

Volunteer network helps
Farm Safety 4 Just Kids
save children's lives

By Cheryl Tevis, Farm Issues Editor

FS4JK marks two decades



Photographs: Harlen Persinger, Ken Frick

left to right: Jordan, 6, and Aaron Daye, 4, feed a calf on their farm near Wautoma, Wisconsin. Mom Lorie, sister Brianna, 12, dad Bob, and sister Mariah, 10, look on.

It was June 14, 2003, the day before Father's Day. Lorie Daye had taken her two girls and a younger son to buy a Father's Day gift.

Jordan, her 2½-year-old son, had begged to stay with his dad, Bob, on their Wautoma, Wisconsin, farm. When Lorie was paged over the store's public address system, she knew it was an emergency at home.

She learned that Jordan had been by his dad's side in the milk house when he reached for a red handle attached to a hose on a container of lye. Bob pulled him away, but Jordan's hand brushed the hose and a drop splashed in his eye.

Despite Bob's efforts at the scene and immediate care at the emergency

room, the chemical burn erased the sight in Jordan's right eye. A cornea transplant last year failed when scar tissue re-formed.

Today, Jordan is in kindergarten, a bundle of energy with a captivating smile – and one cosmetic eye.

The injury or death of a child is every parent's nightmare. Although kids aren't exposed to as many adult hazards, studies show that their rate of farm injury is higher. An estimated 104 kids are killed and 22,648 are injured annually.

After Jordan's injury, Lorie heard about a Farm Safety 4 Just Kids (FS4JK) day camp. She called the Iowa-based organization and was put in touch with Keith Wilson, an Antigo, Wisconsin, volunteer.

Wilson seemed to know their story without being told. "When he visited, he told us about other farm kids hurt or killed and how his heart was burdened by their stories," she says. "He had a heart for our little guy."

Today, the Dayes are lifetime FS4JK members. "We're grateful Jordan has a normal life," Lorie says. "We want to tell our story to help other families."

HIDDEN SUFFOCATION DANGER

Marilyn Adams knows full well the horror, grief, and guilt in the hearts of parents who wanted more than anything else to protect their child.

In the fall of 1986, she was at her job when she received a call telling her that her 11-year-old son, Keith, was being airlifted to a hospital.

He had begged to help his dad, Darrell, with harvest. Keith promised he would stay away from the auger.

Darrell went to the field, leaving Keith waiting for the gravity flow wagon to empty grain into the bin. When Darrell returned 20 minutes later, Keith had disappeared. Darrell discovered his 80-pound body buried under thousands of pounds of shelled corn.

"We just didn't know the dangers of gravity flow wagons," Marilyn Adams says.

One sleepless night, as she ▶▶

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►► struggled with the nightmare that had become her life, she resolved to start Farm Safety 4 Just Kids. She set out to spread the word about safety.

Nearly 660 miles away, close to Bellfontaine, Ohio, it was Ron Smith's job to watch daughter Rose after she got home from kindergarten. His wife, Connie, was at work. "It was our time together," Ron says.

The 6-year-old had earned the nickname Tornado Rose. So Ron planned to use the gravity flow wagon as a safe place for her to play as he worked. "My thought was to keep her little hands out of the auger," he says.

But the night before he had a chance to put his plan to work, he opened *Successful Farming* magazine to a story about how Marilyn Adams had started Farm Safety 4 Just Kids to protect children from gravity flow wagon hazards.

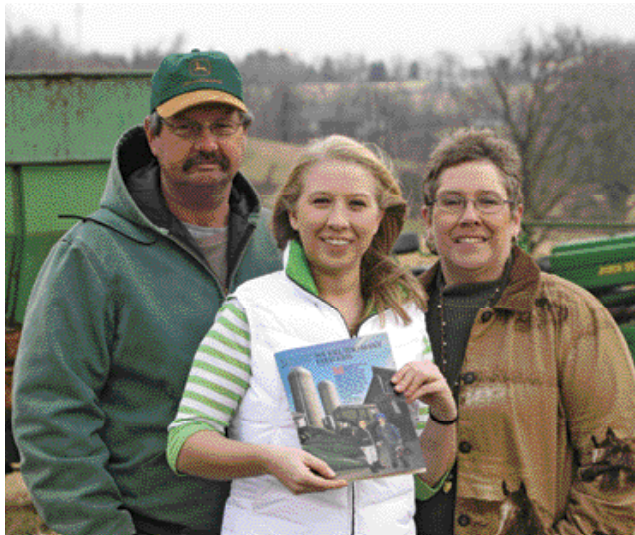
"Ron walked into the kitchen and handed me the article," Connie says. "He said we should send money to the lady to help out her cause."

The Smiths started the first local chapter of FS4JK. "Because I read about her son, Rose is safe, alive, and happy today," Ron says.

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE LIFEblood

The Smiths and the Days mirror only a few of the "Faces of Farm Safety" being recognized by FS4JK as it launches its twentieth year. The annual leadership conference is set for March 16-17 in Johnston, Iowa.

Today, FS4JK offers an array of resources and training through 132 chapters in 31 states and four



The Smiths – dad Ron, daughter Rose, and mom Connie – are grateful for a warning by Farm Safety 4 Just Kids about the hazards of flowing grain in a 1989 *Successful Farming* magazine article.

Canadian provinces. It relies on a volunteer network, including Keith Wilson in Wisconsin, and Dale Dobson, a Kentucky chapter leader.

"Chapters and volunteers are our driving force today," Adams says. "They teach the educational materials we create. Without them, we couldn't get our message out."

FS4JK also partners with national safety groups, including the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, the National Institute for Farm Safety, and NIOSH's National Occupational Research Agenda.

After two decades, FS4JK's focus has shifted as gravity flow wagons become less common. It supports a new National Childhood Ag Safety campaign to keep kids off tractors and offers ATV safety materials.

"Change occurs in baby steps, like kids growing up or parents aging,"

says John Shutske, a University of Minnesota farm safety specialist. "We often don't notice it until later."

Safety day camps are part of this change. Shutske picked up on this idea at a 1991 FS4JK workshop. "Recently, I met a woman who was at our first Minnesota camp," he says. "It led her family to make changes."

The Smiths recall another change since recruiting their first chapter members. "There was a stigma attached to farm safety back then, because people thought we didn't want kids to do farmwork," Connie says. "We wanted to keep them safe. That's still what we want to do." ■



Marilyn Adams demonstrates hazards of flowing grain in front of the gravity flow wagon that claimed her son's life in 1986.

+ learn more (Note: This new address is effective after April 2.)

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids, 11302 114th Street, Urbandale, IA 50322

800/423-5437 | www.fs4jk.org

Call to register for the annual conference.