to factors beyond their control, including fires, soaring gas prices, home schooling and on-line schools. Consequently, the REF is an important element in helping to provide funding for those programs the students need. They hold several fundraisers per year.

Last weekend, the REF members held an all-day retreat to decide the future and funding of programs, including AVID and ROP. Four students spoke to REF members, inspiring them with the growth these students have experienced through these programs. Each student demonstrated a sense of hope for personal achievement gained through hard work and determination learned through these programs.

Students enrolled in the ROP (Regional Occupational Program) learn real life skills through hands-on training.

Carter Whitaker, 18, who graduated from Rim High School in June, felt his "life changing direction" when he took an EMR class during his junior year. He has now earned his First Aid and CPR certificates. During his senior year, he took the "fire tech" class and became a Fire Explorer at Station 91. "I learned so much, and now I have a focus in my life. I plan to attend the fire academy. If not for this ROP program, I would not have discovered this direction for my life."

Keegan McGrath, who took the welding ROP course in 9th grade, also has found his career. He brought a flower he had created to show his abilities and demonstrate the many ways welding can be used. He plans to make welding his profession. "When I heard about the course, I took it and learned how to do one weld in only a week and have learned more since then. Welding will fit well with my academic skills. I plan to attend a trade school after graduation to get a Welding Certification. My parents are very proud and supportive of this life choice."

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is a philosophy and educational program, which holds students accountable to the highest standards. It also trains teachers to use proven practices, preparing students for success in school and a career, believing that they will rise to the challenge. Rim's AVID program had a 100 percent rate of 2016 grads getting accepted to college.

Jaqueline Lopez has set a strong college goal to become an orthodontist, since being enrolled in the AVID program. "AVID keeps me organized, teaching me special skills, techniques, and confidence builders and how to set and achieve goals. I will become the first college student in my family and plan to become a successful professional, an idea my parents support. I especially enjoyed the college tour this summer and hope to attend UC Santa Barbara."

Silvia Gamiz began AVID in 7th grade at MPH and realizes she has achieved much more because of all the skills she has learned. She encourages all her friends to enroll. "Since it makes you a more confident, and improved person, I can talk in front of people now, plus AVID creates a family of students who will be successful in their lives, creating life-long friendships," she told *The Alpenhorn News*. She hopes to attend UC Merced and study audiology.

REF members were impressed at the differences these programs made in these students lives. "There are 140 students currently enrolled in grades 7 through 12," said REF member Josita Todd. They plan to continue these programs, preparing students to achieve their academic and life goals.