

Meetings Underway



Up Front — Tribal Council members Kathleen Tom, Wesley "Buddy" West, Jack Giffen, Jr., Tribal Secretary Chris Mercier, Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy, Tribal Vice Chair Angie Blackwell, Reyn Leno and Wink Soderberg at the Eugene Tribal Community Meeting at the Valley River Inn on Monday, May 1.

Community Meeting Joined Tribe's General Council Meeting

■ Casino Manager Randy Dugger reported solid returns and a quick debt payoff.

By Ron Karten

Spirit Mountain Casino General Manager and Tribal member Randy Dugger reported that revenues were up 7 percent in 2005. The casino borrowed \$20.8 million for the lodge addition and quickly paid back \$10 million of that with the goal of paying back the loan as quickly as possible. By May first of this year, only \$4 million was left to be repaid.

"Most of the increase in revenue," said Dugger, "went to that debt."

"The first three months of 2006," he continued, "were the strongest three months for the casino since we opened. March was the best month in the history of the casino."

The casino is in the process of purchasing an additional 500 machines, an opportunity recently incorporated into the Tribe's gaming compact. Dugger said he expected the new machines to be in the casino by mid-August. He called it, "a fairly aggressive schedule."

And even as the casino is digesting the new addition to the lodge and the new machines, it is in the process of a



Casino General Manager & Tribal member Randy Dugger

"south expansion out behind the current location of Playworld, and will include a special events center and expanding the water treatment system "to get off Grand Ronde water permanently." An upgrade to the waste treatment facility is also in the works.

Dugger encouraged Tribal members to call him directly if they have questions.

Tribal member Michael Bolton asked if the casino was "aggressively putting more Tribal members on staff?"

A mentorship program strictly for the casino is working toward that goal, said Dugger. The Tribe also

sponsors a mentorship program that gives Tribal members experience in both government departments and the casino.

"We recognize we have a lot of work to do in this area," said Tribal Council Vice Chair Angie Blackwell.

Tribal Elder Monty Parazoo noted that many Tribal members have wondered why their per capitas did not increase as much as the Casino revenues increased last year, and said that "in 30 seconds" Dugger had fully explained it with mention of how the Tribe was paying down the debt as quickly as possible.

While Tribal members including Les McKnight wondered about further expansion options to make the casino a destination resort, Dugger replied that for the next three years, the casino will focus on getting everything it can out of the current casino and lodge operation: refining systems and getting games "up to snuff."

Tribal Elder Val Grout asked what was being done about high gas prices that, she said, were keeping casino employees from getting to work.

"Medium-sized vouchers" have been given to employees to buy gas more inexpensively at the Tribal Convenience Store gas outlet," said Dugger, and "we've been encouraging car pools," but no overall decisions for dealing with gas prices has been made.

Fifty dollar door prizes went to Tribal Elders Louise Medeiros and Louise Colton, and Tribal member Deborah Pichey. Tribal Elder Cherie Butler won the \$100 prize. Tribal Elder Albert Peters won a Pendleton Blanket in an Elders Committee drawing.

A box at the Governance Building reception area will be available for questions to be posed to Tribal Council candidates at the Candidate Forum, said Siobhan Taylor, Public Affairs Director. The Candidate Forum is scheduled for Sunday, July 23 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the gym.

Tribal Council nominations will be held Sunday, June 25 at 11 a.m. in the Community Center. And the next General Tribal Council meeting will be held September 10, also in the Community Center. ■

National Volunteer Appreciation Week

■ The Grand Ronde Food Bank has even more to offer these days.

By Ron Karten

National Volunteer Appreciation Week, the third week in April this year, was an important week for the Grand Ronde Food Bank and for Manager Alisa Larson.

"We would like to recognize our many dedicated volunteers and contributors at the Grand Ronde Community Resource Center (GRCRC), and to say thank you to them," she wrote in an email.

"We would also like to solicit for more volunteers, and make people aware of volunteer and work opportunities at GRCRC."

Among those involved with the GRCRC are the Plemmons family. In the Spring issue of Harvester, the publication of Marion-Polk Food Share that serves the GRCRC, a story about the Plemmons family said:

Larry and Connie Plemmons



Helpful — Volunteer Betty Evans packs a food box at the Grand Ronde Food bank.

and their six children know what it is like to experience hunger. They found help through the Grand Ronde Community Center and past food bank manager, Michaelle Kimsey, who embraced this young family and assisted them in obtaining the services they needed.

"As this grateful family began to get back on their feet financially, they wanted to give something back. Their teenage daughter, Jessica, who was struggling in alternative school at the time, began volunteering at the food bank on a regular basis helping a variety of ways.

"Michaelle and Alisa Larson, the current manager, mentored young Jessica and helped instill confidence in her so that she was able to complete her schooling early, receiving an elective credit for her volunteer work at the food bank. In addition, she found a job in the community and will head off to college this March."

There are many ways to volunteer at the GRCRC, said Larson. The Food Bank is one, but volunteers also help staff the Senior Meals program, the Community Garden and Food Preservation efforts.

In addition, work at the GRCRC qualifies for the Tribal Experience Works program through the Tribal Social Services office. Those eligible receive pay for working or training at GRCRC.

"We'd like to encourage people who are interested in these opportunities," wrote Larson. ■