

County fair's family mourns Freak accident claims caretaker

By ASHLEY PHILLIPS
Gazette Staff Writer

Members of the Ross County Fair family were trying to find a way Wednesday to deal with the sudden, tragic loss of a person close to their hearts.

Michael Retherford, 60, caretaker of the fairgrounds for the past five years, died Wednesday morning in a freak accident at the fairgrounds.

According to a Ross County Sheriff's report, Retherford was in the garage area beside the Pickaway Ross Vocational Technology Center building when the accelerator of an all-terrain Trail Hand Model TH 4400 vehicle got stuck while in reverse and Retherford was either dragged or thrown off the machine when it struck the building wall.

He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Ross County Fair Board president Rick Ginther said losing him was close to losing family.

"We looked at Mike as more than an employee, but family, and it really hurts that he is gone," he said.

Retherford has been described as a man who never met a stranger, simply because of his warm, charismatic smile.

"He was one of my better friends, and we talked daily," Ginther said. "It really hasn't hit me that he is gone just yet."

Filling Retherford's shoes is not going to be an easy task.

"It's going to be hard to find someone to replace him," Ginther said.

Other friends of Retherford also expressed their shock in losing a man that has been described as someone who loved his job.

"He enjoyed having everyone in his backyard, which he referred to the fairgrounds as," said Mike Haller.

Having known him for more than 20 years, Haller described him as a man who always kept a smile on his face and someone who was very nice to know.

(Phillips can be reached at 772-9376 or via e-mail at phillips@nncogannett.com)