

'It's going to be a long process'

FIRE continued from front page

Shaw, granddaughter of Genevieve Ray and great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Lafferty, had moved back to Grand Ronde to live in her parent's RV with her boyfriend, Barry, while undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

"It's going to be a long process. Some of the insurance said it could be eight to 10 weeks before we see anything," said Tammy of her current situation. "We're staying at a motel until we run out of money."

Word of the fire spread throughout the community on social media via the Facebook page YamCoWatch. Someone familiar with the family called Tammy's sister, Holly Partridge, at work in the Tribe's Legal Department to tell her of the fire.

Local fire crews began responding to the blaze around 3 p.m. and they reported encountering a 150-gallon propane tank upon arriving on scene. Crews reported the tank was hissing and that there was an explosion at 3:13 p.m.

West Valley Fire responded with an engine, a duty officer, an Advanced Life Support rescue unit and a water tender. Sheridan Fire Department responded with two engines, three tenders and a duty officer.

"My dad had just had surgery and I knew my mom was with my dad so I texted her and asked her where she was," said Partridge. "She texted me back saying she was on her way back to Grand Ronde because the RV was on fire. So I took off from here. In fact it was my parent's motorhome and my sister was living there."

Partridge said local fire department crews were already at her



Photo courtesy of Holly Partridge

Tammy Shaw was living in her parent's recreational vehicle on their Grand Ronde property until it was destroyed by a fire on Thursday, Dec. 22.

parent's home when she arrived. "They had to call in extra fire trucks because there are no fire hydrants up there so they had one down at the river getting water," said Partridge. "They were going back and forth filling up with water."

Partridge said the fire crews let them go into the house near dark once they had everything under control. Partridge said Red Cross personnel showed up at her parent's home around 7 p.m.

Tammy arrived home shortly after learning of the fire while at work. She had just purchased presents for Partridge's six boys and was devastated that those items were in the fire.

"I had a tough year," said Tammy. "I beat cancer to have everything I own go up in flames. I gave up a 20-year career so that I could beat cancer and then to lose it all."

Prior to learning of her cancer, Tammy sold restaurant supplies all over the country. When she learned she needed to take time off to have her thyroid removed as part of the

cancer treatment, she also learned her boss would not allow the time off.

Tammy said she quit to move home to be with her family and take on cancer. Living in her parent's RV was going to be a stepping stone for her climb back to the top of her life.

After learning of the fire, Partridge immediately went to work helping her sister and said she is very thankful that her supervisors allowed her to take the Friday off after the fire.

"The next morning I brought her a clean, fresh change of clothes because she literally had the clothes on her back and that was it," said Partridge. "I brought her up to the Tribe to get replacement medications, a new Tribal identification card and to start trying to start over."

Partridge said her sister, despite everything that had just happened, purchased new presents for Partridge's boys.

"She did that even after the fire," said Partridge. "We had family step up and go to Salem and Portland to get clothing. They ended up with bags full of clothes and shoes. Just the amount of support everybody provided was just amazing."

Partridge took to social media and shared the situation on Facebook and set up a GoFundMe page for her sister and Barry. Partridge said she had to rent a storage space to collect all the items that have been donated by community members and the family.

"I had co-workers here at the office donating cash. I had people

coming from the casino and donating cash," said Partridge. "I had people donating coats. People from the clinic gave her a gift certificate. We have been overwhelmed with the amount of support. My mom opened her door one morning and there was a casserole sitting there with a bag full of clothes for my sister."

One of the people in the community – and there were many – was Tribal Council member Denise Harvey, who said she knows loss and wanted to reach out.

"For me, it's just seeing someone hit with a tragic situation and an immediate loss and providing them with some relief with some goods and services they may need to create something," said Harvey, who lost a son in a drowning accident. "I relate a lot of that back to when people talk about a loved one dying. When you lose someone in a tragic instantaneous loss it is different."

Harvey said her heart goes out to the people in the community, but especially when something like this happens.

"I had to accept my loss. I had to recover from that," said Harvey. "I think anytime you can help someone recover from some type of loss and create some comfort for them you do it."

Partridge said there has not been a cause determined for the fire and that not everything can be replaced by insurance.

"The RV is covered and the shop is covered so they will be able to rebuild everything," said Partridge. "There was 30 years of my dad's tools in that shop. On his free time he builds stuff."

Both Partridge and Shaw said they have been amazed at how much support they have received from throughout the Grand Ronde community.

"People are still asking if there is anything they can do," said Partridge. "This community is amazing. The amount of support that our family received was amazing. So I wanted to thank everybody that helped."

"We have an amazing community," said Shaw of the support she and Barry have received. "I mean a lot of people stepped up."

People can still donate at www.gofundme.com/my-sister-lost-everything-in-a-fire. ■