

General Council briefed on TERO

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

In its first full year of operation, the Tribe's Tribal Employment Rights Office helped Tribal members obtain jobs that paid approximately \$299,506 in wages, said TERO Director Greg Azure during the Sunday, May 3, General Council meeting held in the Community Center.

"We've changed some lives with these job opportunities," Azure said. "That is what we're all about; that is what motivates us. We know we're making a difference in some people's lives.

"Part of that is what they are doing. They're getting up every day, sometimes driving quite a distance to these jobs and sticking with it, and learning a lot."

Tribal Council adopted the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance in 2013 and the Employment Rights Office became fully operational in 2014, growing to six employees, five of whom are Grand Ronde Tribal members. The ordinance's goal is to ensure that Native people can participate in economic opportunities on and near the Grand Ronde Reservation.

The Employment Rights Office is supervised by a TERO Commission, which reports to Tribal Council.

The ordinance applies to Tribal enterprises, such as Spirit Mountain Casino and the government, as well as to contractors conducting business on the Reservation.

TERO also enables the Tribe to work with the Oregon Department of Transportation to obtain



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Tribal Employment Rights Office Director Greg Azure briefs the membership on his office's 2014 accomplishments at the Sunday, May 3, General Council meeting held in the Tribal Community Center.

construction project jobs for Tribal members within a 60-mile radius of the Reservation. In 2014, TERO began dispatching workers to good-paying ODOT projects and is looking to send workers to 19 such projects in 2015 as the construction season revs up.

Azure said highlights for 2014 included referring 67 people to 12 construction projects, Tribal and ODOT, which provided job opportunities to 40 workers. The office also recruited more than 130 applicants to its Skills Bank and certified 17 Indian-owned businesses that are able to exercise a 5 percent bidding advantage on Tribal projects.

TERO also signed more than 90

TERO compliance agreements with construction contractors in 2014 and held seven training events that helped 67 participants improve their job skills.

Locally, Azure said TERO has sent workers to such Tribal projects as the new apartment complex, the employment services building construction, Uyxat Powwow Grounds arbor construction, renovation work at Spirit Mountain Casino and remodeling of the Procurement storage building. TERO workers also have been involved in the completed Grand Ronde Food Bank building, Ackerson Road pump station project, Community Garden pole building construction and extension of the sidewalk on Grand Ronde Road to the Women's Transitional House.

In the first quarter of 2015, Azure said TERO wages exceeded \$80,000. "For the most part, this is new money to Tribal members and new money circulating in the community," he said.

Besides monetary benefits, TERO has also started a Worker of the Month Award recognition. So far, winners have been Richard Brisbois in December, Marcus Gibbons in January, Steve Bobb Jr. in February and Ferrell DeGarmo in March. TERO will be holding a Worker of the Year Award dinner on Saturday, May 30, at the Elders Activity Center.

Other accomplishments, Azure said, were holding training sessions that ranged from teaching Native

Americans how to become flaggers on construction projects to learning how to operate a forklift to first aid courses. TERO also has certified 81 contractors that bid on select ODOT projects within the TERO boundary.

Azure added that TERO's Workforce Program has been working behind the scenes to help Tribal members in their attempts to obtain and retain jobs and in career advancement at Spirit Mountain Casino and in the Tribal government.

He said that Tribal member employment at the casino has increased from 10.86 percent in 2009 to 12.6 percent in 2014 with 19.7 percent of those hired during the first quarter of 2015 being Tribal members. At the Governance Center, Tribal members hold 190 of 384 positions (49.4 percent). Data showed that of those hired in the first quarter of 2015 by the Tribal government, 33 percent were Tribal members. The Grand Ronde Food & Fuel Co. has 42 percent Tribal member employment.

After the presentation, Azure fielded five comments and questions from people in the audience. During the comment session, Azure said TERO collected more than \$290,000 in fees in 2014 as the Employment Rights Office moves closer to its goal of being self-sustaining.

A scheduled presentation by Spirit Mountain Community Fund was postponed until the Sept. 13 General Council meeting.

The next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, June 28, at the Community Center. Tribal Council nominations will be the only item on the agenda.

Tribal Elders Val Grout and Ann Lewis and Tribal spouse Richard Vanatta won the \$50 door prizes and Tribal spouse Terry Gray won the \$100 door prize. Necklaces made by Tribal Council member Jon A. George and apple butter donated by Veronica Gaston also were raffled off.

Land and Culture employees Bobby and Travis Mercier and George, accompanied by Tribal Royalty, opened the meeting with drumming. Tribal Elder Dakota Whitecloud gave the invocation.

The meeting, in its entirety, can be viewed on the Tribal website, www.grandronde.org, under the News tab and then click on the Video link. ■

WIC to visit Community Health

Pregnant? Breastfeeding? Does your family include a child under the age of 5? If so, you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children program. With WIC, people can receive answers to nutritional questions and access fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, juice, cereal and more. A WIC representative will be at Community Health on the first and third Tuesday of the month between 9 and 11 a.m. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 503-879-2078. ■

Construction workers needed for work on upcoming projects

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) is seeking construction workers who are CTGR Tribal members and enrolled members of federally-recognized Indian Tribes to participate in a workforce that is being prepared for deployment on construction projects. Projects are located on the Grand Ronde Reservation and on ODOT projects in various locations in northwestern Oregon.

TERO is looking for workers in the following job classifications:

- Carpenter
- Laborer
- Equipment operator
- Cement masons
- Truck driver
- Electricians
- Ironworkers
- Loggers
- Painters
- Asphalt workers

In addition, TERO is also seeking experienced Native American highway traffic control flaggers for assignments to projects. A limited amount of training positions in construction trades are available to candidates who meet apprenticeship requirements.

For an application to be considered for these opportunities or for more information, go to www.grandronde.org/tero, e-mail at tero@grandronde.org or call 503-879-2188. ■

TERO Open House



TERO will be hosting an Open House Event for those of you who are interested in learning more about the program and job assistance. TERO staff will be available to answer any questions you may have and will also be on hand to assist with filing out TERO applications. We hope to see you there!

When: June 25th from 5-6pm

Where: Adult Education Building Room 126 A & B

Light refreshment will also be served.

If you have any questions you can call Keri Kimsey at 503-879-2188