

Tribal librarian wins nationwide contest

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals editor

When Tribal Librarian Kathy Cole first received a congratulatory email for being one of eight librarians throughout the country who had won an all-expenses paid trip to Boston, her first thought was, "Is this spam?"

"I just couldn't believe it," she said.

After showing the email to a colleague, Cole phoned the sender, Anna Cesary.

Cesary is the executive assistant to Jeff Kinney, author of the mega-bestselling "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" series. Kinney launched a nationwide search last fall to coincide with the release of his 18th book in the series, "No Brainer," with the goal of finding extraordinary librarians and treating them to a fun-filled weekend trip in Boston.

"Kathy's reaction was one of my favorites," Cesary said. "She was just so shocked that she had won."

Cole was nominated for the honor by Tribal Family & Community Partnership Coordinator Rebecca Ambrose.

Selecting the winners was a collaborative process between Kinney's team at Wimpy Kid Inc. and his publisher, Abrams Books,



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Librarian Kathy Cole was recognized as a first-class librarian as part of the nationwide campaign for author Jeff Kinney's latest book "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: No Brainer." Cole's prize package includes a paid trip to Boston, Mass., to meet Kinney and tour the Wimpy Kid studio.

according to Cesary.

"This was a nationwide contest and as such, we received hundreds of submissions," Cesary said. "Kathy's nominator detailed an impressive library program spearheaded by Kathy, an extremely thoughtful array of quality offer-

ings for her community. Just one example is that Kathy coordinates Blind-Date-With-A-Book events, which caught our eye."

Cole will spend the weekend of June 7-9 in Boston, which will include sightseeing, food and library excursions. It concludes with a

field trip to Kinney's bookstore, An Unlikely Story, in Plainville, Massachusetts and a tour of the Wimpy Kid studio.

"It will be my first time in Boston and I'm excited for everything, especially the Boston Public Library," Cole said.

Additionally, Kinney will donate 50 books to the Tribal library.

"The trip to Boston in June will be a fun-filled and truly memorable weekend, we hope," Cesary said. "Our winners are exceptional librarians and really, the spirit of the weekend is celebration. We want to recognize and honor these librarians for doing what they do and we think it will feel special to get them in the same room as one another."

She added, "This is the first time Jeff has sponsored anything quite like this. In fact, news of winning this contest was so unbelievable to some of our librarians that we had to legitimize by following up with articles."

Cole has served as the Tribal librarian for 4 years and credits Library Aide Crystal Bigelow for helping her run a diverse program.

"It's just the two of us here and she's always in the middle of everything with me," she said. ■

'I try to always be really humble'

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all-tournament for his work at the state tournament in Pendleton, was one of five players in his league to be named to the all-defensive team and was named the News-Register Athlete of the Year.

Additionally, Cohen's 26-point game in post-season play was the highest in the tournament and his free-throw percentage was second highest after Willamina's game against Regis High School on Friday, March 1.

It was a fitting conclusion to his high school basketball career after years of daily practice, gym workouts and time spent studying his craft via YouTube technique videos and games.

When asked about these accomplishments, Cohen is decidedly modest.

"I try to always be really humble,"

he said. "It's a nice feeling to be recognized like that but I always feel you should stay really calm and stable with your emotions and not get too excited."

For Cohen, emerging as a strong basketball player came between fourth- and fifth-grade, when he would sit for hours on the kitchen floor and dribble a basketball to the video game NBA Baller Beats, which he said is similar to Guitar Hero but the objective is to bounce the ball to the beat.

"For the next two full years I think, he drove me nuts with the sound because it was right near our living room wooden floor where the T.V. was, but you could see him getting better every day," Rich said with a smile. "He came back the next year and the coach was like, 'What happened to Cohen?' At that point, he was just shining and that carried over into AAU ball as well."

When he was in middle school, Co-

hen was called up to the high school level for summer league ball, where he was competing against kids who were much bigger and older.

"He's always been a pass-first player," Rich said. "So kids love to play with him because he's not one of those kids who scores 30 points a game. He could, but he's unselfish with how he plays."

This season, Cohen and his fellow Willamina Bulldogs were determined to secure a spot to compete in the state tournament in Pendleton.

"We were really focused on winning, not any high-point games, just get in every game and get a win," he said.

Even on days when Cohen isn't playing basketball, it's still top of mind.

"Whenever I come home and want to watch something, it's YouTube basketball, two hours a day," he said. "Playing basketball can range from an hour to five hours, however long I can stay in the gym. I'm always trying to learn and get better."

Added Rich, "It's always been a really big focus and he would spend a large majority of his sophomore and junior years getting to school at 6 a.m., and he would work out until 8 a.m., and then he wouldn't get home until almost 9 p.m. after evening practice...That's an idea of how hard he works."

Cohen's mom, Sunni Ulestad, is proud of her son's work ethic in basketball and in how he lives his life.

"I think I would just like to say besides his basketball achievements, he is such a humble human being," she said. "He is kind, young kids look up to him and he's one of the hardest

working kids I know. He has never let a single thing get in the way of the success he's had on the court. He really is the best son I could have ever imagined...made it really easy being his mom. I can't wait to see what he does in the future, on and off the basketball court."

When he's not practicing basketball, Cohen enjoys playing the guitar. He's also an honor roll student and was inducted into the National Honor Society last year.

Now that his final high school season has concluded, Haller is focused on the next phase of life: College ball. He's been invited to open gyms with players from Linn-Benton Community College and George Fox University. He also plays for a men's basketball league in Salem.

"I've just been all around, trying to get in front of coaches, trying to practice and get better," he said.

Future basketball endeavors include an all-state tournament with other Oregon 2A league players in June and Native American basketball invitational tournament in Phoenix in July.

No matter what the next phase of life brings, Cohen sees basketball as always being a part of it.

"I think I really just like being able to play with friends, you know?" he said. "Also, just the competitiveness when you can get the right people around you. It's nice when you can go to a gym and have people around you who are also your friends compete at a really high level. You can tell who works hard and who doesn't. I really feel basketball is a community no matter where you go." ■

Tribal Elder named CLUSI Elders Honor Day queen

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Phyllis Brown was named queen of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians Elders Honor Day.

The event was held Friday and Saturday, March 15-16, at the Three Rivers Casino Resort in Florence and was open to Tribal Elders from across the state to gather, visit and celebrate.

Brown was selected as queen on Friday after her name was drawn in a raffle. She was crowned with a cedar bark headpiece, wrapped in a Pendleton blanket and given a gift basket. ■

~ Contains information from the *The Voice of CLUSI*