

Tribal employees share successes of Warriors of Hope program

By Danielle Harrison

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Tribal employees Danielle Murrell and Anne Falla capped off National Domestic Violence Awareness Month by participating in a panel discussion about how to recognize intimate partner violence and ways to help survivors cope.

Murrell is the Grand Ronde Warriors of Hope program manager and Falla serves as the victim assistance advocate. The program offers a confidential outlet to support survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking.

They joined other public health professionals, victim advocates and activists from across the state for a Zoom “Lunch & Learn,” event on Friday, Oct. 28. It was sponsored by the Oregon Commission for Women, whose mission is to “work for the implementation and establishment of economic, social, legal and political equality for women and to maintain a continuing assessment of the issue and needs confronting women and girls in Oregon.”

October was first declared National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989. Since then, it has been a time to acknowledge domestic violence survivors and be a voice for its victims.

The event was held the day after Murrell’s department hosted a “Take a Stand Walk With Me” awareness event on the Tribal campus, which attracted several Tribal and community members.

“Anne and Danielle provide critical work that focuses on services for Native American women and children,” commission co-chair Natasha Haunsperger said.

Murrell began with a brief history of the Tribe, starting with when Tribal members were force-marched to the Grand Ronde Reservation in 1856, how the Tribe was terminated in 1954 and the resulting fracture of family and cultural bonds.

“That leads to a lot of the historical and intergenerational trauma in Indian County today,” she said.

The domestic violence prevention program started as a grassroots effort in 2014.

“There were overwhelming rates of domestic violence in our community,” Murrell said. “Anne Falla



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

From left, Grand Ronde Warriors of Hope Program Manager Danielle Murrell and Victim Assistance Advocate Anne Falla joined other public health professionals, victim advocates and activists from across the state to cap off National Domestic Violence Awareness Month with a Zoom “Lunch & Learn,” event on Friday, Oct. 28. The event was sponsored by the Oregon Commission for Women, and involved a panel discussion about how to recognize intimate partner violence and ways to help survivors cope.

has earned and gained trust in our community through her tireless work. We are lucky to have her as a victim assistance advocate.”

Falla recalled when it was just her working with domestic violence victims, which eventually became overwhelming.

“We were a team of one,” Falla said. “We had a very strong medical staff who were seeing things at the clinic and weren’t afraid to speak the hard truth of what was going on behind closed doors.”

From there, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Program was born.

“I did it for four years and the sheer volume and severity of the calls burned me out,” Falla said.

Some of the calls she fielded included reports of families trafficking their children for drugs, a woman who had her throat cut and was left for dead, someone whose partner attempted to drown her in a river, police over or under response to the calls for help and children who were assaulted for decades.

Falla left the program in 2018, but returned after Murrell took the job and the department was expanded through grant funding.

“We can certainly relate and are supportive of you and your work,” Haunsperger said. “It’s extraordinary that you have come back and we are honored to learn about and bring to the surface the amazing work you are doing.”

Haunsperger asked Falla and Murrell to tell attendees more about the new modular shelters for domestic violence victims that will soon be opened in Grand Ronde, and how they were able to secure the funding.

“We’ve had significant revitalization with the assistance of federal grants,” Murrell said. “Before that, it wasn’t uncommon to have domestic violence calls manned by one person. Now we’re a program of six and were able to purchase

two modular homes that will serve as emergency shelters for victims of trafficking, Elder abuse and domestic violence.”

The Warriors of Hope program also recently received Housing and Urban Development funding for an expansion of the Community Center, where its program is currently housed.

“The expansion will provide for more privacy and confidentiality and also will house support groups and play spaces for kids,” Murrell said. “We’re excited for those things.”

Haunsperger also asked Murrell and Falla to describe the challenges of advocating for Tribal victims in the court system and the barriers they encountered.

“Sometimes it gets messy because our Reservation borders four counties and complaints get dropped because the counties weren’t talking to each other,” Falla said.

Afterward, the panel members took questions. One that Falla answered was how employers could help employees who were victims of violence.

“Victims have a lot going on,” Falla said. “They have to worry about transportation, shelter, schools for their children and work. Finding employers who will help employees through these times is critical. I’m not sure how we would do this, but we need to support survivors.”

Falla said that Warriors of Hope had partnered with various housing authorities for fast track housing vouchers, so those who want to escape a violent situation but don’t have the influx of cash that it often takes for a new apartment can secure a place to live without spending months or years on a waiting list.

“Creating these partnerships is critical,” she said. ■

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