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## Funds give after-school program a kick

Carbondale continues support for Access Roaring Fork programs with \$35,000 grant

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CARBONDALE, Colorado — A popular mix of after-school classes being offered at Carbondale Middle School will receive another \$35,000 in funding from the town of Carbondale for 2011, the same amount as last year.

Carbondale remains the most supportive of any of the individual communities where the Access Roaring Fork after-school programs are being offered. That now includes middle schools throughout Garfield County, plus Basalt.

The funding to date from Carbondale has helped nearly 170 middle school-aged students in Carbondale participate in 16 different classes that are currently being offered at CMS, Access Roaring Fork director Steve Kaufman said at the Tuesday night Carbondale Board of Trustees meeting.

The town board voted unanimously to continue funding the programs at the same level as last year.

Classes, which are offered for a \$20 fee per multi-week session, range from homework help for students who need it and other

academic-oriented classes, to a variety of art, music, dance and film options, intramural athletics, and even a junior police academy.

The program is designed to keep middle school-aged youth busy during the so-called “latch-key” hours between the time school lets out and before parents arrive home from work.

According to Kaufman, national crime statistics show a marked increase in juvenile-related incidents on weekdays during the two hours after school is dismissed.

“I don't personally see this as a program, I see it as a strategy,” Kaufman said.

In fact, Carbondale's initial interest in supporting the effort grew out of an assault incident two years ago that involved a group of juveniles who attacked two women as they were walking home. The women happened to be teachers at a local school.

“I see this as a long-term investment, and as something that is going to help keep incidents like that from happening,” Carbondale Trustee Ed Cortez said in supporting the continued funding for the effort.

“If we're going to make any kind of investment, we need to invest in our kids,” he said.

What began as a pilot project with a single class in media communications at CMS has since grown to include a variety of classes in Basalt, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, New Castle, Rifle and Parachute.

In Carbondale, the program has also served to bring together students who attend different local schools, including CMS, the Carbondale Community School, Ross Montessori School and the Waldorf School, Kaufman said.

The money the town gives has also helped to leverage other funding for the program, he said. A total of \$100,000 was raised for classes at CMS this school year.

Although Carbondale was able to fund the program out of its Victims Assistance Law Enforcement (V.A.L.E.) funds last year, only about \$8,000 will come from that fund this year. The town will dip into its general fund reserves for the remainder.

That was a concern for some town board members, who noted that many other community funding requests were cut by as much as 50 percent this year. The board still voted unanimously to continue the funding at the same level.

Kaufman said he will be approaching other municipalities about maintaining or increasing their funding. Garfield County agreed to contribute \$93,000 to Access Roaring Fork this year, to be spread out between the five middle schools located in the county.

Several other larger grant options are also in the works, he said.

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