



# Young twice as nice at Woodmont/B1

# MONTGOMERY THE Journal

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## Police bears bring smiles

### Stuffed toys comfort kids in traumas

By JANELLE COWGILL  
Journal staff writer

A little boy, uninjured and buckled into the back seat of a vehicle, watches paramedics attend to his parents after their car veered off the road and slammed into a telephone pole.

Scared and shaking, a young girl watches her mother and father yell at each other, the woman pummeling her husband with her fists.

When young kids are frightened and faced with a trauma, they usually feel alone, with no one to really understand what they're feeling.

They need someone to talk to, something to hold.

So when a police officer walks up to a child and hands over a stuffed teddy bear, brown in color and wearing a bright-yellow T-shirt, the child stops crying, smiles and hugs the toy.

"If you could see the smile in a child's eye when you give a bear to them, it's an image the officer can't forget," Montgomery County Police Assistant Chief Robert Barnhouse said yesterday. "It's a small token. We're trying to develop a feeling of trust."

The county police department is one of seven county law-enforcement agencies to receive dozens of boxes of the teddy bears from Montgomery's six Masonic lodges. Each box is stuffed with 20 bears to hand out to kids following a frightening or traumatic incident.

At yesterday afternoon's annual Masonic picnic, under a pavilion at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg, the organization presented the bears to officers from each of the law-enforcement agencies.

Throughout a yearlong fundraising effort among the county's Masonic Lodges, the fraternal organization's 1,500 members dug



Jeff Taylor/Journal

Maryland State Trooper Tawn Gregory of the Rockville Barrack holds one of the 380 teddy bears donated to area law-enforcement agencies by the six Masonic Lodges in Montgomery County yesterday. The bears will be given to children who have suffered traumatic events.

## Pepco offers 'free' power

### Plant sales mean \$200M in credits for customers

By The Associated Press

More than 400,000 Potomac Electric Power Co. residential customers will receive the equivalent of seven weeks' worth of free electricity from the utility's sale of power plants.

Already, about 47,000 Pepco business customers are receiving a total of \$200 million in credits. Some large businesses will save more than \$100,000.

The 447,000 residential customers will receive about a \$152 credit this month and next.

The credits to customers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties come from Pepco's \$2.75 billion sale of four generating plants in the Washington area and its agreement with the Maryland Public Service Commission to share profits with shareholders and customers, company spokesman Robert Dobkin said.

Please see PEPCO, A6

## New rules impact autistic children

### Requirement changes will force some families out

By KARL HILLE  
Journal staff writer

Under revised state rules, all but one Montgomery County child will be forced out of a program that provides in-home care for severely disabled children.

The Montgomery County Council last week discussed new ways to use money from the federal and state governments to help such children after the state's Office of Children, Youth and Families redefined eligibility criteria for its Return and Divert Services program.

State officials said the in-home care and behavioral-modification programs, as well as other services, were intended for children with short-term emotional and mental-health difficulties in order to keep them from being placed in an institution in another state. But in Montgomery County, the funds predominantly have been used to help care for severely autistic children.

Now, all children will have to leave the program after two years, and none will be admitted unless they meet strict eligibility guidelines.

The Return and Divert program, implemented in 1993, served 90 county children in fiscal year 2000, and 67 children cur-

Please see PROGRAM, A6

## City eyes damage in derailment aftermath

By BEN NUCKOLS  
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Two burning boxcars lingered in a downtown tunnel more than four days after derailling there, but city officials turned their attention yesterday to debating how to repair extensive damage to the city's aging infrastructure.

Three mangled cars, smoke billowing from their gutted interiors, were removed yesterday — two from the south end of the tunnel, and one from the north end, 1½ miles away.

Public works crews waited for the final two cars to be removed, preparing to begin a massive project to replace a broken 40-inch water main and reconstruct a heavily traveled intersection directly above the tunnel.

Transportation and public works officials acknowledged that the city's Light Rail line — a popular mode of transportation for commuters and Baltimore Orioles fans — would remain partially

closed indefinitely as efforts began to replace the water main and rebuild the intersection between Lombard and Howard streets.

"People need to expect that this Light Rail system is going to be affected for quite some time," said Mass Transit Administration spokeswoman Suzanne Bond.

Public Works Director George Winfield said yesterday afternoon that a section of the Light Rail tracks would be cut out to facilitate repairs to the water main and at least one collapsed storm drain.

"It's possible there are more storm drains collapsed," Winfield said.

The total cost of the damage could be not immediately known, but talk of restitution had begun.

"We've had preliminary discussions with the city," said CSX spokesman Robert Gould. "We initiated that discus-



Roberto Borea/Associated Press

Baltimore fireman Gralen Lewis hoses down the inside of a still-smoldering train car yesterday, which was removed from the Howard Street Tunnel.

Please see DERAIL, A6

## Author champions 'plus-size' romance

By MEGAN LISAGOR  
Journal staff writer

The woman leaned forward, smiling. Heart earrings quivered as she tossed her hair. Wispy, brown curls dangled past her shoulders and onto the wooden table. Her lips glistened.

BULLETIN: We interrupt this attempt at romance writing to introduce you to Rida Allen, Germantown's newest novelist.

Allen's first book, "Great Love," released last week, features a full-figured heroine.

Allen is part of a growing trend in the romance industry: authors creating characters who are plus-sized rather than pencil-thin.

"Plus-size women can have a fantasy," Allen said in an interview Friday at her home. "The market for it is huge. The majority of women in this world are size 12 and up."

An avid reader, she devours an estimated 244 romances a year — a habit she picked up as a 12-year-old.

"I was a really, really huge tomboy," said Allen, who has three older brothers. "I read romance books as an escape into a world I didn't belong to. I started with teen stuff like Judy Blume, and when the library fell out of that stuff, I looked to romances."

She concedes two other girlish aspects of her younger self: a Pepto-Bismol-pink bedroom and

long hair, which she still maintains.

"If I couldn't find enough to read, I just wrote about it," she said. "I started writing what I thought my life should be like."

And in part, what it has become.

Allen found her own hero, husband Robert, in a more tech-friendly way: through an online message board.

The Allens, married in 1999, are computer people; both work as systems administrators.

Rida Allen, however, has always written. She got her start writing poems as a girl then moved into fiction.



Please see AUTHOR, A6

Rida Allen

### OUTSIDE



■Tonight: Partly cloudy; lows from 65 to 70.

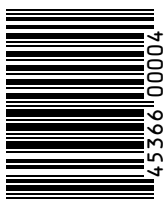
■Tomorrow: Partly cloudy; highs near 90.

■Wednesday: Partly cloudy; chance of showers; highs near 90.

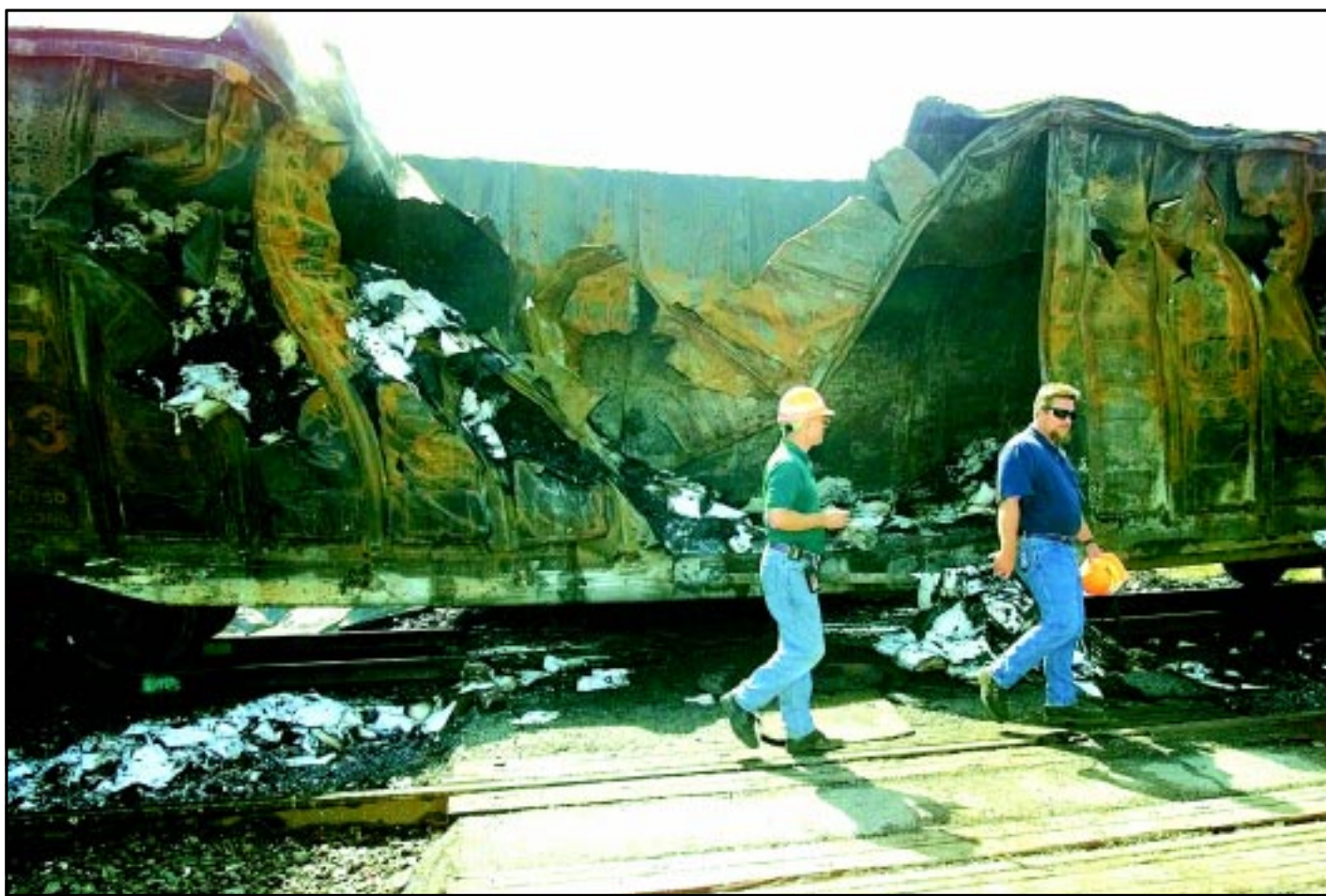
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Photos by the Associated Press

Two CSX employees walk past a still-smoldering train car removed yesterday from the Howard Street Tunnel in Baltimore.

## Last boxcars removed from tunnel

**DERAIL** from A1

sion with them because it's the right thing to do."

Engineers stood by, ready to inspect the structural integrity of the tunnel pending the removal of the final two boxcars. Streets passing over the tunnel were closed for the fifth day.

Mayor Martin O'Malley participated in an informal inspection yesterday afternoon, descending into the tunnel for a 45-minute tour.

An engineer who accompanied the mayor "is encouraged that when the tunnel is finally checked out, it will be structurally sound," O'Malley said.

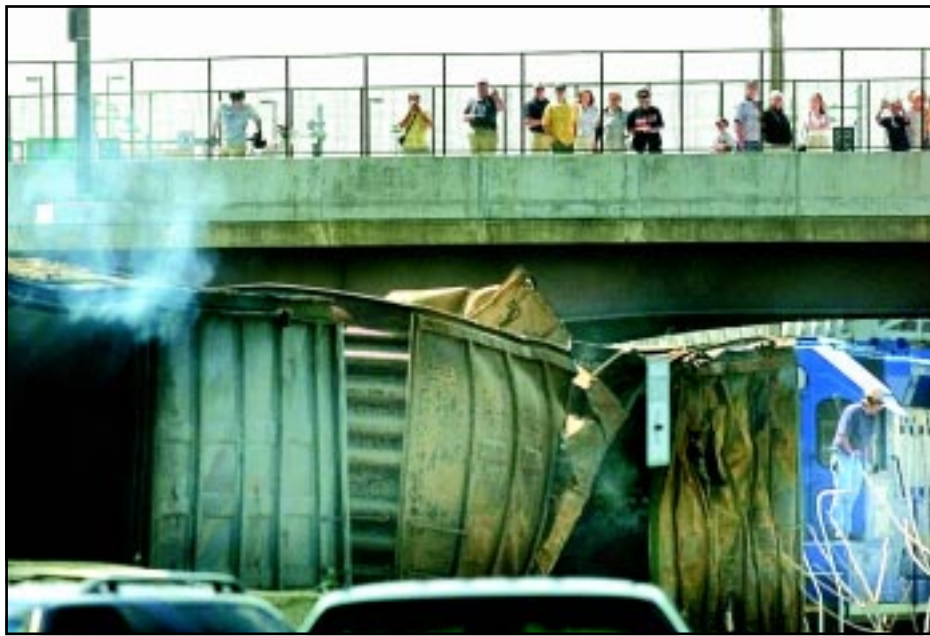
"It was fascinating. We had a lot to look at. It's a very tight, confined and narrow space," he added, extending gratitude to the firefighters who were the first to combat the inferno.

As O'Malley spoke near the south end of the tunnel in the parking lot of Oriole Park at Camden Yards, fans strolled out of the ballpark after the first game of a day-night doubleheader. The derailment forced the Orioles to postpone three games.

Firefighters planned to extinguish the last of the flames after removing the final two cars, which contained tightly packed plywood and paper products.

"People normally think, 'How can paper cause such a problem?' But when it's rolled, and it's compacted, it's a very deep-seated fire and it's difficult to extinguish," fire department spokesman Hector Torres said.

Inspectors from the National Transportation Safety Board waited for the boxcars to be removed so they could complete a report on the accident.



Fans arriving at Baltimore's Oriole Park at Camden Yards pause yesterday on a bridge to view the two smoldering boxcars.

NTSB spokesman Keith Holloway said the agency would review the train's maintenance history and employee records to try to determine the cause of the derailment.

Also, the NTSB planned to examine emergency response times to the derailment.

Torres had said the fire most likely started after the train jumped the track inside the tunnel Wednesday afternoon, and was fueled by flammable chemicals in a leaking tanker.

Torres said all hazardous materials

carried by the train were removed Saturday, and environmental checks had turned up no serious damage to air or water quality.

The ordeal was more complicated than anything addressed by the fire department's training drills.

"If someone had suggested a scenario like we had here, we probably would have said, 'No that's too complex,'" Torres said yesterday. "We had an incredible set of circumstances to deal with."

## Five men indicted in Accokeek slayings

**By ERIC HARTLEY**

Journal staff writer

Five men were indicted by a grand jury in the slaying of two people whose bodies were found last month in Accokeek.

Cortez Nicholas Carroll, 22; Robert Alan Odum Jr., 23; Marco Dominique Scutchings-Butler, 18; Aaron Thearone Hollingsworth, 19; and Eric Ronnell Thomas, 20, were charged with two counts each of first-degree murder, kidnapping, armed robbery, use of a handgun in a crime of violence and conspiracy to commit murder; and one

count of armed carjacking.

The five men, all of Fort Washington, are charged in the deaths of Michael Patten of Waldorf and Lea Anne Brown, who was stationed at Fort Myer, Va.

On June 9, prosecutors said, Patten and Brown left a night club in the Dupont Circle area of Washington and drove away in Patten's car. Their bodies were found the next day off Livingston Road in Accokeek. Both had been shot multiple times and hit with blunt instruments. Patten's Acura Legend was found several days later in Fort

Washington.

Carroll and Scutchings-Butler were also indicted in a carjacking that police say occurred hours before the slayings of Patten and Brown. Carroll, Scutchings-Butler and 20-year-old Paul Jarell White of Fort Washington were charged with armed carjacking, attempted kidnapping, first-degree assault, armed robbery and weapons offenses.

In addition, Scutchings-Butler and Odum were charged with robbing a liquor store hours before the carjacking. Police said that at about 10:54

p.m. June 9, they stole about \$500 at gunpoint from the Nu-Wave liquor store in Fort Washington. Both were charged with attempted murder, first-degree assault, robbery and handgun charges in the incident.

Carroll was also charged with trying to kill a man in Fort Washington on June 5. He was charged with attempted murder, first-degree assault, kidnapping, armed robbery and weapons offenses.

The state's attorney has not decided whether to seek the death penalty, a spokeswoman said.

## New rules force some families out

**PROGRAM** from A1

rently are enrolled. Under the new regulations, only one of these children will remain eligible after Aug. 1, 2002.

Parents packed the council's meeting last week to speak highly of the care their children received under the program.

"This program has kept my family together and now it's going to end," said Debbie Van Brundt, mother of two severely autistic boys. "When my son loses his services and loses his funding, we will lose Joshua."

Her older son, Jeremy, had to be placed in an institution in Winchester, Va., before she learned about Return and Divert. She said her children are very energetic and full of life, but cannot tell when they are in danger and need constant supervision.

Council member Marilyn Praisner, D-northeastern county, said she never heard of a two-year limit, and Montgomery County might not have supported the legislation that formed the program had the council known about a service limit.

"I do not recall hearing about a limit associated with that level of support," she said. "Montgomery County was a critical piece of getting the program started. We are now [told we are] a major problem under the program."

Bonnie Kirkland, special secretary for the Office of Children, Youth and Families, told the council the two-year service limit never was explicitly stated in the program's design, drawing sharp cries of "aha!" from the audience.

Nevertheless, she said the

policies being enforced now were implied since the program began in 1993. She said the \$14 million annual funding is being exhausted each year, and no new children are being admitted to the program.

She said those children ineligible to continue will have one year to find an alternative while the state continues to pay for their care. But Kirkland stressed the importance of applying for other programs now, as some have a limited capacity to accept new children.

Bennett Connelly, Montgomery County's chief of Children Youth and Family Services, said his staff stretched the eligibility requirements to get children into the Return and Divert program.

On the other hand, the Maryland State Department of Education discussed other forms of support, such as allowing some children to receive Medicaid funds to support them in their home and community. County officials are not sure whether the so-called Waiver for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, which is a part of federal Medicaid law, will admit all the children who participated in the Return and Divert Program.

Parents expressed doubts that other alternatives would provide the same quality of care they received through Return and Divert.

Council President Blair Ewing, D-at large, said more money must be found to help pay for these services, whether from the state, federal or county government.

"The state has made it clear they're not going to help [financially]," he said. "And if the state won't, who will?"

## Pepco offers \$200M in power credits

**PEPCO** from A1

Washington-based Pepco also said 201,000 residential and 28,000 commercial customers in the district will share \$200 million in credits.

Businesses in Maryland's Washington suburbs welcomed the credits, which first appeared on June bills.

Human Genome Sciences Inc., a Rockville-based biotech company, received a \$100,000 credit on its last Pepco bill. That's equivalent to a month's worth of electricity.

"It's the kind of thing most people forget about after you hear you're going to get it and then months and months later it shows up," said Steve Mayer, the compa-

ny's chief financial officer.

The SpringHill Suites in Gaithersburg received a \$15,000 credit last month, the equivalent of a month's worth of electricity in the 162-room hotel.

"It's very exciting at a time like this when business is down and revenues are down," general manager Dana Pimentel said. "So anything to save some money helps."

Dobkin would not identify the commercial customers saving the most, but said some — including the federal government, Giant Food Inc., Safeway Inc. and The Washington Post Co. — will receive six-figure credits.

Some customers "will basically have free electric service" this summer, he said.

## Novelist creates plus-size heroines

**AUTHOR** from A1

Because romances are formulaic, Rida Allen said, learning the craft came naturally.

Three years ago, she decided to right a romance wrong after noting that only one of the thousands of books she had read focused on the adventures of a full-figured woman.

More than 41 million people in the United States read romances, according to Romance Writers of America, a national nonprofit writers' association.

Rida Allen decided to target a niche audience: women like herself and like Samantha Velmar, the star of her book.

In just three months, she chronicled Velmar's search for love and happiness, a 65,000-word story written longhand on notebook paper.

"When I see a computer screen, I think 'work,'" she said. "When I see paper, I think 'write.'"

Rida Allen took breaks along the way to type the story into the computer, editing as she went. She sent the finished product to a publisher.

Eight months later, she heard

back. They were not interested.

"I put it away," she recalled. But last April, Rida Allen pulled "Great Love" back out, made some changes and shopped it around. On July 13, PublishAmerica, a publisher based in Frederick, made the 192-page book available on its Web site.

Allen also hopes to get "Great Love" into book stores.

"A lot of the things I've written in there I've experienced," she said. "It comes from inside. I had a lot to say."

For instance, Velmar wonders in the prologue, "How could they have a plus-size store with a size 2 salesperson?" Allen has asked herself the same question during shopping trips.

Since the publication of "Great Love," she has written a second romance and nearly completed a third. Both star full-figured women.

"She's a good person, no matter what size," Rida Allen said of Velmar. "Everybody can have dreams and get them."

"Great Love" can be ordered for \$17.95 at (877) 333-7422 or at www.publishamerica.com.

## Prince George's schools still short on teachers

**By MARGO ABADJIAN**

Journal staff writer

With just over five weeks left before the first day of school, the Prince George's county school system needs to hire about 500 more teachers.

As of Friday, the system had hired about 700 new teachers for the upcoming year, said Judith Miller, associate superintendent of human resources.

The system began the summer with about 1,200 openings; about 500 of those remain unfilled, Miller said.

She said the county school system is in better shape as far as its hiring needs than it was at this time last year. At about this time last year, the county school system still needed about 850 teachers.

Miller said the system has made improvements in its human resources division and has stepped up recruitment in the past year. She said the division has hired "talented" staff to do the recruiting. She said they may be "frazzled" right now but "hiring 1,200 teachers over the summer is the most phenomenal thing they can do," she said.

The system is planning the

last of seven job fairs on Aug. 4, this one to be held at Charles Herbert Flowers High School in Springdale. The fair is for most positions, including teachers.

In 1999 a state law was enacted to allow retired teachers to return to work without penalty to their pensions. Miller said this has helped in the recruiting efforts. During the 2000-01 school year, about 500 formerly retired teachers were rehired to work for the county system. The system has so far hired 267 retired teachers for the coming year, Miller said Friday.

Miller said the recruitment problems that Prince George's County faces are not unlike ones faced by other counties in Maryland and across the country.

She said special education is the most difficult area to fill.

"It is an absolutely critical shortage area all over the state and for that matter the whole country," Miller said.

Next comes math, science, Spanish, English as a Second Language and most languages except for French, she said.

Miller said the county loses

some teachers to surrounding counties that pay better, such as Montgomery County. However, Miller said due to raises Prince George's has implemented, salaries in surrounding counties are "not startlingly higher," she said.

The starting salary of a new teacher with a bachelor's in Prince George's public schools, Miller said, is \$33,548.

In comparison, a new teacher in Montgomery public schools with a bachelor's is paid \$35,087, according to a spokeswoman for that school system. The spokeswoman said the Montgomery system expects to hire 1,150 teachers for the coming year, of which 925 have already been hired.

Miller said based on personnel surveys the system has done, money is not always the factor that causes teachers to leave. Some teachers choose to leave because their spouses are moving out of the county, while others leave for other fields of work.

But she said because of critical teacher shortages across the state and nation, "all of us are now competing with each other," she said.

## Cops hand out 'bears' to foster kids' trust

**BEARS** from A1

deep into their pockets and ended up with a \$6,500 pot.

"I was pleased," said Charles Hahn, a former master of the Pentalfa Lodge No. 194 in Germantown. Hahn's inspiration for the drive was an article he read last year that highlighted a similar bear-donating effort in Michigan. "I think it did surpass our expectations. That was our whole idea."

In all, the Masons donated 1,000 bears to county police, Maryland-National Capital Park Police, Maryland State Police, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and the police departments in Gaithersburg, Rockville and Takoma Park.

"I thought this was a great

idea," Hahn said. "What's better than a traumatized child with a bear in their hands?"

Hahn worked out a deal with a vendor in the Midwest, and 50 large, cardboard boxes filled with the bears were sent to Hahn.

Barnhouse said each of the county police department's six districts has a number of bears on hand for officers to bring with them on calls for domestic abuse and vehicular accidents. Several more boxes were delivered to the department's family services division.

He said the bears are an ideal way for officers to communicate with traumatized children.

"I think it facilitates that trust and allows that communication to begin," Barnhouse said. "There's got to be that rapport."