

Portland food distribution

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey and Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George help load a food box into a vehicle at the Tribe's Portland office on Barbur Boulevard on Thursday, Aug. 13. Twenty-five boxes were available with food donated by the American Military Encouragement Network in Clackamas. Plans are for the weekly food distribution to continue through the end of October. For more information, contact the office at 503-879-1881 or toll free at 1-877-213-0809.

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Boxes of extras, frozen meat, desserts and bread wait to be added to food boxes at the Portland Area Tribal office on Barbur Boulevard on Thursday, Aug. 13.

Portland Area Office Tribal Services Representative Lisa Archuleta gathers information from a food box recipient at the Portland office on Barbur Boulevard.

Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Tests bring the total of positive cases to 12 out of 517

COVID-19 continued from front page

The Health & Wellness Center reported its third positive new COVID-19 case on Wednesday, Aug. 26. The case was the first where the individual has ties to the Grand Ronde community, according to information posted to the Tribe's Facebook page.

"Today we learned that the Tribal Clinic has tested its third positive case of COVID-19 and that the individual does have ties to the Grand Ronde community," the post stated. "Fortunately, we have prepared for this situation and we are working closely with our colleagues at the county and state to conduct contact tracing and manage the situation. Our own awareness to prevention measures — hand washing, mask wearing, and social distancing — is the best way to combat the spread."

On Thursday, Aug. 27, the Tribe reported its fourth positive new COVID-19 case and the second for an individual with ties to the community. "The individual was identified through contact tracing, but is symptomatic," the announcement

said. "We are expanding our contact tracing, monitoring the patients and working with our partners to fully understand the situation."

The federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Tribal policies prohibit health care professionals from releasing personal, identifiable information about patients without their consent.

The new tests bring the total of positive cases to 12 out of 517 tests conducted, but seven of the positives were re-tests of positive results from another county. Five are new positives from the clinic.

The second positive test was announced on Friday, Aug. 21. It was a person who had been exposed to COVID-19 through someone in their personal life. They are following Centers for Disease Control guidelines for isolation and self-quarantine. As was the procedure with the first positive, an announcement was made on the Tribe's Facebook page.

The first positive test was announced on Wednesday, Aug. 5. That individual was exposed to COVID-19 through a family member residing in their home.

According to the Aug. 19 COVID-19 Weekly Report released by the Oregon Health Authority, Grand Ronde's zip code of 97347 has registered less than 10 cases of the virus.

The two counties that split Grand Ronde — Polk and Yamhill — have had 408 and 610 cases and 14 deaths each, respectively.

Since the Tribal government re-opened in late May, all Tribal employees have undergone daily temperature screenings before reporting to work and are required to wear face masks in all common areas in Tribal buildings.

Spirit Mountain Casino employees have been required to wear face masks and have had daily temperature checks since the casino re-opened on June 1.

The two positive cases with ties to the Grand Ronde community prompted General Manager David Fullerton to issue an all-employee e-mail on Thursday, Aug. 27, that encouraged Tribal governmental employees to continue to wear masks, wash their hands frequently and not come to work if they are feeling ill.

"There have been recent positive tests of individuals in our community," Fullerton said. "In turn, these individuals unknowingly may have exposed employees. This is a serious health condition and it is not necessary to assess or place blame as the focus should support the health and wellness of our Tribal members, employees, families and community."

Fullerton said that if the Tribe has accurate information about an employee possibly being exposed to the virus, Tribal officials will privately discuss the matter with the employee. He cautioned against spreading rumors or discussing other employee's personal health information.

"When we discuss this information without validated facts, it can perpetuate a fear- and anxiety-filled atmosphere," he added. "We want everyone to feel safe and calm without spreading panic."

For more information regarding the Tribe's pandemic response and testing, visit www.grandronde.org/covid-19-information/. ■

Includes information from Smoke Signals Editor Dean Rhodes.