

'We can make changes'

VIDEO continued from front page

the community tells you what they think is important."

Among Elders consulted, Empey selected two Tribal leaders.

"It's always been a pet peeve of mine to hire professionals that come in with their ideas, implement what their priorities are rather than finding out what the Tribe's priorities are," said Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy.

Empey's project took Kennedy back to the early days of Restoration when Kennedy was involved in developing health and social service programs for the Tribe.

The prevailing health care picture, long before Tribes were routinely consulted, left many Tribal members preferring not to have any state-sanctioned health care at all.

"We had a population that had gone without health care for 30 years," Kennedy said. "When we were terminated, our members were not comfortable receiving services from the state because there were many negative associated impacts. You opened yourself up to be scrutinized by the agency and others with biases about Native Americans.

"As a result, (the old health care model) was used as a foothold to take their children. If you look at that era, many families lost their children. They were adopted out and all of that, so folks did not want to do that."

In response, the Tribe went to Tribal members to find out what they wanted. After that, Kennedy thought, "Well, I know that we'll



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Fifth- and sixth-grade Tribal youth who produced a video about obesity in the community view the finished product for the first time at Youth Education on Tuesday, Jan. 15. The clip includes Makenzie Aaron, left, and Tara Thorsgard working out in the Tribal weight room.

develop a program that addresses the current issues, but we need to get ahead of that, and prevent things from re-occurring."

For much of the Tribal community, it already is too late to prevent obesity, but strategies are similar for reducing obesity and preventing it.

For the project, students made a short video with some of their ideas: vending machines with healthy snacks, exercising and drinking lots of water. These ideas are interspersed in the video with factoids that include Native Americans have the highest percentage of obesity and Tribal gym hours.

"Youth Fighting Obesity" showed students on gym exercise machines and included a roll of blooper out-

takes that the students wanted to see twice during the first showing of the video.

The video was written and directed by Tribal youth with Dakota Ross and Raven Harmon handling the camera.

"We can make changes," said Tara Thorsgard.

"The Canoe Journey makes our Tribe healthy," said Kialiyah Krehbiel.

"We sing and dance at our longhouse," said Makenzie Aaron, "and that makes us healthy."

The group has already shown the video at Youth Education and plans are afoot to show it at the Youth Powwow on Feb. 22..

Students also learned about setting goals. "A SMART goal," said Empey, "is specific, measurable, attainable, accountable to someone, rewarding and time bound.

"Think about your own goals," Empey told the group.

In addition, students were charged with looking into ways to get healthy snacks into Tribal vending machines, starting a Facebook page and a Tribal Web site for the project, Empey said.

"I remember when she ran for Royalty, and when her sister, (Erica Empey Benthin), did," said Elder and longtime Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison, who also supported Empey on the project. "I told her how proud I was that she is going into medicine."

Harrison recalled how physically active the community had been in the past.

A long time ago in front of the cemetery, there used to be a baseball field. After the powwows, she added, Tribal members used to have a run up to Spirit Mountain. During powwows, there was always a volleyball game.

"We did a lot more when we didn't have any money," she said. "And I think we ate better then because we grew our own food."

Now, said Harrison, "The kids sit inside and push buttons, and add to that all those fast food restaurants, and that's it. Now, it takes two (parents) to make a living, so there's no time to cook (a nourishing meal)."

In a meeting with Tribal Health and Wellness Department Assistant Executive Director Allyson Lecatsas and Youth Prevention Coordinator Lisa Leno, Empey took suggestions about engaging youth with incentives and holding forums in which they could participate, Lecatsas said.

One of the incentives turned out to be a yogurt party for those participating in the project.

Empey also went to Recreation Coordinator Matt Mosley about the Recreation Department starting an exercise project for youth. She knew the Recreation Department had been talking about it and that Tribal children had just learned about staying healthy while creating the video.

"She approached me about kicking off an exercise program with the unveiling of her project," said Mosley, "and I said, 'Yes, sure, it would be a great lead in.'"

So, Recreation has now started a once-a-week fitness component for six to 12 youth with their progress tracked for better success.

In selecting obesity, Tribal youth passed over drug and alcohol issues, chewing tobacco, teen pregnancy and cyber-bullying.

"I think the kids came up with an important issue," said Empey. "I hope the project brings awareness of the problem in the community. There is no quick solution and it has to be a community effort."

Participating youth included Madison and Dakota Ross, JC Rogers, Kialiyah Krehbiel, Tara Thorsgard, Julius Roan Eagle, Austin Little, Diami Eastman, Makenzie Aaron, Braden Ebensteiner and Raven Harmon.

"A successful project," Empey said, "leaves a legacy that continues on." ■

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Workshop information

The ASIST workshop is for caregivers who want to feel more comfortable, confident, and competent in helping to prevent the immediate risk of suicide. Over 750,000 caregivers have participated in this two-day, highly interactive, practical, practice-oriented workshop. If you are interested in learning more about ASIST or LearningWorries Education, you can visit their website at www.learningworrys.net. Participants must be over 16 years of age to attend. This is a NO COST training!

Agenda

When? February 28 - March 1
8AM - 3PM (30 min. lunch that is provided)

Where? Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Adult Education Building Room 126
9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grand Ronde, OR 97147

Contact: Call Shannon Stanton to register
503.879.1489


Registration Deadline: February 22, 2013, space is limited to 40 participants so please register early.

*It is required to attend both days to receive certification.

This training is being hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

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