



RUTH LONGORIA KINGSLAND/Daily Courier

Hidden Valley High school students Jordan Gilbert, Rachel Loughran and Sylvia Marr recently created a fundraising project for local firefighters that earned them second place in the national Future Business Leaders of America competition. It also raised more than \$35,000 so far for a two-year goal of \$60,000 for six local fire districts. The girls on Friday met with Grants Pass Fire Marshal Brian Pike, during a presentation at the Parkway Public Safety Center. Pictured from left are: Fire Corporal Cory Fox Pass; Gilbert and her father, Capt. Greg Gilbert, of Applegate and Rural/Metro fire departments; Pike holding a turnout (protective coat, pants and boots, such as the two sets the department will purchase with funds raised), Loughran and Marr.

Student leaders' efforts benefit fire departments

Six local fire departments received a combined total of \$35,000 last week as the first installment of a two-year \$60,000 fundraising goal set by Hidden Valley High School students Jordan Gilbert, Rachel Loughran and Sylvia Marr. Gilbert and Loughran graduated this year, and Marr is a sophomore.

The girls met with Grants Pass Fire Marshal Brian Pike and other local firefighters on Friday at Grants Pass' Parkway Public Safety Center to turn over the funds.

Gilbert, Loughran and Marr are part of the HVHS chapter of Future Business Leaders of America and the Josephine County Foundation, a student-led nonprofit created three years ago by local students. The foundation involves students from Josephine County's public and private high schools and raises money for needs in the county.

The girls recently came in second place in FBLA's national competition for their fundraising project that involved grant writing and working with six local fire departments to assess needs and create way to help firefighters.

The idea was sparked by the wildfires that destroyed more than 70,000 acres of Southern Oregon last summer, said Gabrielle Pendleton, a 21-year-old Oregon State University student who is interning with the Josephine County Foundation this summer. Pendleton is a 2011 HVHS graduate and the daughter of the high school's FBLA adviser, Chris Pendleton.

Gilbert and Loughran are daughters of firefighters and wanted to do what they could to help out.

Marr, whose family owns a local business, Motel Del Rogue, said her family also was impacted by the fires, due to smoke, lack of tourism and revenue.

"The fires affected the whole community," she said.

But for firefighters, the day-to-day experiences last summer beat up and destroyed a lot of equipment, and replacement needs became great, Gilbert said.

"Radios, turnout gear, hoses, anything they used got used a lot, and it takes a lot of money to replace those things," she said.

Funds raised were distributed to the fire departments based on need and distance from a tax base, Loughran explained.

"It was a pretty wonderful feeling," Loughran said, of giving thousands of dollars raised to the local fire departments.

Each department was able to select what they needed the most, on which to spend the funds. Applegate will buy 10 firefighter pagers; Illinois Valley will purchase carbon monoxide detectors and commercial-grade air cleaning fans; Rural/Metro also plans to buy carbon monoxide detectors; Williams will get two gate valves and five fire hose nozzles; and Wolf Creek will purchase one fire hose and three handheld radios.

Grants Pass Fire and Rescue will purchase two sets of new turnouts — firefighter coats, pants and boots.

Firefighters are provided with two sets of turnouts, which allows for one to wear and another while the other set is cleaned. The sets must be replaced every 10 years, as that's all the manufacturer guarantees them for, Fox said.

Pike said the students' project was a great benefit to local firefighters.

"This adds to our safety and (the turnouts) are our No. 1 line of defense," he said.

• **FREE BACK-TO-SCHOOL BACKPACKS AND SUPPLIES.** The start of the school year may be several weeks away, but the time to get prepared is coming up soon.

Between noon and 2 p.m. on Saturday, about 290 free backpacks filled with school supplies will be given away on a first-come-first-served basis as part of The Cellular Connection's annual free backpack and supplies giveaway at Verizon Wireless' The Cellular Connection, 142 N.E. Terry Lane, in Grants Pass.

Across the country, about 100,000 backpacks will be given out at more than 350 of The Cellular Connection's stores.

In addition to funds from the company and its employees, customers also helped finance the project through rounding up purchase totals, with the difference going directly to the backpacks and supplies purchases.

"The backpack giveaway is a huge part of TCC's Culture of Good movement that's all about making a positive impact on employees while benefiting the world," said Scott Moorehead, president and CEO of The Cellular Connection.

There are no income requirements, but expect lines, so come early.

"Last year, there were long lines pouring out the door," said Megan Custodio of Dittoe Public Relations, which promotes the national event.

Each child at the event will receive one backpack — as long as supplies last. Parents cannot receive a backpack for a child not in attendance, Custodio said.

• **OPERATION CHILL GIVING SLURPEES TO GOOD KIDS.** Kids will get their just desserts — free Slurpees from 7-Eleven — if they're caught practicing random acts of kindness this summer by Grants Pass police.

The convenience store chain developed "Operation Chill" as a way to reward positive behavior and enhance relations between children and law enforcement, by providing officers with Slurpee coupons to hand out to youth observed doing something helpful, deterring crime, or participating in an activity that is positive for the community.

The 7-Eleven store in downtown Grants Pass provided 500 free Slurpee coupons for this year's program.

Grants Pass Public Safety Officer Lesley Donaghy said the program has been going on for a few years in Grants Pass and has been quite successful in locating many good kids doing good things.

On a recent Saturday morning, officers gave out rewards to kids at the skate park. "The kids all had helmets on and were doing what they should be doing," she said, adding one child at the park who received a free Slurpee coupon told her of a friend who had helped out another child with special needs. He got one too.

• **VINEYARD CHRISTIAN HOLDS OPEN HOUSE.** If you're interested in learning more about a local, private Christian school, an open house is planned from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Aug. 7 at Vineyard Christian School, 275 Potts Way, in Grants Pass. The school serves families with children from preschool through high school. For more information, call 541-479-9649 or visit www.vineyardchristianschoolgp.com.

