

Sorenson reports board activities for October



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

The board met with all membership and internal services' departments from Oct. 3 through Oct. 5 and again on Oct. 8 to find ways to balance the \$3.5 million deficit for the 2013 budget. The savings were found in areas with vacant positions that were not going to be filled, training and travel budgets were downsized and the majority of savings was in the health budget. For many years we have budgeted for tribal support dollars to fund services at the health clinics but every year we are collecting more and more money from third party billing. The great news is currently the health center is operating with-

out any support from the tribe. The health centers are operating on Indian Health Service dollars, grants and revenue from third party billing. I would like to thank the Health Division for doing a great job becoming self-sufficient. I would also like to thank all the other divisions and program managers for finding ways to save the tribe money when everyone has their list of needs and wants. The best news of all is that we did not have to cut any jobs or services.

During the budget review, we discussed hiring an efficiency expert from an outside agency to come into the organization and find out where we can make efficiencies. There will be a resolution brought forward at the next meeting to hire that person or agency.

On Oct. 15, Eddy Edwards (tribal councilman and chairman of the Great Lakes Housing Commission for the Keweenaw Bay Tribe) came to talk with the Sault Tribe Housing Commission about economic development. He began by saying, "Many times we create a dependence or handout instead of a hand up or self-sufficiency with our members." We can't just provide them with services but need to create

opportunities and give them tools to want to succeed on their own. Eddy has worked with his tribe to create many businesses under their housing authority such as a building supply company, car wash, laundry mat, plumbing and heating company, a financial institution and gas station. This has created employment opportunities and afforded revenue for housing opportunities. They are able to provide a revolving loan fund for home improvement or business loans. They created an IDA program for members to be able to fund education expenses, vehicle purchases, braces, home ownership and business start up. Currently I believe the tribe is only providing the IDA for home ownership. He gave us many great ideas. I hope he will come back to talk to the whole board about their tribe's accomplishments and to help our housing authority develop business opportunities for us.

On Oct. 24 and Oct. 27, I sat in on the prosecutor interviews. It is unfortunate that we have such a limited number of applicants for our professional positions. We need to encourage more of our people to pursue degrees in these areas by providing incentives such as loan repayment or better

scholarship opportunities.

On Oct. 24, I attended a wild game feast for the Unit III elders, it was put on by the YEA kids and their leaders, Sue St. Onge, Francie Wyers and Connie Watson. They had a good turn out and the food was great.

On Oct. 25 and 26, I attended another training on the tribal action plan. There was a community input session on the evening of the 25th and focus groups with tribal court, ACFS and the youth. We are going to be moving forward with putting together a survey for all our members.

On the afternoon of Oct. 26, Mackinac Straits Hospital presented an award to the tribe for our partnership with the hospital. Frank Foster and Pat Shannon were also present when CEO Rod Nelson presented Chairman Payment with the award.

On Oct. 27, I attended the Rickey family's ghost feast. The Grandmother Moon Singers and the Little Thunder Drum group were present for the celebration. There was a great turn out and an abundance of great food.

On Oct. 31, we had Tribal Gaming Commission roles and responsibilities training.

On Nov. 1, I rode with Denise Chase and Darcy Morrow to

Lansing to be a part of the official signing of the purchase of the parcel that will hold our boutique casino. We will immediately proceed to apply for trust on this land.

I would like to take this time to thank all of our employees for bringing us to where we are today. Without your hard work and dedication, our members wouldn't have so many services or programs to count on. The hardest part of this new position is not seeing all my co-workers at the Shores casino. I miss you all and want you to hold your heads up high because you guys are a great bunch of people.

For questions or concerns, email me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, call me at my office 643-2123 (Fridays 9 a.m.-11 a.m.), or cell 430-0536.

Remember that Unit III meetings are on the fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the McCann School.