

Tuomi earns Ph.D. in health services

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Ron and Brenda Tuomi realized from the beginning that education would be very important for their children.

As the children grew, Brenda said, "We also knew it was important that they attend schools that fit their personalities, and met their needs."

On March 9, eldest daughter Ashley, 30, became the first in the family to receive a Ph.D. Strictly speaking, it is a DHS, Doctorate in Health Sciences from A.T. Still University's Arizona campus, with a focus on leadership and organizational behavior. She wrote her applied research project on dental anxiety among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

"It didn't matter what income or education Indians belong to," Ashley said. "All showed significant levels of anxiety about the dentist."

She started working on her doctorate in 2010, she said, and for the last two years she has been executive director of American Indian Health and Family Services in Detroit, Mich. The non-profit serves all 12 Michigan Tribes and 75 different Tribes from across the country, including members of the Grand Ronde and Siletz.

It serves more than a 1,000 cli-



Ashley Tuomi

Native.

Ashley oversees the operation, budgeted at \$2.7 million this year.

The clinic is funded by 16 grants including approximately \$1.2 million from the federal Indian Health Service. The agency is one of four organizations in Michigan awarded a \$50,000 grant from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to enroll individuals and families in the Affordable Care Act. More than 600 families have been enrolled as a result of the clinic's work.

The clinic serves clients with "pretty typical" health care problems, she said. Diabetes and hypertension top the list, and in the mental health category many present with depression and substance abuse.

The clinic also offers the sweat lodge experience, cultural services and traditional healers.

Ashley said she has learned that "there are such great health dis-

parities in the Native community." When she talks to students, she said, she emphasizes all of the opportunities for Native Americans entering the workforce.

"It's hard to get Native staff," she said.

She had a midlife crisis at a very young age, she said. When participating in Grand Ronde Royalty (for seven years winning three different crowns), she was always introduced as one of the Tribe's future doctors. Early on, she wanted to be a physician. "That didn't work out, but I ended up getting a scholarship from the Indian Health Service."

It required a two-year payback period. After two years, she said, she "fell in love" with the work. She has now been working with Indian Health Service for seven years.

"I really like the opportunity to

give back to the Native community. Even though I'm not back at Grand Ronde, I get to help the Native community as a whole," she said.

She comes back to Grand Ronde for one powwow each summer, and this year she will be back as a speaker for the Tribe's graduation ceremony.

She says that Grand Ronde scholarships for all three of her degrees were among the reasons she was able to complete her education.

Her sister, Tyla, 29, another success story from the family emphasis on education, teaches sixth grade in Eugene.

"(Ashley) was always very focused about what she needed to do and how to get there, from the minute she started college," said Brenda. "I could go on bragging about her for 10 days." ■

Workshop facilitators for micro-enterprise business classes wanted

MERIT is a microenterprise program that provides business training and one-on-one business counseling to residents of Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties who are in the process of starting their own businesses.

A microenterprise is defined as a very small (or micro-) business, having fewer than five employees (usually a single self-employed person or family), minimal capital needs, and whose owner has some social, cultural, economic or physical barrier to overcome that prevents access to traditional business training and counseling resources. We are looking for individuals who possess the best practices in workshop facilitation, instruction and classroom management to facilitate discussion and student information exchange on the topic of business development. Our goal is to create a safe, interactive, non-critical learning environment that encourages self-reflection and learning. We are looking for individuals who will build trust with each student to ensure they become completely engaged in the course to the best of their ability.

Application Instructions: Please send your resume and a bio to the MERIT Program Manager Mona Edwards at medwar44@chemeketa.edu. ■

Free online learning source

The information includes:

- Everyday life
- Math and money
- Computer training
- Online classes

Work and career information

Check it out at www.gcflearnfree.org

'Another great day for the Tribe'

BRIDGE continued
from front page

The \$135 million, 1,720-foot transit bridge coming to life over the Willamette River will connect Portland with Milwaukie for Tri-Met buses and light rail.

At the naming ceremony, Lewis described what the name means to the people of the Grand Ronde Tribe. A century and a half ago, he said, Grand Ronde ancestors were forced off their land and sent to reservations.

"It is an important time for us to re-establish our presence here in partnership with so many others," Lewis said. "Our people came from this place, but it's not simply a Native place. The bridge name means people, and it represents all people."

"This is really an acceptance and appreciation of our people," said Tribal Council member Cheryl A. Kennedy, who attended the naming ceremony. "It represents years of work and hope, and now it's here."

"To me, it's like another great

day for the Tribe," said Tribal Council member Jon A. George. "Once again, we are having our footprint being recognized in our ceded lands."

"This is well-deserved and long-awaited recognition of the Tribe's presence in Portland," Taylor said. "We're the Portland Harbor Tribe, the Willamette Valley Treaty Tribe. The government of this Tribe has always had its hand out in friendship and partnership with other governments and agencies in our ceded lands."

"It was an historic naming process, very deliberate," said Sue Keil, a member of the Naming Committee and treasurer of the OMSI Board of Trustees.

Tri-Met General Manager Neil McFarland said that it was another step toward "full development" of the area.

Portland historian Chet Orloff, chair of the Tri-Met Naming Committee, said that the bridge name reflected "a shared sense of place. This is a bridge that will last."

At the "ta-da moment" in the ceremony when the name selected

for the bridge was revealed, Tri-Met General Manager Neil McFarland said that "the bridge will announce its own name."

Martin Zarzar, a drummer formerly with the Portland band Pink Martini, started a drum roll, but nothing happened.

"You can't blame the banner for having a little stage fright," said McFarland. Then, a 150-foot banner unfurled and the name appeared: Tilikum Crossing, Bridge of the People.

Immediately, drumming from eight Tribal members could be heard. Moments later the group appeared with Native drums and the Tribe's traditional welcome song.

The drum group included Bobby Mercier, Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Jordan Mercier, Brian Krehbiel, Reina Nelson, Cole, David Harrelson and George.

"After the announcement presentation and drumming, folks were coming up and congratulating us," said Reibach. "Several had tears in their eyes and expressed how happy they were to see the Tribe recognized in such a beautiful way."

The bridge is designed to carry light rail trains, streetcars, buses, cyclists and pedestrians, but no private vehicles.

"We think it is the first of its kind in the country," McFarland said.

The bridge is set for completion in September 2015. "It created 10,000 jobs when the region needed them most," McFarland said. "The project is on the way to creating 14,000 jobs before the bridge project is finished."

"In the past at this very place," said Orloff, "Native Americans took canoes back and forth across the river for celebrations, not unlike what we will do here."

The decision by the Naming Committee was unanimous.

"I didn't have to push very hard," Lewis said. "They understood our story in a deeper way than for the other names."

Tribal interpretive signs explaining the name and the lands the bridge connects are still to come. The Tribe will be on board for future events tied to the project, Taylor said. ■