

# Dreams come true for Bruin mascot

By Don Benjamin, Staff Writer,

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**S**poiler alert: If you are a child, or a young-at-heart adult, who is unaware that there is an actual person inside Cedaredge High School's bruin mascot costume -- stop reading now. Otherwise, read on to learn the story of some pesky mice, a fairy grandmother, and a girl with a dream who became a queen and set off to travel the world.

Once upon a time, a fairy grandmother—Peggy Bathie—was attending a high school tournament in Grand Junction to support the CHS girls varsity basketball team. Peggy was there to cheer for her granddaughter, Jade McGovern, and she noticed that all the high school teams had mascots—except for Cedaredge. There were tigers and eagles and panthers and every animal you can imagine but no bruin. Peggy spoke with the head bruin at CHS (Principal Randy Brown) and learned that the school's bear costume had been eaten by pesky mice so she enlisted the help of sponsors to help pay for a replacement. Once a new suit was on hand, the search began for brave students willing to wear the large furry costume.

Elizabeth Wood had dreamed of becoming a dancing bear since first grade when she saw the original bruin mascot performing at a high school game. When Elizabeth grew up and became fully involved in high school activities at CHS, the hopeful girl heard about the opportunity to become mascot and she immediately applied.

Lynne Sederstrom, CHS registrar, recalls, "After the suit was purchased, we gave all students the opportunity to apply to be the Bruin. Elizabeth was the first to apply and had solid reasons why she wanted to be the mascot." For the first year, Elizabeth shared mascot duties with Austin Meyers. Austin, who graduated in 2017, served as football mascot and Elizabeth took on the role of helping Cedaredge boosters cheer for girls playing varsity volleyball and basketball.

What does Elizabeth like most about being the mascot? "I really like to be out in the gym with the teams. They really support what I do," she said. What does she like least? "It gets hot inside the suit and I have to move carefully because my vision is obscured."

She hopes other students will follow in her paw-prints and decide to become the mascot after she graduates this year. Her advice to future bruins: "Don't worry about the dancing. If you're not sure what to do when the music starts, just make it up as you go along. The most important thing is to be yourself."

Despite her advice to improvise, Elizabeth was always very serious about preparing for her mascot role. She spent hours watching professional mascots on television and the internet to practice her moves.

Her parents, Vince and Emily Wood, are Elizabeth's biggest fans. "We are amazed and proud at every game," her mother said, "The girls have been very welcoming and Elizabeth loves feeling like part of a team."

The athletes and coaches definitely appreciate Elizabeth and last spring at the end-of-year basketball banquet, the teams made their affection for her official. "I had no idea why I was invited to the banquet," Elizabeth remembers. "Then I heard people talking about the mascot and I was so surprised when it happened." That night she learned that she had earned a team letter for her work as mascot.

Elizabeth proudly displays her earned letter on her blue and white jacket. And, if you look closely at the jacket sleeves you will see that her proud mother has added some additional patches to commemorate her daughter's remarkable high school career. On Elizabeth's right sleeve are bear paw-prints and a thespian symbol—the faces of tragedy and comedy—with an inscribed motto. On the left sleeve are two patches commemorating her years as mascot for girls' varsity volleyball (2015-2017) and girls' varsity basketball (2016-2018) and below those patches is a crown. Yes—a crown—which celebrates the fact that Elizabeth was voted homecoming queen last year.



It's been a fairy tale ride for high school senior Elizabeth Wood who wanted since childhood to become CHS's mascot. Not only did she become the Bruin, she was also voted homecoming queen and earned a school letter for her work as team mascot. Photo by Synhorst Photography



CHS mascot Elizabeth Wood has a bear's-eye-view of the action at girls' varsity basketball home games. Photo by Don Benjamin



CHS bruin Elizabeth Wood, poses with five-year-old Emmie Joy Meyers of Cedaredge. Elizabeth was her young friend's age when she first saw the CHS dancing bear and began hoping that she would someday become the mascot. Photo by Don Benjamin