

Community Fund grants \$383,500 to 26 nonprofits

Tribe surpasses \$59 million total in giving

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Honoring the "amazing and outstanding projects" of 26 Oregon nonprofits, Spirit Mountain Community Fund awarded grants totaling \$383,500 on Wednesday, March 13.

As "partners in making Oregon a better place," said Spirit Mountain Community Fund Executive Director Kathleen George, the Tribe is making possible "lasting benefits for our neighboring communities."

"This is the most important piece for us," said Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno. "We always want people to come past the casino. Well, go to the casino and then come past it; the casino is a very important business to us, but it is not Grand Ronde. This is Grand Ronde, here."

"It's what you do that makes our job easier," said Community Fund Board Chairman Sho Dozono to the recipients.

The event was held in Tribal Council Chambers with chairs extending out into the Governance Center Atrium.

Community Fund grants support projects in education, health, arts and culture, environment, historic preservation and public safety. Grants equal 6 percent of profits from Spirit Mountain Casino as agreed to between the Tribe and state of Oregon in the gaming compact.

This quarter's recipients included the Architectural Foundation of Oregon. The Community Fund gave \$5,000 to the 40-year-old Architects in Schools project, which pairs architects with teachers in elementary schools across Oregon to teach architectural concepts to young students, according to Kim



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Mary-Minn Sirag, left, KindTree Productions-Autism Rocks board of director's president, shows Julia Willis, Spirit Mountain Community Fund grants coordinator, the organization's newsletter during the fund's quarterly check presentation in the Governance Center Atrium on Wednesday, March 13. KindTree Productions-Autism Rocks received a \$4,000 grant.

Knowles, manager of the project.

Funds from the grant provide materials and cover the cost of developing a training curriculum that joins teachers with architects in the classroom.

Architectural concepts include drawing skills, and measurement and scale. "The lessons help link architectural concepts to all the places where they live, learn and play," said Knowles. "It's a way to see how what they learn in school affects their daily lives."

The six-week program ends with an exhibit of student work.

This is the first Community Fund grant for the group.

Another \$5,000 went to Kúkátónón, Children's African Dance Troupe. The Portland-based brainchild of Liberian emigre Ro-

lia Manyongai-Jones will use the money to move the headquarters to a new space and provide transportation for the program.

Kúkátónón, meaning "We are one" in the Kpelle language of Liberia, teaches West African dance to Portland-area students in seventh through 12th grades. The 30-year-old program is now teaching dances to 33 students in 13 schools.

Benefits of the program, Manyongai-Jones said, include "keeping physically fit, instilling a sense of cultural pride in students and improved self-esteem."

The October-June program held for two hours three times a week also enables students to perform across Oregon and into southern Washington.

This is the second grant to the group.

Portland-based Wisdom of the

Elders received a \$25,000 grant.

The funding will help the nonprofit develop a Native storytelling curriculum for Oregon schools. "It fits into Health and Wellness and Native Studies curricula," said Rose High Bear (Deg Hit'an Dine), executive producer and co-founder of the group.

"We're re-doing the content to meet the needs of Native youth," she added.

As a result of input from Native youth, who have not traditionally been the focus of the group, the new video productions are shorter and include Native youth from the Portland area, High Bear said.

"We're revising the video productions, developing an implementation manual and starting a pilot project targeting student needs. We could start a pilot in Willamina," High Bear said, taking the opportunity to pitch the program.

This is the fourth grant for Wisdom of the Elders. "We would not have been able to finish any of the projects without your funding," she said. "I call you 'Mom and Dad.'"

The Community Fund makes quarterly awards as well as separate grants to Oregon Tribes that are awarded annually in July.

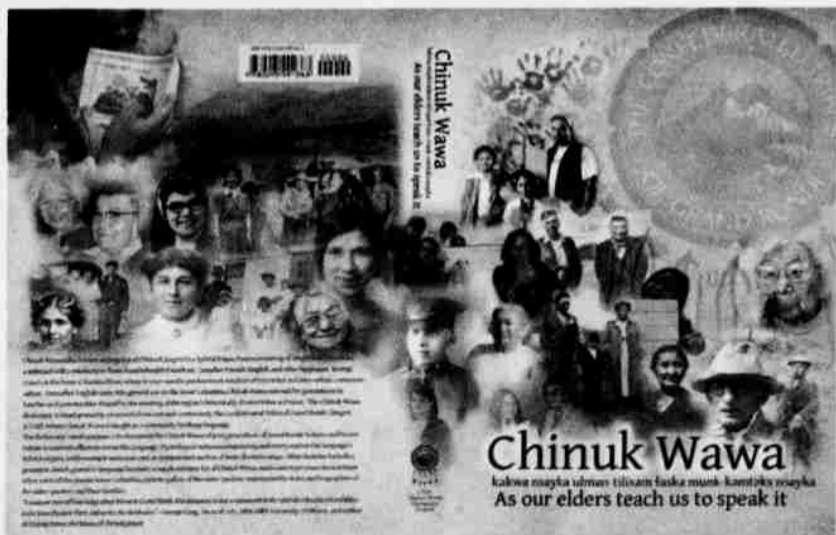
"It's always a nice day when we give money away," said Leno, one of three Tribal Council members who serve on the Spirit Mountain Community Fund Board.

Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council member Steve Bobb, also in attendance, also serve on the board. Other trustees are Secretary of State Kate Brown, consultant Henry "Chip" Lazenby, former Congresswoman Darlene Hooley and Ron Reibach, director of facilities at Spirit Mountain Casino.

Bobb gave the invocation before the grant checks were presented.

"Today," said George, "we have surpassed \$59 million in giving." ■

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