



Holiday photos  
— pgs. 8-9

JANUARY 1, 2020



# SMOKE SIGNALS

UMPQUA · MOLALLA · ROGUE RIVER · KALAPUYA · CHASTA

AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION OF THE CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF GRAND RONDE · SMOKESIGNALS.ORG

## Empey working to increase number of Native physicians

By Dean Rhodes  
*Smoke Signals editor*

For Native American patients, the chances that their doctor would be a Native American or Alaskan Native were never good, but over the last decade those chances have gotten worse.

According to statistics compiled by the Association of American Indian Physicians, the percentage of Native American and Alaskan

Native students in medical school decreased from 0.39 percent in 2006-07 to 0.2 percent in 2017-18.

In 2016, there were only 935 Native registered nurse graduates nationwide, a slight decrease from earlier years.

To combat the declining number of Native American

entering health care professions, the Northwest Native American Center for Excellence at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland was formed as a collaboration between the school, Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board and Portland State University.

Tribal member Allison Empey, who works at the Tribal health clinic part-time as a pediatrician, is the deputy director of the Center for Excellence, which is made possible through a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, OHSU School of Medicine and the support of all 43 Tribes in the Pacific Northwest.

See EMPEY  
continued on page 6

*As a Grand Ronde Tribal member who is a doctor, Empey says she hopes she can be a role model for younger aspiring Native American and Alaskan Native medical school students.*



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Caroline Suiter is the new Behavioral Health administrator for the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center.

## New Behavioral Health administrator seeks to support program, providers

Danielle Frost  
*Smoke Signals staff writer*

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has its first Behavioral Health administrator.

Caroline Suiter, 41, began working for the Tribe in November. The new position was created as part of a reorganization within the program.

"This position will support our providers

and program so that our providers can focus on great patient care," Health & Wellness Center Business Office Manager Tresa Mercier says. "I think Caroline's experience and education makes her a great fit for the Behavioral Health program. She has a calming energy about her with fresh ideas and

See HEALTH  
continued on page 5

## Tribal Council sells, buys land in Portland metro area

Tribal Council approved purchasing this 20,000-square-foot lot on Southeast 82nd Avenue in Portland. The purchase price and intended use for the property were not disclosed.



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

By Dean Rhodes  
*Smoke Signals editor*

Tribal Council approved the sale of 4.67 acres of the former Multnomah Greyhound Park in Wood Village and the purchase of property along 82nd Avenue in Portland during its Wednesday, Dec. 18, meeting.

The sale of a portion of the former 31-acre Greyhound Park, which the Tribe purchased in December 2015, will be to the city of Wood Village and involves wetlands that cannot

be developed because of a conservation easement.

Tribal Lands Manager Jan Michael Reibach said during the Tuesday, Dec. 17, Legislative Action Committee meeting that the property is being sold at fair market value and will benefit whomever eventually develops the property.

After purchasing the Greyhound Park property, the Tribe paid to

See LAND  
continued on page 7