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Tribe doubles COVID-19 testing capacity



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde recently received a second COVID-19 virus test analyzer that will allow the clinic to double its testing capacity from 28 to 56 tests a day during a Wednesday, Jan. 6, Facebook Live event.

“This gives us the ability to react quickly when

someone is sick,” Rowe said.

Rowe gave an overview of the Tribal Health & Wellness Center’s continuing efforts to deal with the virus. She said that as of Tuesday, Jan. 5, the clinic has conducted 1,625 tests with 1,502 of them being negative, 50 positive and 73 being retests. At the time, there were 17 active cases

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Health & Wellness Lab Assistant Kateri Marrufo prepares a test sample to be run through the second COVID-19 virus test analyzer received by the Tribe on Tuesday, Jan. 12. The unit will allow the clinic to double its COVID testing capacity.

Schools weighing options to re-open

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

After Oregon Gov. Kate Brown lessened stringent statewide restrictions for in-person learning in an effort to have more students return to the classroom by Feb. 15, local school districts that educate Grand Ronde Tribal students are weighing their re-opening options.

Beginning on Jan. 1, the governor’s instructions for returning to school became “advisory rather than mandatory,” according to a letter sent to the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority on Dec. 23.

“Moving forward, the decision to resume in-person instruction must be made locally, district by district, school by school,” Brown said. “In addition to schools continuing to adhere to required health and safety protocols and working in close consultation with their local public health authority in understanding and considering the metrics, teachers, school staff, parents and students should be engaged in this decision-making process to allow schools to make the best choice for their community and their students.”

However, schools in areas with high COVID-19 case counts, such as Yamhill, Marion and Polk counties, are still essentially required to follow all of the same rules in the “Ready Schools, Safe Learners,” guidance set by ODE and OHA, and work with local public health officials to ensure guidelines are followed. The guidance is expected to be updated on Tuesday, Jan. 19.

“We will be working on our plan

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Grand Ronde Tribe preparing to open two medication-assisted treatment clinics

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is preparing to open two medication-assisted treatment facilities this year, the first Tribally owned and operated programs in the state to combat opioid addiction.

In December, Portland resident Jennifer Worth was hired as the Operations Director for both clinics.

“I’m really excited just to be able to be of service to the community and helping others,” Worth says. “What is really exciting about these clinics is that we will also be able to offer spiritual and cultural aspects as well as medication-assisted therapy.”

Worth earned a master’s degree in social work from Portland State University and has several years of experience working as a health care consultant across Oregon, including assisting with opening a medication-assisted treatment facility in Seaside.

“What spurred me to accept this job with the Tribe was the sense of community and connection I feel here,” she says.

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe says Worth’s priorities will be effective operations management and services.

“(She will) ensure the MAT program services are responsive to Tribal and community needs, are the highest quality of care, and in compliance with all state,



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Medication-Assisted Treatment Clinic Operations Director Jennifer Worth was onsite at the new clinic in Salem on Wednesday, Jan. 6. The Tribally operated clinic, along with one in Portland, will help people dealing with opioid addiction.

local and federal regulations, and that they contribute to the Tribe’s holistic health and wellness objectives for patients and families.”

The Tribe began looking into offering medication-assisted treatment in the wake of the opioid crisis that swept through the United States beginning in the early 2000s. The crisis led to millions of people with addiction problems, some of whom were not helped by traditional abstinence-based, 12-step programs.

A recent project update on the

Tribe’s website describes why it is pursuing these efforts.

“Medication-assisted treatment is one of the most effective forms of treatment for substance abuse because it combines behavioral therapy with carefully managed medications,” it states. “For the past year, the Tribe has been exploring ways to expand its current health services to include medication-assisted

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