

Rose Festival Court tours Tribal campus

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

This year's Portland Rose Festival Court toured Grand Ronde on Wednesday, May 13, and ate lunch with Tribal Elders and visited the Tribal plankhouse and Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center during their visit.

The 15 members of the Rose Festival Court and five chaperones traveled from their Portland-area high schools to the Reservation.

The tour was arranged through Spirit Mountain Casino's Marketing Department and began at Chachalu.

The Rose Festival Court is made up of young women selected in March of each year. During April, they attend several meetings that prepare them for the many appearances that follow in May. The Rose Festival Court travels to various community events and the princesses visit with business leaders, tour hospitals and senior facilities, and interact with youth organizations five days a week for five weeks.

Each princess receives a \$3,500 scholarship to attend college. The mission of the program is to provide scholarships for higher education, promote community outreach and volunteerism, and to offer networking and mentoring opportunities to outstanding young women.

The princesses, each representing their families, schools and the Rose Festival Court, stepped off a tour bus to be greeted by Tribal member Jocelyn Huffman, who is the sponsorship administrator for Spirit Mountain Casino. Huffman's office was responsible for arranging the tour along with Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin.

Huffman welcomed the Rose Festival Court and chaperones and then introduced Reina Nelson of the Tribe's Land and Culture Department. Nelson gave a warm welcome and then Bobby Mercier, Travis Stewart, Brian Krehbiel and Jordan Mercier performed a drum song in the museum's replica plankhouse.

"Every time we have visitors we like to welcome you," said Bobby Mercier of the welcoming drum song.

Nelson emphasized how far the Tribe has come in a short amount of time.

"If you look around at the land it's beautiful," Nelson said. "It has been restored. We are alive."



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Kathy Cole, left, Tribal Cultural Education and Outreach Program manager, talks with Tabitha Ivan, a 2015 Rose Festival Court Princess, while court members tour Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center on Wednesday, May 13. At left, Rose Festival Court princesses dance to "The Blue Heron Song" during a visit to the Tribe's plankhouse on Wednesday, May 13.



As the princesses toured the museum, they asked many questions and their chaperones seemed impressed.

"I'm always so amazed at the baskets and the beadwork," said Portland Rose Festival President Frank Chinn. "Are people still making baskets?"

Cultural Education and Outreach Program Manager Kathy Cole gave a brief lesson in the Chinuk Wawa language and explained that the Land and Culture Department developed an app for Apple products to help others learn the language and preserve it for future generations.

"What an amazing thing to get to do to save a language," said Princess Tabitha Ivan, 18, who is a senior at Lincoln High School. She said she plans on a career as an entrepreneur.

Next the princesses checked out "the shop" and spent time with Tribal Artisan Travis Stewart and Tribal Historic Preservation Program Manager David Harrelson.

Stewart demonstrated carving and talked about the many art projects he and the rest of the staff are working on. He showed a mask that he is currently carving and said that the Tribal artisans make their own traditional tools.

Harrelson said that the staff artisans are afforded a unique outlook on their projects.

"It's not so much about the time; it's about having the right energy,"

Each princess shared her name, school and interests, as well as her volunteer efforts.

Throughout the tour, Court Princess Naomi Tsai gifted 2015 Rose Festival pins to Tribal representatives. Tsai, 17, is a senior at Cleveland High School who plans to attend medical school for an international career in health sciences.

After gifts were exchanged, all the princesses gathered in front of the Elders Activity Center for a group picture.

As the tour entered the Tribal plankhouse, achaf-hammi, Chinn said he was excited for the court to gain this experience.

"This is a great cultural exchange. I'm so glad the girls can see this," Chinn said.

The court gathered on seats nearest the fire pit and Cultural Outreach Supervisor Bobby Mercier said, "We are happy that you are here today" in Chinuk Wawa. Mercier explained the history of the plankhouse and how its name came about. He also explained how the Tribe acquired the timber used to build the house.

When Princess Lily Brodrick, an 18 year-old senior at Wilson High School, asked Mercier why the Tribal history presentation at the museum began in the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition, he had an answer.

"Our stories go back 15,000 years," said Mercier.

The Rose Festival Court then took to the plankhouse's floor where they were taught the "Blue Heron" dance that had them first walking and then running in a circle and acting out the song.

"We had a fabulous visit to the reservation," said Chinn. "I loved that the 2015 Rose Festival Court was able to get out and visit Grand Ronde. In our fast-paced world, I believe it is always positive to have an experience of interacting with a large variety of people and to learn their story and cultures, especially in our own backyard."

Chinn said he thinks the visit will change things for the princesses.

"I am sure that the court no longer sees Grand Ronde as a place along the side of the road on the way to the beach," said Chinn. "Being of Chinese descent, I know how important it is to retain the culture, history and language of one's origin. It is important for people to know where they came from as well as looking to the future." ■



Harrelson said.

After touring the museum, the princesses traveled to the Elders Activity Center for lunch with Tribal Elders. After grabbing their lunch trays, the princesses sat amongst Elders and the Grand Ronde Tribal Royalty princesses.

The Rose Festival Court was met by Tribal Council members Jon A. George and Denise Harvey.

"This is always an honor," said George. "Time spent with Elders is important. Our Elders come first. What has happened here is because of our Elders."

George linked the Rose Festival Court princesses to Tribal Royalty when he said, "Congratulations on becoming princesses just like our royalty. Thank you for honoring us today." George then introduced Harvey and thanked Huffman for her efforts in coordinating the tour.

Rose Festival Court princesses then formed a chorus line and each member gave an introduction and a sponsor pitch to the audience.

Summer food service starts

A free lunch for any child from 1 to 18 years of age will be served beginning Monday, June 8, as part of the Summer Food Service.

Free lunch will be served through Aug. 14 at Tina Miller Park in Willamina from 11 to 11:30 a.m. and at Raven Loop Park in Grand Ronde from noon to 12:30 p.m.

Lunch also will be served at Willamina Elementary School to any student attending the Art Conspiracy in June and summer school in July and August. ■

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