

March General Council Meeting Held At Tribal Community Center

■ Tribal member Mentorship Program information is presented.

By Ron Karten

The February General Council meeting was held on Sunday, March 5, at the Community Center in Grand Ronde. Here are the highlights:

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryl Kennedy called the meeting to order; Tribal Elder Nancy Coleman offered the invocation.

Mentorship Coordinator Denise Harvey presented an overview of the Tribal Mentorship program, including job fairs and job opportunities for Tribal members, along with an overview of the Tribal Tourism program run by Tribal member Elaine LaBonte, who could not attend the meeting.

"The purpose of the Tribal Mentorship Program is to create opportunities for Tribal members to acquire the necessary education, experience and skills to perform positions of leadership and responsibility for the Tribe," said Harvey.

The program's goal — and it has been successful for mentees including Jocelyn (Kirk) Huffman, Corey Meneley, Angela Sears and James Buxman — is "to target specific leadership opportunities for Tribal members, and to identify candidates from the Tribal membership to assume a mentorship position in these areas in order to develop the Tribal community to its fullest potential," said Harvey. "The Mentorship program includes management and non-management opportunities."

The Mentorship program is funded by the Tribe.

Harvey described the qualifications for non-management positions (high school diploma or GED, be enrolled in an accredited college or university and have maintained a 2.0 grade point average), and for management positions (sophomore status or the equivalent in a post secondary education or trade program, possess a level of work experience required in the job description).

The program also offers workforce development, including help with employment, job searches, interview skills and résumé writing.

Among career fairs that Harvey recommended is a Native American Highway Construction Career Fair next available on March 24 in Tangent, Oregon, the CTGR College/Career Fair scheduled for April 26 at the CTGR Gym/Auditorium. PGE has 60 positions to fill in their Annual Student Summer Hire Program held at various locations. The Women in Trades Fair will be in Portland April 27-29 in Portland at the NECA/IBEW Electrical Training Center.

The Tribe provides transportation to and from many of these events. For a full and updated list, or for additional questions, contact Harvey at 879-2112.

The Tribal Tourism Program promotes tourism on Tribal lands, provides Tribal members with money-making opportunities, and promotes the Tribe throughout its ceded lands, said Harvey.

Among the current Tourism offerings are the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial, a Basketweavers' gathering

and the Wiping of the Tears Ceremony, all in the same time period at the end of this month. (For specifics, see related story about Lewis & Clark in this issue.)

Future steps for the department include creating a comprehensive tourism feasibility analysis and tourism market analysis; a comprehensive Cultural Resources inventory to assess potential tour packages; and a web site promoting Tribally-owned businesses.

For more information on these programs, contact Elaine LaBonte at 503-879-1437.

Tribal members Kevin Campbell, Terry Gray and Diane Giffen each won \$50 in the door prize drawings. Tawnya Reibach won \$100.

Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter announced:

- ◆ The department is sponsoring the Grand Ronde Energy Fair on March 29 at the Community Center to help Tribal members make the most of their energy dollars.
- ◆ The Northwest Indian Housing Authority is again sponsoring a youth scholarship contest. Applications are available at the Housing Authority all through March.
- ◆ The Annual Performance Report required by the HUD Office of Native American Programs for Indian Housing Block Grants is available for comment by Tribal members on the status of all open HUD grants. Activities under the HUD plans include the rental housing project, the construction of the foster homes, construction of the Elders Activity Center, both Elders and Family Housing projects, the HUD-funded down payment assistance program and others. Comments go to the Housing Authority and will be included in the report to HUD.

The Housing Authority also may set up an Open House opportunity for all Tribal members, particularly those who live beyond the local area for the market rate housing now going up and scheduled for completion in phases between summer and year's end.

Tribal Elder Les McKnight asked how much the Tribe is losing with the Bingo Hall closed. Tribal Finance Officer Larry Kovach said that SMGI's board closed the Bingo Hall early to allow staff time to be

placed in alternative job offerings at the casino. The remodel of the Bingo Hall will begin shortly.

The decision to close the Bingo Hall was a "management decision," said Cheryl Kennedy, but a poll of Tribal Council members showed that all supported the decision.

Tribal member Val Sheker said that alternative medical care was being restricted at the Health Clinic.

Alternative care is supported 100



Tribal member & Mentorship Coordinator Denise Harvey

Photo by Ron Karten

percent by the Tribe, said Kennedy. "A lot of these services are not reimbursable."

These services have been restricted to Tribal members and their spouses and others with a close social link to the Tribe, said Michael Watkins, Executive Director of the Clinic, but Acupuncturist Dale Freeman's hours have not been cut back. He continues to see patients three days a week.

Tribal member Maxine Rock requested that the Tribe bring back concerts "that really will rock the house, like Tim McGraw and Faith Hill."

Tribal member Michael Bolton said he is continuing to pursue his idea for pot luck lunches maybe twice a month at the Tribal gym. "I need as much help as possible," he said, and gave his phone number for Tribal members who would like to get involved: 503-879-9037.

In response to a question about whether the casino will allow alcoholic drinks on the floor of the casino, Tribal Council Vice Chair Angie Blackwell said that the discussion had been tabled at the last meeting.

"For me," said Kennedy, "I'd have to see what's happening at other casinos and what kind of revenues are involved." Other Tribal Council members also indicated that it was a tough decision and depended on the information uncovered as they studied the issue.

"I think we have a fairly good, successful casino," said Tribal Council member Reyn Leno. "They would have to show me quite a bit to get me to change that."

But Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg said he already knew what he thought. "We don't need any more information," he said. "It would create a tavern atmosphere and I think we'd damage (the casino's reputation) with drinks on the floor."

"We're trying to be a drug and alcohol-free Tribe," said Tribal Elder Val Grout. "What is more important, money or people's lives?" she asked.

Tribal Elder Charlotte Gray, who raised the issue, suggested the casino keep the drinks away from the crowds in a corner of the facility.

Tribal Elder Betty Bly asked if the Tribal Housing Authority has decided on whether to help college students with their housing needs. That question was tabled at the last meeting, said Ginter.

The Tribe is working on a policy that will enable the Authority to do that, said Tribal Secretary Chris Mercier.

Rumors continue to circulate that Tribal Elder pensions may be cut. Tribal Council member Wesley West called the rumors false. Kovach said that the pensions will be fully endowed by September, 2009, and maybe sooner.

Tribal member Danny Provost asked a question about what the Tribe was doing to protect its rights in the Cascade Locks area in light of the Warm Springs effort to build a casino there.

The newly introduced McCain bill, SB 2078, "may consider grandfathering in off-reservation claims for some 15 Tribes across the country," said Kennedy. "We haven't made much headway with the BIA on our own ceded lands," she added.

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said that the legal department has research to support that Grand Ronde has an equal claim to the Cascade Locks area.

On March 1, the BIA issued a "scoping report" for the proposed casino at Cascade Locks. The scoping report identified those areas the bureau will consider as part of its environmental impact statement for the proposed casino.

The next General Tribal Council meeting will be held in Eugene on April 2. ■

Next General Council Meeting:
Sunday, April 2
 Eugene, Oregon —
Valley River Inn, 1000 Valley River Way