

First fish caught



Courtesy photo by Brandon Weems

Tribal Council member Kathleen George holds up a summer steelhead she caught at Willamette Falls in Oregon City on Friday, May 17. “I want to give thanks to everyone in our Natural Resources crew. I was very humbled and honored to be able to participate with our ceremonial fishers last Friday out at Willamette Falls. I was tremendously honored to get the first salmon, a beautiful steelhead for our first fish for our people. It was absolutely an amazing day and I cannot thank everyone enough,” George said. She is the first Grand Ronde Tribal woman to catch a fish at Willamette Falls since the Tribe resumed ceremonial fishing at the falls in 2016.

Tribal Council approves application for suicide prevention grant

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

With youth mental health concerns at an all-time high following the COVID-19 pandemic, Tribal Council approved a grant application for suicide prevention efforts at its Wednesday, May 15, meeting.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Youth Prevention and Early Intervention grant would be for five years and total \$3.67 million.

“This grant through SAMHSA is specifically targeting suicide prevention and intervention in our community,” Grants Coordinator Dana Morfin said at a Tuesday, May 14, Legislative Action Committee meeting. “We haven’t received this grant before but we have received similar funding from this agency in the past...So, this grant would basically be serving as the next stepping stone and providing suicide prevention services in our community.”

Morfin added that the grant would provide funding for a mental health counselor to assist with a focused suicide intervention and provide for community training opportunities similar to GONA and trauma-informed trainings that have been provided in the past.

“I want to thank you and the whole team for bringing this forward,” Tribal Council member Kathleen George said. “It’s obviously a tremendous spending package and we know that the services are tremendously needed. We know coming out of COVID, many of our youth are really needing help and not finding easy ways to get it. Anything we can do to be that warm reception, we definitely want to do that.”

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved four lease applications with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which allows Tribes to carry out federal functions under a self-determination contract or self-governance compact to enter into a lease agreement for the Tribally owned or rented facility used to carry out those functions. The Department of Interior then negotiates with the Tribe or Tribal organization on eligible expenses for use of the facility and pays the Tribe for those expenses;
- Approved an agreement with Brightwheel Software that included limited waivers of sovereign immunity;
- Approved a \$199,997 grant application to the Oregon Department of Education’s Supporting Oregon Tribal Languages Grant;
- Approved a contract with Sculptured Construction Incorporated to perform landscaping services at Creekside Elder Housing;
- Approved a contract with Elk Mountain Construction to perform construction services for the Route 312 culvert replacement project;
- Authorized a Tribal credit card for up to \$5,000 for Division Chief of Training for Emergency Services Torey Wakeland;
- Authorized a Tribal credit card for up to \$5,000 for Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake;
- Authorized three loans from the Tribe’s line of credit to Spirit Mountain Casino for the remodel of its outdoor courtyard, hotel lobby/corridor and RV park clubhouse for a total of \$5.7 million;
- Approved a settlement agreement and release of claims, including a forgiveness of Tribal debt for a distressed property at Grand Meadows;
- Approved a secured loan of \$600,000 from Upqwen LLC to Shasta Administrative Services;
- And denied enrolling an infant into the Tribe because they didn’t meet the requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

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

Happy Dragon Restaurant closed



Contributed photo

Happy Dragon Restaurant, located in Spirit Mountain Casino, closed its doors on April 7. It opened in June 2022.

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals editor

Less than two years after it opened, the Happy Dragon Restaurant has closed its doors.

The family owned and operated eatery, located in Spirit Mountain Casino, closed on April 7, after the casino terminated its working relationship with the business.

“Spirit Mountain has made the decision to transition to a new Asian food vendor,” Spirit Mountain Casino Chief Executive Officer Camille Mercier said. “This decision was carefully considered and ultimately it was decided that it was not in the best interest of Spirit Mountain to continue a working relationship with Happy Dragon.”

Mercier declined to elaborate on what led to the decision. She added that there is not a date for when a new vendor will open as casino management is still exploring options for the new venue.

“I appreciate the desire for more information and acknowledge it can be frustrating that it feels like there are elements of the decision that is not shared,” she said. “While we value transparency, certain details are bound by confidentiality. Rest assured, the decision was evaluated by management with expert guidance, prioritizing the best interests of the casino.”

Mercier said that there was no truth to the rumors of an FBI investigation into the business.

“To address any concerns regarding the rumor of a FBI investigation, our gaming commission’s executive director has confirmed that there’s not a FBI investigation and the executive team at SMC can confirm that there has been no contact with the FBI on this issue.”

Happy Dragon was one of several new dining options at the casino that began in 2022, including Italian restaurant Amore, the 10 Barrel Brewing Hop Yard and the Mexican-style restaurant Jalapenos.

Owner and head chef LiNan Feng graduated from Taishan Culinary School in China and completed an internship as a master chef at Nan Hai Yu Cun Restaurant and Hotel in Guangzhou in Canton, China. He also has worked at Saigon Chinese Restaurant and Foshan Restaurant in Canton, as well.

He opened the first Happy Dragon location in 2013 in Portland, managed by his daughter, Emily. The second location at Spirit Mountain Casino was managed by his sons, Chris and Ben. The Portland location is still open. ■

SUMMERWEEN 2024

DEPARTMENT SIGN-UP

PLEASE USE THE QR CODE OR GOT TO LINK:

[HTTPS://BIT.LY/SUMMERWEEN2024](https://bit.ly/summerween2024)

