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# California

## FFA members help special-needs kids raise goats for county fair

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

ORLAND, Calif. — All her life, Amanda Houtrouw dreamed of raising her own goat and taking it to auction at the county fair.

This year, thanks to the mentorship of her fellow FFA members in Willows, Calif., she got the chance.

Houtrouw was one of six students with special needs who took part in her school's first Mighty Honker Goat Project, which paired them with mentors who helped them raise, present and sell goats at the Glenn County Fair on May 18-21.

"I learned how to walk a goat and to clean his pen," she said, adding that she and her mentor, Gina Amaro, will be friends forever.

The project was created by Willows High School senior Makaylee Lindsey, who saw a similar project at a fair in Southern California, she said.

"I went to the county fair in Santa Barbara and my cousin was a part of the program," Lindsey said. "I decided to bring the program here."

She rallied local businesses and agriculture boosters to donate materials and help with the cost, which was about \$1,000 per student.

The students with in-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

From left, Willows, Calif., High School FFA students Gina Amaro, Makaylee Lindsey, Amanda Houtrouw and Bailey Morrell stand with Houtrouw's goat at the Glenn County Fair in Orland, Calif., on May 20. The students took part in the Mighty Honker Goat Project, which paired mentors with special-needs students to help them bring their animals to the fair.

tellectual disabilities were each given a goat purchased by donors in February, and they accompanied their mentors three afternoons a week to the high school's farm to work with their animals.

The youngsters fed their goats, cleaned the stalls, weighed their goats and prac-

ticed showing the animals.

One of the students, Ryan Torres, and his mentor, Luis Garcia, raised the grand champion goat.

"It's awesome," said Staci Alves, an agriculture teacher at Willows High. "It kind of brought tears to everyone's eyes."

## Brown restores FFA, career tech funding after outcry from supporters

By TIM HEARDEN  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — After hearing an outcry from FFA advocates, Gov. Jerry Brown has reinserted funding in his budget proposal for high school agriculture education and career technical programs.

California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Karen Ross reassured teachers that the \$15.4 million for FFA and related programs zeroed out in Brown's May 11 revised ledger has been put back in.

"Please be assured, Governor Brown remains committed to ongoing funding for these programs ... through the California Department of Education," Ross told educators in an email. "While one-time funding was used to support these programs in the current year, the governor is committed to ongoing funding for these programs for 2017-18 and beyond."

The decision pleased Anna Canon, an agriculture teacher and FFA adviser at Orland High School. The school's ag program has 218 students, or roughly one-third of the entire student body, she said.

"When this came up with the budget cuts, we were asked to bring kids to the Capitol," Canon said. "That (funding) is how we are able to do what we do. Now the governor's office is support-



Tim Hearden/Capital Press File  
The California state Capitol dome.

ing ongoing funding."

The proposed cut was part of a plan to boost spending for community colleges by \$160 million to, among other goals, improve students' employment opportunities.

Whether the FFA allocation will be moved back from the community college fund or found elsewhere is yet to be determined by Brown and legislators, said Jim Aschwanden, the California Agricultural Teachers Association's executive director.

"We have to work those details out," he said. "I haven't seen the details yet, but the commitment is there to fund it."

Brown's reversal came after parents, students and other FFA advocates took to social media to rally support for the

programs. Last week, 65 legislators sent a letter to the governor and to budget committee leaders asking that the funding be restored.

The \$15.4 million represents the state's total contribution to FFA and other programs, including one for future business leaders, a family and consumer sciences program and SkillsUSA, a career and technical student organization, Aschwanden said.

"What this money has enabled them to do is hold leadership conferences and bring state officers together to do leadership training for their chapters throughout the state," he said.

Of the 114,000 California students that would have been affected by the cut, 86,000 are in FFA, which has a foundation to help raise money but relies on the state allocation as "base funding," he said.

"If there weren't an FFA program, kids wouldn't have the ability to develop leadership skills and a work ethic and (learn how to) manage money," said Staci Alves, an agriculture teacher at Willows High School.

Budget negotiations at the Capitol have been ongoing since Brown presented his \$124 billion revised ledger. The Democrat-controlled Legislature must approve a 2017-18 budget by June 15.

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## 4-H MEMBERS ENJOY TEEN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Some of the 65 participants in the leadership summit.

4-H State Ambassadors enjoy their time at the 4-H Teen Leadership Summit.

Each workshop was a "hands on" experience, allowing the teens to not just "sit and listen" but practice and participate.

Sean Gadson, originally from California, but just finishing his master's degree at Central Washington University, shared his story of overcoming poverty, and what others thought he could and couldn't do, to fulfill his dream of getting into veterinary school. He challenged the teens to not accept anyone else's limitations but reach for their dreams. The 4-H State Ambassadors also took the opportunity to share with the younger teens many of the new leadership adventures and activities that are available to them now and as they get into high school. These include the County Ambassador Program, District Rallies in the fall, State Ambassadors Program and 4-H Know Your Government. For more information go to: <http://extension.wsu.edu/4h/>

Leadership summit participants enjoy the outdoors during a break.

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