

Employees honored for 921 years of service

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

Seventy employees were honored for a combined 921 years of service to the Grand Ronde Tribe during a third-quarter Years of Service ceremony held on Thursday, Sept. 27, in the Tribal gym.

Leading those honored in employment longevity was Natural Resources Department Timber and Roads Program Manager Jeff Kuust, who reached the 29-year mark in working for the Tribe.

Joining him in the quarter-century or more club were Natural Resources Manager Michael Wilson and Finance Officer Chris Leno, who both reached 26 years of service. Higher Education Manager Bryan Langley notched 27 years and Health Benefits Specialist Barbara Steere, Staff Accountant Melanie Hubbard and Procurement Assistant Kelly Leno attained 28 years apiece.

Tribal Attorney Rob Greene reached his 24th year of employment, Assistant Tribal Attorney Kim D'Aquila hit the 22-year mark of service and Cultural Adviser Bobby Mercier reached 21 years.

Head Start Teacher Toni Lockwood, Family Services Assistant Elaine Lane Raven and Dental Hygienist Sheila Blacketer reached the 20-year mark.

Third-quarter award recipients were hired between July and September.

Employees received certificates and bonus checks in appreciation for their increasing tenure with the Tribe. In addition, those reaching the 10-year mark received a Tribal Pendleton blanket or an extra \$100 in their bonus check.

The ceremony began with an invocation from Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. Then employees were treated to breakfast sandwiches, biscuits and gravy, fruit, pastries and juices from Sim-



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Planning Director Rick George, center, receives a hug from Tribal Council member and wife Kathleen George while being recognized for five years of service during the third-quarter Years of Service ceremony held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Sept. 27



Member Services Department Manager Veronica Montano, right, receives a hug from Tribal Council member Kathleen George after being honored with eight years of service during the third-quarter Years of Service ceremony in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Sept. 27.

19 years: Procurement Supervisor Kevin Mueller.

18 years: Elementary Lead Matthew Bucknell, Senior Network Administrator Jack Dobiash, Tribal Court Judicial Assistant Julie Boekhoff and Grand Ronde Police Department Records/Evidence Clerk Egypt Leno.

17 years: Security Officer Roel Hernandez and Education Senior Administrative Assistant Deborah Bachman.

16 years: Part-time College Program Coordinator John Harp, Audit Director Trudi Yoshikawa, Natural Resources Machine Equipment Operator Mark Mercier and Treasury Manager Rick Andersen.

15 years: Benefits Specialist Peggy Carpenter, Nutrition Program Manager Kristy Criss-Lawson and Ceded Lands Coordinator Brandy Humphreys.

14 years: Health Information Technician Stephanie Simmons, Tribal Council Administrative Assistant Shannon Simi, Finance Executive Assistant Ken Trevino and Employment Specialist Brandy Hembree.

13 years: Housing Services Coordinator Deborah Kroeker and Purchased/Referred Care Specialist

Erica Mercier.

12 years: Graphic Designer George Valdez.

11 years: Central Phones Operator Scarlett Holtz, Senior Help Desk Technician Alec Palanuk-Mercier, Publications Coordinator Dean Rhodes, Preschool Bus Driver/Aide Jennifer Jerabek and TERO Workforce Development Specialist Misty Carl.

10 years: Controller Linda Hanna, Community Health Events Coordinator Kandee Little and Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife Technician Matthew Zimbrick.

9 years: Patient Account Representative Kayla Leno.

8 years: Maintenance Technician Jason Bailey, Health Information Technician Amanda McMahon, TERO Compliance Officer Marvin "Duke" Kimsey Jr., TERO Administrative Assistant Lori Sterling, Member Services Department Manager Veronica Montano, Early Childhood Education Department Manager Angie Blackwell, Housing Maintenance Technician Michael Lane, Adult and Family Services Supervisor Amber Zimbrick and Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson.

7 years: Early Head Start Home Visitor Amber Mercier, Youth Education Administrative Assistant Amber Yates, Chachalu Manager Julie Brown, Medical Technologist Staci Pemble and Legal Secretary Susan June.

6 years: Child and Family Services Caseworker Tara Verner, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, 477 Employment and Training Specialist Angey Rideout, Registered Nurse Tashina Blair, Senior Telecommunications Technician Mark Scheelar, Mailroom Clerk Anna White, Parks and Recreation Specialist Jerry Bailey and Forest Technician Andrew Puerini.

5 years: Maintenance Technician Daniel Mooney, Swing Shift Housekeeper James Byars Jr., Planning Director Rick George, Patient Account Representative Loretta Meneley and Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier.

Prizes raffled off included gift cards to Amazon and Kofi Haws, Portland Trail Blazers tickets, an ice cream maker, roadside assistance kits, a pressure cooker, tool kit, work bench, knife set and vacuum food sealer. At the conclusion of the event, Fullerton announced that all employees would be given a half-day of administrative leave, which resulted in loud cheers from the audience. ■

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