

"As soon as they get some classes going, I'll sign up," Missy Rein said.

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