

Tribal member pumped for success

Tribal programs help Tim Anderson right his path after prison sentence

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Texaco used to advertise, "You can trust your car to the man who wears the star." Today, the "man" is Tribal member Tim Anderson.

At Newberg Texaco, he wears the Texaco star with pride, hope and a confidence built on hard knocks and a little help from his Tribe, family and friends.

The story started back many years, said Dodie McKenzie, Tribal Vocational Rehab caseworker.

Anderson, now 31, first received services through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in 2008 and was successful in becoming employed. At that time, he worked with the 477 Program with caseworker Tribal Elder Patsy Pullin, Employment and Training Specialist and department manager. He later spiraled down with drug and alcohol problems and spent 15 months in two state prisons.

Prison time got his attention.

"I've seen where my life could take me," Anderson said. "I did a few sweats (the first he had experienced), and that helped me with the spiritual factor. I learned a lot about my heritage and culture."

In this economy where good workers have spent more than a year looking for employment, Anderson came out of the Oregon State Penitentiary on Sept. 10 and started a new job on Oct. 5. He pursued it from his first day out, flatly acknowledging his troubled record, he said, and did not give up.

"He seems like he's developed a better awareness of himself," said McKenzie. "He appears to be invested in being successful."

In fact, she says, successful clients are invested in their own success.

"It has to be their choice," said McKenzie. "The programs are here to support them, but if they don't want to do the work, there is nothing we can do."

Anderson worked hard with programs inside prison and then, he said, "The day I got out, I picked up job applications."

When Anderson first came in for an application, said Albert Keuftedjian, owner of the station, "I asked him if he had any criminal background. He was honest with me, and I wasn't too interested. Then, he came back a week later, again checking for a job. I said, 'This kid is motivated.'"

"I was upfront with Albert," said Anderson. "I learned to be honest with people in prison."

But he also had in the back of his mind advice that his uncle, Tribal Elder Tom Bean, who has since walked on, had given him.

"He always told me, 'A good man laces up his boots every day, goes to work and doesn't complain about the little things.'"

"Today, I come to work with a smile on my face. I do whatever this



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Tim Anderson washes a customer's windshield during his shift at Newberg Texaco recently. Anderson is a former inmate who has been working at gas stations since October 2010 with the help the Tribal Social Services Department's Vocational Rehabilitation and 477 Employment and Training programs.



Tribal member Tim Anderson fills a customer's gas order during his shift at Newberg Texaco recently. In addition to manning the gas pumps on his shifts, he also takes care of customer service in the convenience store and fills propane tank orders.

man asks me to do. I'm here. I lace up my boots every day."

"I can read people's minds," said Keuftedjian, who purchased the service station four years ago. "I knew he could be a good employee when I saw him."

"I love it here," said Anderson, four months into the job and still receiving rave reviews from his boss.

"He's doing great," said Keuftedjian. "Today, he is one of my best employees."

With seven gas stations north and south of Newberg Texaco on the south side of 99W in Newberg, Keuftedjian says, "Customer service is my priority. All my employees know that any complaints from a customer and they're fired."

"I'm really good at customer service," said Anderson.

The Tribal Employment and Training and Vocational Rehabili-

tation programs that come out of the federal 477 legislation and 121 grant program have played a quiet but effective part in this success.

"When I got out, I went to the Tribe for help," said Anderson. Of working with Tribal member and Voc Rehab 477 Program Supervisor Leslie Riggs, Anderson said, "He was pretty receptive. He helped me work through some things," but in the end, Riggs said that Anderson had done 90 percent of the work.

"He drove it," said Riggs, who started working with Anderson as a case worker for the Employment and Training program.

If Riggs gave him one piece of advice that stuck, Anderson said, that advice was "persistence."

In addition, the Employment and Training program was able to sweeten the deal for Keuftedjian by paying for 90 days of on-the-job training. Then, after Anderson was

hired, both Keuftedjian and Anderson benefitted from 90 days of "job retention support."

The training funds may have been the difference between hiring Anderson and not hiring him, Keuftedjian said.

"I never hired anyone from prison before," he said, "but it depends from where he's coming and who's behind him. The Tribe would not invest a penny in him if they were not sure. It made me think, 'He deserves a chance.'"

Part of the success follows the holistic approach that Tribal departments take in these cases. Tribal Voc Rehab works with its state counterpart, but also with Tribal Behavioral Health, Education, Indian Child Welfare and Culture

programs. McKenzie also serves on the State Rehabilitation Council.

Today, Anderson has thanks for the many people who have helped him succeed after prison. And he is making amends.

"I'd like to take the chance to formally apologize to my grandmother, Laverne Hosford (once a Tribal spouse who still lives in the Grand Ronde community). I never meant to hurt her in any way, shape or form," he said.

"He's a miracle," said Riggs, his 477 Employment and Training caseworker.

"The 477 Employment and Training and Vocational Rehabilitation programs will continue to be a support and advocate for client after his case files close successfully. If Anderson should ever need job retention assistance or employment services, the programs are only a phone call away," said McKenzie. ■