

# HALO program covers the bases in Grand Ronde

Summer program stimulates Polk County youth, economy

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The \$787 billion federal stimulus package, signed by President Barack Obama on Feb. 17, brought \$720,000 for jobs for Polk County youth this summer.

Eighteen of 96 Polk County youth, 17 to 24 years old, came through Tribal programs, and from June 30 through the end of September, they worked on Tribal projects all over Grand Ronde.

The program had many goals: providing disadvantaged youth with jobs and job skills, as well as promoting recycling.

The dugouts at the new baseball diamond on the Tribal campus are a perfect example. They fulfilled a number of those goals. They gave the youth experience in building and work readiness skills. They enabled them to meet the recycling goal of the stimulus money because they recycled wood from the old Elders' seating at the powwow grounds into new dugouts.

And beyond that, said Curtis Rentsch, Tribal Environmental Services supervisor, the project enabled the Tribe to finish the baseball field without more funds from Tribal Council.

"Not only was the lumber free," Rentsch said, "80 to 90 percent of the materials were recycled lumber. My hat's off to (Tribal member) Duke Kimsey, who was foreman, because he did a really good job of working with that crew."

This kind of enterprise and learning also took place at the Elders' Activity Center where the Grand Ronde group built raised planting beds for the Elders.

The group helped with completion of the plankhouse and built a footbridge up off Coast Creek.

Two HALO employees worked in the Tribal GIS office. As September drew to a close, they cleaned the



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Members of the HALO (Help Achieve Lifelong Objectives) crew recently completed two dugouts that they built for the new baseball field on the Tribal campus. The crew was supervised by Jimmy Brandon, front row left, Tribal member and a maintenance technician for the Tribe. The HALO team included, front row from second from left, Rebecca Leader, Tribal member Duke Kimsey and Jeremy Galloway, and second row from left, Justin Rawlins, Kevin Hills, Erik Stroeder, Eric Guardiola, Tribal descendant Kristy Mikkelsen, Matthew Sawyer, Tyler Biggar and Kenny Seagrove.

alder chips out of the play area at the Tribal Head Start program. It was then to be filled with shredded rubber, a safer, cleaner and more pleasant material to play on.

Tribal member R.J. Nelson worked that job.

"I learned about teamwork and focusing on priorities on a number of projects in the Grand Ronde area as well as using various tools and equipment properly," Nelson said. "I also received my Career Readiness and OSHA 10 certificates."

Tribal member Jack Ham, formerly an intern at *Smoke Signals*, was hired as journalist for the projects. His byline appears in every issue of "The Future at Work" publication for the "Polk Summer Work Program — Stimulus Dollars at Work."

Through Ham's work, we have

insights into the thinking of crew leader Rachel Walsh, for example, who gave her workers "a sense of direction" by setting goals for them and checking on how well they were meeting their goals.

Crew members Eric Gorné and Richard Brown, working with the National Guard, "learned about the operation of heavy construction equipment, such as A15s and rollers," Ham wrote.

"We're getting to learn a whole variety of different vehicles," said Gorné.

Here in Grand Ronde, "Participants Cassi Crawford, Shekinah Yubeta and Sasha Oman worked at the Elder Care Center. While there, the three assisted in making beds, making meals, and interacting with Tribal Elders."

It was not all work all summer, however, said Tribal member and Mentorship and Workforce Development Coordinator Denise Harvey, whose membership on the county Workforce Investment Board with Katherine Bartlett, executive director of the Polk HALO (Help Achieving Lifelong Objectives) program, opened the door for Grand Ronde's community and Tribal members.

"Every Friday, they coordinated a field trip," said Harvey.

Sometimes, it was job-related. One week, they went to OMSI. Another, just for fun, they went to Family Fun Center & Bullwinkle's Restaurant in Wilsonville.

On Aug. 10, Jack Ham and Shaylyn Connelly reported that "past members of the Civilian Conservation Corps attended their 12th annual summer picnic" where members of the nation's current jobs program heard stories about an even bigger one held during the 1930s.

The federal dollars came through the state and then through the Enterprise for Employment and Education agency that funds the

Workforce Investment Act for Region 3 (Polk, Marion and Yamhill counties). The stimulus dollars, said Bartlett, were extra dollars in a pipeline already receiving federal dollars to help disadvantaged youth.

But this experience was something special, Bartlett said.

"It was one of the most beneficial things we've ever done for youth," she said. "We kept 95 kids employed for 12 weeks. Nobody was bailing out at all. One moved. The results have been fantastic. The youth have all gained relevant work readiness skills."

"These youth now have skills and experience to move on to another job, and we were also able to buy the materials needed from local Polk County businesses. At least 70 percent of the funds was put back into Polk County between youth wages and using local vendors."

Harvey stretched the dollars by using Oregon Department of Transportation funds to buy tools for the sidewalk repair crew and OSHA 10 safety training, so more money could go into staffing. The initial grant was set for six weeks, but with the extra dollars, employment stretched on for 12 and more youth than expected were hired.

"We got to make our folks crew leaders," said Harvey, naming Jeremy Galligher, husband of Tribal member Lacey Leno, and community member Rebecca Leader. "And when Tribal member Andrew Freeman got a job, HALO was able to provide him with the supplies he needed for his new job."

"Rebecca never worked construction before, but she just shines now."

The key, Harvey said, is "making them feel secure enough" to succeed at work that really comes naturally to them, and allow them to learn enough and have confidence to "go places with the job." ■

**Attention Parents and primary caregivers of Grand Ronde children with disabilities, special needs, or extra challenges:**

**We are creating a support group for parents and caregivers of Grand Ronde children with special needs. We will first begin an e-mail and telephone contact list and later we will be coordinating meetings with the group.**

**If your child, grandchild, foster child, etc. has extra challenges (medically, emotionally, or developmentally) and you would like to collaborate and share resources with other parents, please send your contact information in an e-mail to: [lewis.dm@comcast.net](mailto:lewis.dm@comcast.net) or call us at 503-566-3093.**

Thank you,

David (2741) and Donna Lewis

parents to Saghaley (5132) and Inatye (5323)



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