

Youth program works in Grand Ronde

Polk Summer Work Program gives youth in Grand Ronde a summer job

By Jack Ham

Special to Smoke Signals

Outside of the Grand Ronde Elders' Activity Center, two young men, Eric Guardiola and Eric Stroeder, are helping subject matter expert Duke Kimsey build planters.

The planters are made from fir boards and cedar scrap. Wide trim is being installed on the planters for the Elders to sit on instead of having to bend over while doing garden work.

Guardiola and Stroeder are not employed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Instead, they are employed by the Polk Summer Work Program.

The Polk Summer Work Program was set up by the Polk H.A.L.O. (Help Achieving Lifelong Objectives) Program in Independence.

The head of the program is Director of Academics Elaine Crawley. The program is funded by a stimulus grant enacted by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act put into law by President Barack Obama.

The Polk Summer Work Program's goal is to give youth from a low-economic status a chance to have a good work experience. The program also gives youth who have had a lack of work experience a chance to learn what it's like to have a real job.

Currently, the work crew overall has 54 crew members and 15 crew leaders. The ages of crew members and leaders vary from 17 to 24 years of age.

Youth working in the program come from all over Polk County, such

as Monmouth, Independence, Dallas, Salem and Grand Ronde. Crew members are paid \$8.40 an hour. The program allows youth to work 32 hours per week for six weeks.

The Polk Summer Work Program is employing a number of crews in different fields. These crews include Polk Soil and Water, Aviation, Luckiamute Watershed, Health Care and Early Childhood Education, Liberal Arts, Riparian Restoration and four Oregon Building Congress crews, which include the crew working in Grand Ronde.

All of the work crews have many

goals and projects for the summer. These projects include the building of a permanent public restroom in Falls City, sidewalk repair in Independence, and cleaning up of the Dallas Arboretum and other parks in Independence.

The crew in Grand Ronde has plans to build a trellis outside of the Elders' Activity Center, moving the Dumpsters onto concrete slabs and building foot bridges around Agency Access Road. They also might help with the construction of the plankhouse near the new Uyxat Powwow Grounds. ■

Unmarked grave sites

We need your help — If anyone knows the location of an unmarked grave or knows the name of someone who was buried at the Grand Ronde Cemetery and their grave has not been marked, contact Mike Larsen, Facilities Manager, at 503-879-2407. ■

'The payoff is what I feel inside'

TRAIL OF TEARS
continued from front page

of the barrier, between the barrier and the white fog line, and people throw stuff out the windows of their cars at him.

Coming from vehicles speeding by at 70 mph, "The bottles would have taken me down if they had hit me," Rife says.

And Rife, a Vietnam-era veteran of both the Marines and the Army, does not see much of the world in those terms.

"I took my lessons from John By-God Wayne," he says.

He makes the walk to remember the Trail of Tears, but also, on a personal basis, to mark 2004 as the year that cancer took out after his family, hitting him, his wife, his sister and his aunt all in one year.

His brother, Ron, also a Tribal Elder and also an Army veteran, drives the motor home as a service and sleeping quarters for Rife most of the way. As backup preparation for the trip, they pull behind a wire mesh trailer that holds a motorcycle, gas can, spare tire and air compressor.

At the rest stop near Sutherlin, Ron has taken the motorcycle for a side trip. He took his daughter to a doctor's appointment. And during that time, Steve's friend, Rose Waff, supports the effort by driving the motor home.

"It's scary parking, let alone walking, on the shoulder," she says.

"I do it," Rife says, "because I'm stubborn and I can."

It is nearing 5 p.m. on Thursday, July 2, as Rife and Waff rest in the motor home, a 1976 Dodge that Rife bought for the trip for \$2,000.

"I'll be lucky to get another two miles today," Rife says of the walking.

So far, the day had given him three blisters, and the motor home a busted solenoid.

"It's working. We already fixed



Photos by Michelle Alaimo



With the late afternoon sun shining, Tribal Elder and veteran Steve Rife walks mile 143 of Interstate 5 north in Douglas County on Wednesday, July 1, during his Trail of Tears walk. At left, Rife puts on his ribbon shirt.

it," he says of the solenoid.

In addition, Rife has been making it a practice to walk the Trail with his ribbon shirt.

"Even though it is hotter than all bejesus, I'll put it on," he says.

And sometimes he carries the eagle staff. "The eagle staff gets tired of walking so at times I let him ride," he jokes.

In 2004, Rife was diagnosed with lymphoma and bone cancer. Last year, he quit taking all the medication and he's gained some weight. A healthy amount. But he doesn't have the strength he used to have. So the eagle staff rides more than it

used to.

He's made some friends along the way, too. This trip, he stayed in the Rogue River State Park camp-

grounds for two nights running. They stayed there on Sunday, and after the day's walk on Monday, the team drove back to stay again.

"They want us to put on a powwow there," Rife says. "It's a nice campground. We stay there every year."

"A lot of people offer us rides, especially when I'm carrying the eagle staff. One guy said, 'You need a ride or do you enjoy walking?'"

"Some lady gave us cherries and Band-Aids, but I won't use the Band-Aids because they didn't have them back then."

On the other hand, he says, "When they made this walk it was

raining. They had it rough in another way."

Much of the walk, according to Ambrose's journal, was "pleasant," if "frosty and cool" at night, but the trails were rugged and bare, and the livestock kept running off at night to find forage.

Rife reached Grand Junction in Grand Ronde on Monday morning, July 6, five days before he would resume the last mile of the walk for the Saturday noon Grand Entry of the 2009 Veterans' Powwow.

In the last hot days of the walk, Rife has taken to resting inside the motor home from the heat of the afternoon, and then resuming the walk as darkness set in.

"This is something I choose to do, and I will do it as long as I'm able," Rife vows.

"The payoff," he says, "is what I feel inside." ■