

Radon risk in Grand Ronde unknown

Residents may be eligible for free kit to test for cancer-causing gas

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

A recent update of state data regarding radon risks in Oregon communities did not include any information from Grand Ronde, leaving the risk level for residents in the area unknown.

However, Grand Ronde residents, as well as those in other West Valley communities, are eligible to receive a free radon test kit since they live in zip codes where there were fewer than 20 test results. Residents can send an e-mail to radon.program@state.or.us to receive instructions on how to get a free test kit, which will be provided while supplies last.

Radon is an odorless, tasteless

and invisible radioactive gas that comes up from the ground and is drawn into buildings, where it can build up to dangerous levels. Radon levels vary throughout Oregon depending on the underlying geology.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths annually in the United States, making it the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking. Radon gas is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the United States.

According to the EPA's website, any home may have a radon problem, including homes without basements.

The Oregon Radon Program collects radon test data from test kit manufacturers to gauge which areas of the state have the potential for high radon levels. The data then allows the Radon Program to identify areas where educational

outreach efforts need to be focused.

The 2-year-old data was recently updated with additional test data from around the state.

One Yamhill County community, Dundee, was named as an area with a high radon risk. Meanwhile, communities closer to Grand Ronde were deemed to have less of a risk. Sheridan, which had six test results, was deemed to be at low risk, and Willamina, with five test results, was deemed to be at moderate risk. McMinnville, with 40 test results, also was deemed to have a moderate risk.

"The take-home message is that every home needs to be tested, regardless of where it is located," said Brett Sherry, coordinator of the Radon Program at the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division. "You may have the only house on the block with elevated radon levels."

The best time to test for radon is during the heating season, when

windows and doors are closed. Test kits sell for between \$15 and \$25 at hardware and home improvement stores should the supply of free test kits run out.

"Radon has been detected in homes all across Oregon. The only way to know if your home has high radon levels is to test," Sherry said.

Brian DeMarco, executive director of the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority, said that testing of Tribal housing for radon gas levels has not been done in the past, but that the Housing Authority is in the process of obtaining test kits for all Tribal units.

For more information about radon levels in Oregon, visit the Radon Program website at www.healthoregon.org/radon, which lists radon test data by city and zip code. The site also includes information on radon testing and mitigation, or West Valley residents can call 971-673-0440 for more information. ■

Family Movie Night set for Jan. 30

Youth Prevention will be showing "The Book of Life" during Family Movie Night at 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30, in the Tribal gym.

A build-your-own sundae will be provided as dessert. Water and fruit snacks also will be available and there will be three door prizes.

For more information, contact Shannon Stanton at 503-879-1489 or e-mail shannon.stanton@grandronde.org. ■

Health insurance sign-ups continuing

Native American and Alaska Natives can enroll year-round in Medicaid and the Oregon Health Plan, as well as for private health insurance coverage.

For more information, contact Certified Application Assistants Loretta Meneley at 503-879-1359, Sydney Clark at 503-879-2197 or call 800-775-0095 for an appointment to apply for or discuss health insurance. ■

Tribal Council donated \$250

DINNER continued
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there, too. The Christmas dinner serves a good purpose to the community because a lot of singles go there for Christmas, and others who have no place else to go."

The donation came about when the Elders Committee gave its quarterly report to Tribal Council in early December. Tribal Elder and Elders' Committee member Richard Ray made the pitch.

"I raised the question of helping out the restaurant in light of the robbery," Ray said.

In addition to the Elders Committee contribution, Tribal Council agreed to donate another \$250.

Year-round, the Rays are patrons of Coyote Joe's. Ray said that his job is to harass the waitresses. For the last five years, the Rays have contributed \$100 toward the Christmas dinner.

It is a large cast of characters who make the dinner happen every year. This year, volunteers took a lump of coal that came in the form of a makeshift crowbar used during the robbery and replaced it with turkey, ham and fixings for more than 600.

"One of the largest crowds ever," said Coyote Joe's owner Rolly Heuser, a Willamina resident.

Heuser has owned Coyote Joe's for all but three months of its run, going back to October 1993. A group that became the staff had started the restaurant in summer of that year.



Photo courtesy of Coyote Joe's

Diners kept Coyote Joe's busy the entire time the restaurant's annual Christmas Day dinner was served on Thursday, Dec. 25.

Ray and his wife, Kathy, have been volunteers at Coyote Joe's Christmas dinner almost from the start.

"The whole thing is run by the community," Richard says. "The community donates turkeys and time, presents and money." This year, Kathy was hostess and Richard did "pretty much anything that needed to be done."

Coyote Joe's employees volunteer on Christmas for the job they do daily. Other volunteers from throughout the area, adding up to some 25 in all, did every imaginable restaurant job, from collecting, delivering and preparing the food to waiting on tables and clearing them to washing dishes and resetting the tables.

Credits this year also included Willamina retiree Bob Hollister, who stood in for Santa Claus. He

has starred in the show for the last two years and more in years earlier.

Under his tailored red suit with white accents, Hollister gave out what seemed like thousands of toys and gifts both to children and women.

The Total Destruction team with some 40 local members, coordinator of the annual mud drags in town, also collected toys and other gifts for the dinner at the McMinnville Bi-Mart.

In years past, Heuser said, the group has collected about \$1,500 worth of gifts.

Dinner guests come every year from the local Willamina, Sheridan and Grand Ronde areas and beyond. They travel from McMinnville and Dallas to eat on Christmas Day, too, Heuser said.

Roy Whitman, a retired Willamina teacher, along with Future

Farmers of America students from Willamina and Perrydale high schools made off-stage appearances, collecting 300,000 pounds of food this year. Some went to Coyote Joe's Christmas dinner, some to local food banks and a truckload also went to Coos Bay this year, Heuser said.

Volunteers from the Free Methodist Church in Willamina processed vegetables for the dinner.

Willamina High School contributed use of its cafeteria freezers and ovens. The school allowed the restaurant to store perishables in the days leading up to Christmas and to use cafeteria cooking facilities that enabled Whitman and his crew to turn a massive amount of raw food into four-star dinners.

"We had 25 full-sized trays that needed to be cooked," Heuser said.

Whitman started cooking at 6 a.m. Christmas Day and by 9 he was delivering complete hot dinners to Coyote Joe's.

"We couldn't handle all that in our kitchen," Heuser said, though Coyote Joe's cooking facilities also were busy all morning.

Heuser and staff scheduled the event from 11 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. A line started forming a little after 10, though, so the place opened and dinners were served well beyond the scheduled closing time.

"We were still full at 2:30," Heuser said, "and we continued serving those already in the restaurant." In true Christmas fashion, they served everybody who came to their door. ■