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Wye student Plays it Forward



By Trent Wilkie, Sherwood Park News
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On Thursday, Jan. 17, Cooper Kennedy won the Alberta Play It Forward school grand prize of \$10,000.

The prize, awarded by country singer Tenille, was given to Kennedy during a presentation at Wye School as a part of the Play It Forward school tour.

"When they said I'd be entered in a draw, I wasn't really sure," Kennedy said. "I didn't know how many other kids were going to be entered, but I hoped that I would win.

"I was so happy. I just thought it was going to be a regular assembly, and then Tenille walked in with a big cheque and then I got called up. Then my parents came into the gym and I walked back and saw them and I didn't even know about it."

The \$10,000 is to be divided, with a portion going to Kennedy's school and the rest going to a charity of Kennedy's choosing.

Kennedy saw this as a chance to be creative.

"Since gym is my favorite subject in school, I decided to spend the money that had to go to the school on that," he said. "The other \$5,000, I was told that it could go to a charity of my choice, so I decided on \$2,500 to the Make A Wish Foundation and the other half to the Stollery Children's Hospital. They are both really dear to my heart and some of my classmates have recently been in those two as well."

The crowd at Wye School was wowed by the arrival of the country music star Tenille, but as for the success of the tour itself, this is a surprise to Tenille.

"We definitely knew that it would go throughout Alberta," she said. "It was actually a pilot tour to see how the concept would go over with all these different groups and ages of kids across Alberta. We visited 29 schools in five weeks. We now get to take it across Canada starting in March. I am really excited to see that happen."

With her recent personal accomplishments piling up (Aberta Country Music Association Award for Female Artist of the Year, 2012 Slight Music Humanitarian Award), Tenille doesn't let it go to her head and spreads around her success.

"That has been a part of my whole life," she said. "It is the way my family is. The way they raised me to believe in giving back and it is really important to me and always will be."

In the end, not everything went Kennedy's way, as he wasn't allowed to keep the oversized novelty cheque.

"It was fun while it lasted," he laughed.

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