

## Matt Bucknell Moves To Social Services' Foster Care Program

By Peta Tinda

"You have to have the desire in your heart to help people," said Matt Bucknell, the new Foster Care Program Recruitment and Retention Specialist for the Grand Ronde Tribe.

He takes over the post from his wife, Danis Bucknell, who is taking time off to be with the couple's new baby boy, Matteo, who will be a year old in July.

"She's real supportive because she knows how difficult yet how extremely rewarding a job it can be," he said.

Bucknell's main responsibility is to enlist the aid of new families to provide homes for foster children, and to retain the families and children already in the program through close contact, activities and events.

"It's a real good program and we're real appreciative of the support we get from the Tribal Council," said Bucknell. "Not only our program but also other programs like the Youth Social Services Prevention Program. There are a lot of families in a lot of different situations that depend on the support they get from the department."

His previous experience with the Tribal Youth

Education Department makes him well suited to the task.

"I've participated in activities before with some of the families and kids, so it's nice to know them already," he said.

He maintains a close, working relationship with over 60 foster families in the program's stewardship. He often makes home visits to check on how the families are doing.

"We make sure all the needs are being met, and see if they need any assistance," he said.

Bucknell is also raising funds to take part in the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, held in Portland on July 12-13, 2003.

At the moment, Bucknell spends most of his time processing applications from Tribal members who want to be involved with the program, spending time with the foster families and learn-



Photo by Peta Tinda

ing as much as she can about the intricacies of the National Indian Child Welfare Act, which sets rules on the placement of Native children.

Unlike many state run foster care programs, one of the main priorities of the Tribal foster program is to place Native kids in Native homes.

"First and foremost we try to place kids with their family, with an aunt, uncle or other close relative," said Bucknell.

If a close family member cannot be found to look after a foster child, then the next option is to place the child with a certified Tribal family.

"I think that 99 percent of people would agree that this is the best thing to do in the case of a Native child," he said.

In the future, Bucknell said he would like to see more families enrolling in the program, particularly in the Portland-Metro and Salem areas, where the need for caring, supportive foster homes is steadily increasing.

What it comes down to, said Bucknell, is giving kids the chance to do well.

"The highest priority of my job is to make sure kids have real opportunity and success in their lives. It's very, very rewarding."

## Education Program Gets New Youth Coordinator In Marie Heimburg

By Peta Tinda

Marie Heimburg is the new Tribal Youth Education Program Coordinator.

She was born in the Great Lakes, near Chicago, but has spent the last 30 years living in

Ava, Missouri on her family's farm.

She has three grown children, "And four wonderful grandchildren," she said.

She fell in love with the Pacific Ocean during trips to Oregon to visit her brother, Michael Mega, who lives west of Dundee.

Heimburg has been involved in social work for her entire adult life, starting with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services. She is working on her Master's Degree. She has done everything from start programs to write grants to make home visits with youth and families.

She began her career in a training school for

girls, has managed houses and runaway shelters, was once a juvenile officer for felony-convicted youth at a state wilderness camp, and has done social work for state programs.

She worked for four years as a substitute teacher and as a volunteer for Head Start, and 5 years coordinating and developing academic services for youth.

"I really believe in a prevention approach for youth and at risk youth and families. It's very effective," said Heimburg.

Her favorite part of the job, she said, is working with the youth.

"I look at all youth in a similar way. I think that it is very important to listen to the kids, and let them know my door is open."

Heimburg said that the most challenging aspect of the new job is learning how the different departments, like Youth Education, Social Services and the Tribal Government work together. She also said that she is a strong advocate for collaboration between the Education Department and the community.



Photo by Peta Tinda

"I want to embrace what the youth education department has developed in the past. In the present, I want to include what changes youth and families would like to see and have more parent involvement. In the future, I want all Tribal youth to have the opportunity to participate in services and be highly successful in whatever education and career choices they make."

She looks forward to helping people utilize the education department. "There are such wonderful resources available here for youth and families. I would like to see more participation," she said.

In her spare time she likes to pursue her artistic interests, like painting and pottery and her favorite, weaving. She mostly does floor loom weaving, which she considers a dying art.

She said she used to go to pow-wow's in the Midwest, but hasn't been to one for years. But she did say that she is going to go the Grand Ronde Pow-wow this year.

"It's an honor to be working out here at the Tribe," said Heimburg.

"All that I've done was in preparation for this."

## New Scholarship Coordinator Sees Herself As A Resource

By Peta Tinda

Luhui Whitebear, age 23, is the new Scholarship Coordinator for the Grand Ronde Education Department.

There was a need for additional personnel to handle the growing numbers of Tribal members attending colleges. There were well over 100 students that the Education Department worked with regularly, too many for one person to handle. So the position was created, resumes were submitted, interviews scheduled, and Whitebear stood out as the obvious choice.

She has been at her new post since May 19.

"I really like it," she said of her new position. Since she was recently a student herself, she knows well the difficulties of getting financial support for one's education. "I'm really excited to be finding funding for students, because I know how important it is."

She said that she is eager to be working in a Native community because she feels most familiar with Natives.

She is originally from Santa Barbara, California, but has spent the last few years living in Oregon.

She is a member of the coastal band of

Chumash Indians, but counts her decedency from many Tribes. "I was brought up pretty traditional," she said. "There was a lot of ceremony, a lot of living with the land."

She was very active on campus during her stay, involved in the Native American club and other student organizations.

Even with the recent increase in Native students in college, Natives are still one of the smallest minorities on campus, with usually no more than a few Natives attending college at a time.

"I know that Native people are under-represented in college," she said.

By helping Native students track down funding for their education, she feels that she helping with this obstacle.

Her main responsibility, Whitebear said, is to make sure her students are getting their funding and fulfilling their obligations to the Tribe. The students must maintain a high grade point average, take a certain number of classes and fulfill other criteria in order to receive funds.

Her other fundamental task is to find out what resources in the form of grants, fellowships and scholarships are out there for students to take

advantage of.

She has about 50 students that she is working with right now, with more on the way.

So far, she said, her experience at the Education Department has been very good.

"It's been really nice, everybody's really friendly and helpful if I have any questions. And I had a lot of questions."

Her foremost goal for the future, Whitebear said, is to be a resource for the Tribe and community. She wants people to feel free to stop by with questions or suggestions, and looks forward to getting to know the community.

For enjoyment, she likes to read, be outside, go to the coast, and she does beadwork. Whitebear also attends the Grand Ronde pow-wow every year.

"I couldn't not go," she said.



Photo by Peta Tinda