

# General Council briefed on health and wellness issues

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

In the recent past, the Grand Ronde Pharmacy was often known for its frequent lines and long wait times, which sometimes resulted in customer complaints.

Due largely to workflow improvements, including an electronic prescription organizer, wait times are down substantially and so are complaints.

In 2018, there was a 70 percent decrease in complaints, according to Executive Director of Health Services Kelly Rowe, who provided an annual Health & Wellness program report at the Sunday, Jan. 6, General Council meeting.

"In Pharmacy, we are always trying to improve our (customer service) so people are not waiting," Rowe said. "We instituted a process for complaints and grievances so we could find out what was causing those. I'm thrilled our pharmacy had a 70 percent decrease in complaints and have worked through this."

Rowe also highlighted 2018 achievements in the Medical, Dental, Behavioral Health and Community Health departments.

"At the clinic we have amazing staff who are looking out for how we can best deliver services," she said.

A major success in the Medical Department is the Hepatitis C Elimination Project, Rowe said. Before its implementation, only 14 percent of those at risk had been



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe gives a presentation during the General Council meeting held in the Tribal Community Center on Sunday, Jan. 6.**

screened for the disease. Now, that number is up to 67 percent and the clinic worked with 36 hepatitis C positive patients. Of those, five have been cured and five are awaiting final lab results. The other 26 are in various stages of the treatment process.

"The idea was if someone has it, there is now a medication that can cure it," Rowe said. "It is not common that we have this kind of situation in health care ... Thirty-six people being worked up is huge."

Dr. Randy Blome was the project lead, and received national and state accolades for his work. He received a Local Impact Award from the National Indian Health Board and also was recognized with an award from the Caring Ambassadors Program of Oregon City for

outstanding service to the hepatitis C community.

Other highlights include having pediatrician Dr. Allison Empey at the Health & Wellness Center, the first Tribal member to serve in that capacity. Her presence has increased youth access by 20 percent, Rowe said.

"We are also looking at alternative medicine more in 2019, such as physical therapy, acupuncture and pain management," Rowe said. "I'm excited about this. A holistic look at the body is very important."

In Behavioral Health, efforts are underway to collaborate with other departments in an effort to "treat the whole person."

Other updates include launching a medication-assisted treatment program for those struggling with opioid dependence, adding a staff psychiatrist two days a week and adding space in the building using grants.

Optometry Department staff will attend additional training on fitting glasses and look at more community involvement opportunities, while the Dental program will continue work with youth to help them learn to properly care for their teeth and

gums, and take the portable X-ray unit to the Veterans Summit in July to offer services.

Community Health is looking at how to best help Tribal members manage chronic conditions.

"They're also trying to increase their outreach into the Portland area because several of our Tribal members live there," Rowe said.

She also said that Community Health Events Coordinator Kandee Little was named 2018 Health & Wellness Center Employee of the Year.

"She has been an excellent example of an employee for Health & Wellness," Rowe said.

After the presentation concluded, Rowe received four questions and comments.

Following the presentation, Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy announced that there would be a break for lunch and to conclude vote tallying for the Elders Committee election.

After the break, it was announced that Dan Ham, Penny DeLoe and Julie Little received the most votes, which were cast at both the General Council meeting and during the Wednesday, Dec. 19, mealsite luncheon.

Immediately following the Elders election results was the Health Committee report by Vice Chair Alan Ham.

**See MEETING continued on page 9**

## Constitutional Amendment Election

### Jan. 16 - Kick-Off Educational Meeting

(5:30 P.M. – Dinner Provided) Grand Ronde, OR

Grand Ronde Community Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road

### Jan. 30 - Educational Meeting

(5:30 P.M. – Dinner Provided) Portland, OR

Portland State Native American Student and Community Center

710 S.W. Jackson St., Portland

### Feb. 13 - Educational Meeting

(5:30 P.M. – Dinner Provided) Eugene, OR

Lane Community College Longhouse, 4000 E. 30th Ave., Eugene

### Feb. 20 - Final Educational Meeting

(5:30 P.M. – Dinner Provided) Grand Ronde, OR

Grand Ronde Community Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road

