

# Tribe, Salem-Keizer Transit receive award

By Dean Rhodes  
Smoke Signals editor

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Salem-Keizer Transit District will receive the Regional Cooperative Project Award on Wednesday, Feb. 2, at the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments annual dinner.

The two governmental entities will be honored for Route 2X — The Grand Ronde Express, which was made possible through the cooperation of the Tribe and Salem-Keizer Transit.

“The route was created to meet the need for employee transportation to and from Grand Ronde,” wrote Steve Dickey, Salem-Keizer Director of Transportation Development, on the award’s nomination form. “Spirit Mountain Casino is the largest single employer in Polk County. In large part due to transportation challenges, employee retention has been an issue at the casino.”

The partnership created a public transportation option for Spirit Mountain employees between Sa-

lem and Grand Ronde, as well as a park-and-ride option in Rickreall.

“Since the service started, over 34,000 trips have been taken on this route that operates five days a week,” Dickey wrote. “The partnership is a reciprocal relationship of funding and transportation service resources. The funding is provided by Federal Transit Administration Tribal Transit Funds, Oregon Department of Energy Business Energy Tax Credits and passenger fares. The transportation service resources (buses, drivers, maintenance, etc.) are provided by Salem-Keizer.”

The route is available for use by commuters, business patrons and anyone looking for an alternative to driving state Highway 22 between Grand Ronde and Salem.

The dinner will be held at the Oregon Gardens in Silverton. Tribal Council member Chris Mercier, who sits on the Council of Governments’ Board of Directors, will represent the Tribe at the awards presentation.

The Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments is a voluntary



File photo by Michelle Alaimo

**A Salem-Keizer Transit District Route 2X, Grand Ronde Express, bus stops at Spirit Mountain Casino. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Salem-Keizer Transit District will receive the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments’ Regional Cooperative Project Award on Wednesday, Feb. 2, for working together on starting the bus route between Salem and Grand Ronde.**

association of local governments in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties, including the three counties, cities

within those counties, several special districts and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. ■

## URGENT: Skookum Alternate Resource survey deadline

The Skookum Health Program is funded with Tribal dollars. The annual cost for medical claims has increased dramatically over the past 10 years, and in 2010 the Tribe spent more than \$20 million to operate the Skookum program. To help control costs, effective March 1, 2011, all members who have not completed the Skookum Alternate Resource Survey will not have their claims paid until the survey is completed. Shasta will be notifying members whose claims have been pended via mail, with instructions for completing the survey online or by telephone. Tribal staff will be contacting members who have not completed the survey by telephone as well.

This information is essential if we are going to get the plan back to its original intent of being the primary payer ONLY in cases when other payers (Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance) are not available.

**PLEASE NOTE: TRIBAL COUNCIL WANTS YOU TO KNOW THAT THIS SURVEY IS CRITICAL AND THAT YOUR BENEFITS OR OUT-OF-POCKETS EXPENSES ARE NOT EXPECTED TO CHANGE.**

Here is an example of how this will work and why it is so important:

- A Tribal member who has Skookum as a primary payer must have a back surgery and, due to complications, remains in the hospital for 45 days. Average cost to the Tribe: \$250,000.

- This same Tribal member has the same surgery and complications and remains in the hospital for 45 days. However, the member has access to his spouse’s employer’s insurance, with a maximum out of pocket of \$5,000. Total cost to the Tribe: no more than \$5,000.

**YOU MAY COMPLETE THE SURVEY ONLINE (BY FOLLOWING THE LINK ON THE CTGR WEB SITE) OR OVER THE TELEPHONE BY CONTACTING BARBARA STEERE, JIM HOLMES OR MELODY BAKER AT (800) 775-0095. ■**

## ODOT clearing Highway 18 trees

The state Department of Transportation, working under an agreement with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, will fall dead and dying trees that pose a threat to traffic along a 12-mile section of Highway 18 in the Van Duzer State Scenic Corridor between Grand Ronde and the Oregon Coast.

Work was scheduled to begin the week of Jan. 17 and take until Feb. 14 to complete, weather permitting.

The project will occur between mileposts 7 and 19 along Highway 18 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

Almost all 160 trees to be felled are already dead, but within reach of the highway. Most will be left where they fall to decompose naturally. A few of the targeted trees suffer from root rot.

Flaggers and a pilot car will control travel through the area in alternating directions. Motorists should expect 10- to 15-minute delays. ■

## Canoe carvers requested by Cultural Resources

The Cultural Resources Department would like to invite all who are interested to join us in carving the first river canoe to be made in Grand Ronde since the reservation was established. This canoe will be a great achievement for our Tribe and cultural identity. Tribes like the Kalapuyas, Umpquas and Rogue Rivers used this style of canoe. We want as many people who are interested and able to have a hand in carving this canoe. We are encouraging any help or support just by stopping by and witnessing the process and asking questions. The canoe will be moved to the Mission Mill Museum in April to be displayed in the Grand Ronde canoe exhibit. We will be carving every other Tuesday and Thursday at 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. at the carving shed behind the recovery house. Contact Brian Krehbiel for more information and scheduling at 503-879-4639. ■

## 6th Annual Native Caring... A Conference to Learn, Connect & Share



March 30 - 31, 2011

Spirit Mountain Casino and Resort  
Grand Ronde, Oregon

Come and join other caregivers of Native elders and relative caregivers of children from Northwest Indian communities in this two-day event. You have the opportunity to attend valuable workshops that will enhance your caregiving skills and provide you with a break from your daily responsibilities.

**Hosted by:  
The Confederated  
Tribes of Grand Ronde**

and Other Oregon partnering Tribes, Coquille Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indian, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, The Klamath Tribes, Burns Paiute Tribe, The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians., the State Unit on Aging and Oregon Area Agencies on Aging.

Coordinated by The Native Wellness Institute

For more information, contact: Bonnie Mercier at Grand Ronde (503) 879-2016 or Judy Bowen, Oregon State Unit on Aging (503) 373-1842

**Topics Include:**  
Power of Positive Thinking  
Heart Healthy  
Nutrition and Fitness  
Stress Management  
Native Wellness  
Financial Fraud & Scams  
Feeling better is more than physical  
Dementia - Challenges  
Living Well - Chronic Disease Self-Management  
Social Security - What is it for You?  
Health issues and concerns of children raised by grandparents.