Brittany shares her story

By Randy L. Herman

For most, words give a sense of feeling about a certain subject or a person. They open a door to look through at something they know little or nothing about. But sometimes it's not so much what's said, but who says it and how.

The Black River Falls High School student body was on hand last Tuesday at the Lunda Theatre to hear the words of four people dedicated to not only helping others but encouraging them to take an active part in doing so. The crowd listened, then listened even more carefully as a life lesson was presented by both Tom Leadholm and Matt Ryken—and two very special guest speakers.

Leadholm is best-known among many as popular basketball coach and teacher. He led the Tiger girls' basketball team last winter. Ryken is also a very popular and successful coach and instructor in the school district. She is responsible for fielding one of the top Division 2 softball teams in this part of the state. Both, there is much more to both and the students got a real life look at a more person side of them and the guests.

Joining Leadholm and Ryken was Brigitte O’Donoghue, president and founder of the Unit Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) (childwish.com). The afternoon’s most special guest, however, was someone much younger—her name is Brittany. Wearing the petite green-eyed, red head climbed the steps and made her way to the podium, she immediately had the complete attention of everyone in the theatre.

The child has battled brain

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USSA, from pg. 1...

The youngster told her teen audience what the USSA does and how many disabled kids and children with life-threatening illnesses it helps, thanks to the many sponsoring companies and volunteers. She told of fishing and hunting trips she and many others are allowed to experience and how much fun it is. She spoke of not her struggle in life, but of all the happy days she’s had while attending the many USSA functions and what they meant to so many like her.

O’Donoghue thanked the students for offering to help her organization, one that literally dictates every moment of her life and has for so many years. She told of the more than 3,700 wishes granted to so many children. She stressed with pain of losing someone special to the disease. He spoke of the battle his mother fought—and lost to the disease. He told of his discovery of the USSA last summer after reading about it in a newspaper article. He decided to take action to help bring joy to the disabled and ill youngsters while still helping to fight Cancer. Leadholm’s call was welcomed by O’Donoghue. He learned about young Brittany and her willingness to make the long drive from Madison to address the student body and immediately requested O’Donoghue arrange it.

Last year, about 150 students were involved in the Health and Fitness Run/Walk for Life but Leadholm said that isn’t enough. He hopes to double involved, I think we can do much better,” he said after Brittany finished speaking.

Leadholm urges all BRF students to accept this challenge and get out and raise funds for this spring’s run/walk set for May 9. He said that anyone willing to donate to the fundraiser, but not contacted, can still call the school’s efforts. Just send your donation to Black River Falls High School, 1200 Pierce Street, C/O Tom Leadholm or Mary Ryken.