



A friend of the family hugs the 7-year-old boy Wednesday who had been missing for 15 hours with his two sisters, 5 and 3. The children walked away from a residence Tuesday evening in southwest Seward County and had spent the night making their way to Liberal, some five miles away from where they started. A man spotted them on the west side of Liberal on General Welch Boulevard around 9:30 a.m. Wednesday and called authorities. The children were only scratched a few places, caused when they crawled through barbed wire fences on their overnight journey. L&T photo/Victoria Calderon

By Victoria Calderon • Leader & Times Yesterday morning was an exciting one for deputies from the Seward County Sheriff Department and other emergency responders. Three young children, aged 3 to 7, were found outside of Weatherford International building on General Welch Boulevard after being presumed missing for approximately 15 hours.

A local man, who wishes to remain anonymous, found these children walking across the Weatherford lawn around 9:30 a.m. He had been told about three missing kids who fit their description, so he decided to investigate.

"I asked them, 'Are you guys lost?' and the oldest one said, 'No, we know where we're going,'" the man said.

After he questioned the children, Weatherford employees took the kids inside to get something to drink while the man who found them called the police dispatcher.

Deputies arrived at the scene soon after. They immediately identified the kids as the ones they had been looking for throughout the previous 15 hours in rural southwest Seward County. An ambulance was summoned to check the children's conditions.

Seward County Undersheriff Gene Ward, while absent during the discovery of the lost children, was present for the huge search party that had occurred the night before.

“We had over 90 different people from different agencies all over the area helping. The sheriff’s office wants to thank everybody, of course, for their dedication in helping,” Ward said.

He added, “The kids are okay... They’re safe, and they’re uninjured. Everybody’s just happy and glad they were found.”

As for what happens now that the kids are found, safe and sound, is up to the Kansas Bureau of Investigation. While Ward and the Sheriff Department do not believe that there was any foul play, the KBI will ultimately determine what happened prior to the children going missing.

Attempts to contact the KBI agent in charge were unsuccessful as of press time.

To prevent future cases similar to this from happening, Ward concluded, “We strongly suggest that people know where your children are. Apparently, these guys just walked away from the house. I don’t wanna throw anybody under the bus and say they weren’t watching or whatever happened because I wasn’t there at the time. All I know is that they left the house and I guess, just like at Walmart, kids sneak away from you fast for whatever reason. We highly encourage all parents to remember to watch their children, even at home.”