

Preschool graduation



Early Childhood Education's Preschool Teacher/Education Coordinator Kristina Jaquith gives Alex Butcher a hug as he receives his certificate during the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Preschool Graduation held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Aug. 10.

Tribal Chinuk Immersion apprentices Santiago Atanacio, left, and Jade Colton, right, help Armando Contreras put his cedar hat on as they prepare for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Preschool Graduation held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Aug. 10. Armando is Atanacio's nephew.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo



Kalea Liebelt receives help putting on her graduation gown from Early Childhood Education's Preschool Teacher/Education Coordinator Kristina Jaquith as she prepares for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Preschool Graduation held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Aug. 10. Thirty students graduated this year and a dinner followed the graduation ceremony. Graduating students were Abbie Haffner, Alex Butcher, Aiden Campbell, Armando Contreras, Adahy LaBonte, Evelyn Huff, Gabriel Langley, Hanora Diaz, Hemi Haight, Jack Mercier, Jayde Diaz, Kinleigh Bailey, Kalea Liebelt, Kalani Johnson, Liam Batey, Leonidas Pond, Neomyah Guzman, Robert Haller, Taylor Ruggles, Ayden Ruiz, Brett Hembree, Haven Conklin, Kiara Gettle,

Isaiah Ibarra, Nolen DeLoe, Desirae Hernandez, Hudson Hubble, Riley Freeman and Eva Juardo.



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Election is smallest field of candidates since 1993

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membership to work hard to earn their vote," George said about how she thinks she became the most recent member of the 600-vote club. "I think how hard a candidate works in the campaign is a good indicator of how hard they will work after the campaign. It takes a commitment to getting out there and talking to as many Tribal members as you can, meeting with as many Tribal members as you can. ... That's what I tried to do."

George said she met with Tribal members all spring and summer in 2016, driving all over the state for candidate forums and family reunions in southern Oregon that she was invited to, and she developed a website.

She also didn't just preach to the choir, she said.

"I really did prioritize having conversations with people who I knew didn't completely hold the same views as me, and that's important," George said. "It's important for people to know that even if you have disagreements that you sincerely listen to them and you want to understand their point of view because that is critical for our council to do throughout their term."

Blackwell, the first Tribal Council candidate to surpass the 600-vote mark, said she thinks the campaign she ran 13 years ago was the first to create a website and send mailers

to Tribal voters.

"I was definitely surprised by it, but we did do a lot of things that were different," Blackwell said. "That was the first year that we started going out to different areas all around the state to visit with Tribal members. We did a lot of mailings. I did a lot of postcards because I wanted to send mailings that people would have to read that they wouldn't have to open. ... At the time, there wasn't a lot of outreach happening."

Blackwell said that she also thinks that because she grew up in Grand Ronde and was the Community Fund director, like George, also played a part in catapulting her above 600 votes.

"I didn't expect that at all," Blackwell said. "It was my first time to run so I wasn't even sure I was going to win. I was surprised to win. I was surprised to get over 600 votes."

The possibility of a 700-vote total this year is attainable considering there are only six candidates running for Tribal Council, the smallest field of candidates since 1993.

In addition, Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno is stepping down after 21 years of service. He received 558 votes in this last run for Tribal Council in 2014.

Over the last five Tribal Council elections between 2012 and '16, an average of 3,422 total votes have been cast. Tribal members are permitted to vote for up to three

candidates.

For a candidate to reach the 700-vote threshold assuming an average number of total votes cast, he or she would need to capture 20.45 percent of the vote this year.

Although that doesn't sound like much, in past Tribal Council elections only three candidates have ever received more than 20 percent of the total votes cast: Kennedy in 2006 and Mark Mercier and Leon Tom in 1993.

However, the 600-vote club may increase this year. Again, assuming an average number of total votes cast, a candidate would only need to capture 17.5 percent of the total votes cast to reach 600 or more votes, a feat that has been accomplished several times in Tribal Council elections.

Of course, much depends on voter turnout as well. Since 2011, a majority of Tribal Council races have seen a turnout of eligible voting members – those 18 or older – in the low 30-percent range.

This year, Tribal Council candidates are incumbents Tonya Gleason-Shepek and Chris Mercier and challengers Mark Mercier, Michael Langley, Lisa Leno and David Lewis. Angela Schlappie withdrew from the race in late July.

Tribal Election Day is Saturday, Sept. 9. Ballots were mailed to Tribal voters on Wednesday, July 26. Candidate statements appeared in the July *Tilixam Wawa*, which was mailed first class to Tribal members

in mid-July.

Three advisory votes

In addition to voting for three Tribal Council candidates, Tribal voters are being asked to weigh in on three advisory votes with a combined seven questions. A "yes" vote means the voter is recommending Tribal Council consider the specific topic or action.

The first advisory question, which is yes or no, asks if the Tribe should consider investing in Elder market-rate units in Tribal housing.

The second question asks if the Tribe should consider investing in the cannabis industry and gives voters three options: medical marijuana, recreational marijuana or hemp?

The final advisory vote asks if constitutional enrollment requirements should be amended to do a possible three things:

- Remove the requirement that the applicant be born to a parent who was a Tribal member at the time of the applicant's birth?
- Remove the requirement that the applicant be born to a parent who was a Tribal member at the time the application is filed, if still living?
- Or replace the requirement that an applicant have 1/16th Grand Ronde blood as defined as all Indian blood derived from an ancestor on the Restoration Roll with the pre-1999 amendment requirement that an applicant have 1/16th Indian blood and descend from a member of the Tribe? ■