

General Council briefed on Social Services successes

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

EUGENE – Social Services Department Manager Dana Ainam briefed General Council on her staff's accomplishments, including a substantial decline in Tribal children involved in the child welfare system, during the Sunday, April 7, General Council meeting held at the Lane Community College longhouse.

Ainam supervises a 27-member department that handles issues as diverse as child welfare cases, emergency assistance to Tribal members, domestic violence and employment training programs.

"We say that we are a program that is committed to providing a community of caring," Ainam said. "We want to be a program that provides safety for our community. We want to honor our culture and spirituality. We want to be a trustworthy team. We want to work in partnership with people. It's important to collaborate. We always want all of our members to have choice when they are coming to get services from us."

Ainam added that the Tribe's Social Services Department seeks



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Social Services Department Manager Dana Ainam briefed the membership on her department's accomplishments during the General Council meeting held Sunday, April 7, at the Lane Community College longhouse in Eugene.

to meet clients where they are, not where staff members might want them to be. In addition, there is no "wrong door," meaning Social Services staff members will help clients find the services they need even if it is not offered by their department or the Tribe.

Among the accomplishments Ainam highlighted is the decline in Tribal children involved in the child welfare system from 97 in 2007 to 34 in 2018.

In 2018, Social Services received 345 reports of abuse or neglect of Tribal children and only 114, or 33 percent, were assigned for assessment. Of those 114, nine resulted in the department filing petitions: two in Tribal Court and seven in state

court.

"We're always looking at keeping families together whenever possible," Ainam said about the Children & Family Services program. "We really celebrate that success."

Social Services' emergency assistance programs helped 65 Tribal members in 2018, with the majority of those cases – 50 – being helped in paying rent. In addition, 219 children were helped by the school clothing program, which includes income eligibility requirements, and 675 were helped through the school supply program.

Ainam said that the two employment programs in her department – 477 and vocational rehabilitation – helped a total of 158 Tribal members with a combined 60 percent success rate.

Social Services also supervises the Men's Transitional House near Uíxat Powwow Grounds, which cur-

rently houses an average of three men monthly, and is working on revitalizing the domestic violence program with new Program Coordinator Danielle Murrell on board since September.

Ainam concluded her presentation by detailing the "learning lessons" her department has experienced, including gaining community member trust, staying committed to departmental values and beliefs, being consistent with clients and keeping staff members trained and motivated.

"Together, we strengthen our people," Ainam said.

Ainam fielded four comments and questions from Tribal members and Tribal Council members following her presentation.

Michelle Volz, Connie Bobb, Barbara Feehan, Oidavirre Mahto and Luke Volz won the \$50 door prizes and Russell Wilkinson, Debi Anderson and Bob Chapman won the \$100 door prizes.

The next General Council meeting will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday, May 5, in the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.

After lunch, the last of three Community Input meetings was held, soliciting possible topics to be included as advisory votes on the September Tribal Council election ballot. About 20 Tribal members remained to provide input during the meeting, which was moderated by General Manager David Fullerton.

The meeting opened with a cultural presentation. Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George drummed and was joined by several members of the Youth Council in singing.

The entire meeting can be viewed on the Tribal government's website at www.grandronde.org by clicking on the News tab and then going to Video. ■

'We will continue to evaluate our options'

CASINO continued from front page

banking needs, and communications with responding banks and the Tribal Council, Spirit Mountain has decided not to change banks at this time."

Tribal government officially ended its banking relationship in 2018 and switched to Columbia Bank, based in Tacoma, Wash.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy cited three reasons for the Tribal government ending its financial relationship with the bank, including Wells Fargo's involvement in the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline project in North Dakota, creating millions of fake bank and credit card accounts for customers and forcing unnecessary auto collision insurance on more than 800,000 clients.

The Tribal government first employed Wells Fargo for banking services from 1996 to 2005 and then rehired the bank starting in 2013. The Tribe started re-assessing its relationship with Wells Fargo in early 2017 when the Finance Department issued a request for proposals for banking services and Tribal members complained at Tribal Council meetings about the bank's involvement in the pipeline project.

The loss of Tribal governmental business cost Wells Fargo less than \$100,000 in processing fees, Finance Officer Chris Leno said.

However, the Tribal government's symbolic stand was deemed

more important than the amount of lost revenue. In late 2016 and early 2017, the Dakota Access Pipeline project galvanized Indian Country as the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and volunteer water protectors protested the construction of an oil pipeline near the Sioux Reservation. Wells Fargo provided investment funding for Energy Transfer Partners, the owner of the pipeline project.

Kennedy addressed the issue at the Wednesday, April 3, Tribal Council meeting, in a prepared statement that said all respondents to the casino's request for proposals for banking services had some business connection to the controversial pipeline project.

"We appreciate the concern of the Tribal members and made the change as a Tribal government," Kennedy said. "However, the banking needs of Spirit Mountain Casino present a unique set of challenges that limit the number of banking institutions available to us."

"Those that we did hear from and that were able to handle the account were all associated with the Dakota Access Pipeline at some level. After careful consideration, a thorough evaluation and discussions with all of the banking institutions, a decision was made to stay with Wells Fargo. Spirit Mountain does evaluate banking services every few years. We will continue to evaluate our options if something changes in the future."

For comparison, the Siletz Tribe's Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City uses U.S. Bank. ■

Safe hunters



Contributed photo

Twenty Grand Ronde-area youth earned hunter's safety certificates during a two-day course offered by the Natural Resources Department's Parks and Recreation Program on Saturday and Sunday, March 30-31, at the Natural Resources' office off Hebo Road. The class was taught by Tony Jefferies from Monmouth Fitness (above) and having a certificate is a requirement before youth can hunt in Oregon. "It was a great way to end spring break. Well done and thank you to everyone involved," said Parks and Recreation Coordinator Jerry Bailey.