

Fish distribution set for Nov. 17-18

Tribal fish distribution will be held from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 17-18, at the Natural Resources Department's Fish Lab, 47010 S.W. Hebo Road. Tribal members must show photo identification to pick up their fish. Elders will have a line established to expediently fill their requests. To ensure this, only Elders' orders will be filled using the line.

If you are picking up for others, a signed release form will be required. There will be no early or late pickups, and fish will not be mailed.

For more information, contact the Natural Resources Department at 503-879-2424. ■

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. ■

Fish & Wildlife Committee has new e-mail address

In an effort to be of better service to the membership, the Tribe's Fish & Wildlife Committee has created an e-mail address for those who hunt, fish and gather on the Reservation.

The e-mail address is designed so that Tribal members can make the committee aware of any concerns or questions and to make positive comments. The committee will do its best to provide answers and feedback to the membership so that everyone who wishes to utilize the Reservation lands may do so legally.

Submit your comments, questions and concerns to FW.Committee@grandronde.org. ■

Tribe opens exhibit at End of the Oregon Trail museum

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center is continuing its collaboration with the End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive & Visitor Information Center on several Native American historical exhibits.

A new exhibit, "Before the Grand Ronde Reservation: Native Presence and Assimilation at Willamette Falls," opened Monday, Oct. 13. This newest collaboration joins other enhancements the Tribe has been installing at the museum in 2014, including exterior interpretive and welcome signs, and displays about Tribal culture and lifeways in the galleries.

Oregon City is one of the historic sites of the Clackamas Tribes where they encountered settlers arriving on the Oregon Trail in the 1840s. The Clackamas Tribes are among the Tribes and bands from western Oregon that were sent to the Grand Ronde Reservation in the 1850s.

The End of the Oregon Trail museum is open 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily at 1726 Washington St., Oregon City. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$7 for senior citizens, \$5 for children 4 to 17 years of age, and free for children 3 and younger and for active military personnel.

For more information, call the center at 503-657-9336. ■

'Our biggest competitor is the Oregon Lottery'

DILLON continued
from front page

left southern Oregon after graduating from high school because of the bad economy. He went to Reno, where his sister was working in the gaming industry as well, and started on the bottom rung as a houseman, shampooing carpets and working in the laundry.

"My sister said, 'Hey, why don't you come down here. There are jobs here.' ... She was coming home every night with a \$50 bill, getting paid, and I'm working myself to death for \$18 a day and she's making \$70 to \$100 a night and getting a break every hour. I'm like, 'I want to do that!'"

The day after he turned 21 in 1977, he started working at Club Cal Neva, picking up chips as a dealer. From there, he was promoted to main floor person, pit boss and then assistant manager of Cal Neva's racing and sports book.

In February 1984, he was promoted to casino manager, a position that reported to the general manager. He remained in booming Reno until 1993, when he took a position as table games manager at Mystic Lake Casino in Prior Lake, Minn.

"At that time, Mystic Lake was the second largest Native American casino in the country," Dillon says. "They had a huge table gaming department. They had 142 blackjack games ... 1,200 people in their table gaming department."

He was quickly promoted to director of table games, and eventually

became director of gaming, interim vice president of Little Six Casino and assistant general manager at Mystic Lake in charge of all gaming departments, as well as surveillance and security.

Interestingly, when the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino opened in 1995, it hired the Mystic Lake surveillance and security staff.

In 1999, Dillon was asked to return to Cal Neva in Reno as vice president of operations. Cal Neva had about 1,650 slots and the second largest race and sports book in the country. After casinos opened in California, however, the Reno gaming economy nosedived and Dillon started looking for work elsewhere.

Six years ago, Dillon landed in Grand Ronde as the director of gaming.

"Technically, I still am," he jokes. "I haven't hired a new director yet. I've kind of come full circle, which is very strange."

Dillon says that although he has never aspired to be a general manager at a casino, he does have goals as the new leader of Spirit Mountain Casino. He says that early conversations with Tribal Council and the Spirit Mountain Gaming board have helped identify some projects he would like to work on.

He said the casino is coming up on its 20th anniversary and the building is in need of upgrades, from updating the gaming floor to renovating 106 more rooms at Spirit Mountain Lodge.

"The gaming floor looks like it

did when we opened," Dillon says. "We need to try and improve the ambiance, not just the games that are on the floor. It really positions who you are in the market."

Dillon says that the casino also needs to catch up on capital expenditures that were postponed after the economy crashed in 2008. Many of the slot machines, which are the core of the casino's business, are reaching their "end of life," meaning the manufacturers no longer make replacement parts and no longer support the technology.

"Our biggest competitor is the Oregon Lottery," Dillon says. "They have a plan to replace all 12,000 of their games within the next five years. That puts more pressure on us to make sure that we remain competitive and refresh the games on our floor."

Dillon says the casino will continue to support Tribal member employment, which usually runs about 12 percent to 15 percent of the workforce, but says the casino is being challenged by an improving economy to find good employees. If someone can find a 9-to-5 job in Salem or McMinnville, they are less likely to take a job 25 to 40 miles away that requires them to work nights, weekends and holidays.

"We're not getting near the number of applicants that we were," he says.

Dillon also says that the Tribe's new TERO program is giving Tribal members other employment options that have regular hours and

better pay than working the entry level, minimum-wage jobs at the casino.

"It is going to get harder and harder for us to attract quality employees," Dillon says.

Dillon says the aftereffects of the recent recession continue to affect Spirit Mountain Casino because people became more frugal in their discretionary spending.

"I think that, ongoing, it will be challenging to grow the business. I do think that we can do that. People are getting tired of being so thrifty. I think that as more people are retiring every day, and gaming is something retired people like to do, I do think it will take time to recreate that gaming habit."

Dillon also says he wants to make the casino a fun place to work despite the fact that gaming is a highly regulated business.

"You should still be able to have fun and focus on your job," he says. "Sometimes you become stiff and rigid because of that fear of violating a rule, but you do not have to overreact to that."

Dillon has been married to his wife, Cathy, for more than 30 years. He met her while working in Reno and she has worked in gaming marketing for much of their marriage. They live in West Salem.

"I look at this job as this is not my company, but the Tribe's company," Dillon says. "I need to understand 'What do they want their company to be?' And it is my job to help them get where they want to go." ■