

Cancer Coalition meeting held in Grand Ronde

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Northwest Tribal Cancer Coalition filled the Community Center lunch room on Monday, April 20, with cancer survivors, their supporters and many service providers in one of the group's best-attended meetings.

The coalition heard Jacqueline Left Hand Bull (Sicangu Lakota), administrator of the Northwest Portland Area Health Board, tell how she lost four friends to cancer this year alone.

They heard Kathleen Marquart (Tlingit/Haida), a physician's assistant on the Health Advisory Committee for the Grand Ronde Head Start program, describe how two of her Alaskan uncles, diagnosed with colon cancer, refused to travel south for treatment and died of their diseases.

"Cancer is very devastating," said Stella Washines (Yakama), chair of the Cancer Coalition, "but it can be the home of miracles, too."

One of those miracles, according to Grand Ronde cancer survivors, is Grand Ronde Tribal Cancer Navigator Jasen Henderson.

Last year, Tribal Elder Lottie Child was diagnosed with small cell carcinoma of the thorax and given two months to live by her doctor. She lost her job at Spirit Mountain Casino and her medical insurance, and then she lost her house. The final indignity, said her daughter-in-law, Cory Farmer, was her long, beautiful hair.



Photo by Ron Karten

Grand Ronde Tribal Cancer Navigator Jasen Henderson presents a Tribal blanket to McMinnville Internist Scott Gibson during the April 20 Northwest Tribal Cancer Coalition meeting held in the Tribal Community Center. Gibson cares for most Tribal referrals for gastrointestinal cancer.

ful hair.

"I had a lot of pride," Child said. "I didn't want help."

But when she turned to Henderson for whatever he could do, he became her "angel."

"When I lost my job, Jasen got me insurance," Child said. "When I lost my house, Jasen got me into Elder housing."

"I'm only as good as my best resources," Henderson said, but he wants everybody to know that resources

are available to help. He said that increasing awareness and education, and providing a wealth of contacts are functions every bit as important as emotional support.

When Henderson started as navigator at the beginning of 2008, community member Jurhee Ackerman had been diagnosed with cancer two years earlier and had been waiting a year for help.

"We had 90 percent of her bills eliminated," Henderson said, who advocated for her before the state of Oregon to obtain health insurance. He was successful, and that "basically changed her life," Henderson said, "because the insurance made her eligible for treatment."

During the meeting, Henderson honored McMinnville Internist Scott Gibson with a Tribal blanket for his dedication. Eighty percent of Grand

Ronde gastrointestinal referrals go to Gibson, Henderson said.

Gibson reminded the group that his office does not turn away "anyone who needs gastrointestinal services, regardless of ability to pay."

"When I started practicing," Gibson said, "there was very little to detect colon cancer early. Today, it is the third most common cancer killer."

The mortality rate for cervical cancer, on the other hand, has plummeted in recent years. "It is very rare," he said, "to have end-stage cervical cancer today."

Golf tournaments and mother-daughter luncheons are among the ideas they've brought to the Klamath Tribe, said Christa Runnels, a health educator in southern Oregon. Each session has something special for the men and women attending, but the message about cancer prevention and education come along with the fun.

Grand Ronde Tribal member and 2008 Native Flutist of the Year Jan Michael Looking Wolf Reibach started the meeting with his music. He is working with Henderson to reprise the success of his "Seven Rabbits" CD with its healing stories for young patients. ■

Youth Canoe Club

Every Wednesday 4- 5 p.m., Youth Education Building

Contact Lisa Leno at 503-879-1471 or Travis Mercier at 503-879-2143 for more information.

2009 Tribal Marketplace dates

- May 1-3, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- May 8-10, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- June 5-7, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- July 3-5, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- July 10, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. — Elder Honor Day
- Aug. 7-9, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Aug. 14-16, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. — Powwow
- Sept. 4-6, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Oct. 2-4, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Nov. 6-8, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Dec. 4-6, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Dates subject to change due to conflicting Tribal or SMC events. Located across from Cedar Plank Buffet. For more information, call Dakota Whitecloud at 503-879-4240.

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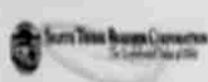


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2009 Winter General Council & Community Membership Meetings

This year the community membership meetings started in January and were combined with the General Council meetings in Portland and Eugene, as well as in Grand Ronde. The focus of the meetings will be on the Draft 2009 Strategic Plan.

May 17, 2009

Sunday

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Community Meeting

Riverhouse Hotel (Deschutes Room;
south end of Restaurant Bldg.)
3075 N. Highway 97
Bend, Oregon 97701

The 2009 Tribal Strategic Plan will be adopted by mid-July based on comments received at the community meetings and written comments received through the mail. Comments from these meetings also will be used in preparing grant applications (e.g. ICDBG, ANA). For additional information, call the Planning & Grants Department at (503) 879-2250. If you wish to mail in comments on the Strategic Plan or Tribal priorities please write to Mr. Kim Rogers, Planning & Grants Department, Grand Ronde Tribe, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347