

Community Fund Education Grants Go a Long Way

■ Willamina and Sheridan are recipients; Dallas grant serves students from six school districts.

By Peta Tinda and Ron Karten

With the state of Oregon facing its worst budget crisis in half a century, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have stepped up to help the Willamina and Sheridan school districts. These schools will receive \$300,000 in grants from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

"Our children's education is something that we definitely want to give as much as we can to," said Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker-Robertson, who has children attending both schools.

"Many of our Tribal members live in the Willamina and Sheridan area," said Tribal Council Secretary June Sell-Sherer. "If we are committed to the belief that our children are our future, then these grants are testimony to our commitment."

Although this is not the first time the Tribe has helped a publicly-funded institution, it puts the Tribe in the awkward position of being seen as a backup for the state.

"We do not want to be seen as a replacement for state and federal funding for the school, but if we can help out with books, curriculum or teachers, then we should," said Sheker-Robertson. "Right now that's the most important thing."

Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Angela Blackwell echoed that dedication. "The children that attend these schools are not only our own, but the children of our 1,500 employees and neighbors," she said. "As part of our commitment to the surrounding community, we will continue to do all we can through this funding crisis to level the playing field for underserved students," said Blackwell.

The grant given to Sheridan School district will be used to revise the English language arts and literacy curriculum. It will also be used to provide staff training, textbooks, technological equipment and software. The \$125,000 grant will equal about \$260 per student over the course of the school year.

The Willamina School District is in much worse shape financially, having already suffered \$500,000 in cuts from their budget with the fail-

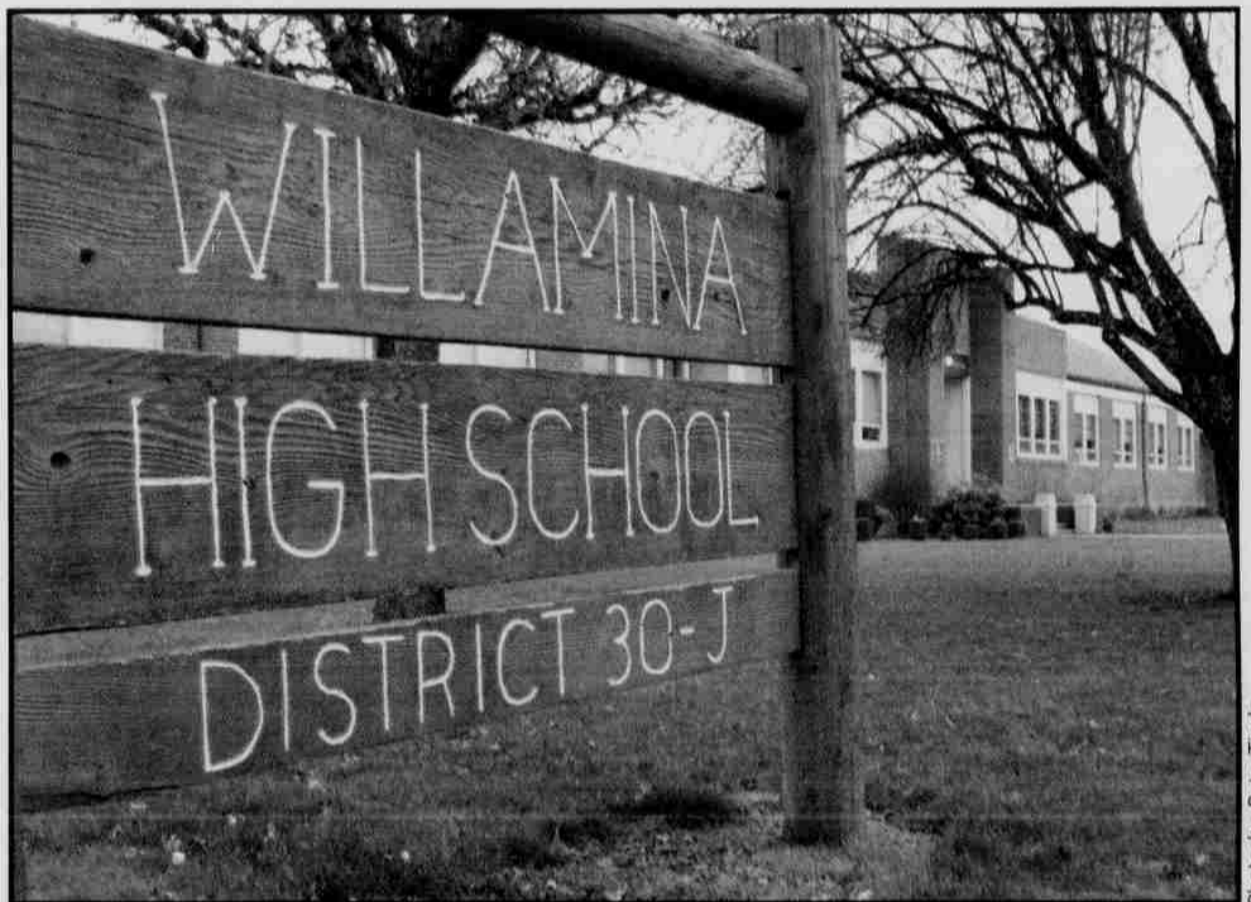


Photo by Peta Tinda

ure of Measure 28, a temporary tax increase. The \$175,000 grant from the community fund will ensure that no teachers will be laid off, but the school will still have to cut about ten days from the school year.

Gus Forster, Willamina School District Superintendent, said that the grant money will be a

in the tough financial times ahead.

"For those schools outside Willamina, Grand Ronde and Sheridan, we will continue to support students through a wide variety of indirect grants to organizations like SMART, Saturday Academy, The Oregon Zoo, SMILE and others," said Blackwell.



Photo by Ron Karten

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great help.

"If we didn't have the money from the Community Fund we would have to lay off teachers and make many other cuts to our programs. That would be devastating to our students," said Forster. "What the grant enabled us to do is to maintain our existing programs through the school year."

Blackwell said the Spirit Mountain Community Fund will do as much as it can to help out

Dallas School Grant Will Teach Construction Skills To Students

Students at six rural schools will soon be building construction technology skills thanks in part to a \$184,222 grant from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund. The grant supports an innovative project developed by the Western Oregon Professional Technical Consortium for the Dallas School District.

Students from Dallas, Falls City, Central, Willamina, Amity and Perrydale school districts will participate.

With the construction bid process now underway, funds will go to remodel the Dallas High School wood shop, purchase new equipment and fund transportation to and from job sites. The project's first job will be to build a Habitat for Humanity house in Dallas.

The consortium began in the late 1990s as local school districts explored ways to increase their capacity to implement the Certificate of Advanced Mastery mandated by Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century. The consortium's mission is to provide community access to education and training for the workplace. That access is provided through collaboration and partnerships with post-secondary education, business and industry.

"The Oregon Department of Education uses us as a model for providing regional technical education in a time of shrinking resources," said Dr. Dave Novotney, Dallas School District Superintendent. "The funding from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde means our program will continue to thrive and benefit our students and our community."



Photo by Peta Tinda