

# Tribal police dog Nixwa earns dual certification

By Ron Karten

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

The Nov. 3 Oregon certification of Grand Ronde Tribal Police Officer Patrick McConnell and K-9 Officer Nixwa completed the pair's credentials at both the national and state levels.

Ongoing, McConnell and Nixwa require 16 hours of continued training a month. McConnell is Nixwa's handler.

The pair received a perfect score on the performance test held in Redmond by the Oregon Police Canine Association. State level certification meets the requirement of many law enforcement agencies that they cannot call out a K-9 for assistance unless the handler and dog are OPCA certified.

The state certification requires success in a parcel search, area search, room search and vehicle search, said McConnell in an e-mail. Both trainer and dog must demonstrate proficiency.

In late April, the pair received certification from the National Police Canine Association in Tucson, Ariz. They were certified for narcotics detection and patrol apprehension.

In the world of K-9 officers, certification comes not from government entities, but from private associations.

"When we returned to Oregon," McConnell said, "the decision was made to use Nixwa as a narcotic detection K-9 only due to a lack of resources it takes to keep up the patrol side along with the detection side."

Maintaining certification for both narcotics detection and patrol apprehension would require 32 hours of training a month on top of McConnell's regular work hours.



K-9 Officer Nixwa

"Because we are a small department," he said, "we don't have the manpower to assist with all those hours, so we chose one specialty, and that was detection."

Nixwa is trained to detect the odors of methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin or any derivatives of those narcotics. He presents a passive alert, meaning he sits when he detects one or more of the odors. Since June, Nixwa has made five finds resulting in five arrests.

Polk County District Attorney Aaron Felton supports the Grand Ronde Police Department and the K-9 program, McConnell said. Felton recently sent letters to sheriffs and police chiefs in Polk and Yamhill counties to let them know about the service Nixwa can provide their agencies. None so far have taken advantage of the standing offer.

Nixwa is a 3-year-old, 83-pound Belgian Malinois. Last January, McConnell selected him from among three dogs at Adlerhorst Kennels International in Riverside, Calif. At that time, Nixwa's name was Travis. Nixwa, a name selected by the Tribe, is a Chinuk Wawa word meaning "show me." ■

# Salmon Celebration



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Kathy Cole, Tribal Cultural Education and Outreach Program manager, serves Jacob Holmes a piece of smoked salmon during the Salmon Celebration held at Youth Education on Friday, Dec. 5. The annual event recognizes and honors the fish that make the long journey through the waters to Grand Ronde. Traditionally cooked and smoked salmon prepared in the fire pit behind Achaf-hammi, the Tribal plankhouse, was served to attendees.



Drummers and singers perform the "Salmon Song" to begin the annual Salmon Celebration held at Youth Education on Friday, Dec. 5.

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# Sobriety Event set for New Year's Eve

The Tribe's Youth Prevention and Behavioral Health programs will be holding the annual New Year's Eve Sobriety Event at Northern Lights Theatre, 3893 Commercial St. S.E., in Salem on Wednesday, Dec. 31.

The event is open to Tribal member families, plus one guest per family. There are 285 seats available on a first-come, first-served basis. RSVP to Shannon Stanton at 503-879-1489 or e-mail Shannon.stanton@grandronde.org. RSVP deadline is noon Wednesday, Dec. 24.

There will be three movies to choose from. Buses will load at the Community Center at 3:15 p.m. and leave on time at 3:30. First movie starts at 5 p.m.

Dinner will include a salad, two slices of pizza, and bottomless popcorn and soda. Sundaes will be hand-served to your seats.

This is a smoke-free event. ■

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