



Photo by Jennifer Clark

Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George congratulates Dorene Gillespie for receiving her GED diploma at the Graduation Celebration held on Friday, June 21, at the Tribal gym. Six Tribal members were recognized for receiving their GED diplomas at the celebration, in addition to others receiving various certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Tribe honors 101 graduates during June 21 celebration

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde honored 101 graduates for earning eighth-grade promotion certificates through doctoral degrees during the annual Graduation Celebration held Friday, June 21, in the Tribal gym.

Interim Education Department Manager Bryan Langley welcomed graduates and their families to the celebration and the invocation was delivered by Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George.

All graduates' names will be added to a plaque that lines the wall in the Adult Education Building.

"This event is to recognize the accomplishments of our Tribal students," Langley said. "My favorite aspect is seeing students who I have worked with over the years accomplish an educational goal they set out to achieve. It is also great when they come back to work for the Tribe."

After dinner, Willamina High School graduate Trinity Sherwood spoke and then eighth-grade and high school graduates were honored.

After Eastern Oregon University graduate and Acting Tribal Librarian Harris Reibach spoke, GED diploma and college graduates were honored.

All eighth-graders received a Pendleton wallet, and high school, GED and associate degree graduates received a Pendleton saddle blanket. Students earning bachelor's degrees received a larger blanket and those at the master's and doctoral degree levels also received a Chinook carved paddle.

The Tribe's Education Committee includes Tammy Cook, chair; Michael Cherry, secretary; and Valeria Atanacio, Michael Herrin, Peter Grout, Shelby Maerz and Chris Mansayon.

Tribal graduates honored were:

Eighth grade: Brooklyn Bailey, Gage Bishop, Kai Connelly, David

Cooper, PJ Cureton, Daysia Duran, Jaden Haller, Teya Hiebert, Future Leno, Johnny McCormick, Hattie Mercier, Bryanah Lopez, Kylie Quinn, Kaleigha Simi, Shasta Simmons, Donovan Smith, Kady Smith, Kylie Smith, Hailey Tinoco, Denali Williams and Cole Youso.

High school: Makenzie Aaron, Miguel Adams, George Ankeney, Ariana Bennett, McKenzie Colton, Nick Colton, Christian Cooney, Sydney Dizick, Dyami Eastman, Brandon Gatchell, Tynan George, Tessa Gilbert, Jacob Haller, Jurnee Haller, Josie Justen, Kenneth Kittleson, Dylan Knight, Kailiyah Krehbiel, Evan Leno, Maleah Leno, Saghaley Lewis, Austin Lewis-Little, Dylan Page, Kalayo Pedersen-Harmon, Austin Ravia, Kaleb Reid, Jordan Reyes, JC Rogers, Dakota Ross, Trinity Sherwood, Kaelynn Simmons, Phillip Stryker, Zailey Wacker and Lexus Williams.

GED: Madeline Ainsworth, Kaytee Ann Mata, Sasheen Baker, Dorene Gillespie, Emma Leno and Adam Martin.

Certificates: Katelynn Bliven, Josh Biery, Heather Kent and Keri Kimsey.

Associate degrees: Maxwell Hale, Catherine Hill, Heather Kent, John Liljequist, Jesse Lipold, Julie Lomboy, Paxton Parazoo, Shaylynn Shandy, Angie Smith, Tajia Ulestad, Gary Westley and Cheyenne Woods.

Bachelor's degrees: Jeremy Bailey, Sean Brooks, Shane Cooney, Melanie Davis, Kory Ganuelas, Genevieve Henny, Ashlee Hitchcock, Kaylee Jenness-Ardt, Jared Kittleson, Kayla Kneeland, Kara Langley, Rylie Lawrence, Lindsay McCue, Cole Motheral, Melissa Palanuk-Mercier, Helen Tonso and Spencer Weiss.

Master's degrees: Joren Clowers, Sharrah McKenzie, Hannah Portwood, Harris Reibach, Natalie Thomas and Ashley Turley.

Doctorate degree: Stefanie Swan. ■

Incident could have resulted in serious injury or death

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the deputies were engaged in an armed standoff with a subject who was allegedly using methamphetamine and behaving in an extremely hostile manner.

Yamhill County Sgt. Don Stackpole, who was on scene, recalled what happened in a letter to Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight.

"At several points during the ensuing 30 minutes of that standoff, there were multiple times where I felt convinced that this incident was going to result in the serious injury or death of the subject and/or law enforcement," he said. "An additional, aggravating factor was that there was an elderly, bedridden man trapped in the same room as the armed subject."

Due to the small space, there was insufficient room for more than the three officers who had initially responded. When Flynn arrived, he stood just outside in the hallway and began attempting to find a peaceful solution.

"At the time of the situation, the goal was to find the safest resolution for all of the involved parties," Flynn said. "In order to meet this goal we had to take all the innocent bystanders out of harm's way."

With safety as a focus, Flynn found a wheelchair in the hallway and entered the room. He walked over to the elderly victim and lifted him from the bed into the wheelchair and out of danger.

"It should be noted that at the time Officer Flynn entered the scene, he was fewer than 12 feet from a hostile subject who was armed with multiple knives," Stackpole said. "The suspect was also actively smoking methamphetamine. Officer Flynn did not hesitate to place himself in harm's way to help save another person's life."

After the victim was evacuated,



Grand Ronde Tribal Police Officer James "JJ" Flynn

Flynn remained on scene for several hours to help police establish a secure perimeter around the home and stayed until the SWAT Team from Oregon State Police arrived.

"At no time during this multiple hours-long ordeal did I ever see or hear Officer Flynn exhibit any amount of complaint or reluctance to assist," Stackpole said. "Indeed, (he) went above and beyond the call of duty."

McKnight credits Flynn's actions to quick thinking, past experience working at Sheridan Correctional Institution and his law enforcement field training officers.

"JJ is a smart kid," he said. "He found a solution and did it quickly enough so that force didn't have to be used. It also speaks to our relationship with Yamhill County, and that he felt comfortable enough with them to do that."

Flynn said dangerous situations are all a part of the job when it comes to police work.

"It was kind of what I signed up for and (helping to evacuate the victim) is what needed to happen," he said.

Flynn is a 2010 Willamina High School graduate and was hired by the Tribal Police Department in 2018. ■

Biking the Rez



Photo by Jennifer Clark

Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight and Tribal Council members Kathleen George and Denise Harvey, along with many community members, get ready to "Bike the Rez" on Saturday, June 15, at the Tribal gym. The event, which was organized by the Tribe's Social Services Department, attracted approximately 20 participants.