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SMOKE SIGNALS

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Leno, Mercier re-elected; Haller tops Langley by one vote for third seat

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

Lisa Leno and Chris Mercier won decisive victories in the Tribal Council election, but only one vote separated incumbent Michael Langley and challenger Matthew Haller.

Following a recount on Saturday, Sept. 9, Haller was declared the winner with 585 votes to Langley's 584.

Langley, 56, was vying for his third consecutive three-year term on Tribal Council. He had been serving as Tribal Council secretary

since September 2021.

"Congratulations to all of the candidates, especially Chris, Lisa and Matt," he said. "For Veronica and Chris, even choosing to run takes courage and is worthy of kudos. While it has been a demanding job, it has been an honor to serve our Tribe the last six years. I'm proud of what we accomplished. I will always wish for the best outcomes for the decisions this Tribal Council will be making. There is much too important work ahead to ever make it about anything other than good performance."



Chris Mercier



Lisa Leno



Matthew Haller

Haller, 34, the owner of Wildwood Hotel in Willamina, was a first-time challenger.

"Thank you for believing in and supporting me during my cam-

paign," he said. "In the next three years, I promise to give every single

See ELECTION continued on page 7



Contributed photo by Thomas Sievers/City of Springfield

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Marta Clifford received the History Maker Award from Springfield Mayor Sean VanGordon on Tuesday, Sept. 5, during the City Council meeting.

History maker Tribal Elder Marta Clifford honored

By Dean Rhodes
Publications coordinator

SPRINGFIELD – Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Marta Lu Clifford received the History Maker Award as part of the second annual Springfield Heritage Awards that were handed out during the Tuesday, Sept. 5, City Council meeting by Springfield Mayor Sean VanGordon.

The Heritage Awards were developed in 2022 by the Springfield Historic Commission and the Springfield History Museum to recognize an array of stewardship activities that increase awareness, appreciation and support of an inclusive perspective regarding local heritage.

There are two award categories – the Preservation Excellence Award and the History Maker

See AWARD continued on page 8

Community Fund tops \$95 million

Ophelia's Place says grant awards are crucial to fulfilling its mission

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

Spirit Mountain Community Fund awarded almost \$1.5 million in grants on Wednesday, Sept. 13, during its second in-person check presentation in more than three years held in the Governance Center Atrium.

The Community Fund receives 6 percent of proceeds from Spirit Mountain Casino and awards that money to nonprofits in 11 northwest Oregon counties to fund efforts in the areas of arts and culture, environmental preservation, education, health, historic preservation and public safety, and to the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon under the fund's Tribal Grants program.

As of the third quarter of 2023, the Grand Ronde Tribe's philanthropic giving now exceeds \$95 million.

The Community Fund was created as part of the Tribe's gaming compact with the state of Oregon. It is supervised by an eight-member Board of Trustees that includes Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, Brenda Tuomi and Michael Cherry, who is also a former Community Fund director.

Tribal Council members who attended the check presentation included Chairwoman



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Ophelia's Place Executive Director Laura Sanchez sorts beads that will be used to make jewelry at the Eugene location on Friday, Sept. 8. The organization helps girls enhance their emotional health, manage life challenges and learn more about themselves. The nonprofit received a \$50,000 grant from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund during its quarterly check presentation on Wednesday, Sept. 13.

Cheryle A. Kennedy, Vice Chair Chris Mercier and Tuomi, Cherry, Kathleen George, Jon A. George and newly elected Matthew Haller.

Eugene-based Ophelia's Place is one of the Community Fund's beneficiaries, receiving a \$50,000 grant on Wednesday for its partnerships with Albany schools to promote positive female youth development.

Ophelia's Place was founded as a nonprofit in 2005 by biologist and community advocate Ro-

See COMMUNITY FUND continued on page 11