

**Dear tribal members:**

Bill Kellogg gives special thanks to Gene LaBonte (*Smoke Signals* April 15) for what he has done for the Tribe. He asks who is responsible for the accomplishments of the last few years.

I want to thank Gene also, and remind everyone that Ed Pearsall has done an excellent job and deserves to be remembered in upcoming elections.

**Donald E. Haller**  
Roll #219

**To the Editor:**

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde for hosting the memorial celebration for my wife, Sande Schmidt, on March 29 at the Community Center. I especially want to thank Kathryn Harrison, Michael Mason, and the Tribal Council for organizing and hosting the event (together with the Native American Program of Oregon Legal Services). The chocolate sculpture and food catered by *Legends* was most impressive.

As many of your readers know, the Grand Ronde Tribe held a special place in Sande's heart, and she told me many times of the wonderful members she got to know. I am happy to see the fantastic progress the Tribe has made since I first attended a pow-wow at the elementary school about ten years ago, and I'm proud that Sande somehow made that all possible. She would be pleased at the notion of the memorial pine tree that was planted across from the Community Center.

Thank you again, and best wishes for continued success, happiness, respect and well-being.

**Kelly L. Smith**

**Editorial Policy****LETTERS FROM OUR READERS:**

*Smoke Signals* is a publication of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon. We have established an Editorial Policy to encourage input from readers about stories printed in *Smoke Signals*, as well as other tribal issues. However, all letters must be received at the newspaper office with author's signature, address, and phone number in order to be considered for publication.

Letters must be printed or typed. *Smoke Signals* reserves the right to edit any letter for clarity and length, and to refuse publication of any letter or any part of a letter that may contain libelous statements or personal attacks. Not all letters are guaranteed publication upon submission. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Smoke Signals*, tribal employees, or Tribal Council.

**MAIL LETTERS TO:** *Smoke Signals*, 9615 Grand Ronde Rd, Grand Ronde, OR 97347. Attn: Tracy Dugan.

**SMOKE SIGNALS DEADLINES** are the 5th and 20th of each month.

**Dear tribal members:**

We would like to thank all of you for helping us out financially after our major crisis. On March 19th, 1997 we were unable to stay in our home because of flooding. The river came into our home and did a lot of damage. We live in Grays Harbor County in Washington. Even though we aren't from Oregon, the Grand Ronde Indians of which I am a proud member have offered to help us. We are going to purchase carpeting for the living room. We just want to thank all of you from the bottom of our hearts for helping us.

**Larry and Judy Thomas**

**To all COUNCIL MEMBERS of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde:**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for what you have done and are continuing to do for me and many others.

You have enabled my mother to live a more worry free life through the Elder Pension Program. THANK YOU.

You have made my dream of owning my own home a reality through the Down Payment Grant Program. THANK YOU.

You made it easier to tread water last fall by sending money from timber revenues. THANK YOU.

You have made possible a Medical Insurance Policy, which if left to my own means I would not have been able to afford. THANK YOU.

I have become more interested in researching my heritage and ethnography. THANK YOU.

Now you are increasing my income to \$300 a month. It's very difficult to believe something this wonderful can actually be happening to me. THANK YOU.

I'm thanking you for myself and all those on disability. With this additional income our lives will be enriched.

THANK YOU — two words that mean so much but seem so inadequate to describe how I feel. I'm overwhelmed by your compassion and caring.

It is self evident through the many grant programs, scholarships and charitable donations that you are conducting business with much pride and dignity.

You have my complete confidence and support knowing that you will continue to make decisions that will benefit the Tribe as an entity, no matter how difficult this may be at times.

I realize that all of you are under a great deal of stress and pressure from being thrust into the management of a multi-million dollar business nearly overnight.

You carry the burden of having to answer to each and every tribal member, to yourselves, and above all to God.

I realize that at times you feel your job is a thankless one — NOT SO. Many members don't think they can put into words their feelings. I'm thanking you for doing a tremendously difficult job very well.

**Joyce Abbott**  
Roll # 66

**Dear tribal members and community:**

The staff and management at Nathan's Business Services would like to thank the members of the Grand Ronde Reservation very much for allowing us to assist the community and employees with their tax preparation. An especially big thank you goes out to Barbara Lake and Elaine Moore for taking time out of their busy schedule to assist Randall O. Nathan.

Our first year of venturing out was a success, and we are looking forward to continuing our business in your community. Again thank you for everything.

Thank you,  
**Nathan's Business Services**  
**Randall O. Nathan**

**Editor's Note**

*Smoke Signals* published a "Letter to the Editor" in the last issue which thanked the Tribe and staff for arranging medical help for Gloria Engleson. The letter was signed as follows:

Sincerely,  
**Kelly Haggerty and family**  
**Rod Risteen and family**  
**Shelly Whitley and family**  
**Missy Ault**  
**Larry Risteen**  
**Grace Brown and family**  
**May Amerson and family**  
**Bob Taplin and family**  
**Herman Hudson and family**

**To the Editor:**

I am writing to you as a member of the Tribe concerning the ODS Health Plan. Being a tribal member I am sure that I am not the only one that feels living outside the "reservation" land that we are not able to receive the same benefits from the Tribe that we would if we were living "home." One issue that will continue to be brought up in my opinion is the ODS Health Plan. Doctor bills get higher and higher, all because we are not fortunate enough to pay the \$200 deductible right off the bat. For a family that means each person, and it adds up. Living on minimum wage without other assistance makes it hard to pay that much of a deductible. Although we may be seen by a doctor, we still get billed the full amount until that deductible is met, making it harder on a family, and going more and more into debt.

Is it right for 6% of Casino revenues to be going to other counties, when that 6% could be used for helping out those members who can't meet the requirements of the deductible? We fill out all kinds of paperwork just to prove we meet "guidelines" qualifying us for certain plans or programs, but when asked for some assistance or help concerning this deductible, it is suggested we apply for state assistance. Why is that? Is the Tribal Council suggesting we rely on the Welfare System, even though we would have the money if the Tribe were to use the revenues from the Casino?

In my opinion, members who live away from "home" should not have to meet the deductible, and the 6% should be used to help out those who need it. Members who do live "home" have the advantage to use the Health Clinic, that should not require that they have to meet a deductible. The clinic is there to provide medical attention regardless of whether we have a health plan or not. Should some of the tribal members of Grand Ronde go without seeing a doctor of any kind, because we can't afford the deductible? We end up paying 20% of the bill.

As a tribal member, I think the Tribal Council should consider making changes to the 6% of Casino revenue going to the eleven counties in Oregon. I don't think that it is too much to ask for a deductible on any medical needs to be paid for by using the 6% revenue from our own casino. Don't members' needs concern the Tribal Council? This is a suggestion that should be brought up.

Sincerely,  
**Anna Logan Huston**

**Response from Risk Management**

In 1995, Tribal Council made a commitment to provide health insurance benefits to all tribal members no matter where they live. To offer a health program of this magnitude, we realized that tribal members would have out-of-pocket expenses. Using current benefit levels, our initial estimate to provide health insurance to over 3,500 members in 28 states and 4 foreign countries was over 6.3 million dollars. There just is not enough money to provide 100% coverage to everyone and assure this program continues in the future.

There is no doubt that paying insurance deductibles can place a financial strain on a family living at minimum income levels. Yet the need for health care was evident when a survey showed that only 49% of tribal members had access to private health insurance. Even if ODS plan participants had to share some of the expenses of this program, we thought it was more important for every tribal member to have access to health care than none at all.

The Risk Management Department welcomes questions and comments from all tribal members about the ODS program. Because this is the first year of the program, we are continually reviewing the quality of service, benefits, and costs. Your comments will assist us in evaluating the performance of the ODS program. Please contact Val or Marsha at 1-800-442-0346.