

Student, officer swap fire

■ Only 200 miles west of Jonesboro, Ark., a school police officer returns shots at a 12 year-old boy

By David A. Lieb
The Associated Press

PRAIRIE GROVE, Ark. — A police officer exchanged gunshots with a seventh-grader Thursday as the boy headed toward his junior high school with a shotgun, authorities said. Both were wounded.

The officer, who was assigned part-time to the school, was treated and released from a hospital. The 12-year-old was in stable condition after being shot in the abdomen.

"There's stuff that indicates he was heading back to school," said Police Chief Robin Casey. "I think the good Lord was on our side today. I think he helped us out and prevented any kids from getting hurt and hopefully prevented this kid from dying."

Prairie Grove Superintendent Tom Louks said the boy had skipped school Tuesday and Wednesday after being involved in a dispute Monday. The boy was brought to school by at least one of his parents Thursday but left shortly after classes began, Louks said.

Louks said the boy had not been suspended because of Monday's incident and had not been a discipline problem before.

"I know the boy from church. A nice young man," Louks said.

The superintendent would not say what happened to the boy Monday, but a classmate said she heard he had been punched. Students said the boy, whose name was not released, was friendly.

"He wasn't violent. We talked about school and stuff," said John Gladwin, 13, who said he has known the boy since kindergarten. "He was a smart guy."

Police said a resident called Thursday morning, concerned that a boy seen walking down a road might have been skipping school. Sgt. Greg Lovett was dispatched from his office at the Prairie Grove Junior High School.

In his search, he ran across Louks and a principal who said they had seen the boy near a hay field. When Lovett called to the boy, the child stood up in the tall grass and fired three or four blasts from what Casey described as "a family gun."

Lovett was hit in the face and the chest, then in the back and buttocks as he turned away. Lovett returned fire, getting off about five rounds and striking the boy once in the stomach, police said.

Louks said he didn't realize the boy was armed until the first shot was fired. Lovett was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Prairie Grove is 200 miles west of Jonesboro, where boys age 13 and 11 shot and killed four classmates and a teacher two years ago.

The Prairie Grove school system, which has about 1,300 students in grades K-12, serves the town of 1,800 and a rural, mountainous area on the western fringe of the Ozark Mountains.

Police didn't say what charges they would consider against the boy. Changes made in the state law after the Jonesboro school shootings make it possible to charge him as an adult.

I will

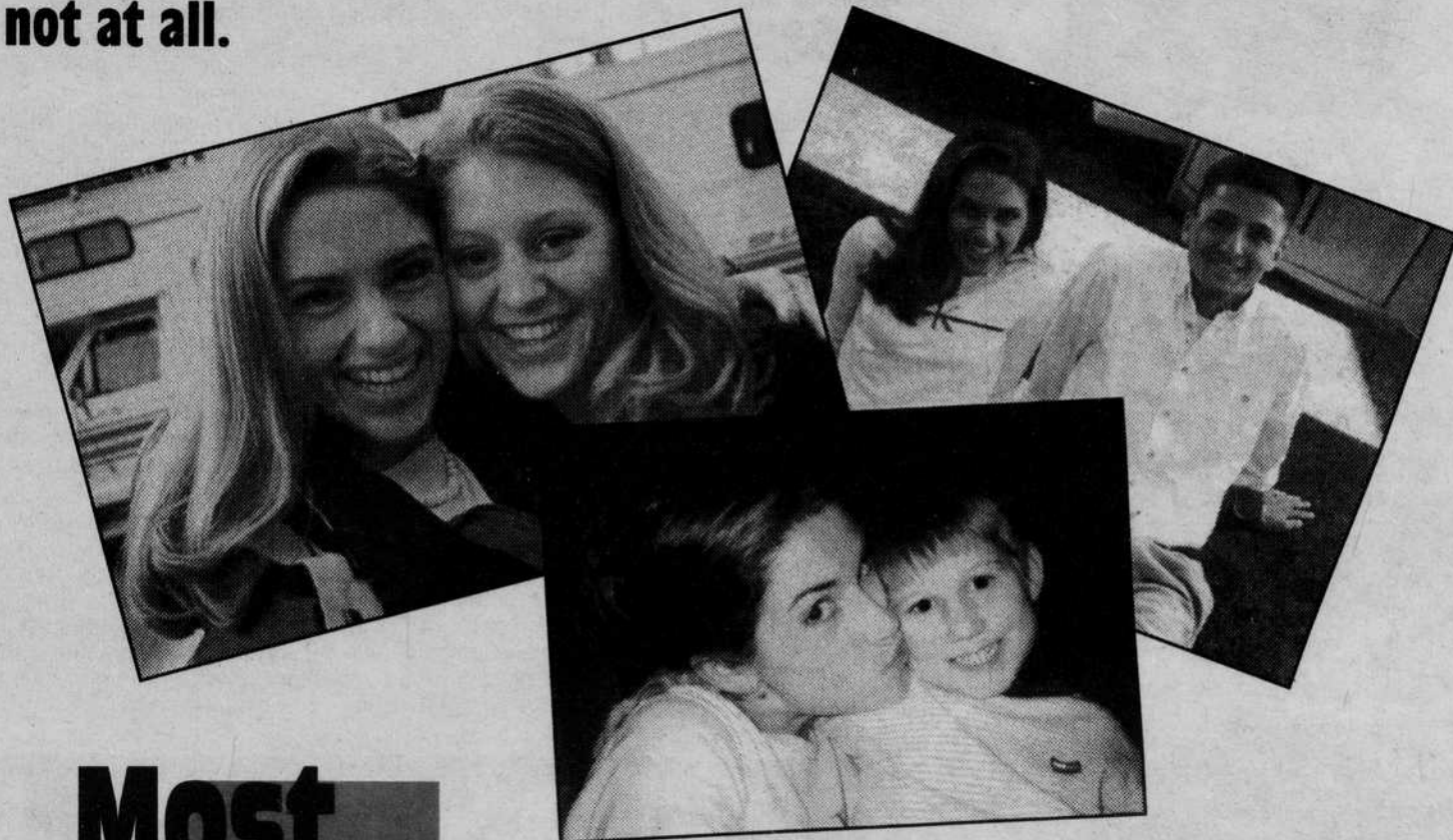
- work out and maintain a healthy diet
- cherish my friendships
- finish my degree at the UO and go to grad school
- be a role model for others
- always listen to my inner voice

... and I will

challenge my friends to drink responsibly ... or not at all.



Nicole Feigion
Journalism Major, UO



Most
4 **UO students**
[80%] have
drinks or fewer
when they party

2000
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Data taken from 1998 UO Health Center Survey.