

Tribe dedicates new employment building

By Brent Merrill
Smoke Signals staff writer

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde dedicated the new Employment Services and Training Center building on the Tribal campus on Tuesday, June 30, with a small gathering and a job fair.

After Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave the invocation, he accompanied drummers Jordan Mercier, Travis Stewart and David Harrelson for a welcoming song.

“This building of all buildings today is designed to bring hope and prosperity and new beginnings for our Tribal families. Through these doors, our members will have the opportunity to change their lives ... to build for their families,” George said.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno was joined by the entire Tribal Council and said in his opening remarks that the new building has been on the minds of Tribal leadership for years.

“I want to thank all of the people who put this together,” said Leno. “This has really been a vision of council that someday we would have a one-stop shop type of employment place to streamline people to get hired. More importantly for council, we are fulfilling a mission of having a Tribal member walk through that door and maybe be able to go to work and really change their life not only for them, but for their family.”

The new building will be the home of the Tribe’s Human Resources, the Tribal Employment Rights Office, the 477/Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Spirit Mountain Casino Human Resources. All four programs will work in concert to meet the employment needs of Tribal members and for the first time they will all work under the same roof.

Each program was represented by staff, who had tent-covered tables set up outside the new building to share program information and promotional material with interest-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

From left, Tribal Council members Chris Mercier, Ed Pearsall, Tonya Gleason-Shepek and Denise Harvey, Tribal Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., Tribal Chairman Reyn Leno, Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy, Tribal Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council member Jon A. George participate in the ribbon cutting for the Employment Services and Training Center building on the Tribal campus on Tuesday, June 30.

ed job seekers.

“This is something we (Tribal Council) thought about for a long time,” said Leno. “This is another piece of what the council members have all worked toward - the bigger picture and the bigger plan. I know we are going to make this successful. I think we have a lot of good people to help do that.”

Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy echoed Leno’s comments and thanked everyone who made the new building possible.

“Everything takes time, but we are here today and I’m very pleased about that,” said Kennedy. “I think we, as Indian people, have learned to be very patient with things and sometimes they do take years to get to this stage, but I’m very pleased that it has. There is a thrill that goes through me about the lives that will be changed because of the services that are being offered here. I raise my hands to all the people that worked to make sure that this

happened.”

Once those gathered began the tour of the two-story office building, Leno took a moment to share stories with Tribal Engineering and Public Works Manager Jesse White and the man who designed the building—John Shirley of Anderson Shirley Architects Inc. in Salem.

“This was all just fields,” said Leno. “There have been a lot of changes, but this area was all just hay fields.”

White said the building was constructed on a tight time frame and that the structure was modeled after the Tribe’s Adult Education Building. White said Shirley worked on the Adult Education complex and it made sense for the Tribe to work with Anderson Shirley Architects again on this new building.

White said ground was broken on the project in August 2014 and that he was very pleased with how quickly the building came together.

“We condensed all the planning and design and construction into that 10-month window. Typically we would be looking at 18 months to complete construction,” said White. “Tribal Council’s direction was to get it done and I’m really happy with it. Like Reyn said the direction from council was to have a one-stop shop. As soon as the Tribal member walks in the door there is someone there to assist them and to evaluate their needs. The building was really set up that way with each department having their own space, but being interconnected. I think Tribal Council, the executive office and the Tribal members will be pleased with it too.”

Shirley, who founded Anderson Shirley Architects with Karl Anderson in 2004, said the enthusiasm and excitement of the people he worked with on the new Employment Services and Training Center building made the job fun for him.

“I enjoyed the whole process,” said Shirley. “Everybody was really enthusiastic about the project. All the way through it has been a fun process and now to see it come to fruition is icing on the cake.”

Tribal Council Vice Chairman Jack Giffen Jr. said the new employment center had been an 11-year project for him and he thanked everyone who made it possible.

“Anytime you bring four different departments together you have challenges,” said Giffen. “It will take a foundation of cooperation and partnership to achieve the ultimate goal of helping our Tribal members succeed. I’m happy to see this building open up and I’m happy to see the different departments come together and forming that foundation for the Tribal members.” ■



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