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**The Tampa Tribune**  
**Hillsborough says it won't ax 'out of school' programs**  
**6.6.08**

Mike Salinero

TAMPA - Hillsborough County might have an \$87 million budget deficit, but it won't make up the shortfall by reducing or eliminating a popular after-school and summer recreation program, commissioners pledged Thursday.

At a budget workshop, commissioners told County Administrator Pat Bean she would have to look elsewhere to save the \$2.2 million annual cost of operating the county's Out of School programs. Bean eliminated funding for the programs in her fiscal year 2009 proposed budget, which had a host of cost-cutting measures, including 100 layoffs.

Commissioners, however, told Bean the recreation programs will not be part of the cost-cutting plan.

"The goal should be to expand the program to help these kids that have been on waiting lists for literally years," said commission Chairman Ken Hagan.

Commissioners have to reduce spending by \$87 million to make up for property taxes lost to Amendment 1 and slumping sales tax collections.

The county could save \$1.36 million by eliminating the after-school program, which serves 5,600 children at parks in unincorporated areas of the county. An additional \$853,000 would be saved by firing the 175 temporary workers who operate the county's summer recreation program, which has more than 8,000 enrolled.

Parents pay nothing for the after-school program. The summer program costs just \$50.

Hagan said he has received hundreds of e-mail messages from parents throughout the county asking him to save the programs. Most parents said they would be willing to pay a fee to keep the program going. A majority of parents who contacted Hagan oppose transferring operations to nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA.

Rumors have been flying for weeks that the county planned to ax after-school recreation to balance the county budget. The rumors started when parents discovered that the latest master plan for the county parks department said Out of School is unsustainable financially.

The plan recommended ending the program or outsourcing it to nonprofit organizations.

Stacy Lenz, a mother in Westchase, saw the plan on the parks department's Web site and started an e-mail campaign to save the program.

"It's not just about Westchase," Lenz said. "It's about what are those thousands and thousands of children going to do without that program? ... It's a safe environment for kids, and it's a very nurturing environment."

Hagan told Bean to bring back options to continue the programs at a future budget workshop.

Commissioners also balked at other cuts proposed in Bean's budget. For instance, the Aging Services department was slated to lose 13 jobs to save \$886,944. Six of the employees provide services such as housekeeping and companionship designed to keep elderly residents out of nursing homes.

Commissioner Brian Blair, who said he has spent time in nursing homes visiting his grandmother and another relative, asked Bean to find some way to fund the jobs.

"You can certainly keep them out of nursing homes by keeping them company and keeping them active," Blair said.

Commissioner Kevin White questioned whether the eight jobs scheduled for elimination in Code Enforcement would hurt the county's efforts to crack down on people who don't maintain their property.

Code Enforcement director Dexter Barge conceded that the cuts would limit code inspectors' aggressiveness in finding violations on their own.

"What we will have to do is cut back on our proactiveness by responding to complaints," Barge said.

The commission will hold its next budget workshop Wednesday at 1:30 p.m., followed by a public hearing on the budget that evening at 6. The commission will approve the budget Sept. 18.

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### **WestsideConnect (CA)** **After-school program, staff earn accolades** **6.6.08**

NEWMAN – After-school programs in the Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District continue to be a model for others to follow.

The programs served about 500 students a day during the last year, offering recreational and enrichment activities, a safe and supervised setting for students during the after-school hours, homework help and much more.

A success story in its own right, the district's after-school program and three staff members recently were honored as leaders in the three-county (Stanislaus, Calaveras and Tuolumne) region.

Mary Williams, the district's after-school program director, was named the regional director of the year. Yolo after-school program leaders Claire Patereau and Dawn Lamantia were honored as site coordinators of the year, and Yolo was named the region's middle school program of the year.

Williams has been involved in the after-school program since its inception locally 10 years ago, and has seen it grow to exceed all expectations.

“We started with a program at Von Renner, with 20 kids,” she recalled.

Williams believes a number of factors have boosted the popularity of after-school programs, including the safe environment, academic support and the opportunity to take part in enrichment activities which may not be available during the regular school day.

Making an after-school program work well, she reflected, is a team effort involving the county office of education, district administration, site administrators and after-school staff, including high school students who are employed as tutors.

“It requires a certain amount of passion to do this every day,” Williams reflected. “It is about the staff, and the teamwork of everybody involved. Without that teamwork, you wouldn’t have an after-school program.”

Lamantia and Patereau oversee the middle school site that serves about 150 students.

One of the hallmarks of the Yolo program is the wide variety of activities it offers to the students – from drumming sessions to cake decorating.

“We try to find activities that the kids will enjoy so that they come here instead of doing other things that could lead them into trouble,” Patereau explained.

Sometimes, the activities reflect the personal interests of the staff members which they incorporate into the after-school program to share with the students.

Students also have a say.

“The kids have a voice in the program. It is their program,” Lamantia pointed out.

Organizers are not afraid to try new activities.

“If it doesn’t work, we change it. If it works, we build on it,” Patereau explained. “We like having the kids experience something that they have never done before.”

The guiding principle of the Yolo program, Patereau and Lamantia said, is a basic one. “We make it about the kids,” they stated.

The district’s after-school programs are funded through a combination of state and federal grants.

The program will be expanding next year to the high school level, which has not offered a grant-funded after-school offering in the past.

Orestimba is one of four high schools in Stanislaus County which has received federal grant funding for a 2008-09 after-school program, Williams and Superintendent Rick Fauss said. The high school grant will total about \$300,000.