

# Student labors help craft IV trail

By Ruth Longoria Kingsland

of the Daily Courier

CAVE JUNCTION — A break in the week's rain was a benefit for dozens of young people Friday as they spent the day breaking out in a sweat while volunteering their time at Illinois River Forks State Park.

Using shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows and other gardening tools, students from Hidden Valley High School and Illinois Valley High School worked side by side to create the beginnings of a wheelchair accessible trail on a portion of the 282-acre park, located just south of Cave Junction.

The students were from Hidden Valley's Future Business Leaders of America, the Josephine County Foundation and Illinois Valley High Schools' Fish Watch program, which encourages young people to improve the natural environment.

"We're going to be buff by the end of the day," joked Jasmine Pinkerton, a Hidden Valley freshman, as she and friends, Josie Notter, also a freshman, and Daleighn Giasson, a sophomore, finished their morning work and joined several classmates for sack lunches in the pavilion.

The day of work was organized by Roger Brandt of the nonprofit Illinois Valley Community Development Organization, in conjunction with the Bureau of Land Management (which owns part of the park), the two high schools, and Oregon State Parks' Adopt-a-Park program.

The project was a combination of National Public Lands Day and the local Dan Fisk Day of Service, to honor a Cave Junction city councilor who died last year.

"This is a way to honor Dan with a project he'd be proud to see," said Kenny Houck, business development coordinator for Illinois Valley Community Development Organization.

It's also a way to grow community pride, said Hidden Valley teacher and FBLA adviser Chris Pendleton, who on Friday accompanied his group of 27 students to the park from Murphy.

"It's a countywide project, serving all of the county," he explained.

The project was funded through a grant from Take it Outside, a BLM youth program that encourages kids to get outside and work on park and state lands.

After arriving at the park, students



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**Above, Caitlin Kelly and Summer Smith watch Ben Adams dump the final load of dirt for Steven Kurtz. At right, Tomi Young uses a compacting roller filled with water to smooth out the trail.**

were assigned various tasks to create the trail, such as clearing and leveling the walkway, and shoveling, distributing, raking and tamping down a granite and dirt mixture that makes up the new trail. This, on a trail area originally created by Illinois Valley High Fish Watch students in 1995.

"The trail was let go, and after many years of neglect, needed to be reconstructed," Houck said, adding the community has been working in recent months to make the park more friendly and useable for all.

In recent years, Forks State Park has received a bad rap due to overemphasized drug and transient activity, Houck said.

"There was some activity, but not to the extent people think," he said.

Park officials now coordinate volunteers and a part-time worker, and recently added a park host.

Park hosts are usually retirees who



stay at various state parks for about a month at a time and whose presence serves as a deterrent to criminal or other unauthorized nighttime park activities, Houck explained.

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**Austin Hueth, a Hidden Valley High School senior, rakes dirt at the end of the trail.**

David Williams, a Hidden Valley senior, and his fellow FBLA member, Milo Dolan, a freshman, spent much of the day shoveling and leveling granite on the trail.

Williams said he was “a bit tired and hungry” by mid-morning, but was glad he could help out on such a worthwhile project.

The students each received a National Public Lands Day T-shirt for participating in the project, as well as the knowledge they’d made a difference in the community, said Shannon DePuglia, a recreational assistant with BLM.

“It’s so fun watching the kids work really hard and get so much done,” she said.

Although the students accomplished a lot, the project is planned in two parts, with a second student and community work day planned for Friday, Oct. 3.

Anyone interested in volunteering should bring water and a lunch, and wear long pants and sturdy shoes. For information, call Roger Brandt at 541-592-4316.

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