

Sorenson learns the ropes, board on right track



**BRIDGETT SORENSON, DIRECTOR
UNIT III**

First of all I would like to thank everyone who took the time to vote in the last election and those who supported me. I look forward to serving Unit III and the entire tribe as we move forward. I have been very busy trying to learn the ropes. The board had a retreat on Sugar Island from July 29–Aug. 1 at the Mary Murray Culture Camp. All department heads from the membership services introduced

themselves and their staff and gave presentations on the services they provide to tribal members. Even though I have worked for the tribe for 10 years, it is really amazing how many services we provide for our members when much of what you hear is negative.

One of the best things we provide is our newspaper to keep members informed on services and events within our tribes and things affecting other tribes. The Communications Department used to have a staff of 14 and now operate with four. In addition to the newspaper, they are responsible for the Sault Tribe Website, the Intranet and email blasts to our 4,600 members who have given us their email addresses. This is great for immediate updates so I encourage everyone to send an email to jdburton@saulttribe.net or call 632-6398 with your email address to be added to their list.

A department very important to me is the Education Department which consists of Head Start/Early Head Start, the Child Care Center, YEA,

STAY, WIA Employment and Training, Higher Education and Adult Education/GED. One of the more disappointing things for me was to hear that the St. Ignace Head Start only has 11 students enrolled for this coming year, when they can take 20. If you know parents of any 3- or 4-year-olds, please have them consider enrolling their child.

Getting children involved in an educational environment at an early age has many benefits. Kids have to be ready to read when they get to kindergarten instead of the early days of playtime, colors and shapes.

This year the higher education programs gave away 23 \$1,000 scholarships (from golf fundraiser), 260 need based grants (\$300-\$500) and 700 incentive awards, which are based on grades and credit hours. If you have a child who will be attending college, and you would like more information, please contact Brandi MacArthur at 635-7784.

The Elder's Division currently has 4,296 elders who are 60 years old and older. The scary fact is that within five years that

number will be about 15,000. We need to prepare for how we are going to handle that many elders and that is the primary reason for the declining amounts in the elder's yearly checks. At age 55, elders may attend the free lunch program held at the McCann School. These are held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Lunch is served at noon.

On July 20, Director Massaway and I grilled for about 50 elders for their annual picnic. Side dishes were provided as a potluck and there were drawings and a 50/50. I enjoyed being a part of this and I think everyone had a good time.

Enrollment is currently at 40,605 members. When someone turns 55 they are considered a lifetime member. The rolls are currently closed except for biological children, under 18 years of age, of a current enrolled member. The cost to renew an expired tribal card is \$5 and a lost card is \$20. If you have enrollment questions please call 632-8552.

We have made positive changes to the board's meeting

schedule. We will be holding more meetings outside of Sault Ste. Marie. We will be going to Mackinac Island on Oct. 2 and St. Ignace on Oct. 16. It is important that we bring more meetings to these areas so members have a chance to address the board. The Unit III meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month at the McCann School at 6 p.m.

In each unit report, I will try to give out resourceful information about these and other membership services. I am happy to report that the board is working well together and I think we will accomplish many things. We have a lot of areas that need work, that will not happen overnight but we are on the right track. I am in the process of setting an office up in the old Lambert Center building. My direct line is 643-2123. I will be there on Thursday, Aug. 16 and Thursday, Aug. 30 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. You can also call or email me to set up an appointment at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, 984-2052, or 430-0536.