

Health Center to hold open house

The Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center staff is inviting the community to help celebrate the center's eighth anniversary.

An open house has been scheduled for April 11 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Open house activities will include tours of the facility, specific department information, and a slide show about the Health Center.

A special Health and Wellness Center pin and coffee cup will be provided for all adult participants. Refreshments will also be provided.

A questionnaire will be available for anyone who would like to participate. Your input will be a consideration for future planning for the facility.

March planned for sobriety

The community will host a sobriety march on April 30 at 11:30 a.m. in front of the court house. Marchers will leave the court house en route to the Community Wellness Center.

Poster material will be provided for those who want to participate.

The march is being held to celebrate the efforts of community members who have been sober for 10 years, 10 months, or just starting out. Everyone is encouraged to support those who are taken the personal oath of sobriety.

Sack lunches will be provided at the Community Wellness Center. For more information contact Sheila Wahnetah at 553-4914.



Clockwise from top: Kupns poised to begin their work; Bernice Mitchell prepares roots; Cassie Katchia with piaxi; diggers begin the day.

Night out slated for mid-month

Everyone is invited to spend an Indian nite out with the community on April 19, 6 p.m. at Agency Longhouse. A powwow will follow dinner.

Recognition and appreciation will be distributed for past Healthy Nation volunteers.

Dinner is on the house and kids are encouraged to dress up and dance with family or friends.

For more information contact Sheila Wahnetah at the Community Counseling Center, 553-4914.

Older trailers being discouraged

The Realty, Credit and Housing departments have been approached by individuals wanting to sell their older mobile homes or manufactured homes. The Housing Department discourages people from bringing older trailers to the reservation.

The Realty Department has no vacant lots to place these older trailers. There have been inquiries from around the region to offer them for sale. Indian reservations are appealing because no trailer park in the state of Oregon will accept these trailers, nor will the Oregon Department of Transportation issue a permit to move them unless there is a destination.

The trailers are not up to state electric codes set in 1977. Many are considered worthless and they also pose a fire hazard.

Anyone with a newer trailer the building inspector has approved should contact the Realty Department to discuss possible sites for locating the trailer. New sites will be presented to the Land Use Planning Committee for consideration. The applications take time to process, so those who have to move a trailer from an existing site should anticipate waiting before the committee makes its decision.

Root feast back for return visit

Once more, spring has returned and earth has shared its bounty. Once more, the root diggers of Agency Longhouse have plunged their kupns into sacred ground and unearthed the piaxi and luksh which sustained their ancestors and provide both spiritual and material nourishment today.

On Wednesday, March 28, Bernice Mitchell, MaryAnn Meanus, Mary Danzuka, Geneva Charley, Daisy Ike, Lizzie Rhoan and other Agency women designated to bring in the ceremonial roots of the season traveled to the hills above Warm Springs where they were grateful to find the roots both plentiful and, because of recent rain, easy to dig. That evening, as women of all ages sat and peeled the bark from the day's harvest, Longhouse members shared a dinner of thanksgiving.

The following day another caravan of vehicles wound its way up to Webster Flats. At its destination, the

group dispersed as keen eyes sought out the tiny green root heads peeking out of what looked to an outsider like barren soil. When Bernice Mitchell, the group's leader, found the fitting place, she pushed her digging stick, or kupn, into the earth.

Walking a few yards, she faced north, took out her bell and began a song of prayer. Against the expansive backdrop of earth and sky, she appeared a small figure. But her voice carried clearly in the crisp air, riding the breezes to the Creator she invoked.

During the prayer, each woman stepped forward from a line they had formed and placed her kupn near Mitchell's. Soon the tools stood in a sculptural formation on the barren heights - utensils of simplicity ready to perform an age-old task of community.

At the close of the prayer, the diggers took up their kupns and simultaneously worked the chosen

spot for its treasure. Within seconds each digger now holding a precious root stood and joined Mitchell in a song of thanksgiving.

As the opening ceremony concluded and Mitchell departed, Cassie Katchia headed north. Leading the way along winding dirt roads, she bounced over ruts, rolled down hillsides and splashed through puddles, seeking the spot her mother had always said yielded the best roots.

There the diggers disembarked once more and began their job in earnest. As they dug in the yielding earth and began filling the bags belted to their waists, they shared the emotions the day elicited. They spoke of family, continuity, memories, tradition.

Desmond Tohet Katchia, Katchia's grandson, eagerly ran from mother to cousin to grandmother, peering with wonder at the mount-

ing harvest, oblivious to the history in which he was partaking. As they worked, the women spoke proudly of Katchia's mother, Prosanna Tohet, who, despite crippling pain, led Agency diggers out to the hills each year until the time of her death. "We miss her a lot," smiled granddaughter Sharon Katchia wistfully.

As the sun continued to warm the day, Mary Sando Emhoolah was also working, a serene look on her face. She explained that as she dug roots for the following Sunday's feast, she needed to be at peace. Because the food takes on the spirit of the gatherer, she wanted to pass on only positive elements.

As she plied an aged kupn which had obviously given many years of service, she told its history. She remembers first seeing it in the hands of her grandmother, Eva Polk. When its handle eventually cracked after years of digging, her grand-

mother bandaged it with tape and cloth. Sando Emhoolah's hands now held the original, taped grip. The frayed cloth fluttered in the breeze.

At her grandmother's death, the kupn was left to Sando Emhoolah's sister, Pat Smith, whose own untimely death returned the tool to Sando Emhoolah. "It was like getting a part of my grandmother back," says Sando reverently glancing at the worn instrument she now uses only to dig for the root feast. "It has had the hands of my grandmother and my sister upon it."

Nearby, Eva Polk's real legacy was evidenced as Pat Smith's two daughters, Alfredine and Ava Smith, shared the day of digging with their aunt. Someday the harvest of 2001 will be the story they recount to their grand children, when another spring arrives and the women of Warm Springs return to their sacred digging grounds.



Bernice Mitchell and diggers sing thanks.