



2008 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



Role models who give us *Reasons to Believe* in the power of education

Earl P. Cole

Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, 1989

Earl Cole was raised to be a winner, and he has succeeded.

He made national headlines in 2007 when he won the CBS reality show *Survivor: Fiji*. He credits his humble upbringing in Kansas City, Kansas for his million dollar win.

"I went through school dealing with different races and talking with all levels of people, and the experience prepared me well," he said. "I also have had plenty of obstacles in my life, but I have never given up on myself."

Growing up in KCK, Cole was bussed to J.F. Kennedy Elementary School as part of the desegregation program. It gave him the opportunity to be among all ethnic races and he thrived.

At age seven, he was diagnosed with Legg-Calve-Perthes Disease, a condition where a loss of bone mass leads to a collapse of the hip joint. He spent eight years using casts, braces, crutches and a wheelchair. He missed school often, and remembers stares he got from strangers. But his family, especially his mother, continued to give him reasons to believe in himself.

"The whole experience brought my family closer, and I knew that after dealing with that, I could deal with anything," he said.

Cole majored in business at the University of Washington and spent 10 years after college in the entertainment industry. Currently, he is balancing a career as the CEO of A-Frame Studios, a TV/film production company, and of Wondertwin Technology, an internet company that recently launched yoddol.com.

He also is a composer and an accomplished musician, and has set up his own charity, the Earl Cole Fund for Legg-Calve-Perthes Disease.

Being chosen for *Survivor* was a fluke. He was approached with the offer while at a restaurant in Santa Monica, California, where he lives. The talent scout told him, "Who knows, you might win."

The experience was mentally and physically grueling, but he knew he could do it. His background had prepared him well.

