

# Grand Ronde is Full of Achievers

■ *Smoke Signals* recognizes those in the community whose accomplishments are many.

By Chris Mercier

We've all got our lives to live, and if given the chance, no doubt many of us could put out fairly impressive biographies. We at *Smoke Signals* want to draw attention to humble Tribal members and workers who've gone out and done a fair share of deeds and accomplished notable things in their own right.

Dr. Joseph Stone of Social Services pointed us to achievements in the ranks of his own staff. Congratulations to Karen Scharf for her recent certification as a Chemical Dependency Counselor Level III CDC III. And kudos to Laura Burton for her own accomplishment: Provisional Certified Alcohol & Drug Counselor II.

"It is the maintenance of this type of professionalism that has allowed the A & D (Alcohol & Drug) program to function at 115 percent of the nationally accepted community standard of practice for the past several months," said Stone.

We agree.

Human Resources has reason to be proud, also. Tribal Member Connie Holmes earned a Professional Human Resources certificate through Portland Community College. And Kathryn Smedema also earned some merit in the form of the Senior Professional Human Resources certification. Connie and Kathryn, we salute you.

One unfortunate demographic about Native Americans is the high incidence of high school dropouts. For whatever reasons, many Natives are unable to get their diplomas. We admire those people who hunker down and pursue their GED's, because really, it would be so easy to not try at all. The *Smoke Signals* says "good job" to Tribal members Sam Kottke (#4629) of

Keizer, and Sonia Whitefeather (#2937) of Vancouver, Washington for successfully getting their GED's.

Kottke, 25, completed the GED course at Chemeketa Community College in November. He also offered an enormous "Thank You" to the Education division, Kevin Simmons and Joanne Carr.

Whitefeather wrote us a lengthy, inspiring letter detailing the numerous obstacles that have stood in her way. Yet she persevered and is now planning to attend Clark Community College to study Psychology with hopes of one day being a domestic violence and substance abuse counselor.

Speaking of careers, you have to be thoroughly impressed by the accomplishments of Tribal Member Gary Soderberg of Polson, Montana. He recently graduated from the Northwest Lineman College with a GPA of 4.0. It marks a career switch from 25 years as a logger. In addition to the 550 hours of training, he had also to take two hours per day of academic studies, memorizing stuff like Ohm's Law, Watt's Law, comprehensive knowledge of electricity and assorted technique for dealing and establishing power lines. Soderberg grew up in Lake Oswego but moved to Alaska back in 1978 to begin a career logging. Now 42 years of age and beginning a new profession, Soderberg's story should remind people "It's never too late."

For those of you in the Tribal loop, the name Wanda McCoy probably draws some recognition. A Tribal Elder, Wanda appears periodically at functions, known for possessing a winning smile, unbeatable work ethic, and now Goodwill's Graduate of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, an award not

handed out frequently. Wanda has been involved with Goodwill Industries for 20 years.

Not too many are surprised by Wanda's achievement. Connie Hanson, a manager at Ross Dress for Less in Salem where Wanda works setting up lingerie and in-store displays, claims our fellow Tribal member is one of the best workers around, never failing to show up on time each and every day with a refreshingly pleasant attitude. Wanda also worked nine years in a nursing home kitchen, raising eyebrows by failing to ever break a single dish in that span, which surely has to be a record of some sort.

Wanda lives in Salem, engaging in restaurant hopping in her spare time. When given the chance she likes to come out to Grand Ronde to visit friends and fellow elders, and on occasion, hit up Spirit Mountain Casino. Wanda rarely misses a General Council meeting on Sundays.

Congratulations, Wanda.



Kathryn Smedema



Wanda McCoy



Dr. Joseph Stone



John Bellville



Connie Holmes



Laura Burton