

Children Sing, Dance Their Way Into Grand Ronde Hearts

By Siobhan Taylor

Cultures connected and hearts filled with hope as the Watoto Children's Choir performed a free concert in Grand Ronde on February 17.

The Saturday night free concert was the brainchild of Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West.

West learned about the choir from his sister who'd heard them perform in Spokane. He was moved by their story and the spirituality they freely share. West wanted to help them and share their exuberance with the entire Grand Ronde, West Valley Community.

"We all know that all children in any country anywhere in the world are precious and they're beautiful. These children have had a lot of suffering and grief in their lives but they have risen above it. And they have dreams and they have

goals like all children. And, they are working to attain those dreams and those goals," West said.

"Watoto" means "the children." The children are from Uganda. They are all orphans as a result of the AIDS epidemic or the war. The group is sponsored by a Christian organization, Watoto Child Care Ministries, with offices in both the U.S. and Canada. The organization uses the proceeds raised from donations and sponsorships to build the homes, clinics, and schools that serve the children who live in the Watoto village. The mission of the organization is "to raise the next generation of Ugandan leaders by placing parentless children in families where the necessary love, care, spiritual discipleship and physical needs are provided."

The evening's concert was an en-



Photos by Siobhan Taylor/Graphics by George Valdez

ergetic one full of African rhythms, and contemporary gospel music and ethnic dance that had the audience

up and dancing. Tribal member Dee West, in the front row, drew smiles of appreciation from the children as she moved to their music. "I just love to dance and I love these children," she said.

A free will offering was collected at the end of the program. The audience dug deep and gave generously as Tribal member and Public Affairs Secretary Teri Mercier helped pass the collection basket. The program ended all too soon, but the message of hope and love will stay in the hearts of all who heard them for a long time to come. Tribal member Marcella Selwyn made sure of it. She approached one of the guardians with the group and handed her a small, hand beaded heart. "I told her I wanted to share my heart with all of them, and that I would keep them in my heart," she said softly. ■



◀ Tribal Council members Kathleen Tom (l) and Wesley "Buddy" West (fifth from left) pose with Grand Ronde Veterans' Royalty and members of the Watoto Children's Choir on Saturday, February 17.

Tribal Elders Celebrated At Portland Luncheon

By Siobhan Taylor

Tribal Elders traveled from all around the Portland area and from Grand Ronde to enjoy a luncheon in their honor at the Tribe's Portland Office. The luncheon was hosted and prepared by staff from the Tribe's Portland Office: Tribal members and staff members Jon George and Lisa Archuleta, staff member Chris Garcia, Tribal member Greg Archuleta and special helper Tribal member Kimberly LaBonte outdid themselves for the event.

Love and appreciation for the honored Elders was displayed everywhere, from the Valentine themed decorations to a large cake trimmed in red roses that read: "Welcome Elders."

After a delicious meal of ham, Lisa Archuleta's secret recipe scalloped potatoes, salads, Jon George's specialty cinnamon rolls and far too many side dishes to list. The Elders listened as the staff welcomed them and introduced themselves. Then, it was time for each Elder to introduce themselves and share their Grand Ronde family history with the assembled group.

The Elders returned the love and affection with high praise for the meal and the hospitality from the Portland Office. One or two Elders were seen teasing Tribal Council member Reyn Leno about his sweet tooth as his hand occasionally wandered into the chocolates set about the office. But even Reyn Leno was willing to pass on the chocolates for a piece of lemon meringue pie.

As the afternoon came to a close, plans were being put in place for next year's lunch. Family stories will again be shared and next year they may even bring their photo albums for a "show-and-tell" of all their family members. ■



Photo by Siobhan Taylor

Tribal member and Portland Office Tribal Services Representative Lisa Archuleta (r) helped prepare the meal for the Elders' Luncheon in Portland. Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom was one of about 30 Tribal members in attendance.