

## Program helps Indians enter health careers

## Ceremony honors rare white buffalo

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Verrica Livingston knows the exact moment she decided to go into the medical field.

She and her mother took her 7-year-old brother, Justin, to the Indian Health Services hospital in Gallup, N.M., for treatment, but were turned away because of a shortage of doctors. There had been a traffic accident, and the scant staff had to allocate their resources to the injured. The hospital urged Livingston's mother to take Justin home and come back the next day, but she refused.

They waited at the hospital for about four hours before a doctor was available to examine Justin. Once the doctor diagnosed him with pneumonia, he was finally admitted to the hospital, where he remained for about two days.

"Sick kids shouldn't be turned away," said Livingston, a 17-year-old Navajo who lives on the Twin Lakes reservation in New Mexico.

A year later, Livingston is taking the first step toward becoming a pediatrician as one of 18 American Indian students from across the United States attending the Headlands Indian Health

Career Program at the University of Oklahoma this summer. The program is an intense eight-week curriculum designed to give American Indians entering college a leg up in math and science courses so they will be more apt to choose a health profession and succeed in it.

"We change their lives," Headlands director Tom Hardy said. "Most of the students who have ended up in a health career say they couldn't have done it without this program."

Less than 1 percent of current U.S. medical school students are American Indians, said Darrel Pratt, chief of health professions support for Indian Health Services, the principal federal health care provider for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

According to the American Medical Association, the United States had only 503 American Indian physicians in 2003, making up 0.06 percent of the country's more than 871,000 physicians.

Studies show that minority physicians are more likely to return to their communities and provide care for minority and underserved populations, ac-

ording to the AMA. Of the 6,600 health professionals working for Indian Health Services last year, 37 percent were American Indians.

"You want to get them back serving other native communities," said Hazel Lonewolf, Headlands resident adviser. "I think that's the goal of the program."

The lack of American Indians in the medical field is due to educational factors, Hardy said. Many American Indians live on reservations, where a large number of schools are underfunded, have inadequate facilities and are unable to recruit adequate math and science teachers at the high-school level, officials said.

As a result, American Indian students who try to pursue a health career in college are often ill-prepared for the intense math and science courses required and switch to another field of study or drop out altogether, Hardy said.

Headlands participants spend six to eight hours every weekday in math and science-oriented classes such as chemistry, calculus, physics and biology, and another four hours doing home-

work at night. Their progress is measured by the improvements students make on a test given at the beginning and end of the program, Hardy said.

"They're actually doing this on their own volition," Lonewolf said. "Just by being here they're wanting to better their college career and future in health profession. The ones that are more driven are the ones that seek out these programs."

Headlands has graduated over 600 participants since it began 30 years ago, and 50 percent are currently in the medical field or pursuing medical opportunities, Hardy said. Another 25 percent have gone on to college but chose to study something other than medicine.

The program, funded by the National Institutes of Health, pays all expenses for the students. In addition, they receive a \$500 stipend.

Four counselors preside over the students and also act as tutors and resident advisers. The students stay in a dormitory on the university's Norman campus.

Hardy said between 50 and 75 applicants compete for 17 spots each year.

BAGDAD, Ky. (AP) — A group of Native Americans held a ceremony honoring the recent birth in Shelby County of a white buffalo, considered a rare and sacred symbol.

The calf, named Medicine Heart, was born June 3 at Buffalo Crossing in Shelby County.

Steve McCullough, a Lakota Shawnee from Indiana, led the 90-minute ceremony on Sunday. The buffalo's Lakota name is Cante Pejuta.

"The white buffalo calf is still very sacred to us today," McCullough said. "It's still a part of our tradition. That's why we wanted to come when we heard about her birth."

The white buffalo is tied to Lakota tradition, which says a spiritual being known as the White Buffalo Calf Woman came to the Lakota 19 generations ago and bestowed upon them their beliefs and traditions.

During the ceremony, men sat around a drum while others performed prayer songs. At the end of the ceremony, several of the 200 spectators tied prayer flags and other offerings around

the fence to honor the buffalo calf.

McCullough said other tribes also believe in the spirituality of the white buffalo calf.

"This ceremony brings unity, peace and hope," he said. "It's for all nationalities — red, yellow, black and white."

Deborah Hennessey of Jeffersonville has attended other naming ceremonies for white calves in South Dakota and Arizona.

"It's all very spiritual to me," she said. "I feel I'm part Native American, if not in blood then in spirit."

The owner of Buffalo Crossing, Bob Allen, said Medicine Heart is the first fully white calf born there.

The calf is the granddaughter of bull Chief Joseph, a buffalo Allen said he purchased in Denver. Chief Joseph was struck by lightning and died in 2003, Allen said.

Bob Pickering, a white buffalo expert in Cody, Wyo., said his research shows the incidence of white buffaloes at about 16 per million.

## Council

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He said all senior citizens from the tribe should "get together and name the casino. I think the people ought to get together and find another name for it."

### Tribal jail

Several tribal members voiced concerns about the Warm Springs jail. Jail issues included how inmates are treated once they are incarcerated, how they are fed, how often ministers from the reservation are allowed inside the jail to conduct church services, and the number of tribal members employed as jail keepers.

Floyd Calica said that with all that had been said about the criminal justice system in Warm Springs, he hopes Jody Calica, the secretary-treasurer, investigates the situation and "restores accountability."

Floyd Calica also expressed support for the current direction of the tribal government in establishing the casino in Cascade Locks.

"A 20-percent minority is still doing what it can to keep the casino in Warm Springs," he said. "I really don't see the necessity to re-create the wheel again and have a meeting or another referendum, when the wheels are already turning and we're all for the Gorge. We've invested \$9 million into it. Personally, I would like to see a six- or eight-figure return down the road."

### Education

Lana Leonard, student liaison

at the Jefferson County middle and high schools, in the last speech of the evening, spoke passionately about education of younger tribal members.

"It doesn't seem like our people are being educated," she said. "Nobody talks about it."

She had a packet of information that included a five-page document Leonard created with her colleague at the middle school, Butch David. The document showed statistics involving Native American students at school, including the number of students suspended during the school year, the number of days students missed school and the reasons they gave.

The document also had suggestions for tribal leadership to consider, including imposing a more strict school attendance standard, making students who are suspended from school perform community service for the time they are suspended, making the boarding schools more accountable, and having members of the tribal community visit schools in the 509-J school district during the school year.

Leonard said she would be in favor of making the summer youth worker program an incentive program. "Kids should have to have good attendance and good grades (to be in the program)," she said. "What are they going to do if they don't graduate from high school?"

She said more focus should be put on the education of young tribal members, and more should be done for the students who graduate high school.

The General Council meeting was held June 28 at the Agency Longhouse.

## Camp

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She always kept a supply of sourdough handy, and she'd make sourdough pancakes over an open flame.

"It just showed me," Grant said, "God wants me to take kids camping."

The camp is funded through Grant's own contributions, through donations of \$35 from campers, and from many other sources.

"There's been everything I can scratch up into it — donations from estates, from

churches, from people just donating, and we just keep having money," she said.

Attendance at Canyon Ranch Kids Camp is by invitation only, but the invitation has always been open to people from the reservation, said Grant.

She said this year's camp season was different because she started out with new helpers. "The lady who cooked for 14 years left," she said. "A young lady who was my associate, supposedly, left. And so the first of this year it was like, 'Oh, now what do we do?'"

One of the new people at the camp is Judy Barton, who lives

in Redmond.

"I call her 'Mrs. Hoof-in-Mouth Disease' because I met her down at the creek and got to visiting about camp and talking about needing a cook, and she said, 'Oh I can do that,'" Grant said. "Then she called me up that night and said, 'I don't think I can do that,' but here she is."

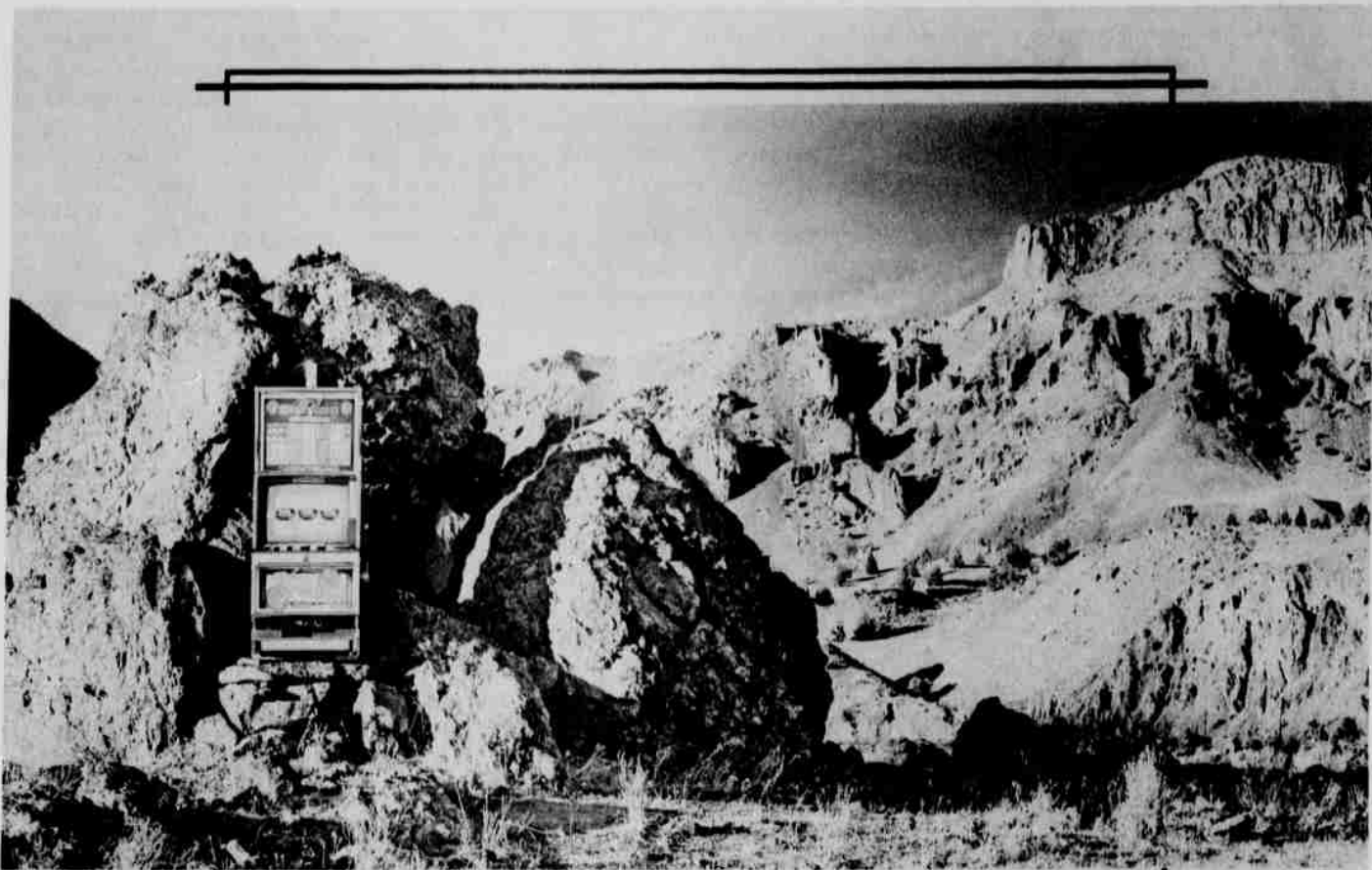
Barton said, "I called and told Gladys, 'I think I lied. I don't think I can cook for 50 people.' I said, 'I'll clean your toilets.' Well, there are outhouses, so I can't clean toilets."

When the camp is over, the campers all leave with a me-

mento of their time there. Each camper's photo is taken on a digital camera and printed. The camper then takes the printed photo and creates a decoupage pictures on a routed piece of wood.

Asked to recall the fun things she and the other girls in her camp did during their week, Shawnel Yahtin, 11, said, "The swimming, and tomorrow, we're on a boat on Lake Simustus."

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## Youth

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Every year the youth program holds an orientation to introduce the youth, usually at the age of 14, into a work setting, and to show them what to expect and how to deal with certain situations. They teach them about listening, using appropriate language and following the dress code.

Even with the orientation some kids refuse to follow the rules, or otherwise act inappropriately. There were a couple of

cases where workers showed up to their interviews with hickies. This is inappropriate in a place that demands professionalism.

Every once in a while there are students who come to the job bruised up from fights over the weekend. This is also deemed unprofessional.

One of the major problems in many worksites is overuse of the Internet, such as playing games on the computer or surfing the web.

"If you're bored, take the initiative to ask for work," Kalama said.