

Youth Center seeks volunteers

The Tina Miller Community Center Thrift Store, 110 B. St., Willamina, which helps fund the after-school and weekend youth community center located in the old high school gym, is seeking volunteers who can help run the store, in addition to donated items and customers. The store accepts clothes, books, knickknacks, etc., as donations.

It is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and closed on Sunday and Monday. Donations also can be left at the Wildwood Hotel and Restaurant in Willamina. For more information on volunteering, call 503-876-7897. The youth center and thrift store that funds it are nonprofit and 100 percent self-sustaining and volunteer-run. ■

Washington woman hits \$416,262 jackpot at casino

A southwestern Washington woman who was looking to do something "fun" while her husband was at work drove 90 minutes to Spirit Mountain Casino and hit a \$416,262 jackpot on the \$1 IGT Wheel of Fortune slot machine on Friday, Aug. 31.

The woman, who requested her identity and place of residence remain confidential, won the casino's second jackpot this summer to be claimed near a national holiday. A Bend man won a \$578,175 jackpot on July 3.

The woman arrived at the casino at 6 p.m. and she said she planned to play for a couple of hours before heading home. About an hour into her play, she became confused and was about to call for a slot attendant when the Wheel of Fortune machine suddenly locked up. The woman playing next to her exclaimed that she had just won a jackpot.

Stunned and surprised, the woman kept repeating "I can't believe it" and called her husband at work. He arrived at the casino about 11 p.m.

The woman said she plans on buying a newer car and paying off some loans with the proceeds. ■

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Annual flyovers bring together agencies

GROW SITES continued from front page

es Manager Michael Wilson recommended the Tribe participate and Wakeland approved it.

The annual flyovers bring together Oregon State Police, sheriff deputies from Yamhill, Polk, Lincoln and Tillamook counties, staff members from the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Guard to sniff out major marijuana grows in the region.

Owing to budget cutbacks in recent years, says Ogle, coordinator of the effort this year and for the last two, "We're only looking for big grows, from 2,500 to 5,000 plants or more, sometimes up to 10,000 plants.

"We used to have a helicopter for each county, but now we're down to two helicopters for all four counties."

The majority of grows that the operation has uncovered since the program began more than 20 years ago, Ogle says, have been enterprises run by Mexican drug cartels.

"These investigations aim to catch the big fish," he says, "not just the guys growing the plants. We could process the growers, but more

would be right back tomorrow."

Planning for these annual searches begins as early as March. The actual flights take place from July 1 through the end of September, the growing season for marijuana.

Ogle, who has 22 years in law enforcement, says the operation's first concern is for the public. Bow hunters and hikers may unwittingly come into a place where growers have guns. On the other hand, when civilians come upon a grow site, they may report that site to the police, helping the effort.

To investigate up the line, police are looking for people who are not likely in the area, but are nevertheless running and funding the operations. At the same time, they need to complete the work on a discovered site before the marijuana is harvested to prevent it from reaching the street.

Each of the four counties involved in this region — similar operations take place across the state — receive about 10 hours of helicopter coverage over two days. Each helicopter is staffed by a pilot and one or two marijuana spotters.

The spotters work with naked eyes because using binoculars causes dizziness. Many veterans, like Ogle, know where to look. They have extensive experience with the

area after years of operations.

"We have historic grow locations," says Ogle, "and with fewer resources, we focus on these areas."

Just as the police know a lot about growing operations and places, growers also know a lot about police operations.

"It's kind of a cat-and-mouse game," says Ogle. "We try to adapt our operations based on what they know, and they try to adapt their operations taking into consideration what we know."

"The easiest way to find a grow," says one of those involved, "is to look for the green and blue Miracle-Gro fertilizer bags."

The mess left behind at these growing operations is a signature.

"They do all sorts of environmental damage," Ogle says. "They dam up the creeks, leave fertilizers and trash all around." Sometimes, they dig holes to pile it all in, but they don't bother covering the trash sites, leaving animals to scatter the garbage. They limb and dig up trees and set the stage for extensive erosion.

"I've seen the fertilizer and all the garbage they leave behind," says McKnight. "That was always a pet peeve of mine when I was Forest Patrol officer."

As a result of grow operations,

Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center institutes Broken Appointment Policy

In an effort to make medical services more efficient, the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center (H&WC) has approved and instituted a broken appointment policy for medically-related appointments at the H&WC. To qualify as a broken appointment a patient must either not show up for their appointment, show up more than 10 minutes late or give less than 24 hours notice of cancellation. When any of these events occur, the patient is notified in writing. After the third broken appointment in a six-month time frame, the patient will not be allowed to schedule routine appointments. However, they will be offered a "sit and wait appointment" — the chance to sit and wait for an opening with a provider. This probationary period will last for six (6) months. The H&WC has a process for reminding patients of appointments and strives to notify patients of appointments the day before.

The broken appointment policy is very important as broken or missed appointments create unused time in a provider's schedule, which is inefficient financially and leads to barriers to accessing care. Ultimately, a broken appointment policy exists to improve access to care for all patients and is critical to providing responsive, cost-effective health services. ■

New Oregon tuition waiver

House Bill 3471-Tuition Waiver Bill is a law that gives "tuition waivers" to current and former foster youth for Oregon community college and public universities. This program begins with the 2012-13 academic year.

Requirements: All current foster and former foster youth who have spent at least 365 days in substitute care after age 16, AND either left foster care (had wardship terminated) or completed high school/GED within the previous three years qualify for this program.

Application process: Students must submit their FAFSA (www.fafsa.gov) as soon as possible! DHS and ICW will send a list of eligible students to the Oregon Student Access Commission for prioritization of an Oregon Opportunity Grant.

The school of attendance will be notified of eligible students attending their institution and notify the student of the tuition waiver amount. There is no separate application or steps for students to apply other than submitting their FAFSA.

For more information, contact your ILP worker or the Tribal Scholarship Office at 1-800-422-0232, ext. 1345. ■

private forest landowners who have allowed hunters and hikers to use their land for recreation in the past have stopped doing so.

Twenty-some police and administrative personnel who make up the Coast Region Marijuana Team are sometimes barely enough to do the investigation once a grow operation is spotted, Ogle says.

"You need a lot of resources to investigate," he says.

Some of the sites are behind steep and forbidding terrain, so in addition to the risk of violence they face, police also prepare for less dramatic risks, such as heat exhaustion.

Opening up Tribal property for the operation made the work easier.

"It's a great area and it really has helped us out," Ogle says.

Coastal airports have fog issues and the Tribal land is central to the counties involved, Ogle says.

As the helicopters settle down in front of the Natural Resources building late that morning and the propellers slow, a National Guard truck moves in for refueling.

"It's good to see that we're all working together," Ogle adds.

To provide information about possible marijuana grow sites, contact the Yamhill County Inter Agency Narcotics Team at 503-472-6565. ■