

In-person family event planned for July 24

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Grand Ronde Tribe is planning its first in-person family event in more than 15 months since the pandemic shut down the Tribal campus to visitors.

With Oregon closing in on a 70-percent vaccination level for adults, the Tribal Health & Wellness Center will be hosting an event for Tribal families beginning at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, July 24, on the Tribal campus that will include vaccinations for youth ages 12 to 17, a meal, social powwow, lacrosse activities and 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

“I’m looking forward to being able to celebrate each other and our culture,” Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said during a Wednesday, June 23, Facebook Live event. “We will be doing this outside and include lots of hand sanitizer and distancing for those who have not yet been vaccinated. People will also need to sign in for the event.”

The Facebook Live event was the 18th held since the Tribal government shut down in March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Approximately 90 people logged on to watch the event, which featured Rowe, Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, Vice Chair Chris Mercier and General Manager David Fullerton.

The event was originally scheduled for June 16, but had to be rescheduled due to technical issues. Those issues also appeared during the June 23 event with Kennedy’s microphone going out and forcing her to move to a different seat in Tribal Council Chambers.

Fullerton said that the Tribal government was still in a state of emergency, but that more than 70 percent of employees have been vaccinated so some restrictions are being lifted.

“Vaccinated employees no longer have to wear masks unless they are interacting with the public,” he said. “We’re hoping to move into phase four soon, but for now limited access

to the campus is still in place.”

Phase four would allow in-person meetings and outside visitors to the Tribal campus.

Fullerton also said that the Tribe still has rental assistance funds available to members whose incomes have been affected by COVID-19 and to contact Social Services at 503-879-2077 for more information on how to access the funds.

Mercier announced that the Tribe has two new grants set up for Tribal member households to access. One is for healthy eating and the other is exercise related.

“One of the good things that came out of the pandemic is that it forced us to look at the services we offer to members and what we could do to promote healthy living,” Mercier said.

The healthy foods assistance program will include a one-time \$300 allowance for households and can be used for items such as fruit and vegetable gardening supplies, online meal kits and farm box deliveries.

The exercise program will follow the same model and include things like weights, fitness equipment, gym memberships, athletic camps for youths, swimming lessons, bikes and more.

“Because of COVID, many people were stuck at home, sitting on the

couch and eating,” Mercier said. “These programs are important to help promote better habits. It’s good to be mindful of your eating and exercise. We hope these will become permanent grants.”

Information on how to apply will be announced soon, he added.

Rowe also announced that the clinic is now vaccinating all youth ages 12 to 17, provided they are registered with the clinic. For more information or to make an appointment, call 503-879-2032.

So far, the Tribe has vaccinated 20,588 people, which includes 9,961 Elders. Since testing began at the clinic in April 2020, it has administered 2,423 with 2,148 negative and 89 positive results. There are currently two active cases of COVID-19 that the clinic is monitoring, she added.

Kennedy closed the Facebook Live event by giving a brief overview of the American Rescue Plan Act funds, of which the Tribe has thus far received \$27.5 million, according to [usaspending.gov](https://www.usaspending.gov).

“We’re making decisions about the use of those funds,” Kennedy said. “They have a longer lifespan than the CARES Act in 2020.”

CARES Act funds must be spent by the end of 2021 while Tribes will have until the end of 2024 to spend American Rescue Plan monies. ■

Health & Wellness Center hours

The Health & Wellness Center is pleased to add additional access for patients during holiday weeks on Thursday mornings. The clinic will be scheduling patients at 8 a.m. every Thursday preceding or following a holiday closure. Urgent care also will be available during this time. ■

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