

Photos by Toby McClary



Consequences — On Wednesday, January 19 the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Department held an AIDS awareness community dinner and lecture at the Adult Education building. Among the speakers in attendance, Poppy Miller, who is HIV positive, spoke about her life experiences and how she contracted the disease. There were also two trainings at the Clinic on Thursday, January 20 to give citizens HIV testing, training and



counseling. Pictured here (L-R) Poppy Miller, Dr. Hillary Liss, Chaquita David and Jutta Riediger.



Photos by Toby McClary

Classy — Youth Education hosted a beading instruction class with dinner for Family Night on Wednesday, January 19. About 20 people attended to learn and spend time with friends and family. Sinew and beads of all shapes and sizes were provided for people to make crafts. Noreen Bolton, far right, took time to enjoy the evening of crafts and laughter.



Education Achievements Lead To College At Oregon State

■ Tribal member Ashlee Merrill is first to gain early acceptance.

By Peta Tinda

Tribal member Ashlee Merrill is by all accounts exceptionally organized, extremely positive and has a knack for getting the job done.

When most high school students were working on their senior projects, Merrill had hers done before her senior year.

As a result of this, she has been chosen for early admittance to Oregon State University, where she will be studying physical therapy next fall.

"As far as we know Ashlee's the first Tribal member to be accepted early," said Rachel Warner, Tribal College and Career Counselor, who worked closely with Merrill during the application process.

"And she's just a bright student, on top of things and always positive," said Warner. "She's one of the most positive people I know and I think that will help her to succeed."

Merrill, a 17 year old senior at Willamina High School, carries a 3.8 Grade Point Average and is involved with many youth and community oriented organizations, including the Native American Club, The SMART program, which reads to local children and has been on

the varsity cheerleading team for three years.

She is President of Bridging the Gap, which makes visits to Deer Meadows Nursing home in Sheridan and the Co-President of the National Honor Society.

She also works for the Tribal Education Departments where she tutors children who need help with their grades.

"She does all this while keeping her grades up," said Warner. "She's very self-motivated and will make sure she does what she needs to do to reach her goals," Warner added.

Ashlee's mother Vickie Merrill, who works as a Training Coordinator for Spirit Mountain Casino, said that the Tribal education department was very helpful getting the information Ashlee needed and that she was unquestionably proud of her daughter, saying "She's definitely miss overachiever."

When Merrill found out that she was accepted "I just ran to the office and jumped up and down," said Merrill. "I was just so happy and so relieved."

Merrill said that the Tribal Education Department was extremely helpful in getting her application

in early.

"They helped out a lot. Rachel (Warner) got all of the information together, Luhui Whitebear went over all of the application questions with me and April Campbell (Tribal Education Specialist) took my application herself to Corvallis so it wouldn't be late."

Merrill said she wants to study physical therapy because "I have a really strong interest in health and anatomy. I love to help people, if I see someone that's upset or sad; I just automatically have to help them."

Merrill said that she wants to get as much education as she can and wants to eventually get her doctorate and possibly open her own clinic. "I think it's a good career choice for me," she said.

Merrill's role models, she said, are her mother, Vickie Merrill, for her organizational skills, her brother Aaron, for his independence and spontaneity, and her father, *Smoke Signals* Editor Brent Merrill "Because he's always worked really hard and has a really stressful job, but still has time for us and to be funny," she said.

Her parents, Merrill said, have been very supportive. "They tell me



Ashlee Merrill

Photo by Peta Tinda

they're proud of me every time. They give me a lot of confidence and are always encouraging me."

Merrill will begin college in September of 2005, where she will stay in the dormitories and attend classes full-time.

To other Tribal members seeking higher education, Merrill had this to say: "I know it sounds cliché, but you can do anything you put your mind to; you shouldn't let anybody tell you. You should use your potential to the fullest," she said. "Anything you're good at, you should take it and run with it." ■