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Mother of burn victim promotes fire-safety event

By **Jamie Jung**

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To help kick off National Fire Safety Awareness Week, Oct. 7 to 13, the Central Wisconsin Children's Museum, the Stevens Point Fire Department and Inspired by Family are teaming up with other area businesses and organizations to hold a fire and burn safety event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at CenterPoint MarketPlace.

The event is the brainchild of Hilary Bilbrey of Stevens Point, a mother of three who experienced every parent's worst nightmare about 41/2 years ago.

Her son Breck, then 18 months old, climbed into a bathtub in the family's home and turned on the hot water, scalding his lower body in a matter of seconds. Breck, now 6, sustained first-, second- and third-degree burns and has had to undergo two sets of skin grafts. And as he grows he will have to have more surgeries.

"Too many kids are getting hurt, and through this event we want to educate both kids and their parents on burn and fire safety," Bilbrey said. "I want families to communicate and be proactive about safety."

The event will include information on hot water, kitchen and campfire safety and general fire safety. It will include virtual fire extinguisher demonstrations; a safety house demonstration in which children can go through a smoke-filled house; and a sprinkler demonstration in which the Fire Department will set two rooms on fire, one with a sprinkler system and one without to show the difference in damage. Stevens Point firefighters will be on hand to meet with children, and emergency vehicles will be on display.

Bilbrey also will sign copies of her book, "Brecker



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Hilary Bilbrey reads to her son Breck, right, and his kindergarten class at St. Stanislaus School from a book she wrote after her son suffered burns when he was 18 months old. *THOMAS KUJAWSKI/STEVENS POINT JOURNAL*

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Schedule of events

10 a.m. -- Safety house demonstration, JCPenney parking lot; demonstrations open, CenterPoint MarketPlace

10:45 a.m. -- Virtual fire extinguisher demonstration, CenterPoint MarketPlace

11 a.m. -- Safety house demonstration, JCPenney parking lot; book signing for "Brecker Bunny Learns to be Careful!," until 1 p.m., CenterPoint MarketPlace

11:45 a.m. -- Virtual fire extinguisher demonstration, CenterPoint MarketPlace

Noon -- Safety house demonstration, JCPenney parking lot

12:30 p.m. -- Sprinkler demonstration, JCPenney parking lot

1 p.m. -- Safety house demonstration, JCPenney parking lot

1:45 p.m. -- Virtual fire extinguisher demonstration, CenterPoint MarketPlace

2 p.m. -- Demonstrations close

Bunny Learns to be Careful!," which teaches children about fire and burn safety. One thousand copies of the story will be given away to those who attend.

"My husband and I, we read all the books, we thought we knew everything we needed to know, and we still made a mistake," Bilbrey said of Breck's accident. "Hopefully through this event, one more child will not be burned, one more child will not pull hot water out of a microwave."

There also will be several give-aways at the event said Tonya Kowalski, education coordinator for the Children's Museum, including smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, glow sticks to light up jack-o'-lanterns and for trick-or-treating, and other safety devices.

"We want parents to become aware of products that are available to prevent injuries," Kowalski said. "I don't think a lot of parents realize just how many things could be a burn factor."

Organizers are hoping to make this an annual event.

"God gave us this story, this gift," Bilbrey said. "The only way I can deal with it is to educate families by using our story and hopefully we can prevent a situation like this from happening in the future."

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