

Kids First offers help in a neighborly way

By Brian Mortensen
Spilyay Tymoo

If a group of people including a local policeman or two, a nurse, a fireman, a social worker and the tribal sanitarian come knocking on your door on the morning of a weekday, don't be alarmed. They're there to help.

The group would be part of Kids First, a group of employees of the Warm Springs tribes that canvass areas door-to-door to offer services and provide information on tribal resources.

While the name denotes services for children, the group is really for anyone who lives on the Warm Springs reservation. The intention is to let tribal members and residents know what services tribal government provides when they may not know about them or be in position to take advantage of them.

Kids First was brought to Warm Springs in 1999 when leaders from Sparks, Nev., where the program originated made a presentation at Kah-Nee-Ta Resort in 1999. After the presentation, representatives from Warm Springs, Crook County, Jefferson County, Madras and Prineville, went to Sparks to observe the program in action.

"There was a sergeant from Sparks Police Department, on his off-duty time, he was going around knocking on doors and checking on children, doing home visits," Lieut. Stoney Miller, Warm Springs Police, said. "One evening, he ran into a nurse that was out on her own time after she got off work. She was doing the same thing. The two of them had gotten together and started working together on it, and they titled it 'Kids Corner.'"

By the time representatives from Warm Springs had seen it, it had grown into an operation that was supported by two medical centers in the Reno/Sparks area, three church organizations and the Washoe County Library, among others.

"A number of different departments had come on board, giving support to the program," Miller said. "One of the things they had developed was a mobile van, 38-foot, that was a field medical center, so it could do field assessments right there on the street, and they had worked things out to where they had a couple of doctors in the van as well as nurses."

Later, the Reno group had built up a van to create a field dental unit.

What immediately impressed Miller was a visit with a woman in Sparks. "The sergeant was introducing us from the Kid's Corner program," he said. "And she told all of us in the group that she was well-acquainted with Kid's Corner."

The woman said she had come to Sparks with three children and a broken-down car, he said. Thanks to Kid's Corner, she had been offered a job within three days, was able to get insurance for her children and had found someone to repair her car.

"If it hadn't been for Kid's Corner coming along and helping her, she wouldn't have known what she'd have done," Miller said.

Kids First in Warm Springs, Miller said, is the use of the concept in a rural setting.

A group of between eight and 10 representatives from various tribal services, including Warm Springs Police, Fire Prevention and Safety, Housing, Indian Health Services Public Health, Fire Management, Tribal Sanitation, and Community Counseling, usually make up the group that canvasses a different neighborhood on the reservation every other Thursday.

On a recent Thursday, the group visited residents in the Upper Dry Creek neighborhood. The Kids First group, due to illness and other commitments, was pared down to four: Miller, Warm Springs Police officer Bob Medina, Tribal Sanitarian Nancy Collins, and Michelle Kuntz, a social

worker in public health.

Others who usually come along include I.H.S. Nurse Liz Sachse, Rudy Clements from Tribal Housing, Suzi Macy from Fire Prevention Management, and Scott Spalding from Fire Prevention and Safety.

The group had a plastic bag full mostly of brochures for the folks on Upper Dry Creek, including a brochure on disaster planning for the family, a schedule of when and for what children should be immunized, a list of telephone numbers from emergency services to health care programs to assistance programs to Jefferson County schools, and a brochure detailing Warm Springs community health plans. And, if kids were in the house, the group had "sheriff badge" stickers for them.

No one answered the door at the first three houses, all mobile homes, that the group approached. The front yard of the second appeared to be the site of a yard sale, with toys, a futon, kitchen table, a wheel barrow. More likely, it was the apparently abandoned contents of another mobile home that had apparently burned in a fire.

"We'll see if we can get this cleaned up," Collins said.

By the fourth house, someone answered the door. A young woman, Juanita, answered the door. The affable Medina, in his police uniform, greeted her, "Hi, Juanita, we're from Kids First," and introduced Miller, Collins and Kuntz.

"How's your smoke detector?" Collins asked. She had new batteries if the old ones had expired.

"How's your dog?" she asked, adding she could give her a certificate to have her puppy inoculated if needed, as well as certificates for spaying and neutering. Miller brought an oral treatment for mange that also de-wormed dogs.

Medina asked her if she had any concerns tribal law enforcement could

address.

Kuntz told her about services of Indian Health Service Public Health Nursing, including immunization and in-home visits.

The next visit was to a small red house, with toys and a bicycle in front. An elderly man answered the door. Miller and Medina knew him. Medina said later the man had been a policeman before his health worsened.

Collins heard the man's smoke alarm 'chirping,' so she worked at replacing the battery. While Miller and the man talked, a younger man emerged from

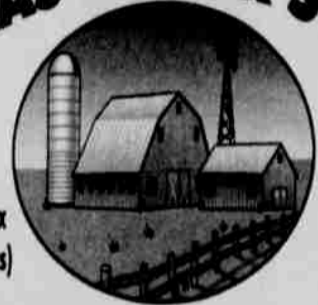
a bedroom, appearing to have just woken up. He said he and his wife and their three children also lived there. He said the house had at least one broken window. Collins said the tribes' Social Services offers the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to provide weatherization for homeowners on the reservation.

The group started its effort at 9 a.m. Miller said it tries to catch people in the morning, he said with a smile, "to wake them up."

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Elementary school attendance great for October

The following students are recognized for their outstanding attendance during October at Warm Springs Elementary School:

Cecelia Andy, Justine Clements, Johnny Holliday, Jordan Patt, Monique Moody, Amaya Adams, Autumn Suppah, DeMiryce Miller, Brittony Ike, Codi Palmer, Austin Rauschenburg, Lana Shike, Dalton Katchia, Soraya Mendez, Vivian Yazzie, Lyndreth LeClaire Nicole Goudy, Roman Silva, Eric Boise, Marlin Suppah, Voshau Bryant, Cirelle Frank and Jarron Lopez.

Shelby Moody, LeiRon Picard, Shania Tom, Jamie Warner, Margarette Tapia, Devynn Rodriguez, Elyesia Moran, Jarrod Yahtin, Jackie Poitra-Wetchie, Emmitt Smith, Illante Smith, Francisco Medina-Hernandez, Morgan Frank.

Jalen Graybael, Delvina Heath, Kirsten Holliday, Henry Adrews, Elyse Bagley, Dominique Craig, Sage David-Miller, Nolan Pennington, Kortney Stacona and Kari Wahnetah.

Alexander Comedown, Sierra Patt, Delbert Goudy, Marvin Thompson, Kaleb Smith, Amanda Henderson,

Cyril Frank, Dylan Miller, Bryson Spino, Darrin Sam, Treyvon Black, StannLee Meanus, Jonathan Tanewasha, Raphael Caldera and Venus Garate.

Raylene Jones, John Katchia, Kapri Moody, Stephen Pratt, James Red Fox, Nikki Reynoso, Victoria Spino, Joseph Tewee, Haley Wahnetah, Amelio Thomas-Yahtin, Julia Yahtin, Tyreal Centre and Tirus Centre.

Daily attendance statistics:

Oct. 25, 89 percent; Oct. 26, 95 percent; Oct. 27, 91 percent; Oct. 28, 92 percent; Oct. 29, 92 percent. Nov. 1, 91 percent; Nov. 2, 90 percent; Nov. 3, 94 percent; Nov. 4, 93 percent; Nov. 5, 86 percent.

Parents idea of the week:

"Maybe the child could pick out a book at the end of the month if they've had perfect attendance. Maybe after three months of perfect attendance, an ice cream party!"

(Good news for this parent - Warm Springs Elementary monthly perfect attendance students already receive a "Book Buck," good for one free book at the school book store!)

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