

Elders fishing trip — pg. 8



OCTOBER 1, 2017

Smoke Signals

A Publication of the Grand Ronde Tribe

www.grandronde.org

UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

Health & Wellness Center feting 20th anniversary



Smoke Signals file photo

The Tribal Health Committee and Human Services Division staff arranged for then-Human Services Division Manager Cheryle A. Kennedy to break ground on the site of the Health & Wellness Center with a backhoe in August 1996.

Building's construction changed medical care in Grand Ronde

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center will celebrate its 20th anniversary of providing health care to Grand Ronde Tribal and community members from 3 to 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 6.

The center, one of the first buildings constructed by the Tribe after the 1995 opening of Spirit Mountain Casino and subsequent influx of gaming revenue, opened with 20 programs and 61 employees.

The celebration will open with the Grand Ronde Veterans Color Guard bringing in the colors accompanied by Grand Ronde drummers and singers. After an invocation, there will be comments from Tribal Council members and Health & Wellness staff.

The celebration also will include honorings, facility tour and light refreshments.

According to back issues of *Smoke Signals*, construction of the Health & Wellness Center started in October 1996. It was built simultaneously with the Natural Resources office off of Hebo Road.

See **CELEBRATION**
continued on page 9

Native American absenteeism rates improving locally

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

First-year numbers recently released by the Oregon Department of Education indicate that an effort to combat Native American student chronic absenteeism in the Willamina School District by district employees in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is having a positive effect.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as students missing 10 percent or more of school days annually.

According to the Department of Education, the percentage of Native American students who were chronically absent in Willamina decreased in all three schools — elementary, middle and high.

At the elementary school, the percentage dropped from 43.22 percent in 2015-16 to 36.51 percent in 2016-17. The middle school saw a smaller decrease from 45.45 percent to 42.42 percent while the high school dropped more than 7 percentage points from 55.36 percent to 48.28 percent.

In 2013, Spirit Mountain Community Fund financed a study by ECONorthwest and the Chalkboard Project that compared the membership rolls for seven participating Oregon Tribes with data from the state Department of Education.

One of the most disturbing findings from that study released in early 2014 was the elevated rates of chronic absenteeism among Native



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elder Rosetta LaBonte Manangan has traced the non-Native side of her family back to being some of the first settlers in Oregon. Her great-great-grandfather Louis LaBonte was on a list of Astorians of the Pacific Fur Co. who lived near the Columbia River during the winter of 1813-14.

Deep Oregon roots

List of 'Astorians' includes first LaBonte in area

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

While most Grand Ronde Tribal members know that their Native lineage traces back through time immemorial before written records were kept, Tribal Elder Rosetta LaBonte Manangan knows exactly where her non-Native

ancestry begins in Oregon.

Manangan, 90, knows that her great-great-grandfather Louis LaBonte was on a list of Pacific Fur Co. employees who lived near the Columbia River during

See **LABONTE**
continued on page 11

See **EDUCATION**
continued on page 10