Article for June 6, 2018

A large part of the heart of the Fayette community is the school district. The pride in the traditions of the school district are evident in the relationships with businesses, Central Methodist University, alumnae, community organizations, retired teachers, and the community at large. On the recent band trip to Washington D.C., approximately seventy-five parents and community members traveled to D.C. to watch the Fayette Falcon Pride Marching Band in the National Memorial Day Parade. Exchange Bank organized a tour bus to D.C. for about 35 people and others flew or drove with extended family members. Summer vacations were planned around the band trip. Not only did people attend, but this community came forward to support the fundraising efforts it took for the band to get there. That is something that not every school district can boast about. That was amazing!

The sports program brings the community out for Friday night Football games and win or lose, there is an assembly of players, coaches, and Falcon Fans gathered on the 50 yard line afterwards to share the great moments of the game. People of this community go above and beyond to ensure the students have extra resources needed, positive experiences to enhance learning in the classroom, and fun opportunities after the school day has ended. Community organizations have stepped forward to help build and help fund needed improvements to the athletic fields, concession stands and restrooms. Businesses have provided special equipment needed for science classrooms and field trips.

Fayette R-III has a strong academic program offering a rigorous course of study that includes dual credit courses and a Non-Traditional Learning Center and the Missouri Options program for students depending on their individual needs.

Did You Know?

1. The Fayette R-III School District is an accredited school district.
2. The Board of Education earned the Missouri School Board Association 2018 Governance Award.
3. The Board of Education earned the 2018 Outstanding Board of Education in Climate, Culture and Organizational Efficacy.
4. Two Board members, Larry Anderson and Jean Schmidt, earned certification at the Advanced level and two members, Gary Gose and Eric McSwain, earned certification at the Master level having already earned the Advanced level in 2017.
5. The Fayette Falcon Pride Marching Band was invited to participate in the National Memorial Day Parade on May 28, 2018, and the community rallied to help raise the funds that enabled them to participate.
6. Fayette sent a student to the 2018 Missouri Scholars Academy. To be selected for this three week summer program is quite an honor. Fayette can only nominate one sophomore student who meets the stringent requirements and only 330 students are selected to participate out of approximately 50,000 who apply.
7. Fayette High School had a senior selected as an Honorable Mention student in the 2018 Missouri Scholars 100, a statewide program that honors 100 of Missouri’s top academic students in the graduating class.
8. Daly Elementary, once identified as a Focus School by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has worked strategically and diligently to address issues that turned test scores around and improved achievement.
9. After a site visit from a statewide Professional Learning Communities team to assess the level of implementation of the components of a Professional Learning Community, it was determined that Daly Elementary is an Exemplary PLC School.
10. Clark Middle School Schoolwide Positive Behavior Supports earned Bronze Level Recognition for efforts made in training staff, working with students, and helping parents.
11. An FHS senior was selected to be a part of the highly competitive Southwest Division American Choral Directors Association Honor Choir.  Students from seven states (Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) audition to be a part of this group and work with a nationally renowned choir director.
12. The Falcon Football team finished this season with their highest winning percentage ever, 8-2.
13. Isaiah Estes was the Lewis & Clark Conference Player of the Year for the second year in a row as Defensive Player and Offensive Player respectively.
14. The Lady Falcon Softball team had their first winning season in ten years.
15. The Lady Falcon Basketball team won their first tournament trophy in seven years and the Fayette Falcon Boys Basketball team won their first Lewis & Clark Conference title since 2010 and the tournaments in Glasgow and New Franklin for the first time since 1990 and 1976 respectively.
16. The district is humbled and proud to have great students, parental support and a caring and supportive community and very lucky to have dedicated teachers and staff who work to ensure that all students receive a quality educational experience each and every day.

There is not enough space to list all the reasons Fayette R-III Schools are fantastic. While we strive to provide the best of everything for our students, we are deeply affected by the financial crisis that has impacted funding at the state level and by the deficits created by underfunded mandates that must be absorbed locally.

Fayette has a declining enrollment. In September 2014 enrollment was 614 compared to 592 in September 2017. Because of this decrease in enrollment, the district is considered “Hold Harmless”, which is a safety net provision within the formula that prevents approximately 185 Missouri school districts from receiving less funding than they did in the 2006 when the formula went into effect. It is a guarantee of how much funding can be expected, except no district has received what is due them from the state because funding has not come in as expected.

Fayette was considered Hold Harmless in 2007-2008 and then moved onto the formula from 2008-2014 and has been Hold Harmless ever since. In 2017 Fayette needed an additional 32 student to move onto the formula. Moving to the formula could enable the district to benefit from increases to the State Adequacy Target (SAT), which is the amount of money the state has determined it takes to adequately educate all students, and the percent at which the foundation formula is being paid. Unfortunately, the district has no control over enrollment.

Some of the programs that districts are mandated to provide are Special Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Transportation, and Technology. In 2013-2014 the district received an allocation of $387,443 for these programs, but their actual cost was $1,186,366, leaving a deficit of $798,923 that was absorbed locally. In 2016-2017 the district received an allocation of $264,325 for these same programs, but their actual cost was $1,209,206, leaving a deficit of $944,881 that had to be absorbed locally.

As a result of these issues, the Board has determined that seeking an operating levy increase of $0.70 will help the district regain some of the lost funding over the years in order to remain solvent. Funds will be used to help cover increasing operating costs including salaries, benefits, facility needs and improvement and to sustain or improve programs and technology.

See next week’s article for information on how the levy will specifically affect you.