F.I.R.E.
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Jordan Gilbert
Sylvia Marr

Hidden Valley High School
Partnership With Business
Chapter 3865
2013-2014
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Introduction

Over the summer of 2013, the majority of Josephine County lay under a blanket of smoke. The residents of Josephine County are accustomed to summer fires because the typical weather pattern consists of rainy winters and dry summers. Fire season starts in March and continues through October. Firefighters will tell you that thunderstorms can be a blessing or a curse depending on weather conditions; this year proved to be the latter. One night of lightning strikes started fires that burned a total of 74,327 acres at a cost of $75 million to the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Compounding the problem, a temperature inversion resulting from cold air being trapped under a warmer air layer caused the smoke to remain in the Rogue Valley for over two months. The smoke came to the valley at such a high rate that in a matter of just a few hours the sun was no longer visible. At the beginning of the day the sun would rise through smoky skies as a red glowing disk, a bit of beauty amid the fear and frustration of Josephine County residents.

This smoke didn't stay for a few days like a normal forest fire; it lasted for several months. Smoke resulting from the fires was so thick that the air quality reached extremely unhealthy levels soaring from a normal 0-50 parts per million to past 200-300 parts per million. Josephine County was in a hazardous air quality zone for six days and remained in the unhealthy category for over two months.
Josephine County’s economy is driven by tourists seeking outdoor experiences. With the fires burning and the valley filled with choking smoke, tourists were forced to look elsewhere for vacation options. Many local residents and tourists mentioned they had no choice but to leave town due to the smoky conditions. People who saw the fire reports on the news immediately thought the area was a no-go zone, and even though many tourists come back year after year, they didn’t desire to enter the thick suffocating smoke.

Businesses suffered from more than just a loss of travelers. Galice Resort, a local tourist destination, stated they usually had about 1,000 customers a day during this time of year, but fell to about six a day due to the fires. A quote from the resort manager, “The fires hit so fast and so hard . . . that it seemed like tourists just fled the sight of town.” With the summer experience still vivid in their minds, Hidden Valley High School (HVHS) students Jordan Gilbert, Sylvia Marr, and Rachel Loughran initiated the Partnership with Business Project (PWB) called Firefighters In Real Education (F.I.R.E.).
Description of the Partnership

Team F.I.R.E.’s leaders began the project by meeting with their advisors to determine what the team could do to help the fire departments of Josephine County. It was decided that the best way to help the fire departments would be to raise funds for needed equipment. In return, they would assist in educating students about firefighting. The team’s next step was to conduct a needs assessment to identify what the fire districts would need over the next five years in order to keep this community safe. This partnership turned out to be more complex than initially was thought. In Josephine County there are three different types of fire agencies: private, government funded, and volunteer. The private fire agency in Josephine County is Rural/Metro Fire Department. Partnering with a private business offered a better look into the business side of firefighting.

The team contacted all six area fire departments to ask for their cooperation in the assessment. Rural/Metro Fire Department, Applegate Valley Fire District, Williams Fire/Rescue, Grants Pass Fire/Rescue Operations Division, Illinois Valley Fire District, and Wolf Creek Fire District are the six departments in the county. Once the stations showed interest in pursuing a partnership, the team discussed how everyone involved would benefit. The decision to partner together resulted in the needs assessment being completed in twenty individual fire stations to determine their need for fire apparatus, fire equipment, medical equipment, and station improvements over the next five years. This 120-page report indicated that over $11 million was needed for new or replacement equipment during this five-year period. Though some of this equipment will be funded through tax revenues for the departments, most will need to come through grants and other sources.

In order to apply for any sort of funding, Team F.I.R.E. first needed to learn how to write grants. The team attended a grant writing workshop conducted by a local non-profit, the Josephine County Foundation. After the workshop, grant request letters were written by the team and sent out to 86 different corporations and foundations. The list of the 86 corporations and foundations was supplied to the team by the Josephine County Foundation. From these letters there were six responses as of May 2, 2014.
Goals of the Partnership

The F.I.R.E. team and the fire departments had a specific set of attainable goals centering around two main points: to educate students about the business of firefighting, and to raise $60,000 in grants for the departments to purchase firefighting equipment over the next two years. These two goals were seen as mutually beneficial to the team and the firefighters. One of the top priorities was to educate students. In order to accomplish the first goal the team needed to have supporting goals: total school involvement and total chapter involvement. The second goal also needed a supporting goal of sending grant application request letters to at least eighty different foundations and companies.

Partnership Goals

1. Raise $60,000 over the next two years
   a. Apply to 80 companies and foundations

2. Educate students
   a. Fire Expo Day
   b. Job Shadows

3. School and Chapter Involvement
   a. School-wide assembly

4. Community awareness of needs
   a. Needs Assessment
## Roles of Student and Business Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Fire Departments</th>
<th>Hours Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Job Shadow Materials</td>
<td>- Contact Mike Shaw of Rural Metro</td>
<td>- Estimated Time 252 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Setting up first enrichment obstacle course</td>
<td>- Contact Mike Kuntz of Applegate and Williams Fire Dept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assembly PowerPoint approval and Speaker approval</td>
<td>- Writing Grant Request Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- First Enrichment Small Gym Request</td>
<td>- Contact Brian Pike of Grants Pass Fire</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Approval for extrication</td>
<td>- Contact John O'Connors of Oregon Department of Forestry</td>
<td>- Estimated Time 252 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Publicize through the high school</td>
<td>- Writing Grant Request Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fire Expo Day setup and teardown</td>
<td>- Organizing where job shadow members were going</td>
<td>- Estimated Time 236 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provision of extrication equipment, fire truck, and firefighter gear</td>
<td>- Mailing Grant Request Letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assembly speakers and information</td>
<td>- Volunteering for Fire Expo Day</td>
<td>- Estimated Time 30 Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Permission for students to go on job shadows</td>
<td></td>
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Planning: Activities to Implement

Project F.I.R.E. had two different parts on the education side, a Fire Expo Day and job shadows. In planning the Expo Day the F.I.R.E. team had to seek approval from school administration. Once Vice Principal Dickens-Turk’s approval was obtained, the project was able to advance. While preparing for Fire Expo Day, the team worked primarily with Mike Shaw and Austin Prince from Rural/Metro Fire Department. There were two components to Fire Expo Day. The first was to educate students about the business of wild land firefighting, and the second was to provide some fun activities to help students understand the demands that come with being a firefighter.

Activities included a vehicle extrication, an agility course, and extinguisher education. During the day there was an assembly including talks by five different experts in the field of firefighting. These speakers discussed the business of wild land and “big city” or structure-based firefighting. Student and member education outside of the classroom was one of the main goals of F.I.R.E. The Fire Expo Day was during school hours on January 22, 2014. Having the event during school accomplished a goal of 100% chapter and school involvement.

Mike Shaw and Austin Prince from Rural/Metro Fire Department helped with the logistics of Fire Expo Day and were keen on the success of this endeavor. Their interest was a key part of why the F.I.R.E. team went to them for the final aspect of the partnership: job shadows for the FBLA members. Rural/Metro has three major stations, all of which Mr. Shaw and Mr. Prince pushed to get permission for FBLA members to use in order to see the differences between them.
The most challenging part of the job shadows was filling out the proper paperwork. Rural/Metro had their own Liability Release form and the F.I.R.E. team had to acquire and distribute this form to the students attending the job shadows. Rural/Metro required the students participating in job shadows provide their own transportation, which changed the amount of students who could participate. Each member had to make three copies of their signed form, one for the fire station, one for school administration, and one for FBLA records. Making sure that the team had enough liability release forms and that each of the five members had completed the paperwork was a time consuming but necessary task.

**Implementation**

Since the Fire Expo Day was scheduled to affect the entire school on January 22, 2014, the team needed to gather materials for the approximately 70 people who had signed up for the first part of the day: the vehicle extrication, agility course, truck show, and extinguisher education. Another 720 students were expected to attend the assembly with guest speakers. Mr. Shaw was the representative from Rural/Metro for the job shadows and for planning Fire Expo Day, he was incredibly important to the implementation of both of these events. The goal of both of these events was to teach the students of Hidden Valley High School about the career of firefighting and the many different parts to the job and business.

For the first twenty minutes of the F.I.R.E. Expo the seventy students watched an extrication of a junkyard car donated by Indian Creek Dismantlers. During the extrication—performed by the Williams and Applegate stations—Battalion Chief Mike Kuntz gave a narration of the steps that would be taken to free a victim. Students were taught about how the extrication gear is...
used and where specifically each piece goes. The students were then split into two different groups, the first one had several different forms of apparatus for students to explore and the second group participated in a fire agility course and fire education games.

Rural/Metro educated students in the first group about how to use an extinguisher on a fire. They also learned about the apparatus the firefighters use and what each piece does. The second group was in the gym participating in various fire education games and an agility course. Each game focused on a different part of a firefighter’s career. One of the games was a structural turnout dash, where students learned how the jacket and pants that comprise the turnouts protect firefighters while they are working. It also showed students how quickly firefighters need to dress to be prepared for emergencies and how difficult moving in the turnouts was. The agility course was made by Hidden Valley FBLA members and Applegate firefighters. The student with the fastest time from each event won a candy bar of their choice.

At the conclusion of working and teaching, the firefighters were left with the task of cleaning their equipment. Oxygen tanks had to be tested and refilled, fire hose had to be dried out and rolled up, fire engines needed to be re-equipped to go on call, and protective gear needed to be stowed away again. The students were also involved with these tasks. The F.I.R.E. team leaders were in charge of ensuring all of the glass was cleaned from the parking lot. The Fire Expo Day was a large scale learning experience for all of the FBLA members, the 720 students of Hidden Valley High School, and the community.

A pivotal piece of the project’s objectives and success was having the students realize the importance of the rescue workers’ jobs and the challenges and risks they face daily. Students gained a greater respect for and knowledge of firefighting by attending the Fire Expo Day.
With the job shadows, Rural/Metro requested only one participant per station for a period of four hours each. Limiting the number of participants allowed for a more in-depth experience and less distraction for the firefighters. There were four different stations that each student could go to, and each one showcased a different strength. When students arrived at their designated stations they were given a tour and educated about apparatus and morning procedures. Every job shadow had a different, unique experience, one student went on a medical aid in an ambulance and another served lunches to elementary school students as part of the department’s community outreach program. The job shadows were shown the different aspects of the firefighting career and business that are not often seen by civilians.

Future Business Leaders of America members that attended each job shadow were also educated about the business system of Rural/Metro Fire Department. Rural/Metro is a for profit business that is funded through home insurance—compared to the other rural firefighters that are completely volunteer.

A helicopter dropping into a local pond to get water in order to extinguish a lightening fire.
Results

Hidden Valley High School students gained incredible information and experiences from the Fire Expo Day and job shadows. The fire stations gained recognition and money to replace and purchase new equipment. The two main goals for this project were accomplished, as well as the supporting goals. Not only did the team educate the entire FBLA chapter, they also achieved a total school involvement.

The F.I.R.E. team has received $10,000 from The Oregon Community Foundation, $5,000 from the Chaney Family Foundation, $9,000 from the San Diego Fire Foundation, and $10,000 from Fireman’s Fund Insurance. An awards ceremony was held for the six departments of Josephine County on May 19, 2014. During that event a total of $32,780 was received by firefighters representing each station based on their needs-assessments. Before the grants were awarded, the team decided along with the firefighters what they would use the money for. A total of $1,220 remains as a starting balance for the coming year’s fundraising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Funded Need</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applegate Valley Fire District</td>
<td>10 Pagers</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants Pass Fire/Rescue Operations Division</td>
<td>1 Structural Turnout</td>
<td>$2,280.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois Valley Fire District</td>
<td>1 RAD-57 CO Monitor</td>
<td>$4,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Positive Pressure Vent Fan</td>
<td>$2,300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Metro Fire Department</td>
<td>3 Multigas/CO Detectors</td>
<td>$4,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams Fire/Rescue</td>
<td>5 Fire Hose Nozzles</td>
<td>$4,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Gate Valves</td>
<td>$1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf Creek Fire District</td>
<td>Fire Hose 1 ¾”</td>
<td>$4,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Handheld Radios</td>
<td>$4,400.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Funded** $32,780.00
Publicity

The multiple phases of publicity implemented were pivotal in making the project a success. The first part of publicity for the project started at the high school. Fire Expo Day was publicized through the school’s morning announcements, posters, and word of mouth throughout the school. The project also was featured in the monthly newsletter for Hidden Valley High School and the FBLA chapter newsletter. Articles were published on the Hidden Valley website and the FBLA Chapter website.

Once the project was publicized all around the school, the F.I.R.E. team set out to inform the community. The F.I.R.E. team contacted the local newspaper, The Daily Courier, and informed them about what the team was doing in partnership with the fire departments. The newspaper was not able to send a reporter because of a time conflict with another event. However, the team wrote a press release and the paper was thrilled to post it on their website. That article reached over 83,000 residents in their serving area, and an undetermined amount who browse the internet. The press release included a summary of the activities featured in the partnership and recognition of the businesses that participated in the events.

Not only did the team receive written publicity, but was also featured on the local news station. A KOBI-News 5 segment that showcases local events and projects, this program reached all of Southern Oregon and Northern California.
Evaluation by Students and Business Leaders

The success of the project was measured by the results; they showed that project F.I.R.E. had a lasting impression on the departments and students. The Oregon Department of Forestry, who sent three speakers for the Fire Expo Day, asked if they could be included in future events. Students enjoyed learning about the career and business of firefighting. Many knew what a firefighter does, but very few knew the entirety of the business and the Fire Expo Day and Job Shadows exposed these unseen aspects.

The need of the Josephine County fire departments was exposed to the entire community, and there has been an out-pouring of support by local business leaders to help fund these needs. Over the next two years the goal of $60,000.00 is capable of being accomplished, and the fundraising amount needed to reach this goal is $26,000.

One student, Jon Boyle even said, “I thought all they did was put water onto fire and get cats out of trees, I had no idea that they were such a big part of our community. When I went on my job shadow I got to see so much more, we served lunches to little kids and the on-duty officer taught me about how Rural/Metro is funded.” This was just one of the many positive comments that the F.I.R.E. team received after the job shadows and Fire Expo Day. The team themselves each saw the effects of the Fire Expo day and Jordan Gilbert said “I saw so many eyes and minds opened to this career. I am so proud of this project and the impact that it has had on our community and school.”

Hidden Valley High School students watching a guest speaker during the Fire Expo Day