



A few days after the house was destroyed by an electrical fire, the Fire Department cleared the property for safety by control-burning the remainder of the structure.

Electrical short sparks fire, house destroyed

A house on Tommie Street at Upper Dry Creek Road was destroyed earlier this month by fire. The house belonged to Floyd Gibson, and was being rented by Steve Anderson. Total loss due to the fire was estimated at \$40,000. The owner had insured the struc-

ture, said Fire Chief Dan Martinez. No one was hurt in the incident, which happened on May 12. Cause of the blaze is believed to be an electrical short. Anderson was at home asleep when the fire broke out, said Martinez. Most fortunately, the fire alarm was

working. Upon being awakened by the alarm, Anderson ran across the street and called 911, said Martinez. Two fire trucks and six fire fighters, plus a command vehicle and an ambulance responded. Anderson was treated for smoke inhalation.

School: attendance still a concern

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"Whoever is raising this child needs to show their involvement," said Leonard. She advocates that parents should get to know their student's teachers and come in to the school to see how they're doing. She also understands that it's sometimes easier said than done.

When a child is attending school in Warm Springs, it's a simple thing for the parent to spend part of their lunch hour at the school. When the child moves to the schools in Madras, that commute turns into a 30 mile round trip - tough to do on a lunch hour.

Leonard has an alternative. Power School is a computer network that parents can use to check attendance, grades and missing assignments of their students. It's available for middle and high school students. Parents can access the network by calling the high school and requesting a password.

Most students are excited by Power School. They are using it to pre-check a grade (for better or worse) and to hold teachers accountable if they failed to record an assignment that was actually turned in.

Attendance is a big issue for Leonard, especially when parents are unable to make their youngster go to school.

She says, "I think that's what I found to be the hardest part of my job; to go out [to a student's home] and hear parents say, 'I just can't get them to go [to school].'"

She goes on, "In some homes the kids are running the house instead of the adults. They are choosing whether or not to come to school. We have some kids that are missing 50 percent of each trimester. How they pass, I don't know. Some do and most don't."

Skipping students are a problem. They don't fit any easy method or category.

"We have those [students] that just don't come and we have others who ride the bus, but don't come to school and then ride the bus back home," says Leonard. "We have those [students] who come and go to classes they want to go to. Who knows what they're doing in between?"

Next school year Leonard is planning to make more home visits. She may even try a war of attrition with some of the harder cases where the parents get so tired of seeing her that they say to the child, "Get to school, I'm tired of her knocking on my door."

As part of the school district's war on poor attendance, they have a phone calling system at the high school. When a student doesn't show up for class, the student's name is entered on a phone machine and a message is left for parents.

Sports is another big issue with Leonard. She sees sports as a positive activity for young Natives.

"I've told the school about how dedicated our kids are when they're in sports," she says. "We have kids who live clear out in Simnasho, they have



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Lana Leonard

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One way reservation parents can become more involved in their children's education is to suggest to administration officials that they would like to see more sports options available to their children.

Foster Kalama is the senior tribal liaison. He works at the high school. He says that parental involvement in a child's education is critical.

"I feel, just like I hear on KWSO, 'Do you know where your kid is?' Do you know what your kid is doing? Do you know who your kid's friends are?" he says. "Those questions are very strong in my belief. I think, 'Do they know how their kids are acting in class?'"

Kalama works with kids who are having a tough time in school. He feels most of that stems from lack of support at home or peer pressure. For years gangs were a problem around the high school.

"Gangs were really bad at one time," he says. "Now we have it down to a level of zero tolerance. We still have little problems here and there."

He goes on, "If we attacked [peer pressure and lack of parental involvement] together as parents, tribal leaders, teachers - everybody works together - we can beat this. We can have more kids graduating. I'm really grateful for the attendance liaisons for that reason, Butch and Lana."

More leadership is something that would help the kids. Take Tribal Council, for example. On one hand, he appreciates what they did when they tied the kid's trust fund money to graduation and certain G.P.A. All too often in the past, when the trust fund money had no ties, it was used for drugs or

alcohol.

"They did it and I feel very honored that they did something to save a lot of our kids," he says.

Tribal Council has done other positive things such as changing the penal code to create harassment and stalking laws. Students had complained regularly about bullies stalking and harassing them.

"Tribal Council passed those two ordinances," he says. "Now we have two new laws that have been put into effect. It's helped a lot, it's cut down on harassment and it's cut down on the stalking."

On the other hand, letters to Tribal Council don't always work. "I write a lot of letters to the Tribal Council with no response," he says. "If our leadership could see what I see or if leaders would ask questions and get off politics - we're not a product and we're being treated like a product. These kids aren't dumb, these kids talk to me every day and they say: 'Why [are things like they are]?'"

Kalama is concerned about alcoholism and drug use among young tribal members. He feels part of the answer is to give the kids more to do.

"I've written letters," he says. "I don't know how many times. About opening a water park at Kah Neeta. This would attract the kids from many, many miles away. They have to find things for our kids to do." Kalama has an open door to his office at the high school for any young Native. Sometimes the students are in his office to share a confidence or decompress from a stressful day.

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Alger: retiring after 21 years at W.S. clinic

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Today, about 125 people work at the clinic.

Here are some examples of the changes Alger has seen in health care service on the reservation since he became clinic director:

The Health and Wellness Center has added more than 2,650 new patients since 1993.

The number of visits to the dentist by the local population went has gone from 6,815 to close to 28,000, an increase of 400 percent.

The number of pharmacy prescriptions at the clinic went from 74,150 in 1993, to 124,250 last year. The number of visits to the diabetes program has increased by 300 percent; and with better treatment, the number of people on dialysis has gone down by 80 percent.

Physical therapy and optometry are services at the clinic that were not yet available locally in 1993. (These statistics were taken from an IHS-Tribal report of 2002.)

In general terms, said Alger, there is overall more interest in health care among tribes now than there was ten years ago. And there is more cooperation and collaboration among the tribes and IHS, he said.

After he retires from his job at the clinic Alger plans to work for a time, perhaps several months, with the regional IHS office in Portland. There

are new clinic chief executives coming on board in the three-state region, and Alger could be of help as an advisor in these transitions.

Alger lives in Madras with his wife Marlys, who is the principal of the Westside Elementary School. As he is getting ready to leave the Warm Springs clinic, Alger says there are many things about his job that he will miss:

"Mostly, the people," he says, "their friendliness and the spirit they have. I've made a lot of good friendships. I've really enjoyed working with the elders. I guess you could say I've grown up with them."

The work, he says, has always been challenging and always changing. "So I'll miss the variety of things that I've done here."

The Tribal Council will make a recommendation to the regional IHS office on who will be the next director of the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center. In the meantime there will be an acting director.

The clinic last week held a farewell party for Alger. Many people spoke of the good work that Alger has done over the years in Warm Springs.



Russ Alger

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