

Employees recognized for 740 years of service

Three staff members reach 25-year mark

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Fifty-eight Tribal employees with a combined 740 years of service were honored during the third-quarter Employee Recognition breakfast held Thursday, Dec. 11, in the Tribal gym.

The event featured a continental breakfast for employees and door prizes.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno, Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council members Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Ed Pearsall, Jon A. George and Denise Harvey attended and shook hands with the employees honored. George gave the invocation.

Leno said Tribal Council respects its employees who have, for budget reasons, been asked to do more with less over the last couple of years.

"You're part of our family," Leno said. "We thank you for all of the hard work you do."

Among those honored were three employees reaching the quarter-century mark in service – Human Resources Department Manager Connie Holmes, Timber



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Kande Little, a pharmacy technician for the Tribe, shakes hands with Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. during the Tribe's third-quarter Employee Recognition breakfast held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Dec. 11. Also waiting to congratulate Little on her years of service are Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, second from right, and Tonya Gleason-Shepek, right. Little has worked for the Tribe for six years.

and Roads Program Manager Jeff Kuust and Silviculture and Fire Protection Program Manager Jeff Nepstad. All three were hired by the Tribe in the summer of 1989.

In addition, employees recognized were:

24 years: Barbara Steere, Melanie Ebensteiner and Kelly Herber.

23 years: Bryan Langley.

22 years: Michael Wilson and Chris Leno.

20 years: Rob Greene.

18 years: Kimberly D'Aquila, Sharon Wattier II and Pearl Rife.

17 years: Bobby Mercier.

16 years: Toni Lockwood, Elaine Lane Raven and Sheila Blacketer.

15 years: Jeff Valentine and Kevin Mueller.

14 years: Matt Bucknell, Jack Dobiash, Julie Boekhoff and Egypt Leno.

13 years: Deborah Bachman.

12 years: John Harp, Trudi Yoshikawa, Tom Brown, Mark Mercier and Rick Andersen.

11 years: Kristy DeLoe, Peggy Carpenter and Brandy Humphreys.

10 years: Jolanda Catabay, Stephanie Simmons, Shannon Simi and Ken Trevino.

9 years: Deborah Kroeker, Erica Mercier and Siobhan Taylor.

8 years: George Valdez, Martin Gall, Louis King and Melody Wright.

7 years: Nicole Bishop, Scarlett Holtz, Alec Palanuk-Mercier, Volker Mell, Charles Neujahr, Dean Rhodes, Hal Mitchell, Kelly Mercier and Misty Carl.

6 years: Linda Hanna, Matt Zimbrick and Kande Little.

5 years: Kevin Ruggles, Kayla Leno and Terri Andries.

Employees received a bonus check and certificate, and those reaching the 10-year mark also received a Pendleton blanket.

After the service awards were handed out, Holmes raffled off a variety of prizes, including Holiday Express trains, bowls, a coffee-maker, movie theater tickets, an emergency preparedness bag and two shop vacuums. ■

Self-sufficiency is main goal

GENERAL COUNCIL
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Deborah Kroeker reviewed current concerns, such as people living temporarily in Tribal housing who have not been screened for criminal histories and have not been determined to be eligible to live in Tribal housing.

"We want to make sure that the person who is living next door to your grandkids is safe for your grandkids to be around. That's the bottom line," she said.

Kroeker also discussed the drug policy, which includes marijuana still being illegal on Tribal lands and in housing despite passage by Oregon voters of recreational marijuana use in November. The new state law takes effect in July.

"Tenants who refuse to cease marijuana use and are caught will be asked to find other accommodations," the PowerPoint stated.

Elder Steve Bobb Sr., who serves on the Housing Authority Board of Directors, discussed the vision for the future and stressed self-sufficiency.

"Self-sufficiency is one of the most significant things we are tasked with helping our Tribal members to achieve," Bobb said, "so that they can stand side by side with others in this society as equal and not count on, or rely upon, the support of those who do."

"Self-sufficiency, since the time of our Restoration, has been a goal, has been a mission and an expectation for our people, our children and our Tribe that we bring self-sufficiency to the next generation of

Grand Ronde Tribal members."

A PowerPoint slide stated that non-elderly, non-disabled tenants should gain stability in their lives and be able to move out of assisted housing within five to eight years of moving into assisted housing.

Bobb exhorted Tribal members to work hard to be successful and self-sufficient.

"Grand Ronde Tribal members are strong people," Bobb said. "Please don't let your life be a blank page in a book of achievement."

DeMarco closed the presentation by reminding Tribal members that the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority must follow federal regulations from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Interim General Manager Rick George gave a brief presentation about the Friday, Dec. 5, grand opening of the new Grand Ronde Food Bank, 9675 Grand Ronde Road.

The new food bank is operated by Salem-based Marion-Polk Food Share, which hired Tribal member Francene Ambrose to manage it.

Vice President of Programs Ian Dixon-McDonald later said that 55 food boxes were distributed and 169 individuals were served.

"It is an investment in this community's future. It's an investment in self-sufficiency," George said.

The next food distribution will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19.

The Education Committee also reported to General Council. Committee Chair Tammy Cook introduced the other members – Mychal Cherry, David DeHart, Alton But-

ler, Brenda Tuomi, Tracy Moreland and Shelby Olson-Rogers.

The committee meets at 5:15 p.m. on the first Monday of the month in the Adult Education Building. Its current theme is convincing Tribal youth that "school is cool."

DeHart reported that since 2004, Tribal members have earned eight doctorate degrees, 60 master's degrees, 162 bachelor's degrees, 125 associate degrees and 202 GED diplomas.

"Student success equals the Tribe's success," Tuomi said.

Cook read a hefty list of universities and colleges that Tribal students have graduated from. "Our Tribal members have graduated from some of the biggest and most prestigious colleges in the United States, and for that we can be very, very proud," she said.

In response to a question from Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Kathleen George about high rates of absenteeism among Native students in Oregon, Tuomi said the Education Committee is seeking to start a mentorship program.

Acting Education Department Manager John Harp added that two more youth tutors have been added to the department's 2015 budget.

"I think they do a great job," Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno said about the Education Committee. "This Tribe has surely stepped up and showed our commitment to education and bettering our Tribal members' lives."

Tribal Council member Jon A. George said that through the Tribe's

and Education Committee's efforts, Tribal children are no longer taught "if" they will go to college, but "when" they will go to college.

In other action, nominations for three open seats on the Elders Committee occurred. Louise Coulson nominated Julie Duncan; Duncan nominated Cherie Butler; Laura Gleason nominated Faye Smith; Violet Folden nominated Jennie Van Atta; and Gladys Hobbs nominated Duane Wheeler. Votes will be accepted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 30, at the birthday meeting held at the Elders Activity Center and also during the Sunday, Jan. 4, General Council meeting.

Kathy Soderberg won the \$100 door prize and Jade Unger, Earnest Norton and Kiah Runningbird won the \$50 door prizes. In addition, necklaces and earrings donated by Tribal Council member Jon A. George, four turkey or ham gift certificates donated by Tribal Council and homemade food items donated by Veronica Gaston were raffled off.

Land and Culture Department Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Tribal Council members Chris Mercier and Jon A. George and Jade Unger performed the cultural drumming and singing to open the meeting. Elder Steve Bobb Sr. gave the invocation.

The next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 4, in the Community Center.

The entire meeting can be viewed on the Tribal website, www.grandronde.org, under the Video short-cut. ■