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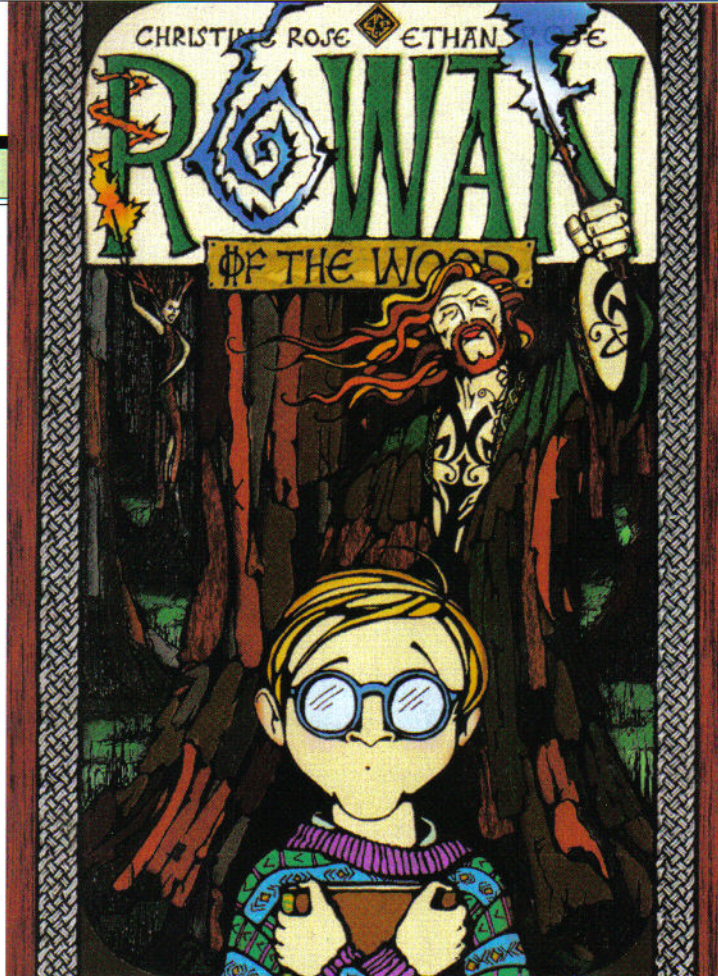
a favorite among outdoor enthusiasts, partners with local nonprofits to protect the environment and promote outdoor activities—two topics very close to the hearts of those at REI.

The company dedicates a portion of its profits to various local outdoor recreation and conservation organizations nominated by REI employees who are personally involved with them. During 2007, REI gave \$3.5 million to more than 360 community partners, and helped recruit 32,652 volunteers for 688 REI-hosted services projects across the country.

Recently, a \$10,000 grant to the Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department through the Round Rock Community Foundation funded a series of educational signs along Round Rock's Brushy Creek Trail. These signs will designate wildlife viewing areas, geological formations, habitat information, flora and fauna identification, conservation information and more. Some of the signs will have interactive components, such as a display of native animal tracks to jumpstart conversations about the variety of species and their unique characteristics.

Through these efforts and more, REI demonstrates its commitment to being a community partner across the country where they do business. "REI is dedicated to creating opportunities for outdoor recreation, especially for the next generation of outdoor stewards," says Todd Callaway, store manager of the new Round Rock REI. "We are excited to join the Round Rock community in helping to connect them to the joys of outdoor recreation and opportunities to care for our shared open spaces."

For more information, visit www.rei.com/reigives.



READ: The people behind the pages **Christine and Ethan Rose**

BY CODI CRADDOCK

Meet Cullen, a fostered bookworm who stumbles across a wand deep within a redwood forest. Little does he know that this magical wand will release forces that will affect both his life and those around him.

Rowan of the Wood, the newest addition to the wizarding genre, is not your average tome. It's part one of a five-book youth series by Christine and Ethan Rose that adds a healthy dose of history and life lessons to the typical boil and bubble of fantasy fiction.

The idea came to the Roses in 2005 after Christine noticed her nephew's fascination with wands and superheroes. A month later, she finished a rough first draft, and Ethan then embellished the story and added subplots. He provides a large part of the inspiration for the main character, as he, too, was a foster child who grew up surrounded by redwoods (in his case, Californian), a tattered book always in hand. "I borrowed on this to create Cullen," Christine says. "It came from the feeling of not really being connected to a family and

of taking solace in reading."

The Roses met in Austin while swing dancing in 1999 and married a year later. Christine is an up-and-coming filmmaker and a teacher at Austin Community College, and Ethan, when he's not reading, is a general contractor. The two are avid environmentalists and often seek the spirit of the woods for inspiration. While Christine types out her thoughts on a computer, Ethan prefers longhand and carries a clipboard while he's out and about. "Inspiration hits among the trees," he says. "It's relaxing and often frees up creativity."

Along with the inspiration the Roses gain from the outdoors and each other, an amalgam of works and authors inform their art. Among them are the Arthurian legend, Celtic mythology, J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Chronicles of Prydain*, Charles de Lint and the Harry Potter series. "I've always had an interest in the Arthurian legend. I'm still very fascinated with ancient peoples," Christine says. Ethan adds, "And *The Hobbit* was my favorite book growing up."