

noteworthy NIGHTS

Memorable court moment encourages inclusion

Cate Oxford, 12, beamed up at the stands packed full of support as she walked down the field. Hand in hand with her teacher, she was part of one of high school's most memorable traditions.

Oxford was nominated for Wando's homecoming court along with her classmate, **Jack Few**, 12. Both are in their final year at Wando and were born with Down syndrome. The nominees, their parents, and their exceptional education teacher, **Abby Zwetzig**, were thrilled about the nominations.

"I was super excited because I think it was good for Wando to have someone that has special needs on homecoming court, and is a little different, and it helps the school be more inclusive," Zwetzig said.

Though the nominees, as well as their family and friends, were happy about the nominations, they were also quite surprised. **Chris Oxford**, Cate's father, never saw this opportunity coming.

"That was something that we had never planned on, and never dreamt of. So we were first surprised, but then we were really excited about it," Chris said.

Since Cate and Few's time at school is usually spent separated from their peers who take general education courses, their homecoming court nomination helped connect them to the rest of the student body.

"I was excited because once people saw their picture they would say to them in the hallway like 'Oh, good luck,' or 'I voted for you,' or like 'Hi Cate, hi, Jack,'" Zwetzig said. "So I think it helped gen ed students see them more and want to talk to them more."

Not only were Cate and Few included on homecoming night, but

they got to campaign to their peers as well. With the help of Zwetzig and other Wando staff and students, they made campaign videos for the student body, featuring a ride on a golf cart and a walk on a red carpet. These aspects helped the videos put Cate and Jack in the running for queen and king.

"[Cate's favorite part] was the red carpet," Zwetzig said. "And Jack's was probably riding the golf cart."

Few's family were so excited about his nomination that a special guest traveled from out of town to celebrate. **Sally Few**, Jack's mother, was overjoyed by this visit.

"His twin brother came from college to escort him," Sally said. "And it was the highlight of my life."

When it came to choosing who to walk onto the field with, the decision was an easy one for Cate to make.

"Cate never gave it a second thought," Chris said. "As soon as she knew she was on the court and had to have somebody escort her, Miss Abby was the choice right away."

The nominees received outpouring support from the community. Cate's fans represented in the stands, holding large signs and cheering her on.

"At the game we had about 30 or so people there to root her on, so [it was a] big family and friends event," Chris said.

Overall, the homecoming nomination left an inclusive impact on Wando and gave the nominees a unique and memorable experience.

"I think it gave him a lot of confidence... and made him feel more grown up." Sally said. "It meant a lot to Jack."

**Story by Victoria Cole
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A SHARED MOMENT: (above) Homecoming queen **Bella Wethington**, 12, stands with homecoming king **Obafemi Akinjobi**, 12. "We are friends so it was really great being able to share that, when I found out both of us had won it was overwhelming and I was glad it was with him," Wethington said; photo by o. estoppey

CREATIVE INTERACTIONS: (right) dressed in Hawaiian gear **Sarah Hudspeth**, 9, walks down the hall with classmate **Hildy Seifert**, 9. "My favorite thing is seeing all the creative outfits, and being able to really interact with different people brings Wando together," Hudspeth said; photo by a. schwinn



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