

Youth grantmakers present checks to organizations helping youth

By Nicole Montesano
Smoke Signals staff writer

Four years into a project to teach the Tribe’s teenagers about philanthropy, grantmaking and community service, the program is hitting its stride, with an annual luncheon to celebrate the organizations chosen by interns of the Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

This year’s Youth Grantmaking check presentation was held Friday, Aug. 8, at Spirit Mountain Casino Event Center. Summer youth interns research and select their recipients, spend time volunteering with each and finally present them with \$5,000 checks as an offshoot of the Community Fund’s quarterly grant program. Each organization was also gifted beaded necklaces.

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey, who serves on the Spirit Mountain Community Fund’s Board of Directors, attended the luncheon.

“I am so grateful to welcome all of you here today to our reservation,” Spirit Mountain Community Fund Director Angela Sears said. “The check presentation is really a way for us to connect with our grantees and recognize all of you for your excellence and dedication.”

Community Fund Program Coordinator Angela Schlappie noted that to date, the Community Fund has awarded 3,432 grants for a total of \$101,208,330.

During the presentation, Intern



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Spirit Mountain Community Fund youth intern Mikayla Mercier examines a piece of trash she picked up on the beach while volunteering to help with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project at Yaquina Bay South Jetty in Newport Thursday, July 24. The beach cleanup was part of SMCF’s site visit to the Oregon Coast Aquarium.



The Arc of Lane County Development Director Jo Ann Henderson, left, is presented with a check by Spirit Mountain Community Fund youth intern Annabelle Guardiola during the 2025 Youth Grantmaking check presentation at Spirit Mountain Casino Friday, Aug. 8.

to their traditions that have been around for hundreds of years,” she said. “In simple terms, these necklaces aren’t just decorations, they’re symbols of pride and personal ex-

pression. As members of the Grand Ronde Tribe, we are honored to recognize you and the important work that you are doing. We give these necklaces to you today as a token of our appreciation of your generous work gift, of the time and dedication to community development.”

Each intern then briefly explained why she had chosen the selected organizations.

Interns Guardiola, Mikayla Mercier and Samantha Bearface chose the following organizations to receive awards:

- The Arc of Lane County, an advocacy group working to ensure that “people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families have the supports they need to live full lives in the communities in which they live.” It provides resources, programs, classes and individual advocacy;
- Jackson Street Youth Center, a shelter for homeless youth in Linn and Benton counties;
- Salem Dream Center, a nonprofit in the Edgewater District in West Salem, that provides services and mentorship to families, to break the cycle of generational poverty;
- St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Inc., which provides shelter and services for youth and families in the county;
- And Wisdom of the Elderberry Farm, a nonprofit organization in Marion County that teaches and assists Indigenous youth with skills to find careers in agriculture and horticulture. ■

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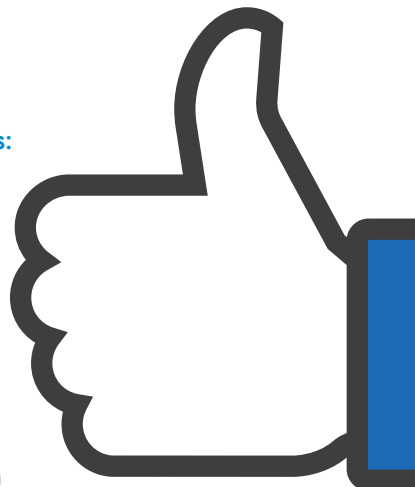
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