

A shiny quarter under the pillow? Nope. Arizona Tooth Fairy now can go as high as \$5 for lost teeth

Magical character's charm, though, still all about promoting proper oral hygiene

By **NANCI HUTSON**
 The Daily Courier

Five-year-old Jackson Crouse in Prescott Valley can expect the Tooth Fairy to leave one to three crisp, green George Washington bills under his pillow depending on what tooth he loses; he already lost his first one.

The effervescent blonde's trade of teeth-for-dollars in a piggy bank is a long-standing tradition. Nowadays, though, the Tooth Fairy seems to be in an inflationary mode; that means the average Arizona kid likely gets a chunk more than was left for his or her parents.

The average Tooth Fairy deposit these days in Arizona is \$4.70 a tooth, according to a **Delta Dental** national Tooth Fairy poll started 23 years ago.

The Delta Dental poll is clear the Tooth Fairy has more than kept up with inflation, as the average value of any tooth has tripled since its researchers started tracking donations in 1998.

At that time, the value of a lost tooth was \$1.30.

Prescott Valley mother of three Megan Olson said her two eldest were left as much as \$5 under the pillow for molars; a dollar or two for smaller teeth. Her youngest, Kingston, has yet to lose his first tooth. She predicts he will likely get under the inflationary rate for the run-of-the-mill lost baby tooth.

Yet only the Tooth Fairy really knows for sure — sometimes grandparents or older siblings help sweeten the Tooth Fairy pot.

Back a few generations, the Tooth Fairy specialty was shiny new quarters- maybe even dimes — in exchange for wiggled out teeth.

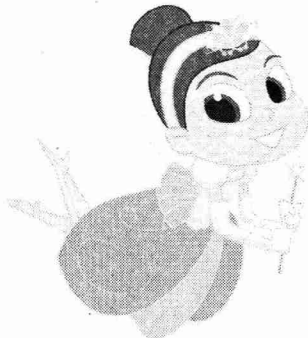
For specialty teeth, the very first out or the top front two teeth, the Tooth Fairy often inspects to be certain they're the real deal. Then the fairy leaves them behind as a family keepsake; some families like to store the first teeth in a silver decorative box.

The Tooth Fairy, too, accepts notes in exchange for teeth that end up lost at school, on a playground or even left behind in a dentist's office.

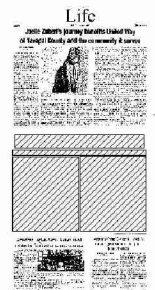
Scientific research has determined baby teeth can have medicinal benefits, but only if the teeth are saved in sanitary conditions. On that, the Tooth Fairy defers to professionals.

An informal playground poll in the Prescott/Prescott Valley area revealed some parents prefer the Tooth Fairy leave something the child will appreciate more than money — think dinosaur toys or a small stuffed animal. A few ask the Tooth Fairy to donate the dollars to charity in the name of the child.

As the whole point of the Tooth Fairy's existence is to promote good oral health when the children's permanent teeth arrive, the Tooth Fairy often elects to



AZ 100 Poll/Courtesy





Kingston Olson at the Granville playground in Prescott Valley shows off his missing tooth. (Nanci Hutson/Courier)



Jackson Crouse and his teeth. To date, he has lost one. (Robyn Cedillos/Courtesy)

leave behind a toothbrush sporting the child’s favorite superhero or cartoon, a tube of toothpaste and dental floss, dental sources said.

“Though legends like the tooth fairy and children go back thousands of years across many different cultures, the Tooth Fairy as we know her is about 100 years old and was inspired by a myth in a somewhat obscure book. However she came about, we dentists love the Tooth Fairy as she is a really special, accessible, visual way to help encourage children from such young ages to care for their teeth,” says Dr. Heather Schneider, dental director for **Delta Dental of Arizona**.

The Tooth Fairy is always open to parental suggestions, and will never force a family to do something contrary to their values and beliefs. So if monetary gifts are not deemed appropriate, the Tooth Fairy will get creative

about alternatives.

Here are a few that have hit social media circles:

- Handcrafted tooth pillow to store the pillow
- Miniature Tooth Fairy notes reinforcing good teeth hygiene;
- Tiny tooth journal so children can chronicle the date and time of lost teeth to read later, maybe when they become parents.

As Kingston twisted his legs around a bar at the playground, he was eager to show off his still full mouth of teeth. He isn’t yet too worried about Tooth Fairy gifts.

Like many children, Kingston and Jackson just want to be sure the Tooth Fairy knows the direction to their pillow.

No worries.

The Tooth Fairy’s tooth instinct is keener than GPS. Just ask Mommy and Daddy about what happened to their first lost tooth – no doubt it will make for a great bedtime story!