



HOWARD HUNTINGTON/Daily Courier

As part of project HEART, several Hidden Valley High School students took time after school Monday to fill backpacks with school supplies, hygiene products and other things for teens facing difficulties in life. From left: Haley Musack, Kenneth Vanleuwen, Jasmine Pinkerton and Karl Giurlani.

Backpacks deliver aid to teens

HVHS students join groups in assembling help kits

By Ruth Longoria Kingsland
of the Daily Courier

The “Me Generation” concept associated with previous generations isn’t likely to be a term linked to youths in Hidden Valley High School’s Future Business Leaders of America.

This group of youths not only shows a great concern for others, but recently acted on that empathy by joining forces with Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Grants Pass for HEART — Helping Empower At-Risk Teens.

The project provides backpacks of school supplies and other basic needs items to kids who otherwise might have difficulty concentrating at school or completing their education.

“It’s about not having clean socks, a warm blanket, or the supplies you need to do your schoolwork,” said Jaya Black, a senior at Hidden Valley.

Black said she’s had times in her life when she didn’t have all

the supplies she needed for school, and she has friends who have been homeless or living on the couches of friends, while trying to stay in school and study.

“Being part of this project empowers me and makes me glad I can help,” she said, adding that items are given and received anonymously, eliminating embarrassment for students receiving the goods.

Black and Hidden Valley sophomores Sylvia Marr and Katherine Haley spearheaded the project, which already created 50 full backpacks and coordinating bags of additional supplies.

The students became involved after Marr, a member of the Grants Pass Unitarian church, informed them of the project.

“We wanted to increase the volume of what the church could do on its own, because the need is so great,” Black said.

Chris Pendleton, FBLA adviser at Hidden Valley, said

he’s proud of his students taking the initiative and working hard to help other kids.

The first 50 backpacks and contents were purchased through a grant from the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation.

Twenty FBLA and Josephine County Foundation members showed up on Sept. 15 for a backpack assembling event, and many other students also helped throughout the process.

Another 50 backpacks have been ordered, and students are currently planning fundraisers to pay for those items and additional supplies, Pendleton said.

To help out or donate, contact the Josephine County Foundation at Hidden Valley High School, at 541-862-2124, or Chris Pendleton at cpendleton-jcf@gmail.com.

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