

Woodlake camp taps new communities

■ Police Chief's Camp Zap begins 9 a.m. Jan. 26 and ends 1 p.m. Jan. 27

By Reggie Ellis
SUN-GAZETTE

A local police chief is expanding his campout to students in communities throughout the county.

Woodlake Police Chief John Zapalac said he may break an attendance record for his Camp Zap with more than 125 elementary and middle school students attending the overnight campout at his ranch in the foothills of Lemon Cove this weekend.

"This is a very positive

exchange for students from different communities to come together and have fun," Zapalac said.

What started eight years ago as a campout for Woodlake students is now being offered to elementary and middle school students in Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay and Ivanhoe. Zapalac said he started the campout so that he and off-duty officers could build a rapport with local students.

"They get to see the officers as regular people that play games and do fun things," Zapalac said.

See **CAMP** on page A10



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Horseback riding is one of the many activities available to students at John Zapalac's ranch in the foothills of Lemon Cove. Other activities include volleyball, basketball and football.

CAMP:

Continued from page A3

Students arrive at the camp on Saturday morning and are treated to a day of endless outdoor activities including basketball, volleyball, football, horseshoes, Frisbee, horseback riding, team building exercises and arts and crafts. Activities are organized by off-duty police officers and host of volunteers from nearly every service organization in Woodlake, including Kiwanis, Rotary, churches and parents.

In the evening, students are served dinner cooked on the campfire and listen to guest speakers who talk on a variety of subjects, including gangs, drugs, school violence, anger management, etc.

"We have received positive feedback from teachers who have even noticed the demeanor of the students change," Zapalac said. "It definitely promotes more tolerance of other students, which has directly lowered the juvenile crime rate in Woodlake."

At night, students sleep in tents around the campfire or on the floor of the barn. Zapalac said he recently constructed a tac room that can also be used to accommodate more students in sleeping bags.

"We think this is a great program and expect it to continue to grow," Zapalac said.

Invitations for the next campout on Jan. 26-27 were sent to Wilson Middle School in Exeter, Steve Garvey Jr. High in Lindsay, Hester Elementary in Farmersville, Ivanhoe Elementary, Stone Corral Elementary and Woodlake Valley Middle School and Castle Rock Elementary in Woodlake.

Students can RSVP to the Woodlake Police Department at 564-3346 or can show up at the



FILE PHOTO

Woodlake Police Chief John Zapalac runs Camp Zap about four times a year on his ranch in the foothills of Lemon Cove.

police department before 9 a.m. Saturday. Parents can pick up their children at the police department at 1 p.m. on Sunday. The Woodlake Police Department is located at 350 N. Valencia Blvd. Lindsay students will be picked up and dropped off at Steve Garvey Jr. High School. For more information on Camp Zap, call 564-3346.