



Photo by Danielle Frost

Child and Family Services Caseworker Dionne Gillum, left, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator Lindsey Ness create bath salts using essential oils and Epson salts. The exercise was one of several activities available at the Native Wellness Women’s Retreat held on Friday, Dec. 20, at the Tribal Community Center.

Native Wellness Women’s Retreat seeks to empower attendees

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

Empowerment, self-care and healthy relationships were the focus of a one-day Native Wellness Women’s Retreat held at the Tribal Community Center on Friday, Dec. 20.

“Winter presents a time of reflection,” Native Wellness Institute Executive Director Jillene Joseph said. “Think of your vision for 2020 and what you want it to look like.”

The 16 attendees were asked to pick a partner, introduce themselves and think of 10 reasons why they were worthy of self-care.

“Also, reflect on something that you learned or were reminded of during this past year,” Joseph said.

In keeping with the self-care theme of the retreat, stations were set up throughout the Community Center with activities such as beading, Pendleton bag making, essential oils, makeup, vision board creation, hair styling, a photo booth, coloring books and Christmas cookie baking.

“When we do things like we are doing today, we are filling ourselves up and making ourselves feel better,” Joseph said. “It’s Friday, it’s the holiday season and time to do self-care.”

Joseph encouraged attendees to think about negative thoughts and emotions they were holding on to and to let those go.

“Since we are only human, a lot of times we let them go, then we decide to pick them back up again,” she said. “If you think about it again, you let it go again. Then, if you fill that space up with good things instead, those negative things are less likely to come back.”

Before the women began rotating through the self-care stations, they each gave each other affirmations.

“This is another tool you can use to help let negative things go and fill up your mind and heart with good stuff,” Joseph said.

The retreat was organized by Domestic Violence Program Coordinator Danielle Murrell.

“I’ve been planning this for the last few months,” she said. “It’s all about health, self-care and empowerment. It’s always nice to come together and have the opportunity to chat more. I always love my conversations talking to different people.”

Murrell said she is hoping to host another retreat in the spring.

“Pampering yourself is nice and realizing you can create something new is awesome,” she said. ■

Helping Hands awards



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Verna Scharbach looks at the Spirit Mountain Community Fund Helping Hand Volunteer Award she received in Mount Angel on Tuesday, Dec. 17. Scharbach was recognized for her more than 30 years of volunteering to help at the Mission Benedict food pantry in Mount Angel.



Ventura Park Elementary School Early Learning Coordinator Jacqui McDougal becomes emotional after receiving the Spirit Mountain Community Fund Paid Staffer award as Tribal Council member Denise Harvey and Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Michael Cherry watch on Thursday, Dec. 20. McDougal was honored for initiating African-American Empowerment Dinners at her school to solicit feedback from parents to improve the school climate. Soon after, she led an after-school class, “Beyond MLK,” to introduce students to the African-American experience in history, art, cuisine, and heroes.



Willamette Riverkeeper Executive Director Travis Williams accepts the Management Staff Helping Hand award from Spirit Mountain Community Fund Program Coordinator Angela Sears during a presentation in Portland on Friday, Dec. 13. Williams was recognized for mentoring each person’s career path, helping staff navigate in office positions as well as making it possible for Oregonians to enjoy the Willamette River by encouraging on-river experiences through participation in research, paddling, camping, and honing their guiding and communications skills.

Grand Ronde Housing Department



Board seeks community input

The Grand Ronde Housing Board is inviting Tribal members and Tribal housing residents to provide input to assist its members in carrying out its advisory role to the Housing Department and Tribal Council regarding policy guidance. The Housing Board meets at 3 p.m. the third Thursday of each month in the Housing Department conference room, 28450 Tyee Road. Its chair is Simone Auger. For more information, contact the Housing Department at 503-879-2401. ■