



PRESORTED  
STANDARD MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PORTLAND, OR  
PERMIT NO. 700



# SMOKE SIGNALS

UMPQUA · MOLALLA · ROGUE RIVER · KALAPUYA · CHASTA

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

APRIL 15, 2020

## Casino extends closure indefinitely



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**The parking lot at Spirit Mountain Casino remains empty. The casino closed on Thursday, March 19, and will remain closed until the Grand Ronde Tribal Council and Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board of Directors determine it is safe to do so during the current COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.**

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

**S**pirit Mountain Casino will re-open when it is considered safe to do so, according to Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez.

After a second meeting between the Grand Ronde Tribal Council and Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board of Directors held Wednesday, April 1, it has been decided to keep the casino closed for an undefined length of time and monitor how the coronavirus affects Oregon and the rest of the country.

Tribal Council initially autho-



rized 120 hours – three weeks – of paid time off for all casino and government employees. For casino employees, the Tribe is paying their standard rate with additional consideration for tips.

On Wednesday, April 1, it was announced that all Tribal employees

See CASINO  
continued on page 7

## Tribal Council creates relief payment program

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

**I**n response to the coronavirus outbreak, Tribal Council voted unanimously to establish a COVID-19 Relief Payment Program for Tribal members during its Wednesday, April 1, meeting.

“We have examined membership’s needs during this unprecedented time and the availability of Tribal resources and believe it is appropriate to establish the COVID-19 Relief Payment Program to assist with offsetting the impacts to members from the pandemic including assistance with rent, mortgage, basic living expenses and medication,” said Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier while reading from a prepared statement. “The purpose of the program is to establish a general welfare payment to provide Tribal members with necessary relief from the devastating impact of the novel coronavirus.”

Mercier said the initial source of funding will be from available Tribal monies and not from gaming dividends or gaming dollars.

The details of how Tribal members can make a request for a relief payment through the program have not yet been established and Tribal members should not call until those details have been worked out and announced, said Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez.

“Tribal Council must act to protect the social and economic well-being of Tribal members,” Mercier said.

Tribal Council held a work session in executive session on Tuesday, April 7, to discuss the details of the program. On Wednesday, April 8, a supplemental budget for \$1.8 million to fund the relief payment program was posted at the

See COUNCIL MEETING  
continued on page 7



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Kathy Cole has been hired as the new Tribal librarian for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. She succeeds longtime Tribal Librarian Marion Mercier in the job.**

## By the books

*Kathy Cole hired as the new Tribal Librarian*

By Danielle Frost

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

**A** common piece of advice is to pick a career you love so that working is an enjoyable instead of depressing experience.

For Tribal member and longtime Chinuk Wawa teacher Kathy Cole, applying for the position of Tribal librarian was heeding that advice.

“I love to read and to promote literacy,” she says. “This seemed like a fun opportunity that

I had never experienced before. I thought it would be yet another way to bring our language to the Tribe. I am not leaving the language behind in this job. I am taking it with me.”

Cole succeeds longtime Tribal Librarian Marion Mercier, who retired in early 2019. Harris Reibach served as interim librarian until accepting the position of TERO director

See LIBRARIAN  
continued on page 8