

Employees honored for 1,037 years of service

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals editor

Seventy employees were honored for a combined 1,037 years of service to the Grand Ronde Tribe during a third-quarter Years of Service ceremony held Thursday, Sept. 26, in the Tribal gym.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy thanked employees for their dedication and recalled when she was just one of three people hired to work for the Tribe. Now, there are 512 employees.

"That is just amazing," Kennedy said. "When I think of that to where we are today, it's you that make this possible. ... I appreciate all of the hard work that has been done here, and I appreciate each and every one of you."

Leading those honored in employment longevity was Natural Resources Department Timber and Roads Program Manager Jeff Kuust, who reached the 30-year mark in working for the Tribe.

Kuust becomes the third employee to reach the 30-year mark, joining Health & Wellness Business Office Manager Tresa Mercier and Head Groundskeeper Gregg Leno at having work more than three decades for the Tribe.

Joining Kuust in the quarter-century or more club were Tribal Attorney Rob Greene at 25 years and Natural Resources Department Manager Michael Wilson and Finance Officer Chris Leno, who both



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Natural Resources Timber and Roads Program Manager Jeffrey Kuust is congratulated for his 30 years with the Tribe during the third-quarter Employee Recognition event held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Sept. 26. Seventy employees were honored for 1,037 years of combined service to the Tribe and Kuust became the third Tribal employee to reach the 30-year mark.



General Manager David Fullerton draws a name during the raffle that followed the third-quarter Employee Recognition. Seventy employees were honored for 1,037 years of combined service to the Tribe.

reached 27 years of service.

Higher Education Manager Bryan Langley and Chinuk Immersion Preschool Teacher Jeff Mercier notched 28 years and Health Benefits Specialist Barbara Steere, Staff Accountant Melanie Hubbard, Procurement Assistant Kelly Leno, General Manager's Office Administrative Assistant Barbara Branson

and GED Coordinator Tracy Biery attained 29 years apiece.

Assistant Tribal Attorney Kim D'Aquila and Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier both reached 23 years.

Family Services Assistant Elaine Lane Raven, Dental Hygienist Sheila Blacketer and Swing Shift Supervisor Ben Bishop reached the 21-year mark and Procurement Supervisor Kevin Mueller and Cultural Resources Specialist Christopher Bailey reached 20 years.

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 Secretary Jon A. George. Employees were treated to a breakfast of eggs, bacon, bagels, cream cheese, biscuits and gravy, fruit, yogurt and juices.

Tribal Council members in attendance also included Denise Harvey and Vice Chair Chris Mercier. Tribal Council members also shook employees' hands and gave hugs as the Years of Service honorees were announced.

General Manager David Fullerton announced employee names and Human Resources Compensation Coordinator Jon R. George handed out the awards.

Employees honored during the third-quarter event included:

19 years: Elementary Lead Matthew Bucknell, Facilities Manager Tyson Mercier and Grand Ronde Police Department Records/Evidence Clerk Egypt Leno.

18 years: Security Department Supervisor Roel Hernandez and Education Senior Administrative Assistant Deborah Bachman.

17 years: Audit Director Trudi

Yoshikawa, Natural Resources Machine Equipment Operator Mark Mercier, Treasury Manager Rick Andersen and Swing Shift Housekeeper Nathan Mueller

16 years: Benefits Specialist Peggy Carpenter and Nutrition Program Manager Kristy Criss-Lawson.

15 years: Health Information Technician Stephanie Simmons, Member Services Administrator Shannon Simi, Finance Executive Assistant Ken Trevino and Employment Specialist Brandy Hembree.

14 years: Housing Services Coordinator Deborah Kroeker and Purchased/Referred Care Specialist Erica Mercier.

12 years: Natural Resources Department Secretary Scarlett Holtz, Senior Help Desk Technician Alec Palanuk-Mercier, Publications Coordinator Dean Rhodes, Preschool Bus Driver/Aide Jennifer Jerabek and Employment Specialist Misty Carl.

11 years: Natural Resources Fish and Wildlife Technician Matthew Zimbrick.

10 years: Patient Account Representative Kayla Leno, Mail Room/Printing Clerk Anna White, Help Desk Technician Spencer Olson and Maintenance Supervisor Andrew Freeman.

9 years: Maintenance Technician Jason Bailey, Health Information Technician Amanda McMahon, TERO Administrative Assistant Lori Sterling, Member Services Department Manager Veronica Montano, Early Childhood Education Department Manager Angie Blackwell, Housing Maintenance Technician Michael Lane, Young Child Wellness Community Coordinator Keri Kimsley and Adult and Family Services Supervisor Amber Zimbrick.

8 years: Vocational Rehabilitation Trainee Amber Yates, Medical Technologist Staci Pemble, Family Support Services Specialist Joanna Brisbois and Legal Secretary Susan June.

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

6 years: Maintenance Technician Daniel Mooney, Planning Director Rick George and Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier.

5 years: Housekeeper Donn Grisaber, Health & Wellness Clinic Medical Director Lance Loberg and Curriculum Specialist Mercedes Jones.

Prizes raffled off included gift cards to Amazon, Portland Trail Blazers tickets, movie tickets, an air fryer, waffle maker, cordless vacuum cleaner, blender, projector and vacuum food sealer. At the conclusion of the event, Fullerton announced that all employees would be given a half-day of administrative leave in advance of National Native American Day. ■

Includes information from Smoke Signals Editor Dean Rhodes.

'Women at War' nominated for NAMMY award

"Women At War: Warrior Songs Vol. 2" was recently nominated for Best Pop Recording by the Native American Music Awards.

The compact disc includes the song "Warrior Wings," written by Tribal member Shelly Nichols with music by Anna Wang.

Earlier this year, the 15-song CD received the Album of the Year award at the Wisconsin Area Music Industry Awards event held in Milwaukee.

This year's Native American Music Awards will be announced on Saturday, Nov. 2, during a ceremony held at the Seneca Niagara Hotel & Casino in Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Nichols, a Navy veteran, wrote "Warrior Wings" about her experiences serving in the U.S. Navy during which she experienced military sexual trauma.

Her lyrics were sent to classically trained pianist Wang, who recorded the song in June 2018 with Nichols providing backing vocals on the track.

"Warrior Songs Vol. 2" was released on Nov. 10, 2018. To listen to Nichols' song, visit warriorsongs.org/track/1564075/warrior-wings.

Voting is part of the Native American Music Awards process and the public can express their opinions at www.surveymonkey.com/r/NAMA19VOTINGBALLOT. ■



To hear Nichols discuss her journey and song, visit www.spreaker.com/user/smokesignals/ss-podcast-32-shelly-nichols