

ZCES losing the man who personified Cubby



Zephyr Cove Elementary School students give Cubby a farewell hug on Sept. 30. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Cubby is going into hibernation indefinitely.

The man who has been Zephyr Cove Elementary School's mascot for the last 16 years is turning in his bear suit uniform.

Pedro Kinner never expected to have this "job" for so long. Nor is it one he every applied for. It all started when his daughter attended the school and Kinner noticed no one was out there to greet the students. There were all these cars either dropping off kids or whizzing by to get to Whittell High School.

“It just makes you feel good,” Kinner told *Lake Tahoe News* of the volunteer job.

Being self-employed allowed him to adjust his schedule to make the school a priority.

Kinner remembers one time running after a kid who was chasing his dad’s car because he had left his lunch in it. Then the principal at the time started chasing Kinner. It was a kid, a bear and a principal running toward Highway 50 in what looked like a comedy show.

Cubby has endured being pelted with water balloons. Then there was the green pinecone incident that ended with a broken class window. He attended so many special events – it wasn’t just an early morning job.



Pedro Kinner has been ZCES’s mascot for 16 years.

The mascot uniform was at the school before Kinner began his daily ritual. However, it is the same one from Day 1. It gets dry cleaned regularly. The head has been repaired, with glue being a dominant tool to keep it looking OK.

Two years ago he and some of the students created a vest of

sorts. Kinner started a weaving group at the school, which is how the vest came about.

Cubby is such a fixture at the school that at his farewell sendoff on Wednesday it was hard to know if the adults were sadder or the kids to know he will no longer be out there each morning. Many said it wouldn't be the same without him.

(Kinner has family obligations that prevent him from continuing on as Cubby. The school may look for someone else to take on the persona of Cubby.)

On Sept. 30 big and little kids filled the bleachers at Whittell to say goodbye to Kinner, aka Cubby. Most only know him as Cubby and few have ever seen his face.

Still, they all know his voice. He'll be at the grocery store and kids will run up to hug him when they hear him. Parents are wary, he said, wondering who this strange man is hugging their kid. Then he explains who his alter ego is.

Those hugs may still happen, there just won't be any Cubby hugs to start the school day.