

ONEIDA

QUARTERLY MEMBER NEWSLETTER

Construction continues on the
new Community Center

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Summer 2023



A Message from the Nation Representative

Shekólih. This summer has been one of tremendous progress and accomplishment for the Oneida Indian Nation and the Oneida People. From the enthusiastic return of some of our summertime favorites like the Bike Rodeo and Elders BBQ, to the surge in participation in our youth programming and the observance of the 30th anniversary of our flagship enterprise - Turning Stone Resort Casino - we have much to celebrate.

The success of Turning Stone and our other diverse enterprises over the past three decades has had an immeasurable impact on the success of our Nation. We will continue to invest in these endeavors, and within the Central New York community, to ensure our Nation can thrive for generations to come.

One of our favorite gatherings, the Member Family Picnic, was renowned by many as one of the best in recent memory. The carnival-themed event, now in its 27th year, brought hundreds of our Members and their guests together for a day full of fun activities, delicious food and great company. The picnic has been a beloved event for many years and we were delighted to be able to bring back some of the favorite activities and foods of past events. And, of course, we were proud to showcase the talents of our award-winning culinary team with an enhanced picnic menu.

Earlier this summer was full of graduation ceremonies honoring the accomplishments of our Members who have worked so hard to realize their educational goals. We are so proud of all of those who take advantage of the educational incentive opportunities provided by the Nation, at all levels, and we will continue to support our Members through these and similar programs, including healthcare, recreational programming and new housing options.



Construction on the new community center continues to progress. The new facility within the Oneida Neighborhoods project will bring our community together in ways that will strengthen the bonds that keep our People strong. We are looking forward to the opening next year and will keep Members updated as plans come together for its operation.

Just recently, the Nation participated in a repatriation of 19 of our Oneida ancestors from the Rochester Museum and Science Center (see story page 2). As we hold these repatriations more frequently, we are reminded of the past injustices indigenous peoples have endured, and why it is so important for us to pursue and protect our sovereignty and the dignity of our ancestors. It is incumbent upon all of us to uphold those responsibilities, now and unto the future generations.

NΛ ki' wa,
Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative

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Museum Repatriates Remains of 19 Oneida Ancestors

The Oneida Indian Nation joined the Rochester Museum and Science Center on Wednesday, Aug. 2 in a ceremony held in Rochester, New York, to repatriate the remains of 19 Oneida ancestors, as well as an assortment of funerary objects. This is the second such repatriation of ancestral remains from the museum’s collections to the Oneida people, following the restoration of the remains of 25 ancestors in 2000.

The ancestral remains repatriated at the event include five adult men, three adult women and two adolescent girls, all of who, along with additional ancestors who could not be identified in this way, lived during various periods of history between 200 and 3,000 years ago. These remains were disinterred during the museum’s excavations, donated to or purchased by the museum between 1928 and 1979, where they have remained ever since.

“Events like this allow us to move past these failures with a chance for cultural institutions to take accountability and make amends. They are a path to a future we can all take pride in, where Native people and our cultures are respected, our inclusion is valued and our dignity is unquestioned,” said Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter. “Today’s repatriation is so much more than the simple return of remains and cultural artifacts. It is an acknowledgment of these ancestors’ status as real people who lived rich lives and deserved dignity in life and death.”

During the ceremony, RMSC President and CEO Hillary Olson apologized for the museum’s acquisition of the Oneida people’s ancestral remains and cultural artifacts:

“Today is a significant occasion as Museums, including the RMSC, recognize the trauma we have caused and participate in the creation of a more just future,” said Olson. “The RMSC has played a role in eroding Native American rights to dignity and self-determination. We have perpetuated harmful practices including the excavation, collection, study, and display of Native American ancestors and their belongings.

“Today’s repatriation is so much more than the simple return of remains and cultural artifacts. It is an acknowledgment of these ancestors’ status as real people who lived rich lives and deserved dignity in life and death.”

- Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter



Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and RMSC President and Chief Executive Officer Hillary Olson sign transfer documents confirming the Nation’s receipt of the Oneida ancestors’ remains and funerary objects. Also pictured are Dean Lyons (Turtle Clan) and Kathryn Murano Santos, Senior Director of Collections and Exhibits for RMSC.

“Today we acknowledge this unjust legacy of the past and take a small step toward repairing these harms by returning the ancestors and their belongings.”

After the repatriation ceremony concluded, President and Chief Executive Officer Olson and Representative Halbritter each signed transfer documents confirming receipt of the repatriated remains and funerary objects.

The event also included a traditional Oneida acknowledgment of the ancestors delivered by Dean Lyons (Turtle Clan). Stephanie Dickman, Rochester Museum & Science Center Board Chair, and Kathryn Murano Santos, Senior Director of Collections and Exhibits, also spoke at the event.

The Oneida Indian Nation is grateful for the RMSC’s partnership in the repatriation of these ancestral remains and for its commitment to devoting the time and resources required to righting the historic wrongs associated with

the acquisition of Native Americans’ ancestral remains and cultural artifacts. ❖

Youth Work/Learn Program Provides Experience, Opportunity

Over the years, the Oneida Indian Nation's Youth Work/Learn Program has provided opportunities for Nation youth to learn the value of hard work through community service or real-world job experience while working at one of the Nation's enterprises. The program for younger kids ages 13-15, known as the Crew, offers the group a 20-hour work schedule per week, performing a variety of duties around the Nation community along with valuable cultural programming.



This year, the Crew was a smaller-than-usual group: Rhys Kennedy (Wolf Clan), Carter Stout (Turtle Clan) and Larry Torres (Wolf Clan). But they still brought enthusiasm to the program. Over the course of the summer, the group weeded around Nation buildings, cleaned up the Peaceful Pines campground prior to the Nation Member

family picnic, and ventured out to ancestral Oneida lands for the cultural dig – one of the most popular activities each year for the youth.



Larry Torres (Wolf Clan), Carter Stout (Turtle Clan) and Rhys Kennedy (Wolf Clan) of the Youth Work/Learn Summer Crew.

Ron Patterson (Wolf Clan), manager of the Shako:wi Cultural Center, also met with the group on Monday mornings. The kids made baby moccasins with Ron's assistance. Handing down that cultural knowledge is important, especially for the younger generations.

One of the more popular trips was a visit to Wáhta' Maple Farm – one of the Nation's newest enterprises – to see the extensive process of maple syrup production, from tapping the trees to bottling the final product. Touring the site where the trees are tapped with Maple Production Manager Brendan Schuler, the kids saw the elaborate maze of tubes that transfer the sap to the holding tanks that will then be brought to the production facility on Territory Road to be boiled down.

Youth enjoy educational trip to Nichols Pond

Participants in the Summer Jam and Youth Work/Learn programs as well as kids from the Nation's Early Learning Center visited Nichols Pond to learn about some of the history of the area and create clay pots with Cultural Programs Coordinator, Jessica Farmer.



NIYOTA'AKÁ:



Beads, fragments of stone possibly used for tools and other artifacts were found during the Crew dig at a site in the Stockbridge area this summer.

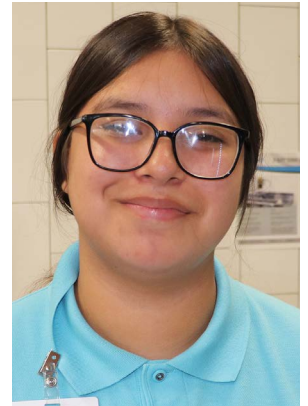
In addition to some of the more manual work, the group attended Onyota'a:ká: language classes twice per week and visited Colgate University, the Great Swamp Conservancy and Nichols Pond, which was once home to an Oneida village.

The program for older kids, ages 16-20, has placed dozens of eager participants for full 40-hour work weeks over the summer at locations such as SāvOn and Maple Leaf Market convenience stores, marinas, Turning Stone Car Care, Heritage, and the ever-popular Turning Stone Golf department.

The group working at Turning Stone Golf this year included Josh Frederick (Turtle Clan), Diane, Elisabeth and Stephanie Morris, along with Ashley and Isabella Scott. Each day, the group would get assignments ranging from collecting the golf balls hit at the golf dome, greeting and assisting guests with their golf bags when they arrive, and cleaning golf carts when guests return after their round.

All of the participants expressed excitement about returning to the golf department next year and enjoyed getting some real work experience, especially with the opportunity to work outdoors.

Others like Kaylene Cook (Wolf Clan), a first-time participant in the program, took on other roles. She decided to work at the SāvOn convenience store on Lenox Ave in Oneida. Kaylene, who will be entering her senior year at Oneida High School, has really enjoyed her experience this summer. Her sister, Elaina, has been a long-time program participant, so she decided to give it a try, and she is glad she did.



Kaylene Cook (Wolf Clan)

"I would recommend Nation youth participate in the program," Kaylene said. "It has been a really good experience and the staff here is very helpful."

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Diane, Elisabeth and Stephanie Morris, Ashley and Isabella Scott, and Josh Frederick (Turtle Clan), enjoyed their summer work with Turning Stone Golf.

Youth Work/ Learn

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Jadayln George is another first-time program participant. The soon-to-be junior at Stockbridge Valley has enjoyed the variety of tasks she’s been assigned behind the deli counter at the Maple Leaf Market in Sherrill.

“I thought this would be a good opportunity to get the benefit of job experience through the Nation’s program rather than to try to find a job on my own,” she said.



Jadayln George

Store Manager Dustin Eddy would be more than happy to have Elaina stay at SāvOn. “She has been great,” he said. “She does a little bit of everything around here and has been very helpful.”

Elaina participated in the program as a member of the Crew for a few years before exploring her options with the job placement assignments. She is hoping her experience will help her in her future and is looking forward to other possibilities.

Kacey Schenandoah-Stanford (Wolf Clan) was helping out at the Shako:wi Cultural Center this summer until an ankle injury sidelined her in mid-July. Toward the end of the program, she assisted Cultural Programs Coordinator, Jessica Farmer, and Language Instructor, Chelsea Jocko (Wolf Clan), by narrating the Summer Jam play written by Chelsea.

The Youth Work/Learn program continues to be popular among Nation youth and provides an avenue for younger kids to get work experience over the summer break from school. ❖

Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan) has really benefitted from her time at the Plaza-Mart SāvOn in Oneida. The recent graduate from Oneida High School plans to work for a while before exploring her educational options, with a focus on business and finance.

“Gas days,” are the busiest she said, referring to a bustling Tuesday morning. “That is when everyone comes to take advantage of the gas savings and specials offered at SāvOn.”



Elaina Cook (Wolf Clan)



Kacey Schenandoah-Stanford (Wolf Clan) reads to participants in the Summer Jam Program during a visit to the Shako:wi Cultural Center.

The Oneida Indian Nation’s Summer Jam program wrapped up Aug. 11 with a special Family Day celebration filled with several fun activities including a play written by Language Instructor, Chelsea Jocko (Wolf Clan). Shako:wi Cultural Center Cultural Programs Coordinator, Jessica Farmer, helped the kids make their outfits and coached them with Chelsea. The play was narrated by Kacey Schenandoah-Stanford (Wolf Clan), who participated in the Nation’s Youth Work/Learn Program and assisted at Shako:wi.



Oneida Indian Nation Honored During Annual Battle of Oriskany Commemoration

On the evening of Sunday, August 6, Members of the Oneida Indian Nation gathered together with the community to commemorate the 246th anniversary of the Battle of Oriskany at the Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site. The battle is known by historians as one of the bloodiest conflicts of the American Revolution, and it is the first major battle that the Oneida Indian Nation took part in on the side of their American allies. A monument was dedicated on August 6, 1884, to serve as a memorial to those who fought during the battle, and each year a solemn commemoration is held to honor their contributions.

Oneida Indian Nation Member Sheri Beglen (Wolf Clan) gave words of welcome in the Oneida language, and Oneida Indian Nation Councilmember Brian Patterson (Bear Clan) delivered closing remarks, focusing on the contributions of women during the war.

The Fort Stanwix Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented the Oneida Indian Nation with an award in honor of Oneida woman Tyonajanegen, (Two Kettles Together) for her role in assisting her husband, Han Yerry, during the Battle of Oriskany, and her subsequent actions as an ally during the war.



Left to right: Melissa Patterson (Wolf Clan), Councilmember Brian Patterson (Bear Can), Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente Jr., Sheri Beglen (Wolf Clan), NYS Senator Joe Griffo, NYS Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon.

“Fort Stanwix Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution is privileged to present our Society’s Woman in American History Medal to Tyonajanegen, ancestor of the Oneida Indian Nation,” said Diane Miller, Recording Secretary of the Fort Stanwix Chapter, DAR while presenting the award. “She did not turn away from the fight but displayed true heroism as a representative of her Clan and as a Patriot of the American Revolution.”

The Oneidas were the only Haudenosaunee nation to side with the Americans and it is that famous battle that cemented their legacy as America’s First Allies. ❖



Sheri Beglen with members of the Fort Stanwix Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



For the Love of the Game

Recent High School Grad Chases Major League Dreams

Although it may not be the first ball-and-stick game that comes to mind when talking about elite Oneida athletes, for Oneida Indian Nation Member Benjamin ‘Benny’ Welch (Bear Clan), his passion for and ability to excel at baseball has opened doors to a bright future.

Benny, a recent graduate from Chittenango High School, is beginning to reap the rewards of years of hard work and dedication to the game he loves. In May of this year, Benny received the news that he was among only 44 American Indian high school baseball players throughout the U.S. and Canada to be invited to participate in the second annual Native American All-Star Baseball Showcase in Atlanta, GA. The event provides an opportunity for aspiring American Indian student athletes to highlight their skills and potential to professional scouts and collegiate coaches.

While players representing 30 tribal affiliations from 13 states and Canada were invited, Benny was the only one to earn the recognition from the entire northeastern United States.

“I felt honored,” said Benny on his selection. “I was grateful for the opportunity to get to a higher level in my baseball career. I was nervous about going. Would I do well? Who would be there? But the chance to walk onto an MLB field was more than I could ever ask for.”

Benny, a catcher for the Chittenango varsity baseball team, received news of the invite prior to a game at Marcellus, perhaps giving him a little extra boost as he hit a sixth-inning homerun to tie the game.

“That was a good day,” he added.



Benny displays the Oneida Indian Nation flag on the field in Atlanta.

While in Atlanta, Benny and the other participants met with Major League Baseball scouts from Atlanta and Arizona and participated in a Home Run Derby and showcase game, which Benny’s team won 2 – 0. Benny’s incredible experience also included a pro-style workout with retired MLB catcher Johnny Estrada (pictured).

“It seemed to go by so fast, it was hard to take it all in,” he said. “The two best feelings were walking up to the Atlanta Braves’ home plate to hit and sitting behind the dish to catch.”

Benny has played organized baseball since the age of five, beginning with Chittenango Little League T-Ball. At age 11, he began taking hitting lessons from Dan Almonte, a popular local hitting, catching and fielding instructor. He then was given an opportunity to play travel ball, eventually joining the Sports Yard Dirtbags – the team he currently plays for on the 18 and under level.

“I found through travel ball I was able to play baseball with kids who, like me, wanted to play baseball all of the time,” he said. The team has participated in tournaments in New York, New Jersey, Ohio and Maryland. Benny also continues to train with Almonte.

Next to the pitcher, a catcher is one of the most important positions in baseball and is a position where Benny thrives.

“It’s the best view of the game,” he said. “I like catching and I like seeing the whole field. As a catcher, I am able to have control in the game. The catcher needs to be the leader on the diamond.”



While attending Chittenango High School, Benny played Modified and Varsity baseball. This year, he was nominated for mid-season MVP and received the award for Outstanding Senior Baseball Player during the end-of-year Senior Awards.

Benny is looking forward to the next chapter of his young baseball career as he plans to play while attending Mohawk Valley Community College in the fall while majoring in Business Administration and Sports Management. While earning his degree will require focus and attention, Benny still has his sights set on an even bigger goal – playing for the major leagues.

“I think the experience in Atlanta gave me the solidification that the MLB is where I belong,” he added.



Benny's family attended his 'early' graduation from Chittenango High School.

Family Plays Important Supporting Role

While players such as Aaron Judge and Mike Trout are the typical pros many young ball players look up to nowadays, including Benny, he also admires the play of eight-time MLB All-Star and five-time Gold Glove Award winner Salvador Perez, a catcher for the Kansas City Royals. But when it comes to the backbone of support and inspiration for Benny, family is where it is at.

Benny's mom, Patty, shared early memories of how it all began.

“At the age of 3, Benny would hang out with his father watching TV, and asked ‘What are you watching Dad?’”, she recalled. Benny's father Kelly was watching the New York Yankees while eating peanuts.

“Benny was interested in eating the peanuts, so Kelly gave him a little cardboard box, showed him how to shell the

peanuts and thus the love of baseball for him was born,” Patty continued. “They would sit together quite often over the next couple of years, shelling peanuts. Benny learned some of his numbers from the jerseys and fell in love with the game.”

When Benny was five years old, his parents signed him up for Little League, bought him his first glove and took him to his first practice. As he got out of the car, Patty said he saw all of the other kids and said, “Hey Dad, do you think the Yankees are watching ME today?” His father's reply was simple – “I'm sure they are son, I'm sure they are.”

Throughout his years in baseball, Benny's older siblings, Maegan, Nickolas, Taylor and Elizabeth, have been there to support him, attending as many games as possible.

“They have come to my games when they can, ask me how things are going and if I need some venting time, they all take the time to listen,” he said.

Benny also credits his parents for supporting him along the way, and his Uncle James Patterson. But who does Benny consider his best cheerleader? His grandmother, Kathleen Patterson, or ‘Grammie’ to Benny.

“She loves watching me play and a hug at the end of a not-so-good game from her is the best,” he said.

The road to Benny's budding success has been a long one, figuratively and literally. Just ask Patty. The duties of a baseball mom are never ending – from providing transportation to lessons, practices and tournaments, to securing the right equipment, to delivering the emotional support a young athlete needs. With his family in staunch support, Benny has remained the driving force in overcoming the many challenges of balancing school with baseball, not to mention of being a teenager.

“As a parent, proud doesn't even begin to describe it,” Patty said. “This journey to do baseball is just incredible, and to watch my son step up to the MLB Atlanta Braves home plate was everything that a baseball mom could ever dream of. But with all of the amazing things, the one thing to remember is to be humble. It's up to him to keep it going, and no matter what, I am proud of the young man that he has become.”

Part of growing up is making tough choices. When Benny realized that the opportunity to go to Atlanta came at the same time as his graduation ceremony, the choice was easy – baseball. Patty contacted the Chittenango principal and superintendent to see if the school could somehow accommodate Benny's chance of a lifetime.

“The school was amazing,” she said. “Benny was able to attend the graduation rehearsal and actually graduated a day early with his class in attendance. It meant the world to me.”

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MEMBER PROFILE: Kristen Marciniak Completes Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine

Caring for the vulnerable is among the most honorable and rewarding professions. Sadly, animals tend to be the most vulnerable in our society. So when Kristen Halbritter-Marciniak (Wolf Clan) began looking at graduate schools to become a veterinarian, she knew it would be more than a job – it was a calling.

Helping and caring for animals has always been a part of Kristen ever since she was little.

“As far back as I can remember,” Kristen said when asked when she knew she wanted to be a veterinarian. “I just love animals and I would always want to pet them or interact with them. But I started working and I realized it was just something I really enjoyed and wanted to pursue.”

Kristen graduated from Andrews University in the spring of 2017 and was still deciding on where to go for her veterinary program. There are only 33 accredited doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) programs in the country, which means admission is very competitive. This high level of competition added to the difficulty of finding and getting into a school she would feel comfortable attending. The place she

chose would become her home for at least the next four years so she wanted to make sure she was making the best choice.

Of the twelve schools Kristen applied to, she was accepted to two prestigious universities: Mississippi State University and Iowa State University.



Kristen, with her sister Kathryn and mom, Karen, at her graduation from Iowa State University.

It was a difficult decision, but after consulting with a few of her mentors, Kristen ultimately chose Iowa State and moved to Ames shortly thereafter in the fall of 2019.

The program at Iowa State consisted of three years of coursework and classes, while the fourth was mainly clinic rotations. That fourth year is critical because students need to pick a specialized track of study.

“With rotations, you can pick between four tracks,” Kristen explained. “Some want to do just small animals, which would be dogs and cats, and some choose to do just horses and track equine, and others want to do just food animals, which includes herd health for dairy cattle, beef cattle, pork production, and also backyard pets like goats, pigs, sheep. But you can also get a mix of all of those, and I wanted to learn about everything, so I chose the mixed track.”

Kristen noted that there are almost as many specialties to study in veterinary medicine as there are in a regular medical school. She would constantly compare notes with her twin sister, Kathryn, who is enrolled in medical school at Loma Linda University in southern California, and they would both be surprised at how closely everything aligned.

After completing her fourth year in the spring of 2023, Kristen graduated with a year-long internship already lined up at Iowa State University’s Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center. It would be an opportunity to put into practice everything she learned while having seasoned professionals at her disposal to ask any questions that came up. She also gets to teach rising fourth-year students in addition to her caseload at the medical center.

“I want to learn as much as I can,” she added. “As a doctor, I take my own cases, but I also have that safety net of having specialists behind me so I know I am doing everything correctly.”

The internship also gives Kristen the flexibility to decide where she wants to go next. She’s leaning toward focusing on general practice, which will give her the ability to move almost anywhere.

“It’s a bit limited where you can live and work as a specialist,” she said. “We love hiking, so we’d love to move out west for a little while.”

Kristen and her husband, David, have lived in Iowa the past four years and are excited to begin a new chapter, wherever that may be.

“She’s always encouraged us to get our education and has always been super supportive. I know she is very proud of our accomplishments.”

- Kristen Marciniak describing the support her mother, Karen, gives to her and her sister Kathryn

With so many options now available to her, Kristen is grateful for the Oneida Indian Nation’s Scholarship Program, which enabled her to graduate debt-free. She credits her mom, Karen Halbritter, for instilling her with self-confidence and a strong work ethic to achieve her dream.

“She’s always encouraged us to get our education and has always been super supportive,” Kristen said. “I know she is very proud of our accomplishments and she comes out to visit me as much as she’s able to, which means the world to me.”

Now, Kristen is looking for the best place to start her next adventure, but she knows wherever that is, she’ll have the support of her family.

“I wouldn’t be where I am, or have the drive to complete school or go to college in the first place, without her mentorship, advice and support,” she added. ❖



Benny and his No. 1 fan, his grandmother Kathy Patterson.

For the Love of the Game

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For the Love of the Game Recent High School Grad Chases Major League Dreams

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Bike Rodeo Rides On

The Oneida Indian Nation Bike Rodeo returned July 13 to the Nation Recreation Center, welcoming dozens of enthusiastic Nation Members and community youth. Oneida Indian Nation Police Officers and Housing Department staff set out an obstacle course for the bikers to test and learn new riding skills. Scooters were also a popular choice for the youth to practice with. Participants all had an opportunity to try the course while being guided by the officers before heading inside to enjoy a healthy lunch served up by new Youth Development and Recreation Supervisor Brandon Inman and members of the Summer Jam team.

Jay Blazek and members of the Team of The Northern American Indian Tour for the Health of Young People (NAIT4HP) joined the Bike Rodeo, sharing words of encouragement and experience with the riders as well as donating 15 brand-new bikes to the Nation. Some of the bikes were given away to lucky winners of a drawing, while the others will be kept at the Recreation Center for future use.

Jay undertook a 5,000-mile bike journey from the west coast to the east, visiting several tribal nations along the way to promote cultural, behavioral and sustainable environmental practices. The Oneida Indian Nation was his second-to-last stop before he ended the 70-day tour at the Mashantucket community in Connecticut on July 17.

“It has been such a great journey,” said Jay, who has conducted bike rodeos at several of his stops. “Being able to help a child gain the confidence to ride a bike, something they’ve been afraid to try, is such a great feeling. And the reception by the tribal nations has been incredible.”

For more information about Jay and the NAIT4HP, visit www.nait4hyp.com. ❖



Maisie Schenandoah was one of the lucky winners of a brand-new bike at the Oneida Indian Nation Bike Rodeo.

