



Tribe consults with EPA on water — pg. 11

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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

Meeting begins process of updating community plan

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

Almost 60 people showed up at the Tribal gym to give their input on the future of Grand Ronde and their ideas spanned the gamut from a Tribal swimming pool to a charter school.

The brainstorming session was a part of a new community development plan kickoff held on Wednesday, April 18. Attendees ranging in age from elementary school to Elders made their voices heard.

“I am really happy people are willing to be open about their ideas and suggestions, and share them with us,” Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier said. “When these plans are done and done right, they really benefit the community. This isn’t about what Tribal Council wants, this is about you, the general membership and what you want. A lot of the stuff you see today was once a part of a community development plan. Don’t be shy about your ideas and think 10 years ahead.”

Other Tribal Council members in attendance included Secretary Jon A. George, Kathleen George, Lisa Leno and Michael Langley.

Kathleen George thanked those in attendance for coming out.

“You are investing your time in the work the Tribe will be doing for the next 10 years,” she said. “Our Elders made planning a priority and worked very hard to provide what the Tribe needed. We want to earn the opportunity to follow in their footsteps and what you tell us the priorities are, we can turn this

See INPUT
continued on page 15



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Spirit Mountain Casino revenues have remained competitive since the opening of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe’s casino, Ilani, one year ago. Ilani is located off Interstate 5, 16 miles north of the Oregon-Washington border.

Spirit Mountain, Tribe have weathered a year of competition well

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

On April 24, 2017, Spirit Mountain Casino relinquished its 21-year title as the closest casino to the lucrative and heavily populated Portland-Vancouver gaming market.

After fending off efforts over the last decade by other Oregon Tribes to open casinos closer to the Portland-Vancouver market and out-of-state investors from building a privately owned casino in Wood Village, the Grand Ronde Tribe finally saw its geographic advantage disappear when the landless Cowlitz Tribe was granted a Reservation from the U.S. Department of the Interior off Interstate 5

approximately 16 miles north of the Columbia River. The Cowlitz subsequently opened a casino, Ilani.

Portland-area casino aficionados suddenly had a drive one-fourth as long as the trek out to Grand Ronde.

Estimates of what the competition would do to Spirit Mountain Casino revenue and the dividend sent to the Grand Ronde Tribe for governmental operations and important programs such as Elders’ pensions, educational funding and health care were, at times, dire.

See COMPETITION
continued on pages 12-13

Memorial Day event set for Monday, May 28



Smoke Signals file photo

12 names being added to West Valley Veterans Memorial

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The annual Memorial Day event at the West Valley Veterans Memorial on the Grand Ronde Tribal campus will be highlighted by 12 names being

added to the four black granite pillars that represent the major branches of the U.S. armed forces.

The event begins at noon with a meal served in the nearby Tribal Community Center.

The outdoors ceremony begins at 1 p.m.

See EVENT
continued on page 7

Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr., chairman of the Tribe’s Veterans Special Event Board and a Marine Corps veteran from the Vietnam War era, will serve as the master of ceremonies at this year’s annual Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday, May 28.