



## State cuts affect three BHS clubs

Written by MIKE FERGUSON Baker City Herald May 28, 2009 12:00 am

Baker High School students who have demonstrated their leadership abilities are learning a hard lesson during the legislative budget season.

Students can scale lofty heights — Baker's Mallory Bailey is, after all, the state president of the Future Business Leaders of America, while her friend Tori Wirth is a regional vice-president — but the view from the top can be a little terrifying.

Especially when the Legislature yanks their funding out from under their feet.

Last week the co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Margaret Carter, D-Portland, and Rep. Peter Buckley, D-Ashland, announced that their proposed budget would eliminate \$375,604 annually that helped pay for travel, workshops, competitions and other events for seven high school leadership programs, including three groups at Baker High School — the aforementioned FBLA, the FFA program and the Family Career and Community Leaders of America, or FCCLA. Combined, the groups are home to about 100 Baker High School students.

The lack of funding won't do away with the programs at Baker High School but they will hamper them, four student leaders said Wednesday.

Nicole Markgraf, a senior and past president of the Baker FFA club, said the funding cuts will mean Baker's approximately 40 FFA students will have to work harder to raise money to attend regional workshops, leadership camps, and the state and national convention.

Those events are important in helping FFA students develop skills in public speaking, thinking on their feet — and leadership in general, she said.

Markgraf said she's also concerned with what can happen to her younger schoolmates if they end up dropping out of FFA.

"I think more kids will get in trouble and make bad choices," she said.

Meagan Paoletti said she worries that the dozen-member chapter she leads, FCCLA, a service-oriented club that this year concentrated on making this part of the world a greener place, won't get to travel as much next year.

Budget cuts will also mean that FCCLA will schedule more fundraisers next year. The most popular this school year, the selling of butter braids ("It's like a pastry," Paoletti explained) could be expanded next year.

Bailey, elected state FBLA president this spring, went to the Capitol last month to testify in front of the Ways and Means Committee.

Her trip nearly went for naught — she almost didn't get to testify.

"They only listened to me because I'd come 350 miles," she said.

Bailey told the committee that while she spoke for FBLA, committee members would hear similar testimony from members of the other six clubs, which collectively form the Oregon Career Technical Student Organizations.

"You may know someone like me. I am an epileptic," Bailey testified. "I received this diagnosis while in eighth grade, and for the two years following my neurologist placed me on a heavy depressant medication that ultimately altered my personality. I didn't want to do anything. I didn't want to leave my shell during these two years.

"Then, during my freshman year, I was recruited to join my local chapter of FBLA and that is when my life changed. ...

"Now, three years after my first introduction to FBLA, I am the newly elected state president of Oregon FBLA and sit before you to tell you that I firmly believe I am who I am because of the influence of FBLA," which she described as "the premier student business leadership organization" which "focuses on preparing our members for careers in business, entrepreneurship and information technology. ... Through our program students are able to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real life business situations and scenarios."

Oregon's 78 FBLA chapters are home to 2,200 members who, Bailey told the committee, "give back through community service projects, learn about business leadership and our economic system and learn to look ahead to their future by setting goals and working toward achieving them."

The loss of funding, she believes, "will have a ripple effect throughout Oregon. It will mean not only the loss of opportunity today, but the future would be drastically different because the knowledge and skills we gain as members of these organizations that prepare us for the future would no longer be available."

"We're exceeding what people expect from us," Bailey said Wednesday on the next-to-last day of school. "For those of us who aren't involved in sports, this is our outlet. If this goes away, what will happen to people like us? What will it mean for today's first-graders?"

At Baker High School, FBLA has almost 50 members. The chapter seeks to "be an even bigger part of the community," Wirth said, by sponsoring such activities as a career day she and Bailey organized earlier in the school year, as well as this spring's March of Dimes fundraiser.

While the students say they're cognizant that donor fatigue can set in at area businesses when too many organizations ask the business community for help, Markgraf noted that the FFA chapter also has figured out a way to give back.

It's using part of the proceeds from its annual barbecue to establish the Baker FFA Helping Hands fund. When the local chapter learns of a particular need in the community, a board can decide to make a contribution, she said.

Bailey said she hopes Baker-area residents will rally to the cause of the clubs and contact their local legislator.

"They may not sit on the Ways and Means Committee," she said, "but they know people who do."

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