

Ley gets students 'pumped up' for fund-raising

By JOSHUA ADAM HICKS
Bothell-Kenmore Reporter

Competing for a state title is nothing new at Bothell High. The football team has done it two years in a row. Teacher Terry Ley wants the Cougar community — students, teachers and even alumni — to shoot for first in another type of contest: fund-raising.

Enter Race for the Bunny Suit, a month-long charity drive organized by Bothell High's Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA).

The club will be collecting donations on behalf of the March of Dimes organization between March 1-31. Those who contribute can nominate a Bothell High staff member to wear a bunny costume throughout the day of Bothell High's next assembly.

"I figured that's the least offensive thing people could laugh at," Ley said. "To me, high school has always been about the memories, and I always try to do something to create those memories."

Ley's goal is to turn the school into Washington's No. 1 March of Dimes fund-raiser.

"This is one where I'm hoping the student body at Bothell will get excited," he said.

Ley has been an FBLA adviser for 11 years. His teams have been at the top since 1998, raising more than \$38,000 and placing second in the nation during the 2003-04 school year.

But Bothell has yet to see a piece of the action. Ley only started teaching at the school last fall. He transferred there after spending the past seven years at Woodinville.

That means the March of Dimes' fund-raising trophy is still in Falcon country.

"I need to get it back," Ley said.

It's not the most far-reaching endeavor. Bothell High has a reputation for school spirit, which is one of the reasons Ley transferred there.

"I'm a high-energy teacher," he said. "I was craving that spirit from the students and staff."

Bothell's FBLA club has flourished under Ley's guidance. Membership numbers for the chapter quadrupled after he became its adviser. Forty-four students joined the group for 2007-08, whereas only 11 participated during the previous school year.

"It was mostly due to Mr. Ley talking to students during class and getting us pumped up for it," said club officer Jaimie Davidson, a senior. "The reason I joined is that he made it sound like a fun club where you can help out the community and people in need."

Ley says there's evidence to suggest that Cougar pride doesn't die when students graduate.

"I think that one of the special things about this city is that people move back when they grow up," he said.

"There's a lot of pride among the people who went to this school."

Ley is trying to harness that alumni school spirit by encouraging graduates to nominate their favorite teachers for a day in the bunny suit.

Bothell's FBLA club will wrap up its fund-raising efforts with a one-mile March for Babies benefit walk along the Burke-Gilman Trail March 29. The event starts at the Park at Bothell Landing.

March of Dimes is a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing complications related to pregnancy and birth.

Ley and his wife, Lori, have lost two children due to miscarriage. They now have two healthy children, Makenzie, 10, and Cameron, 7.

"I figure if we can help people not go through what my wife and I go through, that would be pretty awesome," Ley said. "I tell some of these kids that by donating, they could be saving their own baby."

Ley began his career as a supervisor for the United Parcel Service, but he switched to teaching when a few stints as a youth-sports coach helped him discover a love for mentorship.

"The joy of getting people their parcels just wasn't there," he said.

Ley became the FBLA adviser for Snohomish High in 1997. That's when he went to his first FBLA conference. Makenzie, his first child, was sitting beside him in her mother's lap.

"This kid who had survived a premature birth got up with his little voice and thanked all 5,000 of us for fund-raising," Ley said. "My wife and I looked at each other, and I said, 'I'm winning that thing every year.'"

And so it's been ever since.

• To donate, contact tley@nsd.org or call (425) 408-7094.