

COMMUNITY VIEW

Just like Mom

Kory Johnson's efforts honored

By Susan Felt
Staff writer

Kory Johnson finds it funny that her environmental award from the city of Phoenix is mounted on a product she boycotts — plastic foam.

"They mounted my mayor's award on styro-board," the 12-year-old said.

But Kory — who is no relation to Phoenix Mayor Paul Johnson — is sure that folk singer and fellow environmentalist John Denver will not commit such an environmental gaffe.

Kory has been selected by the seven-member board of directors of Denver's Windstar Foundation as the winner of its first youth award, according to Leslae Dalpiaz, business manager for the foundation.

Kory's down-to-earth, gutsy approach to environmental causes wound up setting her apart from the other 24 children from across the country who were nominated, Dalpiaz said.

"One of them (the judges) mentioned that she liked the idea that Kory had skipped school," Dalpiaz said.

"She had called in sick to school one day and then was embarrassed to end up with her picture in the newspaper that night," Dalpiaz said.

The event was one of several public protests against the ENSCO hazardous-waste facility that Kory attended during the past two years.

Her picture and quotes have appeared in newspapers nearly as frequently as her mother's, who is no environmental novice.

Teri Johnson most recently helped found Don't Waste Arizona, an umbrella organization of several environmental groups, including her daughter's Children for a Safe Environment, that mobilized along with Greenpeace in the effort to stop ENSCO from operating the proposed dump site at



File photo

Kory Johnson, winner of the Windstar Foundation's first national youth award, looks through a scrapbook of her environmental activities.

Mobile.

Following in her mother's footsteps has brought bruises along with awards and newspaper clippings.

Kory was the winner of the Peralta Elementary School Science Fair one year, but she was told by school officials that her entry could not go on to the next level of competition because the competition sponsors would not take too kindly to her message — that plastic foam pollutes.

However, she takes some credit on behalf of Children for a Safe Environment in seeing the switch to paper bags by some fast-food restaurants, she said.

Besides receiving the mayor's award, Kory this spring was honored by the Giraffe Project in Washington, D.C., as

one of those willing to "stick their necks out for the common good."

And in a contest that had nothing to do with the environment, Kory this summer was crowned winner of her first beauty contest, wearing a second-hand dress and dancing a hula number.

The organization she started has grown from six to 300, representing 10 schools in Arizona.

But Kory has had to watch youngsters drop out of the cause, especially after violence erupted at one of the first ENSCO hearings.

"We lost a lot of kids because parents didn't want their kids to be involved," Kory said. "People want a perfect world, and they don't want to know about anything bad."