

Fitness pilot program planned; sign up Aug. 4

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe's Health and Wellness office is introducing a new program — Freedom through Fitness — run by the Salem-based Courthouse Athletic Club.

Working with both nutrition and exercise, the 16-week pilot program begins Tuesday, Sept. 6, just after Labor Day. It will be held in the former Willamina Middle School gym on Grand Ronde Road for about two hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays after work.

"The Tribal government asked us to combat obesity among Tribal members and staff," said Linda Bird, family nurse practitioner for the Tribe. "They wanted results scientifically valid ... to cut down on chronic illnesses, improve worker productivity and reduce the use of medication."

"Throughout the 16-week program, staff will monitor parameters, such as lab work, physical fitness, endurance and percent gain in muscle mass."

The Wellness program will hold an informational and sign-up meeting from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 4, at the Tribal Adult Education Building.

Bird led the committee that chose the Courthouse program from among many during a six-month search. The committee liked the Courthouse plan because it works with both nutrition and exercise, said Bird, who said she has lost 27 pounds on the program herself in the last six months.

A very gradual "one or two pounds a week," Bird said. "After six months, I finally got off the mat at the end of a session without swearing."

The pilot project will be available free to as many as 40 Tribal members and Tribal employees, with preference given to those who have a Body Mass Index greater

than 30. Courthouse has technology to determine the BMI for each individual.

Body Mass Index, Bird said, is a measurement based on height and weight. "For example, a person who is 5 foot 6 inches tall and weighs 185 pounds would have a BMI of 30."

Those who do not meet the BMI criteria can participate in the exercise part of the training for free, as long as there is room in the gym, and at a cost reduced from the full Courthouse fee for the nutrition and testing part of the program. If fewer than 40 initially join the program, others will fill the remaining free spots for the full course.

With aerobics and strength training, and information to "help you change the way you think about food," the program will be individually tailored to allow people in any kind of shape to exercise at an appropriate level and get in better shape.

"It's completely modifiable to any level," said Mileah Frederick, a fitness coach at Courthouse.

"We're looking for progress, not perfection," said Drew Miller, a Courthouse Community Outreach employee.

"If you just starve yourself, you risk losing muscle mass along with fat," said Bird.

To solve that problem, the program offers grocery lists, cooking instructions and practice putting together lean meals to ensure that participants eat enough to "sustain a lean mass," said Miller.

"We want to motivate a group of people that haven't been motivated in the past," said Bird. "People need support all the way through. It can't be done from an office. We have to be out in the community."

"We believe that people can change, although there are a lot of doubters out there."

Bird added a sweetener. "This program will save dollars on your grocery bill," she said. ■

Working at a car wash



Photos by Summer Youth employee Peter Nelson


Tribal Elder Claudia Leno scrubs a car during the Canoe Family Elders Car Wash in the Governance Center parking lot on Wednesday, July 13. Elders raised almost \$100, which will go toward expenses for the Elders to go on this year's Paddle to Swinomish Canoe Journey.



Tribal Elder Linda Brandon rinses a car during the Canoe Family Elders Car Wash in the Governance Center parking lot on Wednesday, July 13. Tribal Elder Laura Gleason and some of the Grand Ronde Canoe Family Tribal youth helped wash cars.

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