

Tribal members ready for diabetes walk

Great Falls Tribune

ROCKY BOY’S RESERVATION — As part of a pilot program aimed at reducing diabetes on the Rocky Boy Reservation, tribal owners, business leaders and students are walking 32 miles around the reservation over the next two days.

In its fourth year, the walk begins today and ends Wednesday at the Veteran’s Park in Rocky Boy. The tribal council walks the first mile, with community members signed up to walk one-mile legs, looping through Duck Creek, Bonneau and Haystack roads.

Students will tackle the last two miles.

“The idea is to encourage students to exercise and become aware enough of the problems to go home and talk to their parents about it,” said the program lifestyle coach Barb Friede.

The reservation’s diabetes prevention program is one of two in the state, funded by the federal government.

In the five years since it started, the program has served 60 people who were identified as at risk for diabetes. Just two of those people accepted has since been diagnosed with diabetes.

The program requires those accepted to get regular lab tests to monitor their progress. They then attend educational classes, get cooking lessons and even get cash and a ride to the farmer’s market in Great Falls to buy fresh produce.

Friede said the program benefits the entire reservation.

A new exercise facility has a swimming pool, basketball court and workout equipment. The tribe recently adopted a policy allowing employees to work out for 30 minutes during work time.

Congress recently agreed to fund the program through fiscal year 2011.

At the end of the fourth annual Diabetes Prevention and Awareness Walk, there will be a healthy feast open to the entire community.

Small girl, big heart

BIG SANDY — Watching the local news last Christmas, Rylee Rice saw a story about Chouteau County Sheriff’s deputies taking kids shopping for presents for their families.

“She turned to me and said I want to help,” the now 6-year-old’s mom Danetta Rice said.

So mom and daughter sat down and brainstormed fundraiser ideas, taking the best options to the Big Sandy 4-H Club.

“It was really neat to see the older kids get really excited and be very supportive of her,” she said.

This Saturday, Rylee and her fellow Clover Buds, who are 5- to 8-year-olds, are holding a jump-athon, collecting pledges for each hop.

Eight older kids are running a rummage sale, selling their own toys, clothes and other items. Both events take place at the Church of God, with the rummage sale starting at 9 a.m. Saturday and the jump-athon starting at 1 p.m.

Rylee also raised money selling lemonade this month.

Danetta Rice said her daughter is too young to really understand the value of money and therefore hasn’t set a goal for just how much she wants to raise.

“Her goal is that every kid that can’t afford Christmas can have Christmas,” Danetta Rice said. “I don’t think she understands how much money that is.”

To help Rylee and her fellow 4-Hers, people can make pledges per jump, send cash donations or give items to be sold in the rummage sale Saturday. Call the Rice family at 378-2170 or donate directly to the Chouteau County Sheriff’s Office.

Remains of 600 American Indians are back

By Veronica Nett
Charleston Gazette

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The remains of more than 600 American Indians unearthed in Putnam County nearly five decades ago have been returned to West Virginia.

The remains, stored in about 150 boxes, were shipped from Ohio State University to the Grave Creek Mound Archaeological Complex Research Facility in Moundsville last week.

Now, the goal is to rebury the remains in Putnam County - out of what advocates say is respect for the dead and Indian spirituality.

The skeletal remains were unearthed in 1963 in Buffalo less than a mile from the present-day Toyota plant. American Electric Power currently owns the land.

During the two-year excavation project, crews unearthed countless artifacts and the outlines of a village 400 to 500 years old.

Crews also dug up more than 500 graves. After their exhumation, the bones passed through several institutions, before they ended up in storage at Ohio State in the early 1990s.

In March, Putnam County commissioners signed a letter stating they were willing to take the remains and rebury them in an undisclosed site.

But some archaeologists spoke out against the reburials, saying it would destroy the chance for future scientific discoveries about the origins of the remains.

In May, the state and the County Commission brought the issue of reburying the remains before the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act review committee.

The committee tabled the issue saying there were too many unanswered questions of who had legal control of the skeletal remains.

The remains landed in Moundsville after the state was able to locate a lease agreement

between Union Carbide and West Virginia stating that all excavation materials would become the property of the state, said Susan Pierce, deputy state historic preservation officer.

NAGPRA, passed in 1990, allows federally recognized tribes to reclaim Indian remains and artifacts from museums and universities. No federally recognized tribes have claimed the remains.

The Buffalo remains have been deemed “culturally unidentifiable,” meaning they cannot be linked to modern-day tribes, said Brian Donat, Putnam County administrator.

“The hope is to be able to affiliate the remains with a current tribe,” Donat said. “If that tribe will step forward and claim them then the state can go ahead and rebury them.”

Pierce said the state has every intention of following NAGPRA and reburying the remains once they are culturally identified. She said there also are no plans for further testing

or for DNA analysis.

“Invasive testing is not something that the tribes consider appropriate,” Pierce said.

“Our goal is have them reburied,” Donat said. “They’ve been studied enough and have been floating around for 40-some years.”

Efforts to rebury the Buffalo people are not new. Various Indian groups, Putnam residents, Buffalo town officials and even the Buffalo United Methodist Church have campaigned for their return.

In 2000-01 there was a move to repatriate and rebury the remains, Ohio State spokesman Earle Holland said.

“Our legal affairs staff at the time said the remains were covered by the protection of federal law [NAGPRA] and until someone could identify what the direct lineage of the bones were and connect them to some pre existing tribe ... we were responsible for maintaining and safeguarding those materials,” he said.

Pierce said the current goal

of researchers of the Gravel Creek facility is to review the inventory delivered from Ohio State. She said the next step is to begin contacting federally recognized tribes that may have a cultural affiliation with the remains.

The Grave Creek Complex also holds a number of artifacts excavated from the American Indian village in Buffalo.

The complex opened its new research center in May. The new 9,600-square-foot wing features a state-of-the-art collections storage area, a conservation laboratory for curators, a study area for researchers, a library, and an observation area where the public can view the activity in the lab.

The addition houses archaeological collections that are currently stored at various locations in and out of West Virginia.

Prior to the new facility there were no state or federal repositories in West Virginia suitable for storing archaeological materials.

Foxwoods slot revenue up; Mohegan still down

By Erica Jacobson
Norwich Bulletin

NORWICH, Conn. — Players put more money through the slot machines at Connecticut’s casinos in August than they had during the same month a year ago, according to slot revenue numbers released Monday. But only Foxwoods Resort Casino made more money off of players and sent more slot revenue to the state this year than last.

“I am pleased with our August performance overall, especially in this challenging economic cycle,” Barry Cregan, Foxwoods interim president, said in a statement Monday.

Gamblers put \$865 million through 8,259 slot machines at Foxwoods in August, up \$22 million from \$843 million in August 2007. At Mohegan Sun, players put \$948.2 million through the casino’s 6,143 slot machines — almost \$11 million more than the \$937.8 million played during the same month last year.

Foxwoods made \$842,000 more off of its players in August with a slot win, the money not paid back to gamblers, of \$72.8 million compared to \$72 million during the same month in 2007. But the slot revenue slide that has plagued the state’s tribal casinos for most of the year continued at Mohegan Sun. There, the casino won \$77.5 million in August, almost \$6 million less than the same time a year ago. Combined, the casinos will send just less than \$37.6 million to Connecticut.

Both casinos had looser slots this August. At Mohegan Sun, slot machines held 8.18 percent of all money pumped through them, 0.73 percent less than in August 2007. Machines at Foxwoods were down 0.12 percent, having held 8.41 percent of all money played in August compared to 8.53 percent in August 2007.

Mitchell Eteess, Mohegan Sun chief executive officer and president, said the casino is holding less this year overall and some of that is driven by free slot play.

Yampa-rafting



Hyoung Chang/New York Times

Yampa-Ancient Native Americans’ pictographs near Jones Hole Creek in Utah.

Commissioners asked to OK Trail of Death markers

By Dorothy Schneider
Lafayette Journal and Courier

LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Tracy Locke has learned a lot about her ancestors in the Potawatomi Indiana tribe in the past few years.

Now she wants other Tippecanoe County residents to have the same opportunity to learn about the tribe’s role in local history.

“They’re a huge part of our history,” said Locke, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. “But it’s one of those things that’s out of sight, out of mind.”

A group wants to put the Potawatomi history back in the forefront by adding marker signs along the roads

from Indiana to Kansas. The markers follow the Trail of Death, where tribe members were forced to march at gunpoint off their homeland in 1838.

Some highway officials in Tippecanoe County, though, are concerned the signs could cause a safety hazard at some local intersections.

Fulton County historian Shirley Willard explained the Trail of Death markers to the Tippecanoe County commissioners Monday and asked to have 15 signs placed in the area. If approved, they would tie into a network of markers along the 25-county, 660-mile trail.

Highway Director Opal Kuhl said she’s concerned

about signs going too close to intersections -- some on high-traffic roads such as Klondike Road, U.S. 52 and State Road 26 -- where they could confuse or distract drivers.

“That is a big concern for us, adding signs to roadways that have a lot of signs already,” she said.

The commissioners asked Kuhl’s office to research which intersections it would be most feasible to place the signs in and report back at a future meeting.

Two signs for Tippecanoe County already have been approved by the Indiana Department of Transportation and another three were approved for placement in

Battle Ground.

Willard said the signs already have been paid for through fundraising. Each one costs \$50 and they are also being placed in Cass, Carroll and Warren Counties.

“Please make an exception and give us permission for the signs. It means a lot to the people who worked on them,” Willard said at Monday’s commissioners meeting.

Locke attended with her 9-year-old daughter, Erin Locke, who held a bake sale earlier this year and raised \$200 for the signs fund.

Their ancestor was Abram B. Burnett, a full-blood Potawatomi Indian born in Indiana in November 1812.

Indians’ suit against feds heads into 13th year

By Deborah Barfield Berry
Palm Springs Desert Sun

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — Elouise Cobell couldn’t have imagined her lawsuit seeking payments for American Indians from a government-run trust fund would go into its 13th year.

But last week, Cobell appealed a federal judge’s recent decision to award only \$455 million, continuing the court battle for at least another year.

“We definitely didn’t feel

like the judge’s decision was one that was fair,” said Cobell, lead plaintiff in the suit seeking \$47 billion.

“It’s not all about the dollar amount. It’s about (how) the judge was not fair and is not right when he says that our trust doesn’t have to be managed to the standards of a private trust. ... The judge basically said we’re second-class citizens.”

Cobell’s class-action lawsuit charges that the U.S. Department of Interior mismanaged billions of dollars it

collected over the years for gas, oil and timber leases and royalties from Indian-owned land.

The suit could affect as many as 500,000 Indian landowners, particularly in Western states such as California and Nevada.

Beyond the money, Indian groups say the lawsuit represents an effort to correct some wrongs done by the federal government.

“If there is any litigation that is being watched in Indian country, it’s this case,”

said John Dossett, general counsel for the National Congress of American Indians.

The case garnered renewed interest last month when U.S. District Judge James Robertson issued an opinion saying the U.S. Department of Interior owed plaintiffs \$455 million from the trust, far less than the \$47 billion plaintiffs had sought.

Cobell, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe from Montana, filed the suit in 1996 on

behalf of individual American Indians.

The issue dates to back 1887 when Congress enacted the General Allotment Act, which allowed the Interior Department to hold in trust income from millions of acres owned by American Indians.

Interior officials have argued the plaintiffs have failed to prove the agency has made major mistakes or mismanaged the trust fund.

Dossett said it has been difficult for the courts to find appropriate solutions.