

Council has always supported food banks

FOOD BANK continued from front page

employees Jordan Mercier, Travis Stewart, Michael Karnosh, Brian Krehbiel, Bobby Mercier, Reina Nelson and Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, along with Tribal Council member Jon A. George, performing cultural drumming and singing.

George then gave the invocation before Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno introduced other Tribal Council members in attendance – Tonya Gleason-Shepek, Denise Harvey, Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. and Cheryle A. Kennedy.

Leno acknowledged past Tribal Councils that always supported a food bank effort in the Grand Ronde area even though the facility moved from location to location.

“We still always had the idea of taking care of our community, taking care of our membership,” Leno said. “The ideal was to always make sure that people had a meal.

“It is very proud for me to be the chairman of a Tribe that has supported and kept alive those ideals of making sure that we take care of our people, we take care of our community.”

Kennedy saluted previous Tribal members who helped feed those in need in the Grand Ronde community, particularly Eugene Hudson, who walked on in May 2014.

Kennedy said that Hudson was one of the early dedicated volunteers, traveling to Siletz and Salem to pick up food and bring it back to Grand Ronde to feed people.

“Gene Hudson stepped forward and from that point on, even though the food source moved, he moved with it,” Kennedy said. “He, on his own, volunteered to go pick up food. He was there to make sure that people were always fed.”

A plaque honoring Hudson hangs inside the new Food Bank building.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., middle, talks with Alex Beamer, left, Marion-Polk Food Share Board of Directors vice chair, and his wife, Lori, during the Grand Ronde Food Bank's grand opening celebration held on Thursday, April 9.



Francene Ambrose, left, coordinator of the Grand Ronde Food Bank, is gifted a necklace by Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno during a grand opening celebration held on Thursday, April 9.

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Marion-Polk Food Share Chief Executive Officer and President Rick Gaupo said it was fitting that the agreement between the Tribe and Food Share to build and operate a new food bank in Grand Ronde occurred over a lunch between Tribal Council and the organization's Board of Directors.

“That moment is when we said that

we should be partnering together and we can do this together,” Gaupo said. “I think it is so fitting that the perspective changed over food. Over food, we understood that fellowship happens, that community happens and that partnership happens.”

“Everyone is excited about this partnership,” added Mike Garrison, Food Share Board of Directors

chairman.

Ambrose introduced about 15 volunteers, who have donated more than a 1,000 hours to the Food Bank since it opened in December. She added that 312 food boxes were distributed and more than 1,000 individuals were served in March by the food pantry, which allows customers to shop for food instead of being handed a pre-determined box.

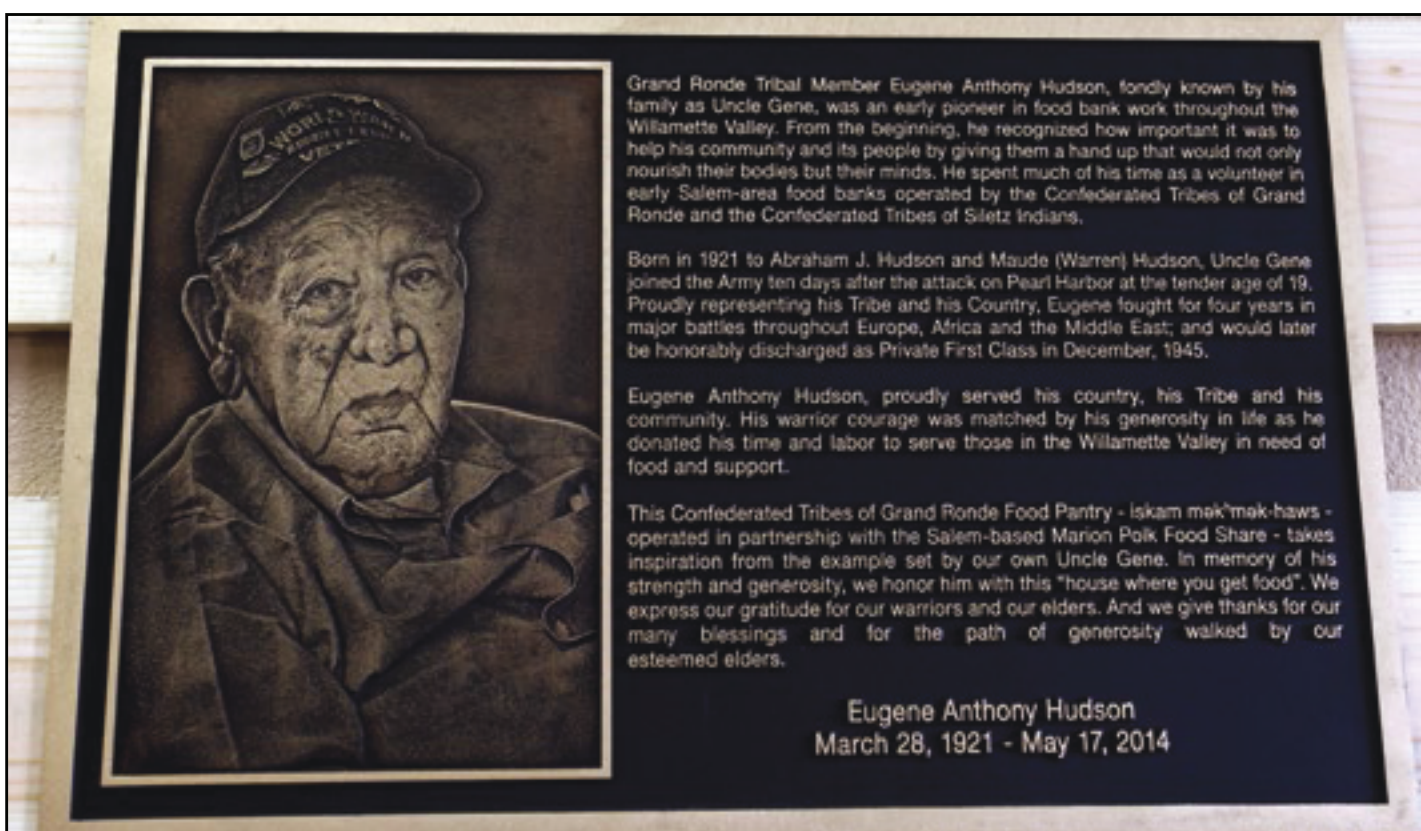
After the grand opening ceremony, more than 100 attendees toured the facility, walking among boxes of produce, bags of potatoes, cabbage and red onions, freezers full of frozen food, and shelves laden with canned goods and bread, among many other food items.

Light refreshments, coordinated by Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, also were available to snack on.

Other Tribal employees who attended the grand opening included General Manager Dawn Doar, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin, Nutrition Program Manager Kristy DeLoe and Tribal Planner Rick George, among many others.

“Keep in mind,” Gaupo said, “when you look inside the food pantry that you are building community.”

“There is great value in looking after one another,” Kennedy added. ■



A plaque honoring Eugene Hudson, a Tribal member who walked on in May 2014, and his lifelong work for Grand Ronde-area food banks is permanently on display at the Grand Ronde Food Bank.