

# Rescue squad saves Marshall teen from floodwaters

## County experiences extensive flooding

**BY GRACE BOATRIGHT JACHIM**  
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Marshall County saw extensive flooding in the wake of significant rain-fall over the weekend. Among the most impacted areas was a portion of U.S. 641 North, where a variety of businesses saw water damage.

While Benton Ford has seen flooding before, owner Todd Rea said even the previous owners had never seen flooding to the extent of what occurred on Feb. 16.

“We bought this dealership back a year and a half [ago] and bought it from the Solomon family,” Rea said. “They’ve been here since the mid-60s...their grandfather started it, Leon Riley. They did have a flood back in, I think it was ‘93, but the Solomon family still works here, and they said it’s the worst they had ever seen it.”

Rea said that about 30 vehicles are “unredeemable” due to flood damage. However, he estimated they were able to move around 80% of the vehicles on the lot to the dealership’s second location in town.

While much of the flooding along U.S. 641 North was due to the Clarks River rising, the impact at Benton Ford was also due to a levee behind the facility breaking.

“Behind the building here, there’s a portion of a dam the Corps of Engineers had built, and it broke, so there’s a hole in the dam,” Rea said. “So, we’ve got to work to get that plugged up, if you will, because if the rain comes again, it’s just going to happen again.”

Many other businesses in the northern area of Benton also sustained flood damage. However, the flooding impacted more than just local businesses. The Marshall County Rescue Squad responded to three separate calls on Feb. 16, one for a juvenile who was swept away while riding a four wheeler.

Ashlee Estes described the feeling of watching first responders come to her son’s aid as she calmed her daughter as among the most difficult things she has endured.

“It’s very hard, I tell you. I’ve never cried and prayed, I don’t think, so hard in my entire life,” Estes said. “You know, to know that my child was in there and I was helpless, there was nothing I could do. But, there were gentlemen there that are trained, and, like you say, it’s their want in life to be there for people and to help them and save people. So you just, you should step back, and let them do what they do, you know, and just pray that they all come out safe, and that they’re able



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**The flooding in the area of U.S. 641 North in Benton was exacerbated by a levee behind Benton Ford breaking.**

to rescue them.”

Estes’ son Layne Bullock and his friend Landon Copeland had spent Sunday much like they spend any other weekend. The boys had taken off on a four wheeler to assess the damage the storms had done to the Soldier Creek area.

“It was a beautiful day,” Estes said. “Yes, we had flood warnings, [but] it was not raining. It was not doing anything outside. It was a beautiful day, and they’re 14-year-old boys that hunt and fish, and that’s just what they did. They love to get outdoors and go, and like I said, my husband and I, we’re just the same. Half the time, if we’re at home and it’s come a weather or whatever, we get out on our side-by-side, and we ride around just to check out the neighborhood, make sure nobody’s in trouble, or, you know, that everybody’s OK.”

Bullock echoed his mother’s sentiments, saying he and Copeland had just intended to survey the damage.

“He [Copeland] spent the night at my house, and we wanted to go see all the flooding and see what it looked like,” Bullock said. “We went to one spot first, and we saw it, and then we kind of went, headed towards the other spot. Whenever we got there, it did not look as deep as I thought it was, and I went off in there. It kind of — I tried to get out of it, and I got out of it, and then we was trying to go back the other way, and then it just kind of slid off. The current pushed me off into the ditch, and it kind of just went from there.”

Copeland managed to get off of the four wheeler before it and Bullock were swept away, leaving him to call for help.

“I knew that I wasn’t going to be able to do anything without getting myself stuck either,” Copeland said. “So, I was just calling his mom and everybody, telling her that, first I called because the four wheeler got stuck, and then, after that, before the four wheeler got stuck, he drifted off with the four wheeler. So then, I called her back, and I was like, ‘Y’all need to hurry up and get down here,’ because he was

holding onto that branch, and it just took them longer and longer, it felt like. I kept calling, he was getting more worried. I just...not a good experience, watching your best friend out there struggling.”

Estes called 911 as she and her husband drove out to the boys, and members of the Marshall County Rescue Squad and the local volunteer fire departments responded immediately.

“We look up, and here comes this man walking down the street with a pair of waders, and I thought, ‘Well, it’s a neighbor just bringing us some waders to try and help,’ ” Estes said. “He come up and he said, ‘Ma’am, help’s on the way, I promise.’ He said, ‘Everything’s OK.’ He said, ‘I heard the call come in, I’m with Marshall County Fire and Rescue,’ or rescue department, and he said, ‘We’re going to get him out.’ He said, ‘They’re on their way.’”

More responders arrived shortly thereafter, and Marshall County Rescue Squad Chief Kenny Pratt was ultimately the one to reach Bullock.

“There was a lot of moving water,” Pratt said. “There was a pretty good current running through there. We could see that they were in trouble, obviously seeing the young man clinging to a tree and in desperate need. Our main concern was that he probably couldn’t hold on a whole lot longer, so we needed to get him as quickly as we could.”

As he approached Bullock, the water was over Pratt’s head, and he was forced to swim to reach Bullock.

“I was actually swimming,” Pratt said. “Once I made contact with him, I was not touching the ground. So, I was actually swimming at that point, and I had to grab onto him. Of course, he did not want to let go of the tree, but I tried to tell him, ‘I’ve got to get you out of here.’”

The other rescuers were able to pull Pratt and Bullock back to safety with a rope. Bullock was one of three rescues made by the rescue squad on Sunday. Pratt said the squad was also



Marshall County Sheriff’s Office photo

**Rescue Squad Chief Kenny Pratt reaches 14-year-old Layne Bullock after he was swept away by floodwaters on Feb. 16, in Marshall County.**



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**Landon Copeland and Layne Bullock began their Sunday afternoon just like many others, on a four wheeler. The boys’ mothers are both happy to have them home safe, following their run in with the floodwaters.**

called to assist in the rescues of two vehicles in water over the course of the day.

While Bullock made it out alive, he, his family, and first responders are urging everyone to move with caution as snowfall and dangerous cold is forecast in the coming days.

“Nobody wakes up and says, ‘Hey, today’s gonna

be a day I have a bad day,’ ” Pratt said. “You know, fortunately, there was a lot of things that happened. His friend was able to call his family, and then they were able to call 911, and thankfully he was strong enough to hold on to that tree until I was able to get to him.”

While multiple rescues were made, and several businesses suffered dam-

age, Emergency Management Director Curt Curtner said he has received no reports of major damage to any homes, only reports of basements flooding and trees down. However, Curtner is encouraging anyone with any damage to take photos and document the damage before repairing it, in case FEMA aid becomes available.

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Copies of plans and specifications may be obtained from Lynn Imaging, 328 Old Vine Street, Lexington, KY 40507 (800.888.0693 Phone 859.252.4178 Fax and [distribution@lynnimaging.com](mailto:distribution@lynnimaging.com)). If potential bidders require a hard copy of the documents, the bidder shall be responsible for all printing and shipping costs.

**THE FORM OF PROPOSAL AND PROPOSAL ENVELOPE MUST BE REQUESTED FROM THE CONSTRUCTION MANAGER** (Alliance Corporation, 116 E. College Street, Glasgow, KY 42141 Phone 270.651.8848, Fax 270.651.2915). All bids shall be submitted only on the Form of Proposal and in the Envelope prepared by the Construction Manager. The Proposal Envelope will have the Project and respective Bid Package(s) number affixed.

**A pre-bid conferences will be held on Thursday, February 27 at the Graves County Board of Education, 2290 State Route 121 N, Mayfield, KY 42066 at 10:00 a.m. (local time).**