

# Tribal Youth Participates In All Things

■ Eric Sabin builds his leadership skills.

By Ron Karten

At 15, Tribal youth Eric Sabin has already taken advantage of Tribal programs for his own benefit, and given back to the community from his own resources. His mom, Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker-Robertson, said, "Truly, he is one of the success stories of the Tribe."

He is a member of the Tribal Youth Leadership Academy, and this year, after raising money for families in need at Christmas time, he worked to make one child's dream come true by dipping into his own savings.

With the money raised through selling baked goods, members of the Youth Leadership Academy bought gifts for kids, and these were distributed through the Tree of Giving program. The amount raised was not enough for the VCR one child asked for, so Sabin put in his own money to help purchase the gift.

Also as part of the Academy, Sabin was one of five participating in the Leadership Academy run by Norman, Oklahoma-based Native Wellness Institute. Over three to four days, the youth visited Lewis & Clark College and the Nike campus for lessons on leadership.

"He's a really go-getter type of kid," said Youth Education Specialist Chris Bailey. "He's always willing to take risks — positive risks. And he's a hard worker and that rubs off on the other kids."

Currently, Sabin is learning peer mentorship training with the help of students involved in a similar program at South Salem High School, according to Bailey.

Last summer, he took advantage of the youth employment opportunities at the Tribe, putting his elbow grease into the work of the Housekeeping Department. He learned to shampoo rugs, strip and wax tile floors, said Jimmy Brandon, a Housekeeping Tech who taught Sabin the ropes. "He's a real good worker," said Brandon. "I was really happy with him. I wish I could have some more like him."

"He was a very outgoing person. Anything you ask him to do, he'd jump in and do it. He was real good at that."

During breaks from last summer's work program,

Brandon said that Sabin would run back to the Youth Education building to get in a quick game of Eight Ball. ("I have a pretty good break shot," he said.) And during lunch, he'd be on the basketball court for a quick pick-up game.

At school, Sabin struggled early on with a speech impediment and through eighth grade, he improved his skills, which were often a year behind those of his classmates, in the Learning Resource Center.

"He had to work harder than his peers," said Sheker-Robertson. "He always had to work harder and now, he stays at it."

Last September, Sabin was student of the month

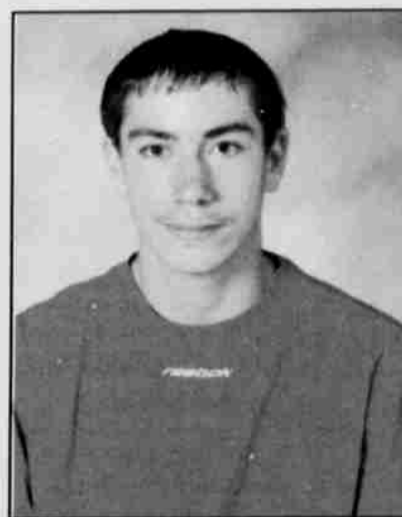


Photo courtesy of Eric Sabin

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in Biology and nominated by his Science Teacher, Arian Fasana, for the National Science Achievement Award in Biology.

"He's a great student and really concerned with learning and understanding the materials," said Fasana. "As a teacher you appreciate students like that."

"It's interesting," said Sabin of his science class. "All those little atoms and molecules. Everything's the same, but different. It's crazy."

In Agriculture class, Sabin's Sophomore Project is helping prepare him for life. "She makes up a life for us. We get a credit card, write checks, so it's like a life experience." He also has a few speeches

under his belt in Agriculture and Biology classes — on animal shelters for Ag and on the flu for Biology.

As a sophomore at Willamina High School, Sabin has come a long way to maintain a 3.2 grade point average.

When school's over, Sabin changes into his basketball gear and as a second year member of the Bulldogs' basketball team, he plays post and averages 4 points a game.

Less formally, Sabin is crazy about his scooter. "It's just something that nobody else does," he said, "and I'm good at it." Known as "the Scooter Master," Sabin started running through his list of tricks, then realized there were too many to name. "How about we say 'a variety of spins, whips and grabs,'" he said. (For those who live beyond the language of these wheeled wonders, he is talking about taking his scooter off a ramp of some kind and spinning around 360 degrees in the air, and surviving).

Also among his hobbies is photography. Accompanying his mother at some Tribal activities, Sabin has a growing collection of photographs, including photos of such events as the opening of the Oregon Trail Museum. But for Sabin, his favorite pictures are of Tribal member Gary (Guzman), his older brother, skateboarding.

"I like taking pictures of Gary because he always does his best and his best is very good. He's not afraid to do stuff that's different. You can ask him to do a trick and he'll do it and he won't stop until he lands it. He has a good attitude about stuff."

He also attended the governor's Harvest Ball to raise money for the Oregon Food Bank. When Portland State University dedicated its new Native American Student and Community Center in October (*Smoke Signals*, 11/1/2003) Sabin was there with others from the community to support the effort.

Sabin goes all the way back to first grade for a memorable book. The book's name was *Each Peach Pear Plum*. "I was all excited because that was the first book I ever read. I said, 'Mom, look!'"

Today, the exclamations come over computer games. "I want to learn computer graphics for video games," he said. He plays Role Playing Games, called RPGs. "You create a different world. You go anywhere. It's just fun and makes me want to be there. I got a video game that kind of makes video games called an RPG Maker."

But fun is as close and as simple as a bench in the park for Sabin. There's one by the Teen Center in Willamina that made him laugh. "I sat down on the bench and it broke," he said. ■



Photo courtesy of Eric Sabin



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**Airborne** — Tribal member Eric Sabin, at left, shows what he can do on his scooter. Above is older brother, Tribal member Gary Guzman, showing what he can do on his skateboard. This shot of his brother is a good example of Sabin's camera work. Both photos were taken at the Willamina Skate Park.