

Sheridan holding First Wednesday event

Sheridan will be holding a Community Yard Sale for its First Wednesday event from 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 3.

Residents are encouraged to clean out their garage or set up a booth to sell their arts and crafts. People can register for a 10-by-10-foot space to sell whatever they'd like — as long as it is legal — for \$5 per space.

For more information or to register, contact Kim Greene at 503-434-05472 or Hawley Vining at 503-913-8338, or send an e-mail to firstwednesday@hotmail.com.

There also is a Facebook page at "First Wednesday, Sheridan, Oregon." ■

Native inmate club sets powwow

Lakota Oyate Ki, the Native inmate club at the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, is sponsoring its annual powwow on Saturday, Aug. 6, from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

People interested in participating in the powwow need to RSVP by no later than Friday, July 29.

To confirm participation, e-mail, call or mail your request to Bill Marion at the Oregon State Penitentiary at Bill.F.Marion@doc.state.or.us, 503-378-2289 or 2605 State St., Ore., 97310. ■

Treatment is expected to continue for years

BRANDY continued
from front page

back in Portland for more chemotherapy and radiation treatments in a month.

The disease has wreaked havoc with Brandy's young life, but her family is behind her all the way.

Brandy has a positive outlook and an electric smile. She was unable to finish her freshman year at Wallowa Junior-Senior High School before the operation, and now faces an uncertain future, depending on what happens next.

As a freshman, she had an assignment on "Romeo and Juliet," she said at the Tribe's Portland satellite office before she left for home, which every freshman in her school had to complete. For the class, the students develop a book filled with "Romeo and Juliet" information like their family trees and what their closets might have looked like.

Brandy called her book, "A love worth dying for," but because of the disease, the project never was finished.

She also likes shop work. "I was building a jewelry box and a cutting board," she said, but one of the sanders she needed broke down.

She played basketball and soccer, and loved hip-hop dancing.

Depending on the course of the disease, she could get back to all of it. Risks remain, however. She is fighting balance issues and is tired all the time. The doctors don't know yet whether the treatments will cost Brandy part or all of her vision and hearing. There is a whole list of unknown outcomes.

Medical treatment is expected to continue on and off for five years.

At the same time, her family is struggling to keep up with dozens of aspects of her treatment at Doernbecher Children's Hospital. Tonya has a book six inches thick in which she keeps track of medications, medical instructions, Brandy's appetite, appointments, doctors, nurses, social service workers and the countless tasks required for managing the disease and its side effects.

"The information could fill a room and you remember this much," Tonya said, holding her thumb and first finger close to touching. "You're overwhelmed and you forget things. And when you remember something, like something Brandy has to do, you feel like a nag. It's kind of a vicious cycle."

"Her last healthy weight," said



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Brandy Starmer takes her hairpiece off of the mannequin head to put on as she gets ready recently in the room that her and her mother and Tribal member Tonya stayed in for six weeks at the Inn at Marquam Hill bed and breakfast in Portland.

Tonya, "was 105 pounds last December." That weight fell to 92, and at one point Brandy did not seem to care about eating or anything else. But day to day now, her appetite seems to be returning and it is a blessing, they both know, that Brandy has discovered new cravings for Wendy's chocolate frosties, Chinese food and french fries.

The disease also is wreaking havoc with the family's day-to-day life back in Wallowa. Father Craig continues to work supporting home life expenses, and the family was barely making those ends meet before the operation. Now, it's on the family's shoulders to fund the medical side of things, including expenses of a second household in Portland, too.

In the turmoil, Brandy's brother, Travis, 18, also a Tribal member, had to put off plans for college. He has, however, landed a job that may lead to an apprenticeship program in a machine shop, Tonya said.

Brandy cried while talking about her brother. It was when she said she hadn't seen much of him since the treatments began.

"Travis is like we all were when we heard the news," said Tonya. "Really sad and scared. Brandy wishes he was still at home."

To make matters worse, Tonya had to give up her job as a bus driver to care for Brandy. They now have the added stress of not knowing where money will come from for countless foreseen and unforeseen expenses.

The Tribe has provided fund-

ing and services for the family, but costs and needs continue to mount.

State and federal funds only kick in once Brandy reaches 18.

"I would like to see the Tribe have a cancer fund for Tribal members," said Tonya.

"For people 15 years old," said Brandy. "It would be a good thing to have a house and car here in the city for Tribal members like us. If that's the only thing I could ever do for our Tribe, to help others in this situation, it would be to create a cancer fund."

When the family receives donations, which they have, they have no local bank account in which to put the funds, and are not sure of tax implications if they were to open an account for financial gifts they receive.

"The last thing we need is a big bill on our taxes," said Tonya.

There are perhaps experts who could help sort out these issues, and the Starmer family has seen the angels come down to help, but the family remains on the financial edge.

Friends, Josh and Christy Larm of Mt. Angel, lent Tonya and Brandy a car during their stay in Portland. "They're our angels in Mt. Angel," said Tonya.

The Eugene-based Angel Hair Foundation has provided Brandy with a "hair system" as it does statewide for cancer and alopecia (an autoimmune disease that causes hair loss) patients throughout Oregon. The group has suggested that

Brandy might play a part in their annual fundraiser, called "Shall We Dance," and modeled after the reality show "Dancing With the Stars," said Deborah L. Wright, president of the foundation.

"I think Brandy has a wonderful personality and I hope she can be involved," said Wright.

"There are a lot of people we've met along the way that are 100 percent compassionate and doing all they can to help," said Tonya.

She mentioned Tribal member and Portland office Tribal Services Representative Lisa Archuleta.

"Since the very first moment she met us, she had her heart open and her arms open to us to help."

Tonya also named Mike Watson, owner of the bed and breakfast where they've been staying during treatments in Portland.

"With his compassion for Brandy and I, I'm sure it made a difference in the outcome. He provided a real loving home environment for us."

The "wonderful people" at Doernbecher's Radiation Department, Tribal member Melody Baker, Contract Health Services representative for the Tribe, "who helped so much when we were at home, when we were afraid to come back here." Thanks also go to Micki Vander Linden, nurse case manager at Innovative Case Management.

"So many have helped. We're grateful to all, mentioned or not," said Tonya.

With the stress and sadness come some silliness, too, said Brandy and Tonya.

"We do a lot of laughing at the dumb stuff," said Tonya.

Brandy's hair is just starting to come back. She said that the wind in her hair tickles as they drive.

"And I'm going, 'What hair?'" says Tonya.

Before all this, Brandy had 20/20 vision. There was a time, though, when she started seeing double.

"We joked that her vision was 40/40," said Tonya.

"I always considered myself a fighter," said Tonya. "I feel like a lion trying to protect her cub. I've always thought, where there's a will, there's a way, but sometimes now, I'm reevaluating that."

Meanwhile, out of the blue, Brandy takes opportunities to be silly. When she goes to restaurants now, she tells the waitress, "Thank you. Come again!"

To help the Starmer family, contact Tonya at 541-263-0278. ■