

Merrill graduates from Oregon State

First Gates scholarship recipient plans to obtain master's in education

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal member Ashlee Merrill, 22, one of the first Oregonians to win a Gates Millennium Scholarship, received a degree in human development and family services on June 13 from Oregon State University in Corvallis.

Merrill, the daughter of Tribal member Brent Merrill, graduated with honors and completed her studies in the minimum four years.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awards need-based scholarships to minority students with an impressive record of academic achievement, leadership and community service. The scholarships provide students with funds to cover 100 percent of their unmet needs and is renewable for up to nine years.

Merrill is the first local Gates winner to earn her degree. She graduated from Willamina High School in 2005.



Smoke Signals file photo

Ashlee Merrill

Merrill told the *McMinnville News-Register* that she plans to take a year off and then enroll in graduate school to seek a master's degree in education.

Rachel Warner, Grand Ronde's Tribal college counselor in 2005, encouraged West Valley students to apply and guided them through

the scholarship process.

"It was a crazy opportunity," Merrill said at the time. "I was happy to do everything I could to apply for it."

She told the *News-Register* that the Gates scholarship made it so she did not have to work to subsidize her education, which allowed her to concentrate on her studies.

Tribal member Amanda Thomas Monk, 21, also received a 2005 Gates Millennium Scholarship and went to Oregon State University for a year. She was Willamina High School valedictorian in 2005 and is the daughter of Tribal member Brian Thomas.

Monk is currently attending George Fox University in Newberg, where she said she has one more year to go before obtaining a degree in nursing. ■

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Tea Time



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Kateri Marrufo feeds her 14-month-old son and Tribal member John Marrufo during the Young Mother's Tea at the Tribal Community Center on Friday, May 29. Mothers of children age 2 and under and mummies-to-be were invited to the annual event put on by the Dental Clinic and the Tribal Wellness Program.

The way to Grand Ronde



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Singer Dionne Warwick sings "I Say a Little Prayer" during her concert at Spirit Mountain Casino's Events Center on Friday, June 5.

The Confederated Tribes
of Grand Ronde
Youth Basketball Tournament
June 26 - 29, 2009
CTGR Tribal Gymnasium

Ages: 15-18
Males Only

8 participants per team

Awards:

1st place: Tournament jackets
2nd place: Hooded sweatshirts
3rd place: Gift certificates

\$200 registration fee per team
Contact Chris Labonte @ 503-879-1369 or
800-242-0232 for more information

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