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## Collage performers



Dave McMechan/Spilyay

The Quartz Creek Drummers and Dancers performed on Saturday at the Collage of Culture at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Madras. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are long-time co-sponsors of the event (more Collage pictures on page 14).

## Composite Products lands its biggest contract

### Fire-rated doors to be used in world's tallest building

Warm Springs Composite Products has won the contract to supply fire-resistant components that will be used in the tallest building in the world, the Burj Dubai in the Middle East.

Composite Products will supply fire-rated components for architectural doors and frames to be used in the \$4 billion Burj Dubai skyscraper, located in Burj, United Arab Emirates.

The contract represents the biggest project ever for Composite Projects, surpassing its previous work for the World Trade Center in Bahrain.

"These projects are helping to build our reputation as a reliable supplier among developers in the Middle East and elsewhere overseas," said Duane Darnell, Composite Products chief executive officer.

Darnell said about 30 percent of the company's revenue comes from overseas, and about 20 percent of that is from the Middle East. Composite Products is planning to open a sales office

Dubai this month, he said.

The Composite Products plant is located along Highway 26 by the Warm Springs Forest Products mill. Composite Products is an enterprise of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

### Height not yet revealed

Construction began on the Burj Dubai in 2005, and the building currently has 164 floors and is 2,089 feet tall, already 350 feet taller than the Sears Tower in Chicago.

The developers of the Burj Dubai are not revealing how tall the building eventually will be, out of concern that another developer will aim to supersede it with a new development.

"What matters to us is that the building will have more than 3,000 openings for which fire-rated components are required," said Darnell.

See COMPOSITE PRODUCTS on 11

## Youth Conference next week

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are welcoming Native youth from throughout the Northwest next week, as the tribes host the Thirty-Third Annual Indian Youth Conference.

The conference features a week of cultural activities, the theme for the week being, "The ancestors will be our strength for the future." Hundreds of youth are expected to attend.

The conference this year is marking its return to Warm Springs, where the annual event began 33 years ago.

Early registration begins on Monday, May 26, followed by the kick-off campfire and chaperone orientation at the Community Center.

The Youth Conference parade will be on Tuesday morning. The parade

line-up will be at the Warm Springs Elementary School, and will end at the Community Center.

Throughout the week, there will be workshops on crafts, such as making drums and drumsticks, necklaces, medicine pouches, dream catchers, and bow and arrows, among many other traditional crafts.

There will be hoop dancing, a powwow, sweats, lessons on language, storytelling, traditional foods, cultural exchanges, a career and college fair, among the many activities.

The Youth Conference events happen at various places around the reservation, from Kah-Nee-Ta, the museum, the longhouses, community center, education building, and other places.

## Education, college degrees run in this family

College student Ashley Aguilar was homesick.

So, she lured her family from Warm Springs to Lawrence, Kansas, where they could attend Haskell Indian Nations University with her.

"Her friends were saying, 'Geez Ashley, everybody goes to college to leave their family and here you bring your whole family,'" her mother, Valerie Switzler, said, laughing.

Ashley didn't just convince her mother to attend Haskell. Her older sister, MayAnne Mitchell, and MayAnne's husband, Allen, attend, too. She also has two younger sisters, Georgianna Aguilar, 20, and Evelyn Aguilar, 19, who live in Lawrence with mom. Evelyn, like her sisters, plans to follow in mom's footsteps.

Last Friday, Switzler, 47, was the first in the family to earn a bachelor's degree.

She attended Haskell in the early 1980s but left after one year because she wasn't ready to live away from home. Coming back wasn't easy and she questioned, at times, whether she would finish. She recalled staying up until 2 a.m. and struggling with business calculus.

"I was crying, but the teacher understood that I hadn't taken a math class



Photo by Mike Yoder Lawrence Journal-World & News

Valerie Switzler, left, and her daughter MayAnne Mitchell, right, will graduate together on Friday from Haskell Indian Nations University. Switzler will be getting a bachelor's degree in American Indian studies, and Mitchell will earn her associate's degree in business administration. At center is Mitchell's daughter and Switzler's granddaughter Alena Mitchell, 4.

for 15 years," she said.

Last semester, she earned a 4.0 grade point average while juggling 24 credit hours with family, campus clubs and working at Haskell's Extension Office. Her job entails teaching Native youth classes, working on grants and helping with computer programs.

"She's a great mentor and great

leader," said Sharon Hallum, Haskell Extension director. "She's a good example for women who are older and grandmothers, that it's never too late."

That includes Mitchell, 24, who has a 4-year-old daughter and earned an associate's degree in the fall. She walked in Friday's graduation ceremony with her mother.

"My mom has taught us that education is the key to what our people need to survive, and that's why I am here because I need to learn and be able to stand up for what we believe in, our culture and our tribe," Mitchell said.

Next fall, Mitchell will continue working on a bachelor's degree in business administration, while her mother

will be in a master's degree program at Kansas University in indigenous nations studies, focusing on language documentation and revitalization.

Her goal is to build an immersion school in Warm Springs where she grew up and teach children the languages and traditions of their tribes.

"We lost a lot of our way, so we are trying to re-establish some of the cultures and traditions and dances from those who are remaining," she said.

During a recent visit to Warm Springs, she taught children songs and dances in their Native languages. Their performances brought tears of joy to the elders.

She also hopes to help reduce the school dropout rate. "We are looking toward a bigger and brighter future," she said of Warm Springs. "I just want to go back and help my people, especially the children."

Mitchell also plans to use her education in Warm Springs, where she wants to provide legal services after eventually earning a law degree at KU.

"Being able to help out my people back home is very important to me," Mitchell said.

(This article was written by by Karrey Britt, and is reprinted with permission of the Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World & News.)