

Kah-Nee-Ta: improving tribal employment

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She worked in the pre-employment field at Chinook Winds. When she heard of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs' proposal to build a casino at the Gorge, she decided to move back and work at Kah-Nee-Ta and then one day work at the Gorge casino.

At Kah-Nee-Ta, she's working on streamlining the employment and interviewing process. The recruitment and development program, she said, should be involved with the various resort departments, as they are hiring people, to make sure the employment goals of the resort are being met.

Leroy Smith was in tribal relations before joining the recruitment and development program. His job now is to go into the community and meet with people who might be interested in working at Kah-Nee-Ta. He meets one-on-one with people, and also works with tribal orga-



The tribal member recruitment and development team: Priscilla Frank, Arlissa Rhoan, Leroy Smith and Urbana "Toto" Ross (from front counter clock-wise.)

nizations such as Workforce Development, and Vocation Rehabilitation.

Smith recruited Michelle

Najera, for instance, to be the lead custodian at the resort. He mentioned that the recruitment and development program wants

to thank the resort human resources department, directed by Janelle Smith, for the teamwork in making the program work.

OPB: program may air in May

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Something Cain will do that worked in the documentary he helped shoot at Crane was allow some of the subjects the use of hand-held cameras to shoot whatever they want to shoot, each from their own perspectives.

"What we're going to get is this incredible hodge-podge of footage, put it together and make a pretty entertaining hour of people that city people would never meet, with no particular end, but to give the viewer a chance to get to know some people," he said.

Cain said he hopes to capture the everyday aspects of the subjects he shoots in Warm Springs and with that let viewers in on the facets of peoples' lives unique to residents and tribal members of the Warm Springs Reservation.

Cain said he hopes his subjects feel free to talk about the sovereign nation the Warm Springs people share and what it means to them.

Cain said his initial meetings with Warm Springs citizens were productive.

"Every person we meet suggests someone else," he said.

Cain said he hoped to

shoot about 20 hours of material and have about that much footage from the hand-held segments the tribal members use.

"Much of it will not be usable, but we hope to have little 'gems and jewels' hidden in what we shoot."

He said the first of the USDA rural projects was in Lakeview, shooting different people of a variety of age groups, answering the same set of questions.

"For what it was, it was pretty good, but it was all just people sitting in chairs," he said. "We needed to get out and see folks doing something."

He said the project in Crane was "much more successful" from that regard.

"And we're building on that with what we do at Warm Springs," he said.

The mission, Cain said, is to "introduce urban audience to the rural part of state."

"It's an amazing op to do some wonderful television," he said. "These programs about rural Oregon get really high ratings. I think we're going beyond the issues and clichés getting to know people beyond the I-5 corridor."

Cain said the documentary could air on Oregon Public Broadcasting in May.

— by Brian Mortensen

Rescue: decision was a quick one

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She has since been released and is awaiting a court hearing. Callista and Racquel Smith

were released to their father, Jonathan W. Smith, of Warm Springs.

Before beginning work for the Warm Springs Police Department, Davino was a reserve police officer and 911 dis-

patcher in Prineville for three and a half years.

"This was first time I've had to enter into a burning building. It was just a decision to make real quick, and do what has to be done," he said. "That's what

the tribes pay me to do, to go in and protect people."

Daniel's home was saved but sustained about \$500 damage from the fire, apparently a grease fire starting on an electrical stove.

Charter school: key is funding

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In Oregon, charters are evaluated and granted every five years and can then be renewed.

There are currently 43 charter schools in Oregon, serving 2,107 students. A total of 38 states have charter schools, while four others have laws allowing the forming of charter schools.

"My concerns are that while we try to develop a charter school, we don't understand the totality of problems a charter is faced with," said Jeff Sanders, vice-chairman of the 509-J School Board. A charter school, he said, faces the same issues a full-fledged public school does, including hiring teachers and adhering to policies and procedures.

"It's no different from a public school," he said. "You have the same requirements as the school district does, in meeting students needs."

Members of the Education Committee have traveled to view other charter schools, including one in Arizona, where most Indian-originated charter schools in the U.S. are located, and the Nixyaawii School, a charter school started by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, in Mission.

Nixyaawii School opened this year with 40 students.

"I visited (Nixyaawii) for a couple of hours. They were having parent-teacher conferences that day, so people were coming and going, but I did sit down with their administrator and talk about it and they said that they have like 45 kids in their school, and they did a lot better than they did in the public school because of the one-on-one instruction," Smith said last week.

The Education Committee has also examined Siletz Valley School, a charter school run by the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, which opened after the publicly run Siletz Elementary School had nearly been closed in 2003. The school opened by the start of the school year in 2003.

Among the reasons sparking the idea for a charter school in Warm Springs are smaller class sizes, more individualized attention, and classes that teach tra-

ditions and language native to the Warm Springs tribes.

"We know that with a charter school, we know we'll have our own self governance because it'll be allowed, we'll have input, self-determination, self-education," Calica said. "That's how we'll develop our own ways of educating the youth that'll be attending."

"The charter school is going to be focusing on our traditional values, our history, our sovereignty."

Members of the Education Committee also cite what they perceive as a lack of concern from teacher and administrators at Madras schools in terms of how students are treated.

"The Council has responded to a huge outcry of the parents. I've been complaining about the school system for years because my son's in school," Barney said. "I guess other parents are speaking up, and now the Council is (saying), Hey, do this."

"Interestingly, the first charter school in Minnesota (City Academy in St. Paul was the first charter school to open, in 1992), one of the things they said was, 'We got tired of the way the school system was treating our kids, and we put their destiny in our hands', and I'm like, this is long overdue."

"Academically, it really makes a difference at a school where people really do work with you and give you a chance," Calica said.

The first step, Barney said, is getting input from the community regarding the project.

"First of all there has to be some community involvement," she said. "We have to find out the needs of the students and their goals, and we need people that when they start, they need to finish and stay right with the school."

The 509-J School District receives funding for educating students from Warm Springs, has a class on the history and government of the Warm Springs tribes at Madras High School, and has liaisons for the American Indian community both at Madras High School and Jefferson County Middle School.

Should a charter school open in Warm Springs, money from the state for educating Native American students, funds that

make up for property tax revenues the district does receive from Indian reservations like Warm Springs, called impact aid funds, would be deducted from the school district's funding from the state and relinquished to the charter school, Sanders said.

The charter school would receive basic school support from the state, based on its enrollment numbers. The charter school would have to come up with funds for things such as meals, building maintenance, teachers' salaries, retirement and insurance.

Sanders, a member of the 509-J School Board for 15 years, said he is "open minded" about the idea of a charter school, but that he has not yet heard a proposal from either the Tribal Council or the Tribal Education Department and would reserve judgment until then.

Additionally, some charter schools have had difficulty staying open nationally, and, because of that, others have had trouble attracting teachers to work for them.

If they lack funding, charter schools may not be able to provide such courses as physical education and music.

"There's a lot of review and processes to make a charter school a success," Sanders said.

The idea of creating a Kindergarten-through-12th-grade school on the Warm Springs reservation has been introduced before, Sanders said.

"Years ago, six or eight years ago, the school board had a meeting with Tribal Council on the possibility of having our own school in Warm Springs," he said. "The school board said it wouldn't object to but would help start K-12 here in Warm Springs."

The discussions stalled over the funding for such a school and the tribes' ability to fund it, he said.

Julie Quaid, also a member of the 509-J School Board for a year and a tribal member, said the school district is responsible in serving students from three distinct and equally split ethnic groups in Jefferson County.

"In the schools, we have some activities around that are kind of targeted at kind of reflecting our native culture here," she said. "But in the entire

school district, if we're looking at an equal balance of 30 percent Native, 30 percent Hispanic and 30 percent Caucasian, we have to represent that diversity in the entire district, in an equitable manner."

Quaid said any planning for a charter school in Warm Springs must consider the needs of students in Warm Springs, independent of how other Native American-run charter schools have been modeled.

"We've got to be focused on what works in our community for our children, and just because these charter schools are somewhere else, that doesn't mean that model's going to work here," she said. "The model worked over there, but that doesn't mean pick it up and say 'we're going to run a military model', 'we're going to run a language-immersion model', 'we'll run an academic model', or maybe 'we'll run a disciplinary behavior model'."

"How do we know? Success in their community was success by their standards"

"(If we say), 'Well, Siletz is doing it, Grand Ronde is doing it, Umatilla's doing it.' Fine, that's good for them, and I hope they determine that's what's good for them, but I don't know if that's

what's good for us."

Charter schools in Oregon have to adhere to 15 different standards, including public meetings and public records laws, health and safety statutes, and laws applying to statewide assessment.

And, Quaid said, since charter schools are part of a local school district, any efforts to start a charter school in Warm Springs must be able to work in partnership with the 509-J School District.

"It has to include the school district. It just has to. There's no way around it. That's what a charter is," she said. "A charter of a school board approval in the school district, with a specific purpose, and I think they also don't understand that you still have to meet all the regs. They still have to report on the 'No Child Left Behind' (Act), they still have to perform in reading and writing and language arts."

Quaid said a number of alternatives could be considered for middle school and high school-age students along with the charter school idea, one that may suit the needs of students better.

"We don't know that a charter school is the answer," she

said. "It might be an alternative ed program. It might be self-contained classes for (grades) six, seven, and eight, and then kids get referred into that study. We can do that without having a charter or without having a new building."

"We can do that next year if we wanted to, but it has to be justified by who are we going to serve and what is the purpose and what is the outcome of that service we're going to provide."

Barney said a charter school in Warm Springs would not be limited to only Native American students.

"Nothing's going to stop the kids from Madras from coming down here," she said, adding that the ones who chose to attend the charter school would be open to an education that included more exposure to Warm Springs tribal traditions and language.

Sanders said that even with perceived discontent with the public school system, it can be improved, though it takes group effort, both from within and without the reservation.

"If it's broken, we're all committed, Tribal Council, parents, students, teachers. Everybody has to come together," he said.

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