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Schools cheer Kathy Cox, await cash

They'll share \$1 million won in 'Are You Smarter than A 5th-Grader?'

By [MARK DAVIS](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Monday, September 08, 2008

The schools are in Macon, Clarkston and Cave Spring, a little Floyd County town a whole lot closer to Alabama than Atlanta. They share a mission to help youngsters with special needs.

Now, they enjoy a link other schools may envy. They are recipients of unexpected cash bonuses, courtesy of their boss and a TV game show.

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Mike Yarish/Fox

Georgia State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox charms host Jeff Foxworthy.

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The boss is Georgia state schools Superintendent Kathy Cox, who was sharp enough to win \$1 million on the Fox TV series, “Are You Smarter than A 5th-Grader?”

Appearing on the show Friday night, Cox won the moolah when she correctly named Britain’s longest-reigning monarch. (That was Victoria, of course.)

And, before the cheers subsided, Cox announced that her winnings would go to the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon, the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf in Clarkston and the Georgia School for the Deaf in Cave Spring. They are the only schools for deaf and blind students that the state Department of Education operates.

No one is sure how much each school will get after taxes are deducted, nor are state officials certain when the money will arrive, but that’s OK. It’s coming, and folks in Macon, Clarkston and Cave Spring are grinning.

“I wasn’t at all surprised that she’d won,” said Dorothy Arensman, director of the Macon school, where about 120 to 130 sight-impaired students live. Founded in 1854, the school serves more than 1,200 youngsters across the state. “I’m not surprised that she would look after us.”

Cox is committed to looking after the schools, said her spokesman, Dana Tofig. The institutes don’t rely on local funding, a traditional source of support for other public schools.

“These are the schools that we run,” he said. “She cares a great deal about these schools.”

Besides. said Tofig, “It was a great experience for her.”

A great experience in Cave Spring, too. Friday night, 50 or so students gathered in the dorm’s four TV rooms and watched. There, the closed-captioned drama unfolded:

Which country, besides Nicaragua, bordered the country of Costa Rica? Panama, Cox replied.

Crawfish are fish — true, or false? Uh ... false, Cox answered.

And when she correctly named the long-serving monarch Victoria, who ruled Britain for nearly 64 years, the dorm erupted with happy noise, said residential adviser Faye White.

“Everybody yelled and clapped their hands,” White said. “They were so happy.”

No happier than the teachers and students at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, said Cynthia Ashby, the school’s director.

“We were really excited that Mrs. Cox talked about us on national TV,” said Ashby who heads a school that serves about 200 students. They range from 3 to 21, drawn from 31 metro school systems.

Cox, said Ashby, remained true to a core message, even as she fielded queries that might have stumped others. “I think the message the matters the most is what she said,” Ashby said. ““Stay in school. Get your diploma.””

Meantime, administrators and students at three Georgia schools are waiting for an unexpected gift, and willing to tell anyone who asks that, yes, the boss is smarter than a fifth-grader.

Staff writer Brian Feagans contributed to this report.

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