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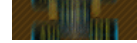


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SUV crashes into Boys & Girls Club

ANGELA FRANZER • THE DESERT SUN • JUNE 4, 2008

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Heidi Gerling, unit director for the Palm Springs Boys and Girls Club, picked the right week to be out of town.


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Around 9 a.m. Wednesday, a green BMW X5 crashed into Gerling's office at the Pathfinder Children's Center, which is part of the Palm Springs Boys & Girls Club at 450 S. Sunrise Way.

The driver, 82-year-old William Deutsch, was traveling south on Sunrise Way when he blacked out, drove through the center median and crashed into a wall, said Mark Avner, battalion chief for the Palm Springs Fire Department.

Gerling was in Seattle helping her parents move.

"I'm normally there every morning around 8:30.

I've been learning a lot lately that things happen for a reason," Gerling told The Desert Sun in a phone interview Wednesday afternoon.

"All I have is a text message picture of it. I thank God the kids weren't there."

Deutsch, who is a part-time Palm Springs resident, suffered only minor abrasions and was taken to Desert Regional Medical Center.

He was not cited, according to Palm Springs police. Alcohol and drugs were not factors in the collision.

Alanna Reichle, Police Activities Officer for the Palm Springs Police Department was working in the other end of the Boys and Girls Club when the crash happened.

"He said he blacked out and the next thing he knew he was in the building," Reichle said.

Reichle, who also works as a medic for the AMR ambulance company, called 911 and then rendered aid.

Jose Gonzalez saw the crash from across the street.

"The driver didn't seem to have any reaction," Gonzalez said. "He didn't hit the brakes. The car looked like a grasshopper. It was all over the place,"

Dean Moore, Chief Professional Officer for the Boys and Girls Club said the staff was shocked and disappointed by the incident, but were glad no one was injured.

"Buildings can be rebuilt," he said.



A BMW X5 ran into an office at the Pathfinder Children's Center Wednesday morning. (Angela Franzer, The Desert Sun)

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A small, black dog who was also riding in the SUV was not injured, although it was "scared to death," Palm Springs Animal Control officer Ted Nickerson said.

Rabbits inside the center were also OK, however some fish from shattered aquariums did not survive.

The Pathfinder Children's Center serves about 150 first- through fifth-graders each day during after-school hours.

Through the media and school officials, most parents of those children heard about the crash and their children did not come to the center, Moore said. A few still were picked up by the club's bus and spent time at the teen center until their parents could pick them up.

The city has cleared the building for safety and the center will be open today, Moore said.

Those interested in making donations to the center can call 325-3160.

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