

# Community starts canning produce

By Ron Karten

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

The Grand Ronde Community Resource Center and Food Bank sometimes finds itself with an excess of produce, particularly at harvest time.

"It is local produce," said Angela Schultz-McCallister, Community Resource Center manager. "It is seasonal produce. Sometimes we get an extra shipment because another food bank doesn't want it, and we'll take it rather than letting it rot. We take it because we will use it and make it useful for our people."

In August, Elders working at the center came up with a new strategy for using that extra produce. They created a canning group. In its first session on Aug. 12, the group included Tribal and community members of all ages.

"We had bananas coming out of our ears," said Elder and volunteer Louise Medeiros. "Literally. We ended up taking eight boxes to the Elders' lunch room — they were so thrilled — and I took a box and went to the different offices and gave them bananas, and by the time it was over, everybody was bananaed out."

When Medeiros first mentioned the canning idea, it rekindled an idea that had been swirling around Schultz-McCallister's brain for years.

"I'm really excited about it," said Schultz-McCallister. "Years ago at Chankal we saw all those fruit trees and learned about Elders canning this fruit, and ever since then it piqued my interest to get back to canning."

More recently, Schultz-McCallister joined others from the Cultural Resources Department in visiting the federal archives in Seattle, where she came across photos of Moccasin Jam labels that Elders



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

**Connor McCallister places a jar of pickled green beans into a box at the Elders' Craft House on Friday, Aug. 17. The jars were being divided between members of the group of people who canned them, also known as the Food Bank Canning Group. Some other people involved in the canning were Food Bank volunteer Audrey Snyder, right, and Tribal Elder Louise Medeiros and her granddaughter Dorothy Anderson, in the background on the left and right respectively.**

used to package for sale. "I read the stories our Elders told," she said. "Both of those got my fire lit."

It was a natural idea for others as well.

"I canned with my mom and my grandmother," said Elder and food bank volunteer Arlettia Krehbiel. "We all chipped in and did everything."

"I have been a canner for the last 50 years," said Medeiros. "(Produce) comes into the food bank and it's at its peak. You try and get rid of it, but sometimes we had way too much, so I would bring things home and I would preserve them. Then Angela, seeing what I was up to, she got interested."

On Aug. 12, a group of seven — now called the Food Bank Can-

ning Group — included Schultz-McCallister and her son, Connor McCallister; Elder Arlettia Krehbiel, a food bank volunteer; Angelia Swiderski; Elder Cheri Butler; Mickel Rogers; and Medeiros and her granddaughter, Dorothy Anderson. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the canners went to work.

The food bank furnished lids and basic staples, like sugar for simple syrup.

"We've had beautiful cherries and green beans," said Medeiros. "We're looking forward to apples, some pickled carrots. Whatever comes in. We have plums and we can make jam."

When there is extra, the group aims "to get people to come and join us," said Medeiros.

The group started canning on a Sunday, but that day may shift, said Schultz-McCallister.

"Part of the thing for the resource center," she added, "is we're very big in trying to get clients to self-sustain, preserve foods, feed their families and find ways to stretch their budgets. This is one way to do that."

Marion-Polk Food Share, Grants and Communications Officer Eileen DeCicco said, offers canning and food preserving classes through Oregon State University's Extension Service. She said she had not heard of any other local food banks embarking on such a project.

"We encourage people to preserve food so they have it available in



**The Food Bank Canning Group canned more than 50 jars of excess green beans and Queen Anne cherries from the Grand Ronde Community Resource Center and Food Bank on Friday, Aug. 17.**

leaner times," DeCicco said.

There are other benefits to the local group's work as well.

"It's so much healthier to eat home-canned items than to buy them in the store," said Schultz-McCallister.

"The oral stuff, the conversation that you capture when you have multiple generations together (is another benefit). For the younger kids to see and learn from us, hopefully, they will carry on (the practice)."

For the first effort, finished jars of produce were split among all the canners at the end of the day.

When apple season arrives, Medeiros said, "We're going to do apples, so if you want to make an apple pie filling or juice, feel free to bring the ingredients and that'll go into your cans."

"Somebody asked, 'Why are we doing it when it's so hot?' " Medeiros related. "Angela said, 'That's when it ripens up.' My mother and grandmother were at this, too. They didn't have air conditioning then. They found a cool, dark place, and when they were finished, it was the food they ate. Our ancestors lived to ripe old ages, and they did this. It's not rocket science."

Today's group has it a little easier. Currently, the group is planning on meeting at the white craft house behind the clinic.

"We have air conditioning that really works over there," said Medeiros.

The group invites anyone interested in joining to call Medeiros at 503-879-4312. In addition, tips for preserving foods and related issues are available free at the Oregon State University Extension Web site at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/community/nutrition>.

"Pickled zucchini, zucchini relish — they're wonderful," Medeiros said. "When you've got a lot of hands working, it really works great." ■

## Tribal Encampment set for Sept. 7-8


There will be a Tribal Encampment at the Elks Picnic Grounds, 10539 Agate Road, in Eagle Point, Ore.

The site is reserved for Tribal members on Friday and Saturday, Sept. 7-8. Tribal members are invited to bring your drums, songs, Tribal craft projects and share your culture with fellow Tribal members. There will be potluck dinners on both nights. Camping is allowed at the site and there are tent sites and some RV sites, but no waste water dump. There are portable toilets and no dogs are allowed.

Tribal members are responsible for their travel arrangements and expenses.

This is a drug- and alcohol-free event.

To RSVP, contact the Public Affairs Department at [publicinfo@grandronde.org](mailto:publicinfo@grandronde.org) or call 503-879-1418. ■



## Carving Class

Please come join us, first class will start on Oct. 3

Come learn the Columbia river art style. Cultural Resources will be having an ongoing class every Wednesday at the carving shop down by the food bank starting on Oct. 3 we will only have room for 10 students. Please contact me at (503) 879-4639.

Or e-mail [brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org](mailto:brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org), please leave a detailed message.

I look forward to hearing from you hayu masi