

Poage hired as RN for Adult Foster Care lodges

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Much of the country is just now recognizing the benefits of adult foster care and the positive effects it can have on the lives of elderly Americans.

According to a study by the Rutgers University Center for State Policy and the American Association of Retired Persons, Oregon has been ahead of that curve for 35 years and is considered in the health care industry to be a pioneer in adult foster care.

While the rest of the nation catches up, Native American Tribes like the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have been taking care of their Elders since time immemorial.

Helping to continue that tradition, new Program Manager/Registered Nurse Debora Poage joined the Tribe's Adult Foster Care team in December after 43 years of nursing.

Poage, who is an Army veteran, retired from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in December 2014 and quickly decided she wasn't finished helping people. Poage received an honorable discharge from the Army in 2008, leaving at the rank of captain.

"I was home retired for several months and driving my husband nuts," Poage says with a laugh. "I'm used to having one or two jobs and going all the time, and all of a sudden I was just in the house."

Poage, 66, has bachelor's degrees in nursing and business administration from Southern Oregon University in Ashland. She says it wasn't long before she started searching for something to do that she discovered the open position with the Tribe.

"This position was right up my alley," says Poage. "I have specialized in geriatrics because that is where my love is."

Currently, the Tribe operates three lodges designed to care for Elders. The program's Cougar and Elk lodges are set up to handle as many as 10 full-time, live-in pa-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Debora Poage is the Tribe's new Adult Foster Care registered nurse manager.

tients and the program is a level 2 state-licensed foster care facility.

Staff members provide residents with assistance with all their daily activities, including medications, injections and other routine care. Staff also provides Elders with assistance with their personal grooming, bathing and dressing.

Adult Foster Care residents in Grand Ronde have a comfortable setting where a premium is placed on a resident's privacy and independence. Each resident has a private room with a private bath. They each have a phone and a television in their rooms and each lodge has a whirlpool bath.

Residents receive three meals a day in the lodge's dining room and housekeeping and laundry services also are provided.

"Deb comes to us with many years of experience," says Community Health/Adult Foster Care Director Kari Culp. "She has worked extensively with the elderly and disabled population. She is compassionate about helping people receive quality care. She is kind and warm in demeanor. We are all very excited to have Debora join our team."

Culp says Poage will be responsible for all Adult Foster Care patients' medical care and that

she will be interacting with each resident's medical care providers.

"She will review charts and medications and ensure that all care is in line with the best interest of the residents and see that the resident's wishes in regards to their care are being met as well," says Culp. "She will be in charge of the staff's continued education and training. She will eventually learn all aspects of the Adult Foster Care facilities operations over time."

Culp says Poage is team oriented and that everyone is pleased to have her on the staff.

"I think it is really important to take care of our members throughout their whole continuum of life," says Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe. "For us to have the lodges here and be able to provide Adult Foster Care is amazing. There is an opportunity for people to still be part of the ongoing daily life of the Tribal community. It allows people to be more independent, which is really important. This allows people to maintain that dignity and that oneness with the community. When you're here you are still part of the Tribal family."

Rowe says that having people on staff who truly care about a patient's health is a good concept

to foster.

"It's important that we have the ability to take care of our Elders," says Rowe. "Having an RN there to be involved in that program is key because there are things that take a skill level beyond what a caregiver provides. Having her here is wonderful because she is bringing that skill level to make sure that everyone is receiving the care that they need."

Poage says she relates to the Tribe's long-standing tradition of taking care of its Elders and that she believes in the same traditions.

Poage says her initial reaction to working in Grand Ronde has been a positive one.

"It's superior," says Poage of the Adult Foster Care program. "It makes me feel good to come to a place that is so beautiful. I'm hoping to add to that and to maintain that good quality that is here."

Poage says she has spent the few short weeks she has been here getting to know the patients and their needs. She says she looks at their diets and has been going through every patient chart to ensure everything is in order.

"It's all about the individual here," says Poage. "There is a lot of individualized care."

Poage says the Tribe has taken the concept of individualized patient care one step further here.

"We're connected to the Elders' Center so patients are free to go over there and that's a great outing," says Poage. "Families come here and they are very involved. They don't forget about their Elders."

Poage says that her love of caring for Elders comes from her own childhood. She spent time with her great-grandparents, who were married for more than 50 years, when she was younger and she remembers listening to their stories.

"That verbal history is so important to me," says Poage. "They were my inspiration."

Poage, who was raised in Idaho as part of a large family, has been married to her husband Dallas for 35 years. ■

ATTENTION CTGR TELEPHONE SERVICE

If you have an emergency and need to dial "911" you must first dial a "9" (9911). The only calls that do not require that you dial a 9+ are those made from the CTGR extensions within the CTGR campus and/or those who use CTGR Tel for their home phone service. ■

LIHEAP program available

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps pay heating bills, is now available for eligible Tribal members in the six-county service area and Clackamas County.

LIHEAP is a first-come, first-served program and income criteria applies.

For more information, contact Social Services Department Administrative Assistant Tammy Garrison at 503-879-2077 or tammy.garrison@grandronde.org. ■

Name changes in Tribal Court

Tribal Court provides both minor and adult name changes to enrolled members for a filing fee of only \$30. If you have any questions or would like to request a packet, contact Devin Larsen at 503-879-2303 or devin.larsen@grandronde.org. ■

Thank You!

The sponsoring Tribes of the Gathering of Oregon's First Nations event in Salem have decided to discontinue the January Powwow. We want to thank everyone who helped make our event a success. Thank you for 7 wonderful years of support!




