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Concern of mom, friends helped Dustin Gamble

By BRIAN GADD
Times Recorder

ZANESVILLE — If Dustin Gamble didn't know it already, he does now. He has some of the best friends in the whole world.

Two of those friends, Perry Collins, 18, and Seth Curry, 16, left classes at Maysville High School early Thursday morning to aid in the search for Dustin, who had been missing since Wednesday after-

Man has surgery day after mine shaft fall

noon.

Dustin had been riding his 4-wheeler on the Midwest Portland Cement property Wednesday afternoon, when he fell down an old mine shaft. He was found by his mother, Jill Gamble, about 9:30 a.m. Thursday and was later pulled from the pit at 11:46 a.m. He se-

verely broke his right leg and had surgery at Genesis Health Care's Good Samaritan Medical Center to insert stabilizing pins Friday afternoon.

"My mom's a good little detective," a groggy Dustin said Friday before surgery. "I knew she would find me. And I knew the guys, including

Perry, Seth and my stepdad Carl, would be out looking too.

"But I didn't try to jump a gap, like someone said before," Dustin added. "I came up to the hole and it started to open up, and I jumped off the bike to save myself and avoid going down (the shaft). But I ended up going down anyway."

Collins was deeply concerned that he hadn't heard from Dustin by Thursday morning, but went on to school early anyway. Later, Collins and Curry left school around 8 a.m. to search for their friend.

Dustin's mom finally got hold of Collins and they put their heads together to make sense of Dustin's disappearance.

"If it hadn't been for the clues Per-

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GAMBLE: Youths scoured area to find their missing friend

ry and Dustin's mom put together, we would still be looking elsewhere," Curry said, clues that included Dustin's pager, wallet, sneakers and a missing 4-wheeler. "I was just glad Perry came and got me at school."

"We had both been thinking about it and we knew we had to do something," Collins said. "Paul Frederick (Maysville High School principal) stopped us before we left the school and asked me 'is it worth it, going out looking for your friend, putting graduation on the line and missing another day of school?' We said, yes it is, because anything could have happened to our friend out there.

"We've been friends for a long time, and there is nothing I wouldn't do for him," Collins went on.

"He's been just like a brother to me. How could I not go looking for him?"

Collins said among other signs that something had happened to Gamble, he noticed that Dustin had left without his good pair of sneakers.

"Dustin's stepdad (Carl Gamble) had said he thought Dustin might have gone off with a girl or something," said Collins. "But I knew he wouldn't go anywhere without looking his best, and that included his shoes."

Collins and Curry scoured the Midwest Portland Cement lands near Blue Hole for any sign of Dustin, not knowing that they were in as much danger as their fallen friend.

"We had been riding out there

about a month ago, and the land was firm and we had no problems," Collins and Curry both agreed. "The rains we have had lately will do that to the ground out there. But the way the sun was Thursday, the ground was crumbling and we could have been in trouble. But we didn't care, he was our friend, and we didn't know if he was alive or dead."

The pair relaxed a little after Jill Gamble, who was riding the rough terrain on horseback, galloped up and informed them that Dustin was all right.

"She showed us where he was and we waited by the hole in the ground for her to come back with help," Collins said. "We were just glad to see him, and he us. He was so far down, we didn't know how bad he was."

Curry took off his flannel shirt and threw it down the gaping hole to Gamble, who was obviously chilled from his night underground.

"It was the least I could do, giving him something to put on," Curry said. "I think they said he had hypothermia or something, from being out there all night. All I know is, he was in pain but good spirits, joking a little."

Collins said that if they had it to do over, he and Curry would go right back out again.

"We're all good friends, and we stick by each other," said Collins. "Neither one of us could care less if we have to go to Saturday school for that school day. Dustin's our friend and we would do anything to help him out."

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