

Tribe starts new programs to aid members affected by pandemic

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

There won't be a September per capita payment, but the Tribe is rolling out several new assistance programs for Tribal members.

The Tribe also will extend its COVID-19 Payment Relief Program to send adult Tribal members three more \$600 payments from September through November, totaling \$4,400 in relief money since March, using its CARES Act funding.

The CARES Act funding must be used by the end of the year, Tribal Council member Michael Langley said during a Facebook Live event held on Wednesday, Aug. 19.

"I think what's important is for people to know what to expect the next few months and these funds have to be spent by Dec. 31 because they are the least flexible of our funding (sources)," he said. "We feel this is the best way forward and it feels like a relief to us that we are all on the same page."

It was the Tribe's 11th Facebook Live event and Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier said they are likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

"We averaged 400 viewers in the first few months of the pandemic and those remain in the hundreds," he said.

Mercier also read a statement from Tribal Council regarding why a September per capita payment wouldn't be disbursed despite Spirit Mountain Casino re-opening on June 1.

"Tribal Council has made the decision to reserve the monies associated with a potential per capita distribution to protect vital services, such as health care, over the long term. We believe that this decision is the fiscally responsible decision that will help the Tribe recover from the months without revenue, give the Tribe flexibility in future programing, and create additional financial security during this uncertain time.

"Unfortunately, there is no end in sight for the COVID-19. The Tribe's priority has always been to ensure that Grand Ronde Tribal members, the Grand Ronde community and Tribal staff have the resources and programs they need to make it through this. Everyone on Tribal Council believes that this decision is in the best interest of everyone and will allow us to address any scenario that comes our way."

The Tribe is offering several new programs to help members during the pandemic. One is a technology grant as many schools remain shuttered to in-person instruction.

"All Tribal member students will be given a \$500 check to buy technology, such as a computer, needed for classes," General Manager David Fullerton said. "There is an application process to complete. We'll issue a check to those who qualify, and all we ask is that you provide a receipt for the purchase so we can close that circle for audit."

Additionally, the Education Department also is offering matching grant programs to assist Tribal members with funds to pay for academic support services, such as tutoring and exam preparation assistance, and a K-12 private school funding program to support Native students with private school tuition costs.

There is also Housing and Urban Development funds available to both those living on and off the Reservation who need assistance with rent or mortgage payments.

"Some of these programs are limited to Tribal members only, but some are also for descendants," Fullerton said. "For any of our programs, please be sure to call first and see if you qualify."

For information on the education and technology programs, call the Education Department at 503-879-2101.

For more information on the HUD programs, contact Social Services at 503-879-2077.

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe also spoke during the Facebook Live event.

She announced that the clinic had conducted 457 Covid-19 tests. Of those, 451 were negative, five were positive retests and one was a positive test. None of the positive tests were from individuals who live in the Grand Ronde community.

Rowe also said that of the 397 deaths in the state from COVID-19, seven of them are Native members of other Oregon Tribes.

"We have known all along that Tribal people are more susceptible to this, as with any viral illness," she said. "It validates what we already knew and that we need to continue to be diligent with hand washing and wearing masks."

About 220 people logged in to watch the Facebook Live event. ■

Election Board has new office hours

The Election Board's new reduced schedule for 2020 is that it will be open Monday, Wednesday and Friday through Sept. 11. Office hours are from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with lunch from noon to 12:30 p.m.

The Election Office is located in the Tribal Community Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, and the phone number is 503-879-2271. A Tribal voter signature verification form can be obtained online at www.grandronde.org/media/1517/voter-reg-form.pdf.

Ballots were mailed to voters with verified signatures on Wednesday, July 29. Tribal members may submit a verified signature form at any time up to and including Election Day on Saturday, Sept. 12. The Grand Ronde post office is no longer open to accept ballots on Saturday, Sept. 12.

It is the voters' responsibility to ensure the ballot is received by the Election Board on Election Day – be sure to allow adequate time for the ballot to reach the Election Board by Sept. 12. ■



COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL EVENT BOARD VACANCIES

The following Committees and Special Event Boards have vacant positions.

- Housing Grievance Board – 1 vacancy**
- Ceremonial Hunting Board – 2 vacancies**
- Culture Committee – 2 vacancies**
- Enrollment Committee – 2 vacancies**
- Fish & Wildlife Committee – 3 vacancies**
- Powwow Special Event Board – 1 vacancy**

Please send completed applications to
Stacia Hernandez, 9615 Grand Ronde Road,
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Letters welcome

Letters should be exclusive to **smok signalz**.

Letters should be 400 words or less and must include the writer's name, address, phone number and Tribal roll number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed during a three-month period.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than mentioning the other writer by name, should refer to the date of the letter published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner. Letters deemed in poor taste will not be printed. Send letters via e-mail to news@grandronde.org, or submit in person at the Tribal Governance Center in Grand Ronde, Ore., or mail to **smok signalz**, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR, 97347.



Every Saturday 4 p.m. • Everyone welcome
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Toward Spirit Mountain
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503-879-3435