

Member Services Gives Tribal Council Report

■ Cheryle Kennedy honored as "Woman Of The Year."

By Ron Karten

The December General Council meeting was held on Sunday, December 7, at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde. Here are the highlights:

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy called the meeting to order; Tribal Council member Jan D. Reibach gave the invocation.

Director of Operations and Tribal member Chris Leno presented the program report on Member Services. Highlights included increases in Tribal support for Elder pensions, which are set to rise at the first of the year and for burial benefits with an additional increase for providing a meal for relatives.

Overall, Tribal members receive medical and dental insurance, annual per capita and timber distributions, pensions and disability insurance, Medicare Part B reimbursement, tax preparation assistance, enrollment and burial assistance.

Elders also are entitled to non-member spousal health insurance.

In 2003, the Tribe enrolled 90 new members, 70 of them minors.

■ 601 members received Elder pension/SSI/SSD.

■ 113 received non-Elder SSI/SSD.

■ 4002 received medical insurance

■ 3,833 received dental insurance.

For questions about an individual account, please contact the following:



Respected — The Board of Directors of Celebrating Traditions & Medicine Winds News present Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy with the group's award for Woman of the Year 2003-04. L to R: Mike WhiteHawk, Ian Kerchee, Nakima Kerchee, Lesa Kerchee; not pictured: Ellen WhiteHawk.

Liz Leno, Member Services Coordinator regarding per capita and timber distributions, 503-879-2082; Margo Mercier, Enrollment Coordinator regarding Enrollment and burial benefits, 503-879-2253; Amy Whisler, Member Services Specialist regarding Elder pensions, SSI/SSD and non-Elder SSI/SSD; and Francine Peterson, Member Services Assistant regarding medical and dental insurance issues. Those out of the area may use the

Tribe's toll free number: 1-800-422-0232, and ask for the last four numbers of your party's full phone number.

The Board of Directors of *Celebrating Traditions & Medicine Winds News* based in Oakridge, Oregon, presented Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy with its third annual Woman of the Year Award for 2003-2004. It is presented to Indian women who, among other things, "contribute

to the well-being of her people first, but also promote the well-being of the community in which she lives," according to Co-President Nakima Kerchee (Lakota Ottawa), who made the award presentation along with four others from the board.

A group led by Tribal member Rebecca Crocker pressed the council to revise Enrollment rules, specifically as a result of changes to the rule made in 1999.

From Tribal member Tracy Howerton of Grand Meadows to Tribal member Leroy Good of Michigan, speakers described the difficulty and seeming unfairness of having one child honored as a Tribal member while another in the same family, with the same blood quantum, only born after the 1999 amendment, is denied membership in the Tribe.

Door prizes included \$50 winners: Tribal members Kayla Koumentis, Gary LaChance and Policy and Grants Development Director Kim Ray Rogers, who again donated his winnings to the fund to help Amanda Schulte with the expenses surrounding her needed heart-lung transplant. Tribal Elder Ruby Bigoni was the \$100 winner.

A basket filled with goodies to raise money for Elders' Committee programs and eight turkeys also were raffled.

Warrior Interrupted

■ Tribal member Brad Leno reflects on tragedy.

Editor's Note: This was a tough story. But, it was a story that had to be told if for no other reason than the age-old possibility that some young person might read the story and be changed, or moved not repeat the actions of the young men involved in this tragedy. This is a Tribal story because so many of those involved are members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. It is also a universal story of growing up in small town America. Many in this particular group of individuals have been united by the tragedy. They look for the good. They wear forgiveness on their sleeves, and from the ruins of many lives, ask that the harsh light of judgment be reserved. They each have suffered plenty. We wish them strength from their ordeal and courage as the days go by. We wish them healing.

Kids at the edge of adulthood with access to alcohol and drugs and cars in every town and village of this country face the choices that made the difference in this story. But for fortune...

"When will they ever learn?"

"When will they ever learn?"

From *'Where Have All The Flowers Gone?'* By Pete Seeger and Joe Hickerson

By Ron Karten

Tribal member Brad Leno wants to leave the world a better place. He's gone through tragedy to bring this to the top of his list, but there's no doubt about it in his mind now. He resides at the MacLaren Correctional Facility for Youth in Woodburn, incarcerated for being young and making poor choices, the last of which ended in the death of his friend in a car he was driving with his blood alcohol level twice the legal limit.

He takes full responsibility for the death of his friend. It is something he says he will live with every day of his life. But a question comes up. It comes up for those who love him and those close to the other boys involved. And it comes up for the wider community.

Can you prevent a tragedy, even when all the ingredients to that tragedy are out there in plain sight? Leno, now 19, remembers the experts coming to Willamina Middle School when he went through there, telling him about the evils of drugs and alcohol, the dangers of mixing them with driving, but he thought: 'It won't happen to me.'

"I just think kids are young and they're going to learn in their own ways. I know I did," said Tribal

member Wendy Scott, who barely knows Leno, but she knew Matthew Castellon, the boy who died, only too well.

Only a few months before the fatal accident, a 17-year-old Leno was involved in his second recorded car accident — cited for careless driving in a head-on collision on State Highway 22 — and was sentenced to write an essay on traffic safety.

His essay said in part, "If I got into a head on collision and killed somebody I would have to live with that guilt on my mind for the rest of my life. I would rather have died too, than live knowing I killed someone... I know from now on I will be a more cautious and careful driver and obey the speed limit at all times, so that this will never happen again."

Yamhill County Circuit Judge Ron Stone wrote him back in March of that year, "The essay reflects thoughtfulness and concern on your part. I am sure you have learned from your experience."

He knew. He'd experienced consequences, small though they were. He thought he had it straight. The judge thought he had it straight. So, what went wrong?



Consequences— Tribal member Brad Leno sits on a bunk at the MacLaren Correctional Facility for Youth in Woodburn.

Roll the calendar forward only a few months to the Saturday evening of July 14 that same year, 2001. It was the evening of the Veterans' Pow-wow. Leno was home, "watching TV and stuff, getting bored. I decided to go into town to see what everyone else was doing. I was saying to myself, 'I should stay home,'" because he had been in trouble a few weeks earlier, partying when he had promised to help his dad, Tribal member Lonnie Leno, "buck hay down at the beach."

He decided to leave anyway, he said, "and then (like his conscience was telling him something, he) kept forgetting things — my shirt, my keys, the phone."

The story covers a lot of ground from there, heading to Sheridan and coming back with a video called, "Dude, Where's My Car," ("the parts I saw were funny," said Leno), a trip for methamphetamines ("I didn't do the meth," said Leno. "I had made a promise to my sister [Tribal member Brandy] that I wouldn't do it anymore... we made a deal: if I stopped doing meth, she'd stop smoking cigarettes.")

Brad Leno continued on next page