

Staff photos by Dominick J. Rebeck Jr.

Sadique Powell, 2, pets Buck, a Doberman pinscher the county uses to get children to buckle their seatbeats.

Getting kids to buckle up for Buck

By JOYCE VANAMAN

For The Press

Whether he's at the Cumberland County Fair, a shopping center or a school, it's obvious that Buck, "The Buckle-Up Dog," is a star.

After all, he has his picture on a card— just like famous athletes — and he's featured in the coloring book, "Stay Safe — Buck Will Teach You The 5 Safety Rules."

Kids and adults alike eagerly pet the black and rust, 105-pound, almost 2-and-a-half-year-old Doberman pinscher. Buck lives in Maurice River Township with his family — Bill and Chris Ward Garrison and his sister, Stella.

Buck likes traveling all over the county with Bill Garrison, traffic safety coordinator for the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department.

"Buck is a big, goofy and lovable dog, but he does have two bad habits," Garrison said. "He loves to eat, and if anyone is holding food and he can reach it, he'll steal it. He also loves stuffed animals. At a special event at the Wal-Mart store in Carlls Corner, there was a man dressed as a furry bear. Buck grabbed his hand and thought it was the best stuffed animal he had seen."

But Buck looks very dignified in his work outfit, an orange vest with a pouch to hold his cards and a colorful blue scarf.

Buck made such an impression on the first-grade students he visited during the past school year throughout the county that while he and Garrison were at the county fair, several youngsters ran up to them eager to pet Buck and show him to their parents.

The message Buck and Garrison deliver has been so well-received that plans are being developed for a children's picture book. Illustrations will

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Bill Garrison

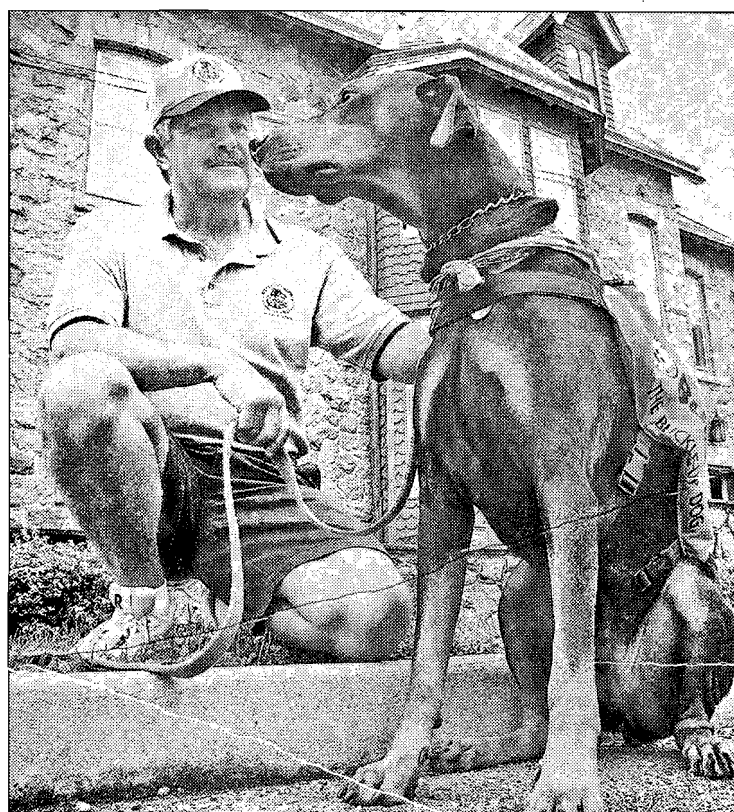
artist who illustrated the coloring book, and the text will be by Judith Brett, a retired Millville English teacher.

While Buck, the Buckle-Up Dog, was Garrison's idea, he credits the approximately 40-member Cumberland County Sheriff's Traffic Safety Task Force with coming up with many of the innovative programs, posters and signs to promote traffic safety. The members include police, rescue, hospital, roads department personnel and others in the county.

One of the most eye-catching signs is "You Can't Afford To Pass This in Cumberland County" and shows a school bus.

An attention-getting poster reads: "You Buckle Them So We Don't Have To." At the top, a family is buckling a child in a child seat. At the bottom, two Rescue Squad members are buckling a child on a gurney — a child who had not been buckled in a car seat. Like much of the traffic safety materials, there are posters in Spanish and English.

Garrison, 59, has twin daughters from a previous marriage and three grandchildren. One of them, Connor



Bill Garrison travels throughout the county with his dog as part of a safety program run by the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department's Traffic Safety Task Force.

Buck's Five Safety Rules

- Buckle your seatbelt.
- Buckle your bike helmet.
- Walk facing traffic; ride with traffic.
- Cross at intersections.
- Be safe; be seen.

fic safety poster children.

A former Millville police officer, Garrison retired in 1996 after serving for 25 years. The last seven years were in the Traffic Safety Bureau. Prior to joining the Police Department, where his father, George, had served for 27 years, Garrison served three years in the Marine Corps. This included eight months in Vietnam where he was a gunner in a helicopter.

Garrison, an avid hunter, has hunted big game in Zimbabwe, elk in the western United States

in Quebec, Canada. He also enjoys fishing and is heading for Alaska to fish for salmon and halibut.

He and his wife, Chris, have been on six Earth Watch expeditions, including in Poland, Alaska and Hawaii. Garrison also enjoys birdwatching, traveling, history, woodworking and gardening.

Garrison is a graduate of Millville High School, Cumberland County College and Thomas Edison State College where he majored in