

## Governor Announces New Steps to Improve Services for Oregon Veterans

### Task Force to Strengthen Assistance for Oregon Veterans

SALEM, Ore. — Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed Executive Order 08-08 in late March creating the Governor's Task Force on Veterans Services to compile, review and evaluate current veterans policies, procedures and programs, and to develop recommendations for improvements to ensure that Oregon veterans have access to the services they need.

"More than 360,000 Oregonians have unselfishly served in uniform," Gov. Kulongoski said. "The veterans' issues emerging as a result of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are significant and are impacting our families and communities. But in addressing those, we must also remember the men and women who fought in Vietnam, World War II and the Korean War so that Oregon is providing adequate care and services for all generations of veterans — not just some."

The governor directed the task force to identify service needs for the different generations of veterans and conduct a comprehensive inventory of state and federal services. As part of this evaluation, the governor asked the

task force to focus on: 1) reintegration services; 2) post-separation access services; and 3) retirement/senior care, and to develop recommendations to enhance coordination of services among state and federal partners.

"Uncoordinated attempts to provide care for our veterans has created confusion and frustration for our veterans and their families," the governor continued. "The lack of a comprehensive approach to veterans care limits the impact of scarce resources and our capacity to help veterans who need and deserve our care. To ensure that our veterans do not fall through the cracks, we must begin collaborating to ensure we are providing quality services that meet the unique needs of all of our veterans."

The task force will develop a comprehensive list of recommendations, including potential legislation for the 2009 legislative session, to be delivered to the governor by Dec. 31, 2008. The task force held its first meeting April 3 at the Oregon Department of Human Services in Salem.

## Siletz Tribe and Siletz Valley Schools Earn Award for Community School Partnership

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Siletz Valley Schools will be honored by the Oregon Department of Education with a 2008 Outstanding Community/School Partnership Award.

In a letter sent by Susan Castillo, superintendent of Public Instruction, to the school, the award is for "demonstrated successes in bridging the gap between communities and schools. I believe that community/school partnerships like yours are a key element in closing the achievement gap and supporting all children."

"Teamwork and partnership are wise investments in our students, their families and our communities. By pooling our resources and services in a targeted way, we give each child the best chance to succeed."

The Siletz Tribal Community School Partnership worked to keep

Siletz Elementary School open by obtaining charter school status in 2003. Last year, it reopened the high school after it had been closed for 24 years and has provided supplemental funding to enhance academic programs and building maintenance projects.

Other partnership activities include developing preventive drug programs such as Red Ribbon Week, infusing cultural activities and Siletz language acquisition into the classroom and providing classroom volunteers.

Castillo also cited the fact that Siletz Valley School has met AYP targets under No Child Left Behind for the last two years and it received a "strong" rating on the 2006-07 Oregon school report card.

A community celebration will be arranged by the Department of Education.

## Housing Funds Available Again in July

Tribal emergency housing funds are expended and the program will be available again July 1, 2008.

Please contact Rachelle Endres at 541-444-8311 or 800-922-1399, ext. 1311, if you have any questions.



*The new USDA building (left) nears completion in April, with a projected opening date in May. The inside of the warehouse area (below, left) is nearly ready to store food, as is the new freezer (left in photo). The nutrition education area (below) is almost ready to host cooking demonstrations. (photos by Diane Rodriguez)*

