

Dedication was held Oct. 3, 1997

CELEBRATION continued from front page

At the April 14, 1996, General Council meeting, architect Frank Whalen said design started in August 1995 and the construction budget for the 29,000-square-foot, two-story structure was approximately \$4 million. Future expansion of the building will be easy, he said, because of the design in the shape of a medicine wheel with four separate wings.

Ground-breaking occurred in August 1996 with then-Health & Human Services Director Cheryle A. Kennedy mounting a backhoe to move the first clump of dirt.

The new building was designed to house the medical and dental staff, support services and wellness and counseling, which included alcohol/drug, mental health and vocational rehabilitation. Also scheduled to move into the new building were Indian Child Welfare, foster care and general and emergency assistance programs. New services made possible by the new, larger building were optometry, pharmacy, a medical lab and radiology.

In the center atrium hangs a 500-pound mobile of several hundred salmon silhouettes that were created by Tribal Elders. Memory bricks were purchased by Tribal members and placed randomly in the entrance's main sidewalk.

On Sept. 8, 1997, Pierson Mitchell blessed the new Health & Wellness Center. Warm Springs Tribal members Anna and Rudy Clements were honored guests.

"A blessing is necessary in order to ensure the clinic is a place of health and healing," Health Committee member Patti Tom-Martin said during the ceremony.

A dedication ceremony was held on Oct. 3, 1997, to honor staff and Tribal members who contributed to "the realization of the dream of having our own health center for Tribal and community members and those who have continued to serve the membership even before there were buildings and programs."

During the dedication ceremony, Tribal Council Chair Kathryn Harrison delivered a speech and Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey gave the blessing. Kennedy, who is now Tribal Council chairwoman, spoke about how far the division had come since Restoration and working part-time out of the depot building, and showed historical slides of previous buildings used to provide health services to Tribal members.

Two of the first physicians to provide services at the clinic were James Molloy and Glenn Geritz. Molloy left his Sheridan practice to work for the Tribe.

Some of the familiar names listed in Nov. 15, 1997, *Smoke Signals* as staff members at Health & Wellness included Kennedy, Alan Ham, Penny DeLoe, Dr. Eric Webster and Tom-Martin.

Kennedy, who was one of the first three employees hired by the Tribe, said her job then was similar to that of a planner. She recalls conducting a Needs Assessment Survey to find



Smoke Signals file photos

Then-Tribal Council Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison delivers a speech during the dedication ceremony for the Health & Wellness Center on Oct. 3, 1997.



The Health & Wellness Center under construction in 1997.

If you go

Health & Wellness Center 20th anniversary event

When: 3 to 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 6

Where: Health & Wellness Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road

More information: 503-879-1407

out what services were needed by Tribal members in the six-county delivery area.

"Our Restoration was really about acquiring health services," she said. "That was really paramount. Health, education services, housing, a homeland for our people and economic development. Those were really the underpinnings for Restoration.

"We had a tremendous amount of data and a lot of it was like self-identification because many of our members didn't have services for years and years. When we asked questions like, 'Do you have a current condition that you need to see a doctor right now,' there was an overwhelming response of 'Yes.'"

Kennedy said she worked with Portland State University to compile and interpret the data, which helped to plan the services offered

in the new Health & Wellness Center.

"We had several community meetings where we had put the wish list kind of on the road," Kennedy said, traveling to population clusters in Eugene, Bend, Portland, Yakima and Seattle. "We asked, 'What is your highest priority?' and health care was always No. 1."

Kennedy recalls she planned staff training and certifications, as well as purchase of medical equipment, to coincide with the construction schedule so that everything was ready to go on opening day.

"All of that was targeted for one day when we would open those doors," Kennedy said. "It was a big job."

Tom-Martin, who was program manager of Vocational Rehabilitation at the time and is a longtime member of the Tribal Health Committee, credits Kennedy with the vision that saw the Health & Wellness Center through to fruition.

"It was just an amazing thing to have health care in Grand Ronde," Tom-Martin recalls. "My grandmother's children died from stuff that I get a vaccination for. It was just amazing to us to have health care out there. And, of course, they built that building. It looked like the Taj Mahal it was so nice.

"Cheryle Kennedy, she was the

dreamer. The one who made that happen. ... She had that vision and made us think that we could have that, too. You could not deter Cheryle Kennedy. She just wouldn't give up. I didn't have the vision that she had for that building. It was just amazing when that thing went up."

Tom-Martin said the major change that she witnessed was that Tribal members who lived outside of the Grand Ronde area who would not travel to the clinic located in modulars started making the drive to receive their health care in the new building.

"The biggest change was to be able to open a full array of services with a one-stop shop for health care," Kennedy said. "Before, it was piecemeal."

Since its opening, the Health & Wellness Center has seen anticipated expansions. Most recently in December 2010, a 4,000-square-foot addition was opened that added six more work stations to the Dental Clinic and added 2,000 square feet to the Medical Clinic. In addition, a new metal roof and Native-themed flooring were added.

The \$2.25 million expansion and renovation was paid for using federal grant dollars leveraged by about 10 percent in Tribal funding.

The Tribe also recently received a \$500,000 federal grant to help expand the Behavioral Health wing to meet increased demand for services.

According to the 2016 Grand Ronde Annual Report, the Health & Wellness Center had 15,812 patient visits for medical needs, 2,477 patients for dental work, 2,774 patients for optometry needs, 1,495 patient visits for behavioral health and 2,475 visits for community health.

In 2016, there were more than 5,514 active medical records and 185 active Behavioral Health records on file, and the Pharmacy filled more than 90,000 prescriptions. ■