

Tribal Elder
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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

'One day's recognition'

Tribe honors veterans during 2011 Memorial Day event

By Ron Karten
Smoke Signals staff writer

The sun and a light rain played tag all morning as hundreds joined in multiple Memorial Day observances sponsored throughout the West Valley by the Grand Ronde Tribe this year.

Dozens showed up for each of the four morning stops at local cemeteries while more than 100 people were on hand for the lunch in the Tribal Community Center at noon and the Memorial Day program at the West Valley Veterans' Memorial at 1 p.m.

"If a person could write a book with one story from every veteran," said Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno, who was master of ceremonies for the event, "that would be some book. But it wouldn't be what you'd expect. It would be stories of the families and stories of the buddies. You form a real brotherhood over there."

Many of those stories were recalled — if not actually told — this Memorial Day as visitors and veterans alike milled around the memorial, looking for names.

Vietnam vet Arthur DeHart of McMinnville posed for a photo with his grandsons, Jesse and

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Photo by Michelle Alaimo
Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. speaks during the Memorial Day observance at the West Valley Veterans' Memorial on the Tribal campus on Monday, May 30. Tribal Vice Chair Reyn Leno was the master of ceremonies and Tribal Council members Jack Giffen Jr., Chris Mercier and Wink Soderberg also spoke at the event.

Tribe buying middle school

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has agreed to buy the soon-to-be vacated middle school facility on the east side of Grand Ronde Road from the Willamina School District.

The cash-strapped school district is in the process of consolidating its student population at the Oaken Hill facility in Willamina and put the middle school facility up for sale.

At its May 17 meeting, the Willamina School Board approved its 2011-12 budget, which includes \$1.2 million from the anticipated sales of two properties, including the Grand Ronde site.

The Tribe is buying the middle school property, which was part of the Tribe's original reservation given to it in President Franklin Pierce's 1857 Presidential Order, for \$675,000.

Before construction of current Tribal facilities, the Grand Ronde Tribe held many powwows and other events in the middle school's gym following 1983's Restoration.

The Grand Ronde Tribal Council voted to approve a purchase and sale agreement for the middle school property at its May 25 meeting.

Tribal member Jan Reibach, Tribal Lands manager, said the agreement follows weeks of internal strategic meetings and evaluations, as well as negotiations with the Willamina School District.

The main structure on the eight-

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Dakota Whitecloud retires after 21 years

By Ron Karten
Smoke Signals staff writer

After almost 22 years of employment with the Tribe and standing as the sixth longest serving employee, Tribal Elder Dakota Whitecloud is heading out for the good life.

She's not going all that far — only across the street to her home in Grand Meadows, where she intends to putter in the yard and continue with her many crafts, but not everybody who knows her thinks she is gone for good.

"I have to say, I laugh when they say Dakota's retiring, going away," said Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno. "She's got my home phone and my cell number, so she ain't going nowhere."

Her tenure with the Tribe and her positions assisting the Tribe's executive staff over all those

years make her an invaluable source of the Tribe's recent history.

She remembers when the Tribe moved its headquarters from the Manor Building, where she started on Grand Ronde Road, up to a new shed built on what is now the Tribal government campus when ground also was broken for the Community Center nearby.

"There wasn't nothing out there then," she said. Well, nothing but that big oak tree that still sits in the middle of the old powwow grounds.

"(Former Tribal Elder) Merle Holmes remem-



Dakota Whitecloud

bered that tree from when he was a boy," she said, "and he asked Tribal Council to never take it down."

"In the morning when we first came up here, I'd make coffee and stand on the deck and watch coyotes, elk, deer and some of the most beautiful sunrises and sunsets that you've ever seen."

And she continued that tradition in one form or another throughout her career.

"We'd always have our little talks in the morning," said Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. "I always get in early, and Dakota is there, and we'd pour ourselves some coffee. I'll miss them little chats. She pretty much knew about every department. She's worked in almost every

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