

# Community Fund surpasses \$71 million in giving

**Sept. 14 check distribution bids farewell to George as director**

**By Dean Rhodes**

*Smoke Signals editor*

Spirit Mountain Community Fund's third-quarter check distribution held on Wednesday, Sept. 14, in the Governance Center was noteworthy for more than surpassing the \$71 million mark in giving.

Community Fund Director Kathleen George resigned her position the day before after being elected to Tribal Council on Sept. 10. She was sworn in to office two and a half hours before the check distribution.

Community Fund Program Coordinator Louis King took over as acting director in George's stead.

During the check distribution ceremony, the Community Fund awarded 27 large grants and 16 small grants (\$5,000 or less) for a total of \$688,999, which pushed the Tribe's philanthropic giving since 1997 to more than \$71.65 million. In 19 years, the fund has awarded 2,362 grants to 1,054 different organizations.

The Community Fund receives 6 percent of Spirit Mountain Casino's profits and distributes those funds to nonprofit charitable organizations in 11 northwestern Oregon counties, as well as Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes.

Although she had resigned, George's presence was felt as she appeared in the Community Fund's revamped video shown to grant recipient attendees before the checks were handed out. She also attended as a supportive Tribal Council member.

"I want to thank you for the incredible work you do for Oregon communities," George said. "That is what Spirit Mountain Community Fund is all about. That is why the Tribe wanted to create this fund, wanted to dedicate our revenues to empower communities to identify the solutions in their community and make those solutions happen. We are so pleased and so honored to be able to empower your work because you folks are truly our community heroes."

Spirit Mountain Community Fund Board of Trustees Chairman Sho Dozono also gifted George with a bouquet of flowers, thanking her for her almost five years of leadership.

"She used to work for me, but now I work for her," Dozono joked. "She's been a phenomenal leader for our fund. ... I want to thank Kathleen for the wonderful job you did, helping to take us to the next level."

In addition to George, Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno, then-Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., then-Secretary Cheryle A. Kennedy and fellow Tribal Council members Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Brenda Tuomi, Denise Harvey, Chris Mercier and Jon A. George attended the check distribution.

"It's always a pleasure. This is one of the best things, I would say, you can do as a council member is to be part of this," Leno said. "There's really no problems or issues with



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Spirit Mountain Community Fund Interim Director Louis King talks with Doris Towery, vice president of development for Planned Parenthood, left, and Suzie Hunter, annual fundraising manager for Planned Parenthood, during the fund's third-quarter check presentation held in the Governance Center on Wednesday, Sept. 14.**

giving away money. ... It's always a great opportunity to have people come here. Grand Ronde is a Tribe of about 5,000 people. One of the most important things about here are these documents. They are our seven treaties that represent this Tribe up and down the whole Willamette Valley from Washington clear to California. It's a vast area. A lot of people don't realize that. When we get to have people come here, we certainly enjoy telling our story."

Jon A. George joined Cultural Resources employees Jordan Mercier and Brian Krehbiel and Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark in performing the cultural drumming and singing to open the check distribution ceremony.

Community Fund Grants Coordinator Julia Willis helped draw names of groups for three gifts. Recipients were the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides, Dallas Fire Department and Classroom Law Project.

After receiving their checks from Harvey, Kathleen George and Tuomi, recipients shook hands with the other Tribal Council members and then posed with Leno to have their photo taken by Tribal photographer Michelle Alaimo.

The largest grant – \$43,200 – went to the Lane County Legal Aid & Advocacy Center in Eugene for its rural and multicultural outreach project.

Advocacy Center Development Director Andrea Ciaston said the Community Fund grant will help the organization fund attorneys and advocates traveling into rural areas to bring free legal services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

"Prior to this program, these folks had no services," Ciaston said. "Because of Spirit Mountain we've seen a 33 percent increase in the people we reach in these areas. They're suddenly discovering that we exist and that we're able to help."

The outreach will help victims living in Florence, Junction City, Cottage Grove, Oakridge and Blue River.

Other large grant recipients were:

- Bienestar Inc. of Hillsboro,

- \$26,410, for enhancing academic achievement of Bienestar children and youth;

- CASA of Polk County in Dallas, \$15,000, for capacity building;
- Children's Book Bank of Portland, \$41,000, for building home libraries for Albina Head Start preschoolers;
- Dallas Fire Department, \$25,000, for replacement of auto extrication equipment and extrication response;
- Classroom Law Project of Portland, \$10,000, for Project Citizen: Promoting Responsible Participation in Civic Life;
- Dental Foundation of Oregon of Wilsonville, \$30,000, for Tooth Taxi, a free mobile dental clinic;
- Food Roots of Tillamook, \$15,000, for its Farm to School program;
- Friends of Tryon Creek Park of Portland, \$25,000, for habitat restoration and connecting people to nature and ancestral lands;
- Gateway to College National Network of Portland, \$25,000, for the PDX Bridge: From State Care to College program;
- KBOO Foundation of Portland, \$20,000, for preserving 50 years of audio from communities of color;
- Kinship House of Portland, \$34,000, for Kinship East's New Starts program;
- Lewis and Clark College of Portland, \$20,000, for its first phase of problem gambling treatment research;
- Lincoln County Child and Family Day Treatment Center of Toledo, \$35,000, for a relief nursery;
- McKenzie Watershed Alliance of Springfield, \$10,000, for Lane County Salmon Watch;
- Mid-Valley Healthcare Inc. of Lebanon, \$19,000, for adolescent mental health care and wellness;
- Mother & Child Education Center of Portland, \$8,183, for increasing capacity for enhanced services;
- New City Initiative of Portland, \$25,000, for improving educational outcomes for children and families experiencing homelessness;
- Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides of Eugene, \$20,000, for its Clean Water for Salmon initiative;
- Oregon Native American Busi-

ness & Entrepreneurship Network of Portland, \$20,000, to fund its Native Youth Entrepreneurial Empowerment initiative;

- Philomath Youth Activities Club Inc., \$5,000, for its Get Active After School program;
- Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon of Eugene, \$15,000, to fund sexuality education programs to improve teen educational success in Springfield schools;
- Portland Community College Foundation, \$20,000, to fund "Future Connect," the school's educational and workforce development program;
- Schoolhouse Supplies Inc. of Portland, \$20,000, to expand the geographic reach of its free store for teachers;
- Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality, \$40,000, for Leyendo Avanzamos, its emergent literacy intervention program;
- University of Portland, \$25,000, to fund the study of a new alternative school model;
- And Wellmama Inc. of Eugene, \$30,000, for its Reaching All Mothers program.

Small grant recipients were:

- A Community of Hope & Inspiration Enabling Volunteers' Endeavors of Molalla, \$2,000, for its Getting to Know Molalla effort;
- Baby Blues Connection of Portland, \$1,750, to support its Every Body-Gender and LGBTQ Inclusion pilot program;
- CASA of Lincoln County of Newport, \$4,950, to support advocacy for abused and neglected children;
- Center for Community Counseling of Eugene, \$5,000, to fund mental health counseling to strengthen the community;
- Chelsea Hicks Foundation of Tualatin, \$5,000, to expand therapeutic play programming for seriously ill children;
- Civil Liberties Defense Center of Eugene, \$5,000, to fund a training program and resource center;
- Create Plenty of Portland, \$5,000, to fund a high school environmental leadership project;
- International Carpe Diem Foundation Inc. of Portland, \$5,000, for its PDXchange program;
- Kitchen Commons of Portland, \$5,000, to fund its Health Equity Requires Food Access effort;
- Little Hands Can of Eugene, \$3,000, to fund its after-school program;
- North Tillamook Library Board of Manzanita, \$5,000, to fund the first year of a four-year major maintenance program;
- Portland Meet Portland, \$4,500, to fund its refugee youth leadership and lived citizenship effort;
- The Artback of Eagle Creek, \$2,500, to fund a Celtic world mural;
- Third Angle New Music Ensemble of Portland, \$5,000, for music education in schools;
- Valley AIDS Information Network Inc. of Corvallis, \$3,500, for HIV prevention services needs assessment in Linn and Benton counties;
- And Yamhill County CASA of McMinnville, \$5,000, for its Serve Every Child effort. ■