

# 'I'm thrilled with what I see'

## FOOD continued from front page

Community Team that has been meeting for the last couple of years in an effort to educate people about how to access fresh, healthy foods grown locally.

At a well-attended Community Conversation meeting held in Grand Ronde on Jan. 28, it became clear that there was confusion over food resources and benefits, and that an event like mək'hmək Mania might be the perfect way to clear some of that up.

FACT member Lexi Stickel of Marion-Polk Food Share said the Mania event is a direct response to information gathered at the conversation held in January.

Marion-Polk Food Share collects and distributes nutritional foods to food pantries, meal sites, foster homes, low-income day care centers, shelters and senior housing sites. As many as 44,000 people receive emergency food monthly through the Food Share Partner Network. Marion-Polk Food Share is part of the Oregon Food Bank Network.

"We're trying to increase access and knowledge about food resources in the community and so that is what this event is focusing on," said Stickel, who is the Community

Food Systems coordinator for Marion-Polk Food Share. "In terms of what we hope to accomplish, the first one is just to build community around food in Grand Ronde, so we're bringing people together for a community meal and a fun day."

"We have been gathering information and we have done a survey," said Ambrose. "People didn't realize what was out there and how they could access that information so we decided we would put on this event. We decided we would pool all the food resources in our area that we could to educate people."

Mercier said the issue of educating people about food resources and options is an ongoing one.

"We figured if we increased the magnitude of the event and got more representatives from the other food-related services that that would help raise awareness of food issues and how they are important to the community," said Mercier. "We live in a golden age of food and food options right now, and I think people are aware of it but I would like to see more people aware of it. Options are out there and strangely enough people don't know about them."

Mercier might be right about people needing to learn more about food resources and options, but it has become increasingly clear that

many people know about the Tribe's iskam mək'hmək haws Food Bank on Grand Ronde Road.

According to Ambrose, the Food Bank has served 7,627 households since the beginning of 2016 and 25,618 individuals including adults and children. Ambrose said the Food Bank is serving an average of 98 households a week and that those numbers represent an increase in households and individuals served during 2015.

Mercier said he had no idea the numbers of those served at the iskam mək'hmək haws was so high.

"It's like a measuring stick of success," Mercier said. "I would say that we are pretty successful then if we are reaching that many people."

Ambrose said there is no resource catalog for local produce so they hope to have participation from several local farmers at the event.

"We are hoping to have some of our local farmers come and set up a farmer's market at our event and educate people on where they usually are and when they are available so people can find them," said Ambrose. "We will have a master gardener there to answer questions and the Timber and Fish and Wildlife committees will be there to talk about how to sign up for hunting tags and safety classes."

Stickel said information will

be shared with people attending the event who are interested in accessing fresh produce from local farmers.

"We're going to provide a sheet of paper that talks about the different farms in the area and where you can buy food at the different farm stands," said Stickel. "Hopefully, people can leave the event with some idea of where they can access fresh fruits and vegetables in their community."

Stickel said the ongoing relationship between Marion-Polk Food Share and the Grand Ronde Tribe is an important one and that the community input they receive through the FACT group does determine what they do with their events.

"I'm thrilled with what I see," said Stickel. "Every time we have an event in Grand Ronde we have more people coming and engaging in these food conversations and it really helps us decide as a FACT where we want to go next. It has really been driving what we plan."

Ambrose and Mercier each said they hope the community comes out to the event so people can learn about their food options.

"We want to gather the community up to celebrate what we have here and learn how we can make it better," said Ambrose. ■



## 33rd Restoration Celebration

Tuesday, Nov. 22

Meal – Noon

Break – 2 p.m.

Powwow – 3 p.m.



For more information e-mail:  
[publicaffairs@grandronde.org](mailto:publicaffairs@grandronde.org)