

Plan is to expand relationship with SAM

SAM continued
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investment funds will be put to marketing activities, essentially sales activities to get those products to the market quickly.

"In the past we've tended to get products to market very slowly; take a couple of years to get penetration because we just didn't have the funds behind marketing, communication and sales materials. So this investment piece will allow us to accelerate that dramatically. Three new products lines for us are huge. It's like 40 percent of what we have now."

And, Polliack said, Tribal members should start seeing a return on their investment within five years if not sooner.

"The investment in SAM Medical Products by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has been a long time coming," Asghar said. "I think I can speak on behalf of both parties here how excited we are to start this great collaboration. The partnership will allow SAM Medical to accelerate new product development and to expand their marketing and sales capabilities for the next couple of years. The investment provides economic diversification for the Tribe and, believe me when I tell you, this is just the beginning."

"We are planning on expanding our relationship with SAM Medical to improve not only the Tribe's economic base, but also to accelerate Oregon's local economy. We are hopeful that this partnership is the catalyst to accelerate our regional economy and create much needed, sustainable jobs in the future."

SAM Medical Products was started by Sam Scheinberg and his wife in 1985 in their kitchen while living in Otis.

Scheinberg was a trauma surgeon during the Vietnam War and an orthopedic surgeon on the Oregon Coast. He said he saw a need for better splints that were lightweight, but strong, reliable and reusable.

Today, the SAM splint is the most popular emergency splint in the world, favored by emergency crews, armed services personnel, outdoor enthusiasts and rescue teams. The company's splint was standard cargo aboard the space shuttle and has been used on Himalayan climbing expeditions.

SAM Medical Products employs between 25 and 30 people at its administrative and production facility located in a business park in Wilsonville just off Interstate 5.

The infusion of Tribal dollars will allow the company to expand its product line and market beyond the United States. Currently, SAM Medical Products owns approximately 75 percent of the U.S. splint market.

The company has been so successful that it has been profitable for the last four to five years, Polliack said.

For Grand Ronde Tribal Council members, the event concluded



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

SAM Medical Products Co-Founder Cherrie Scheinberg, left, demonstrates a SAM Splint on Tribal Elder Dolores Parmenter during a tour of the SAM Medical Products factory in Wilsonville on Monday, Feb. 11. Mark Johnston, the Tribe's general manager, looks on in the background.

almost three years of discussions between the Tribe and company. It also will hopefully mark the beginning of Tribal economic diversification to complement current gaming and timber enterprises.

"It's an opportunity for us to partner with non-Native people in the Portland area, which highlights our ceded lands," said Tribal Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. "It's very important to make steps in that direction so that the non-Native people understand our story and realize that we were the first Americans here. It's the first step in moving forward with partnerships."

"We've been seeking economic development with them for a long time," Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. said. "To be able to make this connection with them, a motivated and up-and-coming business, I think it is going to be beneficial to all Tribal members. It's going to take awhile, but we're making that first step and now we're together in partnership with them and moving ahead. I think it is going to mean a lot to us down the road in making our future a little more sounder."

"I think, No. 1, it is the first real business thing that we've done out of our Economic Development arm," Leno said. "Then to have it be medical, where it is going to serve so many people, I think that is huge. What can you look for other than that, something where you are going to help everybody and basically it's a good deal for everybody all the way around. ... I think this has a huge potential."

"I think it is vital to the Tribe's future," Tribal Council member Chris Mercier said. "We've been talking about economic development for years, so it's good to finally see something that's happening. I wish I could fast-forward five years to see

what else we've got coming down the pike. I'm really happy with this. I think the medical field is a pretty safe place to invest right now."

"It's the bringing together of not only of the Grand Ronde people, but medical community in a way that is world encompassing," said Tribal Council member June Sherer. "I feel like that having this chance to be able to work with SAM Medical and serve every facet of life as far as the world is concerned is really a great opportunity. And we're moving forward for Grand Ronde in a really positive way."

"It's one more step in creating partnerships within our ceded lands," said Tribal Council member Jon A. George. "I look at those as bargains, but also for the financial stability to help our Tribe, the membership. Here again we're taking on looking at businesses or organizations about partnerships within our ceded lands, and we can carry on our story, the educational part."

Tribal Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor was the master of ceremonies during the 30-minute signing event that celebrated the new collaboration between the Tribe and SAM Medical Products.

Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave the invocation and a blessing song was performed by the Portland area drum group that includes Debi Anderson, Greg and Lisa Archuleta, Erin and Eric Bernando, Jordan Mercier and Dolores Parmenter. The drum group also performed "New Beginnings" at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Sam Scheinberg said that SAM Medical Products uses materials made in the United States and added rhetorically, "What's more American than Native American?"

"I would also like to say that it's

a great pleasure for us to work with the Grand Ronde Tribe," Sam Scheinberg said. "They are well known to us, their good works they've performed in their own community and in the state. Their reputation is sterling. I would say that we are proud to have all the Grand Ronde Tribal members as business partners and also now as friends."

Tribal representatives were out in force for the occasion. In attendance were General Manager Mark Johnston, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, Tribal Finance Director Julio Martinez, Tribal Auditor Trudi Yoshikawa, Commercial Real Estate Manager Ann Lewis and Economic Development Senior Administrative Assistant Jilene Mercier.

Other dignitaries in attendance included Cheryl Meyers from Gov. Kitzhaber's Office of Economics and Business Equity, Clackamas County Commissioner Tootie Smith and Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp and City Council member Susie Stevens.

"This is part of our ceded lands," Leno said during the ceremony. "This is actually part of the Willamette Valley Treaty and that is why things of this nature are so important to us. Driving up here, I was thinking that my mom and dad were both Tribal, so of the 27 Tribes and bands, we cover a huge amount of ground."

"I was thinking, 'Our people were here' and I always wonder, 'Did my ancestors walk this ground? Did they camp here?' We know they traded here and across the river. So it's interesting to me that we now complete the circle. We're here doing business today that our ancestors actually did 100 years ago. So it's really a great honor being a part of this whole deal." ■