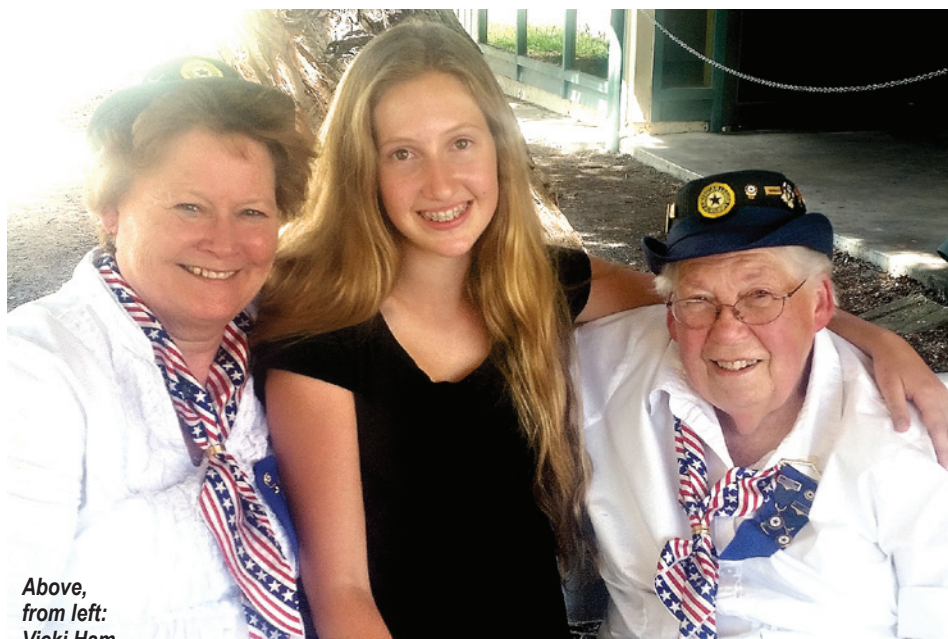


THE WILLITS ORIGINAL

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Above, from left: Vicki Ham, Girls State delegate Olivia Cooper, and Dori Grauer.

Girls State attendee from Willits High School

With a mind for math and a passion for science, Willits High School junior Olivia Cooper, 16, is excited to add a little more political science info into the mix.

The American Legion Auxiliary selected Cooper to be this year's delegate to the Girls State conference, which, according to their mission statement, will "provide an outstanding, unique and coveted educational opportunity for the young women of California that instills the basic ideals and principles of American government."

Cooper was selected for her good leadership skills and her interest in the program, and because she is well-traveled and doing well academically. Cooper takes advanced placement calculus, English and history, and is also enrolled in physics, Spanish III and ceramics, "for fun," she laughed.

"We also chose her, 'cause we like her!" said the American Legion Auxiliary's Vicki Ham.

In addition to her academic roster, Cooper enjoys extracurricular activities, including being president of the PeaceWorks! club, the CSF treasurer, a member of the Peer Counseling club, and part of the Willits High School swim team.

"I'm very excited to get to meet all the other girls," said Cooper. "My friend Rachel went last year, and she made a lot of contacts, and I'm excited to get to do the same. I also hope to learn more leadership and public speaking skills, and have a fun new experience."

The event will be held from June 28 to July 3 at Claremont McKenna College in Southern California.

— Maureen Moore

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Horses, hope and happy endings

Local author Roni McFadden read part of her book "Josephine: A Tale of Hope and Happy Endings," to all the children at Blosser Lane Elementary School last Thursday.

After the readings – all kids in the school participated in two special assemblies – McFadden answered the many questions the children had about Josephine, Josephine's mother, and the writing process.

Josephine, McFadden told the kids, is a real horse who is a great-granddaughter of Willits' beloved racehorse, Seabiscuit. Josephine was born at Ridgewood Ranch in May of 2009. The book centers on the loss of Josephine's mother when she was just four days old, and the search for a surrogate horse mother to raise her.

McFadden encountered many doubters in the publishing world about how the book – which touches on death – would be accepted by parents and children. But judging from testimonials and positive reviews it has received, those doubts have disappeared. McFadden said she is always surprised by the honest questions that children ask about Josephine's mother Lacy's death.

The book was a finalist in the National Indie Excellence book awards as "Most Inspirational Children's Book 2014," and has been donated to such programs as: St. Jude Children's Hospital, Stanford Children's Hospital, Ronald McDonald Houses, Paul Newman's Hole in the Wall Gang Camps, Redwood Children's Services, Tapestry Family Services, Camp Make-a-Dream, and U.S. Army Family Services, as well as many foster children and adoption agencies.

All proceeds from the sale of "Josephine – A Tale of Hope and Happy Endings" go to charity.

McFadden has also authored a multiple-award-winning book about her teenage years working at a pack station in the High Sierra Mountains. "The Longest Trail" is a story about a troubled girl whose life is saved by an old cowboy, horses and the Ancient Spirits who showed her the power within herself to change her path in life. Both books are available locally at The Book Juggler, and can be bought online through Amazon.



Above: Roni McFadden with Blosser Lane schoolkids after her reading of "Josephine" last week.

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A Tale of Hope and Happy Endings

— Laura Hillenbrand, author of Seabiscuit: An American Legend

Bunny McLeod and Roni McFadden
 Illustrated by Sierra Gaston

Based on a True Story