

Employees honored  
for years of service  
— pg. 8



MAY 1, 2021

# SMOKE SIGNALS

UMPQUA · MOLALLA · ROGUE RIVER · KALAPUYA · CHASTA

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

## 13 active COVID-19 cases closed government

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

Thirteen active COVID-19 cases, likely brought on by spring break activities and Easter family gatherings, closed the Tribal governmental campus for three weeks through at least Friday, May 7.

“There’s been an uptick in positive cases recently,” Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said during a Wednesday, April 21, Facebook Live event. “We were at zero for a period of time. These cases have come after spring break and Easter. It becomes a game of telephone where it gets wider and wider. We are here to help treat you, but we absolutely support vaccination.”

The Facebook Live event was the 17th held since the Tribal government shut down in March 2020 because of the pandemic. Approximately 120 people logged on to watch the event, which included Rowe, Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy and Spirit Mountain Casino General Manager Stan Dillon. Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George and Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. also attended.

The Tribe was not the only entity affected by increasing COVID-19 cases in the West Valley. The Willamina School District returned to a virtual learning platform after four students tested positive for

See COVID-19 continued on page 11

## Table Rocks reflections

Tribal member Joseph Ham honored for poem

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

As a child, Tribal member Joseph Ham recalls hearing his mother tell a tragic family story that had been passed down through the generations: A 6-year-old uncle of his great-grandmother, Ila Dowd, was lynched in Jacksonville, Ore., at the onset of the final Rogue River War in the fall of 1855.

At the time, Ham, 29, thought it was family lore and not quite believable. But time and perspective often have a way of imparting lessons.

“When I was researching the Lupton massacre I found an old article of the event depicting what she had told my mom and I kept thinking about how he has been eternally 6 years old this whole time,” Ham says. “And I was mad at myself for not wanting to believe that story growing up, like a part of me only put stock into it after I read it in a book. I think that must be part of the decolonization process.”

He put his thoughts into song and performed it in 2020 to accompany a photography exhibit called “The Land Remembers” by Rich Bergeman. The exhibit was a series of black-and-white photographs depicting the Rogue River War battle sites.

Ham wrote the song after representatives from the Chehalem Cultural Center asked Tribal



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Tribal member Joseph Ham’s poem was selected by The Nature Conservancy for display on the hiking trails at Table Rocks in southern Oregon near Medford.

Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson if he knew of a descendant of the war who could add an element of Indigenous representation to the photo exhibit.

Harrelson contacted Ham again when he learned of a poetry contest, Signs of Spring at Table Rocks, sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and Bureau of Land Management. Winning entries would be displayed along the Table Rocks hiking trail in southern Oregon, in conjunction with information on geology, wildflowers, pollinators and other subjects associated with the area.

The subject of the contest, “What do the Table Rocks mean to you?”

See TABLE ROCKS continued on page 10



Contributed photo by Tabitha Olson, BLM recreation specialist

An unidentified hiker stops to read Grand Ronde Tribal member Joseph Ham’s poetry at Table Rocks.

## Grand Ronde Restoration figure Elizabeth Furse walks on



Smoke Signals file photo

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Elizabeth Furse, who played an important role in helping the Grand Ronde Tribe accomplish Restoration in 1983 and the return of land in 1988, walked on Sunday, April 18, at the age of 84.

Furse also represented Oregon in Congress for three terms in the 1990s. She died peacefully at

her home from complications related to a fall.

In the early 1980s, Furse joined with Don Wharton, founding director of Oregon Legal Service’s Native American Program, to help the Grand Ronde Tribe regain federal recognition, which was taken away in 1954 by the Western

See FURSE continued on page 5

Former Oregon congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, photographed in 2008 for the Tribe’s 25th Restoration special edition, walked on Sunday, April 18, at the age of 84. In the early 1980s, she was instrumental in helping the Grand Ronde Tribe regain federal recognition.