Mrs. Claus delights local kids during library visit

(Left) Mrs. Claus — local resident Cathy Kelsay — discusses the importance of Christmas with local kids during a Dec. 16 Story Time presentation at Cheyenne Mountain Library. (Middle) Arianna Harrison was in her element with help from a world-famous red and white Christmas cap. (Right) A shiny red nose and reindeer antlers suited Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer wannabe Abraham Page. Photos by William J. Dagendesh

BY WILLIAM J. DAGENDESH

Meeting the wife of the world’s most famous toy maker is a pretty cool experience for most children, but not for Cheyenne Mountain resident Miles Soto, 4.

“I like Mrs. Claus but like reindeer more,” Soto said of his sporting toy reindeer during a Dec. 16 pre-Christmas Story Time presentation at Cheyenne Mountain Library. Designed to usher in the Christmas season, the event saw Santa’s wife and youngsters share favorite holiday stories and sing classic holiday songs, and participate in an arts and crafts project.

The event also provided Mrs. C., also known as local resident Cathy Kelsay, with an opportunity to discuss the importance of Christmas, and what it means to be good boys and girls. About 30 children and their families attended the 45-minute Pikes Peak Library District event. “It’s all about stirring kids’ imagination,” said Kelsay as she lowered herself into a wooden chair.

Sporting her trademark granny glasses and a green, red and white quilt shawl, Kelsay introduced her white Christmas mouse who encouraged children to join in the celebration. Kelsay also introduced Santa’s shaggy dog, Ralph, and reached into a gift bag for a Santa hat to keep Ralph’s head warm. Kelsay instead produced a green leprechaun hat.

“What a minute, that’s not the right hat. That’s not even the right color,” Kelsay said as kids giggled and shook their heads. Kelsay then removed Dr. Seuss, pirate, princess and Uncle Sam hats from the bag, but no Santa hat.

“What color is Santa’s hat,” Kelsay asked the children to which they shouted, “Red and white.” Kelsay then reached into the bag and removed a Santa hat. “I must show Santa how to properly pack a gift bag,” Kelsay said as she placed the hat on Ralph’s head.

Kelsay then led the children in a variety of lyric-altered Christmas classics tailored to recognize her canine companion. Songs included, “Deck the Halls with Bones,” “Frosty the Snow Dog” and “Ralph the Red Nose Reindeer.” Kelsay also worked rabbit, turtle and skunk puppets into her act. “These puppets show that friends come in all shapes, sizes and smells,” Kelsay said.

Kelsay also read the Keith Faulkner and Jonathan Lambert pictorial pop-up book, “Santa’s Surprise.” “This is not a good picture of me,” Kelsay said of a Mrs. Claus drawing.

At one point Kelsay asked the children what they wanted for Christmas. One boy blurted, “A dog,” while a girl said, “A toy police car.” One youngster shouted, “A million dollars.”

Following Kelsay’s performance, children gathered at an arts and crafts table to decorate felt blue snowflake, brown gingerbread men, green Christmas tree and red candy cane ornaments. Kids also colored wood candy cane, name tag, snowman, star, stocking and wreath ornaments with crayons and marking pens.

Kelsay, who has been working with children since she was 10, adopted role-playing as a way to interact with and encourage children to expand their imaginations. However, it wasn’t until she shared her passion with the PPLD that her role-playing career skyrocketed.

“Cathy called the library, explained what she does for kids and asked if we would be interested in her playing Mrs. Claus. Of course we said yes,” said Katie Smith, PPLD senior associate and children’s specialist.

On Dec. 9, Kelsay performed three shows for more than 160 parents and children at the Fountain, Ute Pass and 21c libraries. Kelsay tells kids that Christmas isn’t about what they receive, but about what they give others. She encourages youngsters to view every day as Christmas and not just once a year.

“Sometimes after I get home I fall straight into bed, but I love it,” Kelsay said, laughing. “Performing for kids is what it’s all about.”