

Tribal Council approves second Shasta loan

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals assistant editor/staff writer

Tribal Council held a special meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 15, to approve a second secured loan to the Tribe’s health insurance administrator, Redmond-based Shasta Administrative Services.

The \$400,000 loan will be made through the Tribe’s line of credit at TriState Capital Bank if it is needed and will help Shasta with business operations.

The first loan to Shasta was approved in November 2022 for \$350,000 to help the company address cash flow issues stemming from system upgrades and litigation expenses. In return, Shasta agreed to release the Tribe and its entities from any claims Shasta or its parent company, Lamatsin LLC, have against the Tribal entities arising out of a lawsuit filed by QualiCenters Salem LLC against Shasta and First Choice Health Network.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court in Oregon, alleges Shasta and First Choice have “regularly failed and refused to fulfill their contractual obligations” in paying QualiCenters Salem network rates for the treatment of a patient who worked at Spirit Mountain Casino. It is seeking approximately \$1.5 million for past billing and payments for services it provided for

the patient.

Shasta, however, asserts it is the payor of last resort and QualiCenters Salem failed to bill Medicare first before attempting to collect from Shasta.

Shasta employs approximately 60 people and makes about \$17 million in annual revenues, according to the website Datanyze.

“(The new loan) is for the same thing that was approved before,” Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said, adding that there will be an update to the Tribal membership about Shasta.

The other agenda item involved approving a proposed settlement with e-cigarette maker Juul Labs Inc.

In 2020, the Tribe joined a list of Tribal and nonTribal governmental entities in the United States going after the company, which reportedly controls 75 percent of the e-cigarette market in the country, for deliberately targeting Native American Tribes and American Indian/Alaskan Native youth in promoting its products as a safe alternative to tobacco products. However, the products actually are highly addictive and cause significant health issues.

To view the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government’s website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Government tab and then Videos. ■

We want to hear from you!

The Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center Comment Box is located at the entrance of the Health & Wellness Center, next to the drinking fountain. Share your experience, good or bad with us! ■

Raising Confident Competent Children

Wednesday March 8, 2023 at 10:30

Zoom: <https://bit.ly/raisingconfidentchildren2023>

Call: +1 253 215 8782

Enter Meeting ID: 853 1125 4712

All are welcome to attend.

LOVE

GRAND RONDE HEAD START

EMPOWERED PARENTING

(Art by Jackie Traverse)

Booking a blind date



Photos by Kamiah Koch

Tribal Librarian Kathy Cole, dressed as the Queen of Hearts from “Alice in Wonderland,” and Library Aide Crystal Bigelow stand outside the library during the Blind Date With a Book event held Tuesday, Feb. 14. Community members drove through to receive a wrapped book, which was selected depending on their age, and Valentine’s Day treats. Blind Date With a Book started during the COVID-19 pandemic as a contact-free way to keep the Grand Ronde community reading.



Library Aide Crystal Bigelow hands Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi Valentine’s Day treats and a wrapped book during the Blind Date With a Book event.

Tribe offering gas discount

Grand Ronde Tribal members, as well as Tribal and Spirit Mountain Casino employees, can receive a 30-cent per gallon discount on gasoline at the Tribally owned Grand Ronde Station convenience store.

There are, however, a few rules. Tribal members and employees must go inside and show either their enrollment card or employee identification card to receive the discount. ■

Housing Association offering scholarships

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The Northwest Indian Housing Association is accepting applications for its Youth Scholarship Program.

Applications can be obtained by visiting the association’s website at www.nwiha.org and clicking on the Youth Scholarship Program tab.

Applications and support documents must be submitted by e-mail to info@nwiha.org by 5 p.m. Friday, March 31. All applicants, selected or not, will be notified and successful applicants will be recognized at a banquet dinner held Tuesday, April 18.

Complete instructions are contained in the application form.

Questions should be sent to the housing association at info@nwiha.org or by calling 360-220-9212. ■