

Disaster drill



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Duke Kimsey, Tribal HVAC technician, straps a “victim” to a backboard during a full scale earthquake drill in the Governance Center on Tuesday, June 10. The scenario involved a large aftershock hitting after a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake that occurred on the Oregon coast, 25 miles from Grand Ronde, on June 1. The aftershock caused moderate to severe damage. During the drill, the Governance Center was evacuated, a search and rescue unit entered the building, assessed the situation, removed victims and brought them to triage. Kimsey is a member of the search and rescue unit.

West Valley district seeking Fire Explorers

The West Valley Fire District, which covers Grand Ronde, Willamina and Sheridan, is seeking youths for its Fire Explorer Program.

Young men and women age 14 to 20 will become familiar with career opportunities in the fire service through classroom instruction, hands-on training and volunteer work.

The program encourages and promotes accountability, safety, communication, teamwork, fitness and leadership.

Participants must attend weekly drills from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Saturdays, adhere to dress and conduct codes, perform weekly physical fitness and training specific to firefighting skills, and demonstrate a willingness to make improvements and show self-motivation.

For more information, contact Fire Explorer Post 908 adviser Seth Bellarts at 503-437-2046. ■

Sacred Hoop Ceremony set for June 21

The Behavioral Health Department will host a Sacred Hoop Ceremony at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 21, in the Tribal gym.

The four gifts of the Sacred Hoop are the power to forgive the unforgivable, healing, hope and unity.

The Sacred Hoop will bring blessings and healing. The ceremony is open to all people, so bring your families and friends.

The hoop brings healing for all recovering from different traumas (historical, intergenerational, addiction, etc.). It also strengthens sobriety and Wellbriety in the community.

For more information, contact Behavioral Health Director Kelly Nelson at 503-879-2026. ■

Tribe will work with Blumenauer's office

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marijuana legalization.

The issue is important to the Grand Ronde Tribe, Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary said, because the Tribe follows federal regulations. In addition, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene said, there are jurisdictional issues since the Tribe has to certify for some federal grants that Grand Ronde is a drug-free workplace.

So, what does the Tribe do if Oregon makes the use of marijuana legal while the federal government still considers it a crime? What does the Tribe do if an employee is found to have lingering traces of marijuana in their body during a urinalysis test, but is otherwise sober at work?

“We need to clean up the conflicts,” Blumenauer said, “and seek a clarification for Indian Country.”

Blumenauer called the federal government’s expensive war on drugs, and marijuana specifically, part of its “misplaced priorities” that lead to more than 750,000 arrests annually that disproportionately affect young people of color.

“I would appreciate having a representative from the Tribes,” Blumenauer said about upcoming meetings he will hold about the topic. “This is going to be tricky territory.”

Blumenauer, who has been a congressman since 1996, said he sees positives to the legalization of marijuana in Oregon. Illegal growers would stop destroying vast tracts of public and Tribal land through pollution. A legalized and regulated trade in marijuana would raise tax revenue that could be spent on

addiction treatment and hopefully reduce or end the violence of drug cartels.

“This could save the American people \$100 billion a year between the revenue raised and not spending money fighting something that most people think is all right,” Blumenauer said. “We need to clear out the gray areas. Tribes should not be caught in the middle.”

McClary called the potential legalization of marijuana in Oregon a “real issue” and vowed that the Grand Ronde Tribe would work with Blumenauer’s office about providing Tribal input.

After being greeted to the Tribal Governance Center with a welcome song performed by Tribal employees Bobby Mercier, Brian Krehbiel, Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Reina Nelson, David Harrelson, Travis Stewart and Jordan Mercier, Blumenauer and his aide Hilary Barber were escorted to the Tribal Council Conference Room for a sit-down with McClary and Tribal Council members Cheryle A. Kennedy, June Sherer and Jon A. George. Acting General Manager Chris Leno, Greene and Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor also attended.

He received a crash course in the Tribe’s ceded lands from Harrelson, the Tribe’s Cultural Protection specialist, and listened to stories from Kennedy, Sherer and George about living through Termination in 1954 and Restoration in 1983.

Harrelson and Tribal Council members stressed that the 29-year break in federal recognition created a “gap in voice” that the Grand Ronde Tribe is still dealing with in not having a say in Columbia River issues.

Kennedy vowed that the Grand Ronde Tribe will “fight tooth and

nail” for its rights on the Columbia River and lobbied Blumenauer for identifying Tribal boundaries so that one Tribe cannot infringe on the lands of another.

Sherer, who served three years in the Army, encouraged Blumenauer to help veteran’s organizations and veterans in need of health care. She also invited him to the Veterans Summit being held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds in early July.

George also talked about the lack of voice the Grand Ronde Tribe experienced after Termination and before Restoration, as well as how some federal agencies treat all Native Tribes alike. “It’s a cookie-cutter culture,” he said of some federal bureaucracies. Kennedy added that all Tribes are different and should be treated as such.

Kennedy touched on her expertise – health care – and noted that Native Americans and veterans are both recipients of rationed health care from the federal government. She said that an agreement struck between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Indian Health Service that allows Native veterans to be seen in Tribal health clinics, which then receive reimbursement, should be amended to allow all veterans to access care at nearby Native health clinics.

“It’s not an entitlement,” Kennedy said, adding that budget cuts to the Indian Health Service are a “diminishment of life.”

Blumenauer acknowledged that the federal government has not been a good partner with Native Tribes and has a “sorry history” of managing trust assets. “It’s scandalous,” he said.

He said it is important to respect and accommodate the contributions of Native peoples in creating federal

legislation, adding that he believes in the old baseball saying that the tie goes to the runner. “If it is a close call, I side with Native peoples,” he said. “You have a right to have close calls go your way. I appreciate how you honor your language, traditions and history ... it makes Oregon a richer place.”

Blumenauer also said he would encourage others in the Oregon congressional delegation to keep an amendment to the Grand Ronde Reservation Act moving forward. Although the amendment passed the House of Representatives on Jan. 13, it is stalled in the Senate while awaiting a bill regarding the Siletz Tribe that has been met with opposition from other Oregon Tribes and county governments.

Greene said the bills are so different that they should not be in the “same equation” and asked Blumenauer to encourage his colleagues not to the link the bills. McClary said the Grand Ronde amendment is unopposed unlike the Siletz proposal.

The Grand Ronde amendment would allow the Tribe to combine the current two-step process for taking into trust real property that is within the boundaries of its original reservation established in 1857.

The Siletz bill would expand that Tribe’s ability to take land into trust beyond Lincoln County, which is opposed by two Oregon Tribes and several potentially affected counties.

“You shouldn’t be held hostage,” Blumenauer said.

To open the conference room discussion, McClary gifted the congressman with a necklace.

“It is an honor to have you come and sit around our table,” McClary said. ■