

# Community Fund slates 20th anniversary event for July 29

By Angela Sears

Community Fund Program Coordinator

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is committed to honoring the Tribal traditions of sharing and giving back to the community. As an effort to uphold these traditions, the Tribe formed Spirit Mountain Community Fund, dedicating 6 percent of all Spirit Mountain Casino revenue to nonprofit organizations in an 11-county area of northwest Oregon.

Spirit Mountain Community Fund awarded its first grants in 1997 to Life Flight Network and the Portland Art Museum. During its first year, the Community Fund awarded 17 grants totaling \$1.6 million. To date, it has funded 2,473 grants supporting projects in arts & culture, education, environmental preservation, health, historic preservation, problem gaming and public safety, totaling \$74,146,358.

Spirit Mountain Community Fund will be celebrating 20 years of giving with a special gala at the OHSU Collaborative Life Sciences Building on Saturday, July 29. The theme of the celebration is "Let Your Light Shine."

"As a Tribal member growing up in Grand Ronde, I never imagined we would be in a position to invest in and give back to our local communities in such a substantial way. I presented the theme of 'Let Your Light Shine' with this in mind," Community Fund Director Mychal Cherry said. "There was a time when our Tribe didn't have anything to give and our surrounding communities provided support for us. And now, in the spirit of the



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~ Board of Trustees Chairman Sho Dozono

Native tradition of potlatch (the sharing of good fortune), we're giving back and letting our light shine on others."

During the celebration, Community Fund staff members and its Board of Trustees will recognize 10 nonprofit organizations that they believe are doing extraordinary work in their communities, such as Children's Cancer Association, Oregon Children's Foundation, Neighbors for Kids and Oregon Tradeswomen. The first two nonprofits to receive grants from the Community Fund 20 years ago also will be honored. Each honoree will receive a special gift of \$5,000 for the organization's hard work and dedication to making Oregon a better place to live, work and raise families.

"Our focus is to improve the quality of life in northwest Oregon through community investments that provide lasting benefits consistent with the Tribe's culture and values," Board of Trustees Chairman Sho Dozono said. "I am proud to have served on the Board of Trustees for the past 20 years. I value the opportunity to work with an amazing foundation that strives to make a difference in their com-

munity, and I look forward to the future of the Community Fund as we continue our efforts to make a better life for Oregonians."

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is proud of its contributions to the surrounding communities, but the Tribe wasn't always in a position to support their Tribal people, let alone their community. In fact, there was a time when the Tribe wasn't even recognized.

In 1954, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was terminated by the federal government. This meant Grand Ronde would no longer be recognized as a Native American Tribe and would no longer receive federal funding for programs to help its people.

Throughout the years, the Reservation land was sold to non-Native people for as little as \$1.10 per acre and the original 69,100-acre Reservation was eventually reduced to a 2.5-acre cemetery lot.

Many Tribal members left the area to find a better life, and many members struggled to find their identity. After almost 20 years of Termination, a small group of Grand Ronde Tribal members began what would become one of the greatest achievements of the Grand Ronde people.

The group began a fight that became a decade-long struggle. They fought to restore recognition of

their people. They fought to restore pride and honor. And they fought to restore their identity.

What started as a small group soon became a community effort. And after years of hard work and determination by many, the group's push to restore federal recognition for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was finally realized when President Ronald Reagan signed the Grand Ronde Restoration Bill into law on Nov. 22, 1983.

"In 1994, the Tribal membership voted to pursue gaming as a means of revenue. We were hoping to create self-sufficiency and improve the lives of our Tribal people," Tribal Council Chairman and Board of Trustees member Reyn Leno said. "In October of 1995, we opened Spirit Mountain Casino, which quickly became Oregon's largest and most successful casino.

"Once we realized the success of our casino, we wanted to give back to the communities that supported us when we needed it most. And that's how the Spirit Mountain Community Fund was formed."

Today, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has built a flourishing community to provide for its membership, surrounding communities and other Oregon Tribes.

"One of the great things the Community Fund does, that many people don't realize, is our commitment to helping Oregon Tribes. Each year, we offer a grant up to \$150,000 to all nine of the Oregon Tribes," Leno said.

"I'm proud to be a part of a Tribe that is reaching out and helping people. To be able to change so many lives and to have such a great impact, not just here in Grand Ronde, but throughout northwest Oregon is important to us." ■

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