

# Community Fund surpasses \$85 million mark in giving

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Spirit Mountain Community Fund awarded \$574,427 in grants on Wednesday, March 10, during a virtual check presentation event that also celebrated the Grand Ronde Tribe's philanthropic entity surpassing the \$85 million mark in giving since its beginning in 1997.

One year ago, the Community Fund held the final in-person event on the Tribal campus before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down not only Spirit Mountain Casino, but closed the Governance Center to outside visitors and nonessential employees.

Spirit Mountain Community Fund receives 6 percent of proceeds from the casino and distributes those funds to nonprofits in 11 northwestern Oregon counties to fund efforts in the areas of arts and culture, environmental preservation, education, health, historic preservation and public safety.

The virtual event was the first check presentation held by the Community Fund since March 2020. It opened with a prayer by Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George and Cultural Policy Analyst Greg Archuleta showed a video of Tribal member and Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier performing a gathering song at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia rivers.

Executive Director Michael Cherry and Board of Trustees Chairman Chip Lazenby welcomed virtual attendees.

Cherry said the fund's check distributions have always been a way to come together as a community and honor grantees who are doing the good work in their communities.

"This is always the most enjoyable part of my job," Lazenby said. "It is meeting with all of the people who are actually on the ground doing all of the work to improve the community for, in many instances, people who are less fortunate than a lot of others in our society. And that really is the point of our charitable giving and doing it on behalf of the Tribe, which is heavily invested in advancing the communities they inhabit."

Grants Coordinator Jim Holmes showed the approximately 50 people who attended a video on the history of the Tribe that also provided background on the founding of the Community Fund.

St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County was the featured grant recipient with Member Liaison Laura Bennett made a presentation that surveyed all of the programs offered. The organization received \$50,000 to support its efforts to address the effects of homelessness on educational outcomes.

Community Fund Program Coordinator Angela Sears announced



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Michael Cherry welcomed those attending the first ever virtual check presentation event on Wednesday, March 10, from her office in the Tribal Governance Center. It was the first check presentation event held in more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and saw the Community Fund surpass the \$85 million mark in giving.**

the grant awards and allowed organization representatives to briefly speak. The Children's Book Bank won the drawing for an Ikanum saddle blanket designed by Tribal member Travis Mercier.

During the March 10 virtual check distribution, the Community Fund awarded six small grants, 12 large grants and six rapid response grants. The latter were all awarded to organizations helping with either COVID-19 or September 2020 wildfire relief, or both.

Small grants were awarded to:

- Black Parent Initiative in Multnomah County, \$5,000, for its School-based Learning Communities effort.
- School Garden Project of Lane County, \$7,500, for its Science in the Garden program that gets youth outside while learning in school gardens.
- Stayton Public Library Foundation, \$7,000, for its early literacy outreach effort.
- Blosser Center for Dyslexia Resources in Multnomah County, \$5,000, for literacy support for students with dyslexia.
- Woodcrafters in Eugene: Writers Residencies, \$7,500, for increasing school engagement and academic success.
- Yamhill Carlton Together Cares in Yamhill County, \$7,500, for its Tiger Academy that cares for youth while their parents are working.

Large grants were awarded to:

- Yamhill Community Action Partnership, \$49,927, to expand mental health services for Yamhill County youth.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates Voices for Children of Benton County, \$30,000, to give hope to children going through the foster care and court systems.
- Kinship House of Washington County, \$50,000, for its Bright Futures for Foster Children effort that provides mental health services to children with extreme trauma.
- St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, \$50,000, for its project to address the effects of homelessness on educational

outcomes.

- Reading Results, Read to Succeed of Multnomah County, \$40,000, to provide access for all during COVID-19 and beyond.
- Financial Beginnings of Multnomah County, \$30,000, to create financial education opportunities for low-income Oregonians.
- SMART Reading of Multnomah County, \$50,000, to adapt SMART to virtually meet the literacy needs of pre-kindergarten students.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates of Linn County, \$50,000, to fund volunteer recruitment, training and supervision.
- The Children's Book Bank of Multnomah County, \$10,000, for

its effort to provide children with inclusive books throughout the pandemic.

- Oregon Environmental Council of Marion County, \$15,000, for its Water Justice effort.
- Compassion Connect of Multnomah County, \$50,000, to fund continued one-day dental and medical clinics in the Portland area.
- Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center & Foundation of Washington County, \$50,000, to fund its COVID-19 response team throughout its service area, which also includes Yamhill County.

Rapid response grants of \$10,000 each were given to:

- Family Building Blocks of Marion County for COVID/wildfire relief.
- Habitat for Humanity of Lincoln County for wildfire relief.
- Lines for Life of Clackamas County for COVID/wildfire relief.
- North Clackamas Watershed Council for COVID/wildfire relief.
- Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center of Linn County for wildfire relief.
- South Lane Mental Health Services of Lane County for COVID/wildfire relief.

The Community Fund was created as part of the Tribe's gaming compact with the state of Oregon. It is supervised by a Board of Trustees that includes Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, Jack Giffen Jr. and Kathleen George.

Giffen helped close the virtual event by reminding grantees that the funds given to their organizations are from each and every Grand Ronde Tribal member. ■

*The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Veterans Service Office in collaboration with*

*Agency Creek Expressions presents...*

**"Gathering around the Canoe" on April 9<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.**  
**Make your own clay canoe and paddle!**

All CTGR Veterans & Tribal Members, CTGR veteran & tribal families and community members are invited. Supplies are limited, register early to ensure you get a kit!

**Register at:**  
Zoom.us/meeting  
**Meeting ID: 968 9467 1741**  
**By March 26, 2021**

*(To give enough time to mail canoe kits or arrange for kit pick-up).*



*Presented by, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal Member, and owner of Agency Creek Expressions, Brian Krehbiel.*



"For the past 29 years I have enjoyed spending time learning traditional skills and arts with several special elders. Some of these skills include plant knowledge and processing, weaving, carving and tool making. I love to share these teachings with people that want to strengthen their connection to the Tribe and cultural identity. My true passion is making traditional river and ocean going canoes. Making canoes is very challenging and so rewarding. Since my first introduction and experience in a traditional canoe, I've been hooked".

~ Brian Krehbiel

**TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE**

Contact the TVSO for more information:  
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