

2013 Elder group photo



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Fifty-three Tribal Elders gathered at the Elders' Activity Center on Tuesday, Aug. 27, for an updated group picture. The last one taken by *Smoke Signals* occurred in 2009. The photograph was taken after a special luau-themed lunch that day. According to the Tribe's Member Services Department, there are currently 754 Elders in the Tribe.

Tribal Council transfers \$60,000 to aid program

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council approved moving \$60,000 from contingency to help provide rental assistance to Tribal members attending higher education institutions at its Aug. 13 meeting.

The transfer will help Tribal members who previously received funding from the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority's Student Rental Assistance Program, but who no longer qualify for the program because of recent changes to federal housing income guidelines.

The Tribal Housing Authority suspended the program in June for the summer after being informed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that it was tightening its eligibility rules.

The program serves more than 200 low-income Tribal members attending college.

Housing and Urban Development is now insisting that students under 23 years of age include their parents'

income in evaluating eligibility and also is requiring that student rentals rates be evaluated in terms of fair market rates for the area.

Since its creation in 2006, the program has grown 10 times in terms of students, from 20 in 2006 to more than 200 in 2013. In terms of funding, the program is more than 20 times as expensive, going from \$30,000 in 2006 to \$700,000 in 2013.

The program is scheduled to resume in September under the new federal guidelines.

In other action, Tribal Council approved a recommendation from the Tribe's Economic Development Department to purchase preferred stock in MicroGREEN Polymers Inc. of Arlington, Wash.

MicroGREEN will use the Tribe's investment to expand its commercial production capabilities to produce recyclable hot and cold cups for consumer use. The company's commercial production facility in Arlington has the capacity to con-

vert 20 million pounds of recycled water bottles into insulating and temperature-resistant cups.

"We first heard of MicroGREEN from the Stillaguamish Tribe at an Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians meeting and immediately recognized how an investment in MicroGREEN and its InCycle products could be a strategic fit in our economic diversification goals," said Titu Asghar, Tribal Economic Development director.

Tom Malone, president and chief executive officer of MicroGREEN, said that his company's products address a potential \$25 billion market.

"We are very excited to have the Grand Ronde as an investor," Malone said. "We have focused our funding efforts toward Tribes where our sustainability ethos and our exciting economic opportunity resonate. ... There is a clear alignment with our green mission, our economic goals and the long-term goals of Tribal investors."

"MicroGREEN has a breakthrough

technology and customers are jumping on board," Asghar said. "They are a game changer in the cup world; reducing waste while lowering cost and improving product performance. We see a huge opportunity for growth and are delighted to be able to invest at this level."

The investment is the Tribe's fourth recent economic diversification move, including the purchase of Shasta Administrative Services in November 2012, investing in SAM Medical Products in Wilsonville in February of this year and allowing the installation of electric car charging stations at Grand Ronde Station in late 2012.

- In other action, Tribal Council:
- Approved the Tribal Housing Authority's annual O-Link memorandum of agreement to allocate fiscal year 2014 Indian Housing Block Grant funding using Tribal enrollment data for the needs component;
 - Approved the enrollment of two infants into the Tribe. ■

'I don't believe in leaving this for my grandkids'

ENROLLMENT continued from front page

ments until we have looked at every possible legal avenue to help some of these people."

Mercier's motion was seconded by Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom, but it failed 5-4.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno, who cast the deciding vote, said it was the current council's duty to uphold the Tribal Constitution and clean up the Tribe's enrollment files.

"With us having the audit and actually the proof, I believe, that people were enrolled incorrectly, that potentially there are people on our rolls that may not even be Grand Ronde ... there's potential that people might not even be Native Americans, but yet we spend our money every day on these people until we choose to correct this roll.

"I don't believe in leaving this for

my grandkids, my kids or anybody else to clean up. We have an opportunity with the audit that we have today, the evidence that we have today, and I believe it is our responsibility to meet that."

Those facing disenrollment had an opportunity to have hearings with the Enrollment Committee. The hearing with Tribal Council was an opportunity to present additional information that might prove they were not enrolled in another Tribe when they were enrolled in Grand Ronde.

Sixteen Tribal members testified before Tribal Council either in person or on the phone, either contesting that they were dually enrolled or explaining how it happened.

After a more than three-hour recess, Tribal Council returned and sent one case back to the Enrollment Committee for reconsideration and voted to disenroll 11 Tribal members.

Leno said some of the Tribal members who choose not to testify asked to be disenrolled so that they can immediately apply to re-enroll into the Tribe.

The other 18 cases were then held over until Friday, Aug. 16, when Tribal Council reconvened at 8 a.m. and spent six hours in Tribal Council's conference room, discussing the remaining cases.

At 2 p.m. Friday, Tribal Council reconvened and voted to rescind five of the 11 disenrollments that occurred on Aug. 14. With 23 cases left to deal with, Tribal Council remanded 16 disenrollment cases back to the Enrollment Committee for further consideration and seven more Tribal members were disenrolled.

"Over the years our Tribal membership, through constitutional amendments, has consistently pushed for tightening our Tribal enrollment," Leno said in a statement following the hearings. "As elected officials,

we took an oath of office to uphold our Tribal Constitution and the laws of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. In that same pledge, we swore that we would perform all duties required of us by the Constitution and the laws of the Tribe. For those reasons, we must move forward. This has not been an easy decision for Tribal Council. All of these issues have weighed heavily on each and every one of us. We cannot let any past errors override the clear language of the Constitution."

Leno added that there is an appeal process for Tribal members who were disenrolled.

"We want to remind our membership that there is a judicial process to appeal these decisions to Tribal Court and the Court of Appeals," he said. "We also need to be mindful that some people are waiting to be disenrolled so that they can be properly re-enrolled, expeditiously in the next enrollment period." ■