

Kids motivate Rife to attain GED; plan for college, coffee business in future

'Mom, I wanna be just like you and we can go to school together' says her daughter



Photos by Natasha Kavanaugh

Christina Rife celebrates with her children, Anawake and Collin, at the GED graduation ceremony in Siletz on Feb. 4.

By Natasha Kavanaugh

Last August, Christina Rife signed up with the Tribal Self-Sufficiency Program with a goal of obtaining her GED and improving her family's life. Rife has two children, Anawake and Collin.

Before having her first child, Rife worked 40 hours a week doing mostly "grunt" labor.

"I just wanted something different," she said.

After realizing just what her motivation was, she was ready to work on her goal.

"When my daughter comes to me for help in school, I don't wanna be like, I don't know. I want to be able to help her, work with her," Rife said.

Rife worked with Lisa Rilatos, Tribal services specialist, signed up for classes right away and attended regularly.

"Christina thrived in the classroom and before I knew it, the GED instructor informed me that she was ready to test. Christina went in and passed her tests the very first time," said Rilatos.

"She's amazing. I love her. Whenever I had a problem with school, my kids and with my housing, I'd just call her and ask for help," said Rife of Rilatos.

Rife's GED instructor, Angie Butler, spent a lot of time working one-on-one with her. She says she wouldn't have been able to complete her GED without Butler's help.

Rife's two children also played a part in her success.

"My kids are amazing too. I've never had such happy, smart kids in my whole life," she said.

"Mom, I wanna be just like you and we can go to school together," chimed in Anawake.

Rife is a proud and dedicated mother.

"Christina, like many Tribal mothers, is the primary caretaker of both her children. While it wasn't easy to juggle child care and attending class, she was able to pull it off," said Butler.

Right now the task at hand is applying for jobs and trying to provide the essentials of basic living for herself and her kids. Rife is not sure when yet, but she wants to go to college. One thing for sure is looking into a having her own coffee business.

"I love making coffee, so that's my thing. I wish there was a coffee shop here because I'd be running it," she said.

Even through obstacle after obstacle, Rife has pushed forward and is well on her way to where she wants to be. By sharing her story, she hopes she can show others they can too.

"What I appreciate about Christina the most is that while she is a Tribal member, she is a rather humble one. She appreciates services and the support she receives from the Tribe, never coming off entitled," said Butler. "I looked forward to seeing Christina in class and enjoyed her positive attitude and her commitment to obtaining her GED. I think I was the lucky one, getting to contribute a little to her success. I was ecstatic that she was the first to receive her GED since the Tribe took over the contract."



Recent graduates from the GED program in Siletz include Carley Robinson, Shila Justice, Heather Cole and Christina Rife.

Apply for Pre-Law Summer Institute

The American Indian Law Center is now accepting applications for its Pre-Law Summer Institute (PLSI), a nationally recognized legal education preparatory program for American Indians and Alaska Natives interested in attending and succeeding in law school.

Likened to "law school boot camp" by many former students, PLSI curriculum includes eight weeks of core law classes such as Indian law, torts, property and civil procedure, as well as legal writing and research.

PLSI is not a remedial program. It is eight weeks of intense legal instruction, research and study that provides students with an in-depth understanding of the unique methods of law school research, analysis and writing.

The culmination of PLSI is a moot court competition that focuses on current Indian legal issues.

The deadline to apply is March 25, 2011.

For more information, visit the AILC website at www.ailc-inc.org or contact Heidi Nesbitt at nesbitt@ailc-inc.org.



Courtesy photo by Pricilla Gomez

The 477 Self-Sufficiency Program would like to congratulate sisters Loleta Maldonado and Anna Porter for earning their GEDs. Both sisters are enrolled members of the Yakama Nation and have chosen to continue their education at Portland Community College. Loleta and Anna (above) received their Pendleton blankets from Anna Renville, Tribal services specialist in the Portland Area Office. The entire Portland office as well as the entire 477 Self-Sufficiency Program wishes them both continued success.