

Community Fund Provides Books for Local Children

■ Grant will buy much-needed textbooks for four schools.

By Brent Merrill

Homework just got a little easier for students in the Willamina School District. Students attending Willamina High School, Willamina Junior High School, Willamina Elementary School and Grand Ronde Elementary School will be the beneficiaries of a \$148,650 grant from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund to be used towards the purchase of new textbooks.

The Willamina School District has less than 1,000 students enrolled in kindergarten through the 12th grade. The grant comes despite the fact that area voters rejected a local tax option last year that could have provided money for books and additional library materials.

The Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the charitable arm of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community, awards six percent of profits from the Tribes' Spirit Mountain Casino to worthy and deserving charities and organizations in 11 Oregon counties.

"There is a dire need for new and updated text books at the schools in



the district," said Community Fund Administrator and Grand Ronde Tribal member Angela Ellis.

Ellis, who has children attending local schools said some classes have as little as five books to go around the entire class.

"As a parent, I understand how important books and library materials are in helping our children succeed in school," said Ellis. "In the eyes of the members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde it is simply unacceptable that the children in our local school district are falling behind their peers because of inadequate text books."

Ellis also said it is hard for kids to make up missed work when needed because textbooks are not allowed out of the school building. She said



Photos by Willie Merrick

New Books — Willamina High School students, and Grand Ronde Tribal members, Matt Zimbrick (left), Jason Bailey and Andrea Childers in the school library reading some of the books that have been at the school since their parents attended high school. The Willamina School district recently received a \$148,650 grant to go towards the purchase of new textbooks and library materials at the four schools in the district. The condition of these books shows the need for more current materials.

books are shared on a daily basis and photocopied continually.

The Spirit Mountain Community Fund has given over \$10 million in less than four years of existence.

"There is a dire, critical need for these books and I'm really happy with this grant," said Ellis. "We have

worked closely with the school district for close to a year now preparing this grant to meet these important needs."

"The way I see it is our children are our top priority," said Tribal Council member Bob Haller. "In my opinion, anything we do for children is a positive. I'm very pleased with this grant."

Business Spotlight

My Candid Life Photography: Picture Perfect

■ Tribal member turns her dream into reality and gets to see the results.

By Justin Phillips

It's not just a hobby anymore.

When you are good at something, people notice and want more. To freeze a special moment in time forever is priceless. When the person behind the camera is as priceless as the picture itself, well it makes it the entire experience that much better.

Tribal member Mychal Leno's photography business, My Candid Life Photography, is only a year old, but growing all the time.

Leno got started in the business by taking pictures of family and friends. Then, people started noticing her work. Little by little she had more requests.

Leno has been attending photography classes at Chemeketa Community College.

"I definitely like it now," said Leno. "I've been doing a lot of work for friends to try to get my name out there to build a reputation."

Leno learned a lot from different people.

"I learn really well from other people's experiences," said Leno. "I don't like to reinvent the wheel. There are a lot of photographers out there that I made friends with. Dale Peterson (a professional photographer in Salem) has been an awesome mentor. He lets me tag along with him on photo shoots."

Leno said that most photographers are really secretive about their work.

"Most of them aren't willing to tell you anything about anything that concerns photography," said Leno. "I guess it's just something about competition. For me, I always want to share information. I'm just like a sponge right now, absorbing all sorts of information that I hear or read."

Leno currently works in Spirit Mountain Casino's Human Resources department as the Employee Relations Manager.

"Sometimes it's hard to schedule photo shoots around my work schedule," Leno said.

A long-term goal is to have her own photography studio in the Salem area.

"It's quite a few years off, but that is what I'm basing my business plan on," said Leno.

When it comes to taking pictures, Leno focuses on more candid photos.



Mychal Leno

"I like to get people in their more natural setting, rather than the grin and pose," said Leno.

She also took a Calligraphy class just recently. People can have writing on the matting around the picture if they choose to.

"It just came to me one night that there might be a connection between the two," said Leno.

Leno said she wants to thank her husband, Chris.

"He has been really supportive and encouraging," said Leno of her husband. "You need that support. Some people don't realize that it is such a huge step, starting up something new is scary — it's fun and exciting, but it's also risky. When I have a bad day, he is always there for me."

Chris is the one that came up with her business name, which are also her initials.

The entire experience of starting her own business and being involved in photography has been rewarding for her because she sees things different now that she did before.

"When my family and I are driving somewhere I'm always looking at things that might look good in a picture," said Leno.

In her office sits a picture of a door that she recently photographed.

"If you would have told me a year ago that I would have a picture of a door and framed it, I would have just laughed," said Leno.

This is Leno's first experience with her own business. She is attending the Tribe's Small Business department's "Starting a Successful Business" class.

"Sheila Herber has been really helpful to me," said Leno. "She has encouraged me and given me good feedback on the things I do. I've had two or three key people that I feel have been an integral part of starting up my small business, and she is one of them."

Leno is the daughter of Candy and Jess Robertson. Mychal and Chris have two children, Caden and Kiana.

So if you need some professional pictures taken, whether it is just for fun, senior pictures or something else, give her a call. Her phone number is 503-879-7303. You can also reach her via e-mail at mycandidlife@aol.com.

Mychal made her dreams come true; now let her make yours come true — through pictures.

My Candid Life
Photography

Mychal Leno
Photographer
503-876-7303
mycandidlife@aol.com

