

Tribal member aims to promote AIDS awareness

By Tracy Dugan

Dave Brummitt, has been helping people living with HIV/AIDS for more than six years, and has decided to begin outreach programs for adults and youth affected by AIDS within the Tribe. He has been asked to speak to tribal youth from tribes, schools, and Indian communities all over the west coast, and has volunteered time and services to Indian people with this disease. Most recently, Dave will begin working as the administrator of *Positive Community Project*, an organization out of Portland that conducts outreach and awareness activities for people who first test positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

"We were awarded a grant that will help us create an informational brochure that will be in doctors' offices and clinics in Oregon," said Dave. "This brochure is aimed to help people deal with the emotions and trauma after they first find out they are HIV positive."

Dave interviewed many Native people for this brochure, even a couple of tribal members. "The main thing people with HIV must realize is that they have been sent a message, given a challenge. After all the feelings of anger and denial are over, everyone must ask, 'How am I going to live the rest of my life?'"

Dave isn't speaking to people about this disease on a one-dimensional level. He knows about the sadness and anger these young people are feeling. He's been there himself. He tested positive for HIV six years ago, but his HIV status isn't what defines him as a person. The help he provides to Native people is the result of a lifetime of experiences and challenges.

"When I was born, I was immediately adopted into a white family," said Dave. "I just met my maternal family two years ago." Dave, who is now in his early fifties, says that his adoptive family was extremely dysfunctional, and has in recent years had to overcome the painful issues of his past in order to face the future and all that he could be as a person. "I grew up in Portland, went to an all-white school where I was the only identifiable Indian person. My Indian heritage has always been an issue for me."

As an adult, Dave turned to drugs and alcohol to numb himself to the pain

of his childhood, and it wasn't until he entered recovery that he learned spirituality and was inspired to continue and go on. Dave was hired by the American Indian AIDS Institute in San Francisco as a street outreach worker, and also worked on the Navajo Reservation helping tribal families living with AIDS. He moved back to Portland to be close to the Tribe, and received offers to speak to tribal youth. He has provided consulting services to the Grand Ronde Health and Human Services Division. It is very important to Dave that Native people be educated about AIDS, both the youth and adults.

"People are still in denial about who AIDS affects. Many think it's still a white, gay man's disease, but it isn't," he said. "The face of AIDS is changing. The highest increase in AIDS cases is within the 13-25 age group. The high rate of teenage pregnancy, the statistics on drug use within the Tribe — these behaviors increase the risk of getting this disease."

Dave said we all must work to destroy these myths about how a person gets contract HIV or AIDS.

"It is important to take a proactive approach to educating youth of the risky behaviors associated with HIV/AIDS, and also how you *can't* get it," he said. "But if you do test positive, it is important to know you aren't alone. The people who live the longest are those who take an active, responsible role in their health care. It is important to question doctors, seek out information. I believe AIDS is well on its way to becoming a manageable disease. A disease — like diabetes or heart condition — that requires care, but in no way means that we can't live long and full lives." Dave recommends turning to your tribe and family for support if you test positive for HIV. "Native Americans are resilient people and we are at our best when our people need help. Go with peace in your heart and remember it's not how long you live, but how you live the life that you have."

Dave is a member of the HIV/AIDS Advisory Council and the Ryan White Title I Planning Council. If you have questions about HIV or AIDS, please call *Positive Community Project* at (503) 281-0432 or (503) 768-9301.

Photo by Vernon Kennedy.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES CORNER



Foster providers for ADHD children

The Family Resource Center in McMinnville is providing a support and information group for parents of attention deficit disorder children. Friday, April 10 from 7 to 9 p.m. will focus on information by a local psychologist. For more information you may directly call the Family Resource Center at 434-4413; or Mychal Leno at 879-2045 or 1-800-422-0232.

Foster Care certification

The second Foster Parent Training for Certification is being offered through the Tribe beginning on Thursday, April 9 in McMinnville. This training is for all foster care providers interested in foster parenting or foster parents who just recently became certified in 1998. Classes are already underway in Dallas. Please call Mychal Leno at 879-2045 or 1-800-422-0232 for day, time, and location of this second class.

Caseworker reflects back on first year

By Tracy Dugan

DANIS BAZZY-BUCKNELL is not a tribal member, but she grew up in Grand Ronde, and decided a long time ago that working for the Tribe would be the best way to help the people in her hometown.

So after earning her Associate's degree at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, Danis applied for the caseworker position at Community Resources, and was offered the job. She is approaching one year with the Tribe, and has said that helping tribal children and families has been a rewarding career choice.

"It's a good feeling to give back to the community I was raised in. I know a lot of these families."

But Danis says it's important to note that a Family Service Caseworker visits many homes in the Six County Service Area, and many of them who live out of the area are families she does not know.

"I just want to help all tribal families," she said. "I want parents to know that I am here to help them meet their objectives, determine the things they need to work on in order to be a complete family with their children again."

Danis feels strongly in favor of the Tribe's preference that tribal children who need to be placed in foster homes should be placed in a tribal home whenever possible. She wants to encourage tribal member families who are interested in becoming foster parents to call Community Resources to learn more about it.

"We want children to remain with their culture if possible," said Danis. "These are tribal kids." As a caseworker, Danis' duties include supervising family visits, appearing in tribal and state court hear-



ings, making recommendations, and assisting parents in meeting their goals and requirements for reconciliation.