

Holiday event held for employees

SERVICE continued
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Kennedy said. “I really appreciate all of our employees. My heart is blessed from all that is being done and there is going to be a lot more in 2024.”

Kennedy thanked Leno, who then highlighted a few accomplishments of the Tribe this year, including hunting and fishing rights expanding to its members through the memorandum of agreement with the state. He mentioned several construction projects including the recently-completed language education building, the new health-care/vaccination clinic and cooking demonstration area, and a child development center that will open in late 2024.

Next, Leno announced fourth-quarter service awards honoring 69 employees with 983 combined years of service to the Grand Ronde Tribe. The two longest serving employees honored were Health Administration Operations Director Tresa Mercier with 39 years, and Public Works Coordinator John Mercier with 33 years of employment.

As employees were honored for years of service, each one was presented a certificate signed by Kennedy and Leno and received personal congratulations from Tribal Council members.

In addition to Kennedy and George, Tribal Council members in attendance included Vice Chair Chris Mercier, Secretary Michael Cherry, Kathleen George, Lisa Leno and Brenda Tuomi.

Employees received certificates in appreciation for their increasing tenure with the Tribe. Employees who hit milestone years of 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years also received bonus checks. In addition, those reaching the 10-year mark received a Tribal Pendleton blanket and a \$50 check, or a \$150 check.

Other employees honored during the third quarter included:

28 years of service: Social Services Department Manager Dana Ainam, Facilities Senior Administrative Assistant Daphney Colton, Benefits and Risk Manager Tammy Gould, Records Clerk Hollie Mercier, Compensation/HRIS Administrator Candy Scranton, Behavioral Health Scheduler Linda Evans and



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Internal Auditor Kailey Compton participates in the ugly sweater contest during the fourth-quarter Years of Service awards and annual Employee Appreciation Holiday Party held at the Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center on Thursday, Dec. 21.

Tribal Lands Department Manager Jan Reibach.

27 years: Timber Resources Program Manager Michael Karnosh.

26 years: Dental Restorative Assistant Donnette Spaulding, Cultural Center Supervisor Crystal Szczepanski, Judicial Operations Supervisor Julie Boekhoff and Police Records and Evidence Clerk Egypt Leno.

25 years: Employment Specialist Tauni Tollas is the newest member of the quarter-century or more club.

20-24 years: Procurement Department Manager Nathan Rolston with 24 years; Housing Improvement Coordinator Donald Coon with 21 years; and Tribal Librarian Kathy Cole with 20 years of service.

18 years: Gaming Commission Audit Manager Rose Smith, Internal Auditor Heather Roberts, Social Services Support Counselor Christopher Holliday and Housing Improvement Coordinator Loyal Hamilton.

17 years: Utility Maintenance Supervisor Joe Loomis and Health Administration Quality Coordinator Tauni McCammon.

16 years: Housing Administrative Program Manager Joan Dugger.

15 years: Cultural Education Specialist Flicka Lucero and Social

Services SPF Coordinator Isaiah Sherwood.

13 years: Employment Case-worker Rhonda Leno and Infant/Toddler Site Coordinator Melissa Phillips.

12 years: Firefighter Daniel Hyatt, Pharmacy Technician Supervisor Stephanie Wolfe, Senior Applications Administrator Jose Luna and Senior Maintenance Technician Brent Buckner.

11 years: Housing Administrative Assistant Nicholas Kimsey, Pharmacy Technician Cindy Brickell, Medical Clinic Secretary Jamie Adams, Education Services Coordinator Devin Boekhoff and Utility Maintenance Technician Richard Smith.

10 years: Senior Maintenance Technician Daron Pond Jr. and Payroll Administrator Michelle Peterson.

9 years: Behavioral Health Peer Support Specialist Shelly Fox, Lead Certified Medical Assistant Amanda Walker, Child/Family Services Caseworker Santiago Atanacio and Early Childhood Education Instructional Assistant Shantell Ulestad-Salinas.

8 years: Early Childhood Education Teacher Aide Wendy Mercier, Housing Maintenance Technician Winston Mercier, Lead Housekeeper Coley Parazoo, Health Services

Executive Director Kelly Rowe, Gaming Licensing Specialist Jeffrey Smith and Grant Supervisor Gloria Schwagler.

7 years: Domestic Violence Relief Advocate Leah Bailey, Emergency Management Division Chief Torey Wakeland, Data Specialist Sommer Bruckner and Tribal Security Officer Derek Ellenwood.

6 years: Librarian Aide Crystal Bigelow, Certified Medical Assistant Fermin Deras Diaz, Publications Secretary/Advertising Representative Katherine Warren-Steffensmier, Dental Assistant Nina Umfrid, Employee Relations Specialist Aaron Bigelow, Family Partnerships Coach Lyndsey Stuckey, Laboratory Assistant Kateri Marrufo and Housing Safety Specialist Bradley Leno.

5 years: Tribal Veterans Service Officer Ramona Quenelle, Cook Jason Ibarra, Cultural Resources Specialist Christopher Rempel, Community Support Specialist Isabell Bobb, Lead Patient Account Representative Ashley Stonebrink, Youth Enrichment Coordinator Corina Limon and Early Childhood Education Teacher Aide and Bus Monitor Krystal King.

In addition to the service awards, the holiday event featured an audience-judged ugly sweater contest that included prizes of \$100, \$75 and \$50. Many raffle prizes were also given away and included denominations of \$100 to \$2,000, as well as administrative leave days.

The Human Resources Department handed out the cash, led by Scott Mode on the microphone, with cheers echoing through the lodge hall as ticket numbers were called. Spirit Mountain’s AV Tech Ivan Calderon-Arceo kept the program running smoothly on stage, while Banquet Chef Brett Hutton and Executive Chef Sean Huey guided the many employees tending the holiday party buffet.

Christmas ornaments adorned the 74 round tables bedecked with white tablecloths, each with eight chairs decorated with red and green cloth bands. The large lodge hall also featured two large wreaths on either side of the stage and at least four Christmas trees.

At the end of the banquet, Tribal employees were given the rest of the day off with administrative leave. ■



Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy gives a welcome to Tribal employees during the fourth-quarter Years of Service awards and annual Employee Appreciation Holiday Party held at the Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center on Thursday, Dec. 21.



Tribal Dental Assistant Nina Umfrid hugs Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy as she is recognized for her six years of working for the Tribe during the fourth-quarter Years of Service awards and annual Employee Appreciation Holiday Party held at the Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center.