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Season's meetings



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Two-year-old Aubrey Campbell visits with Santa, aka Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., during the Tribal Council Christmas Party held in the Tribal gym on Sunday, Dec. 7. More than 400 people attended the annual party. To see more photos, turn to page 8.

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Mercier attends White House Tribal Nations Conference

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Tribal Council member Chris Mercier represented the Grand Ronde Tribe at the sixth annual White House Tribal Nations Conference held Wednesday, Dec. 3.

The annual conference invited leaders from the 566 federally recognized Native nations – more than 300 attended – to meet with President Barack Obama, Cabinet officials and the White House Council on Native American Affairs regarding key issues facing Tribes, including respect for Tribal sovereignty and the federal government upholding treaty and trust responsibilities.

“I found the conference to be very inspiring and a good reminder of why it is so good to be working in Indian Country these days,” Mercier said. “The administration has proven that it takes the challenges confronting Tribal nations very seriously.”

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General Council briefed on Housing Authority

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

General Council received a briefing on the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority at the Sunday, Dec. 7, meeting held in the Community Center.

The Housing Authority’s mission, said a PowerPoint presentation, is to “ensure that each Tribal member has the opportunity to reside in housing that is affordable, provides a safe and healthy living environment, and promotes self-sufficiency, Tribal pride and spirit.”

Housing Authority Executive Director Brian DeMarco introduced GRTHA Board members Linda Hale, Dakota Whitecloud, Kristy DeLoe and Steve Bobb Sr., and thanked Tribal Council member Toby McClary and Assistant General Manager Stacia Martin for their work with the board.

Current Tribal housing includes 61 apartments in Elder housing; 108 family apartments, which includes 36 market rate and 72

low-income residences; and a 20-unit low-income apartment complex set to open in March.

Administrative Program Manager Joani Dugger reviewed the assistance programs administered by the Housing Authority, which include Down Payment Assistance grants, Medical Adaptation grants, Home Repair grants, Indian Health Service Water and Sanitation funding, Tenant Based Rental Assistance and Student Rental Assistance.

Dugger said the Student Rental Assistance program is the largest that the Housing Authority administers, helping more than 450 Tribal students since 2006 in paying for living quarters while attending school.

Rental Housing Coordinator Leon Ramos reviewed the Housing Authority’s “wait list.” He said that delays occur because tenants are tardy in turning in their keys and staff cannot enter a unit until it is cleared. Staff must then con-

duct a meth test and determine the work that needs to be done to make a unit habitable for the next tenant.

According to the PowerPoint, if an apartment tests positive for meth, “all bets are off” since a contractor must be contacted to clean up the unit, which can take up to a month to accomplish.

Rental Housing Coordinator Shonn Leno discussed the Housing Authority’s work order process, which prioritizes requests based on safety issues.

Leno also discussed the Housing Authority’s pet policy, which does not allow pit bulls, German



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Brian DeMarco makes a presentation during the Sunday, Dec. 7, General Council meeting held in the Community Center.

shepherds, wolf mixes, Dobermans and Rottweilers. He said the Housing Authority is changing how it charges for pets, moving from a pet deposit to a monthly fee for anything from a goldfish to a dog.

“It is so hard to identify what caused the damage,” Leno said, “that we eliminated that and said basically if you have a pet, if you can afford to have a pet, you will pay rent for that pet.” Housing Services Coordinator

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