

“I’m so happy that Santa came to Wanblee again this year”

Dear Friends of Pine Ridge,

Once again, our group, Worldwide Hunger Relief, has had the honor of providing the means to host a Christmas party in Wanblee, on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation. The above quote was from a little girl named Olivia, who told this to our outreach partner in Wanblee, Jerome High Horse. It is for little girls and boys like Olivia that we devote our time, talents, and treasures to see that the Ogala Lakota of Pine Ridge are not forgotten and passed by during the Christmas holiday.

Our volunteers worked tirelessly for a number of months putting together an entire semi load of warm winter clothing, blankets, toys and many other needed and useful items. We also added over 10,000# of frozen meat for a decent Christmas meal, and enough nuts, candy, and fruit to make up over 1,000 Christmas goody bags for the children and adults. The Cooperating Churches of Sussex made up 250 shoeboxes filled with little toys, mittens, hats and underwear, and these were handed out to the children. Our friends Bob and Mary Epps and their group in Madison bought and wrapped 800 presents of warm and useful items to give out at the party.



On Friday morning December 14, our truck arrived in Wanblee. Many Lakota men and women worked very diligently to unload the truck, box by box. These boxes were staged at the Kennedy Center in Wanblee for disbursement later that night. As soon as it got dark, we handed out food and boxes of clothing and blankets to a grateful crowd. Jerome High Horse told us that he received many, many compliments on the quality and quantity of the food and clothing.



On Saturday, The Kennedy Center was set up as a “Christmas Wonderland” with all the boxed presents, goody bags, clothing, books and toys to hand out. While the day

was mostly for the children, we also had items for every adult who came. The interior of the Kennedy center was set up with tables in a big “U.” There were tables of blankets, several tables of winter wear, several tables of wrapped gifts, and everyone received at least two. Also, there was a table of chapter books, activity kits and sticker books. Santa sat

amongst the tables and he was very popular with the excited children. Each child that sat on Santa's lap received one of the gift boxes that the Sussex church group had assembled. Toward the end of the "U" they handed out the goody bags, and then, at the very end, they served sandwiches and soup. We had sent enough cold cuts and bread to make over 4,000 sandwiches, so everyone received as many as they wanted to eat, and we had enough left over so that every family had a large bag of sandwiches to take home.

After the Christmas party everyone walked to the center of town to see "The Parade Of Lights" that the local Lakota people put on. There were around 20 cars and trucks with trailers decked out with Christmas lights and tableaux. Without our help and monetary support this would not have been possible. We are grateful and humbled to be partners with these courageous people in their struggle to maintain their lifestyle and dignity.



These are the poorest people in America, with up to 90% unemployment and 40% of the residents of Pine Ridge are without electricity and running water. It is an honor for us to work on their behalf and to see that the children are able to partake in festivities that we all take for granted. While the "Parade of Lights" may seem hokey to some, They never have any parades of any type, nor do they have community parties. It is because of our involvement and the contribution of a small part of the excess that we have cluttering up our lives, that this can be made to happen. As we look forward to 2014, we have come up with a list of activities that we would like to partner with our Lakota brothers and sisters to accomplish:

- April 20th Easter Egg Hunt and dinner
- July 4th celebration and BBQ
- Summer Powwow and fry bread feast
- August Back to School distribution of school supplies and backpacks
- October 25th Halloween Carnival costume party and dinner
- December 20th Christmas party

In addition to the above "one and done" events, we are working toward setting up a community garden in Wanblee, to address the twin issues of hunger and inappropriate food choices. Another project that is near and dear to Jerome High Horse's heart is to rehabilitate the house of a middle aged woman and her son which is literally falling down around them. We envision an "Extreme Makeover- Home Edition" type of event where we have a large group of people from this area, along with a large group of Lakota to go in and completely rehab her house in a week.

We've got many more ideas we'd like to share with you and we're looking for people who want to help our Lakota friends who so desperately need help. There is work for anyone and everyone. If you have a heart to help the Lakota of Pine Ridge, please send either myself, karlralian@gmail.com, or Gloria Klomsten, gklomsten@gmail.com, our Pine Ridge team leader an email. We'll contact you with more information.

Peace and blessings,

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