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New Program Launches in Cheyenne River

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Christian Children's Fund is known for its overseas work with deprived, excluded and vulnerable children, but its staff also performs the same work in several communities throughout the United States.

A new Christian Children's Fund program on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in South Dakota officially kicks off this week as CCF seeks to provide a nurturing and protective environment for children in the communities of Eagle Butte, Cherry Creek and LaPlant.

In addition, program services also will be offered in the rural communities of Bridger, Frazier, Dupree, Iron Lightening, Takini, Red Scaffold, Bear Creek, Green Grass, White Horse, Blackfoot, Swiftbird, Timberlake and Ridgeview.

CCF CEO and President Anne Lynam Goddard will visit the program this week. "Most of the children served by the program are Native American and, unfortunately, they live in severe poverty and have few opportunities and limited access to services," said Goddard. "Few jobs are available for their parents so money is tight. The children also have to travel great distances to their schools."

The Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, which is home to the Lakota tribe, is in one of the poorest regions of the United States ranking in two of the top 10 counties for the lowest per capita income. Youth suicide is three times the national average and alcohol related deaths are 17 times higher than the national average. The school dropout rate is 50 percent. Health care is available through the Indian Health Services, but many medical services are only available in larger cities, which are 200 miles from the reservation.

The new CCF program addresses these issues through a variety of projects and activities in partnership with other agencies, including the Cheyenne River Tribal Council, the Western South Dakota Community Action Agency, and the Boys and Girls Club. Early intervention and prevention programs address educational, social and emotional needs.

"We have programs that focus on youth leadership, early childhood development, health promotion, reading readiness and life skills," said Deb Swan-Douglas, Northern Plains area manager for CCF.

As part of the program CCF hired home visitors who will assist with programming and visiting homes to provide educational and support services to children and families. In addition, a summer initiative provides opportunities for children and families to participate in a variety of recreational and educational activities.

“What makes this program unique is that it supports youth as leaders in their communities,” Swan-Douglas said. “Fifteen youth facilitate program activities in the different communities. Children also are able to find a place where they can express their creativity, gain new knowledge and skills and be physically and mentally active.

“We’re implementing initiatives designed to have long-term impact and improve conditions in these communities. Youth have to feel as if they have the power to control things – to be successful and independent,” Swan-Douglas said. “CCF is providing opportunities for children and youth to discover that with perseverance and guidance from CCF their dreams will come true.”

CCF relies on the support of individual sponsors from across the world to provide opportunities for children, families and communities. Their monthly contributions are combined to provide critically needed services for all enrolled children and families in the area. Equally important, sponsors are encouraged to build personal relationships with their sponsored children through letter exchanges, annual progress reports and even visits.

For information on sponsoring a child either in CCF’s programs in the United States or worldwide please contact CCF at 1-800-776-6767.

CCF has been an active partner with other community organizations serving children on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations and in Rapid City, S.D., since 1970. More than 2,500 low income children in South Dakota are sponsored through CCF by generous individuals from throughout the United States.

For more information about the Cheyenne River program, please contact Deb Swan-Douglas, area manager for CCF’s U.S. Midwest Office (Northern Plains Area Office) at 605-342-8452.

Christian Children's Fund (CCF) is a global force for children, helping the world's poorest and most vulnerable survive and thrive in order to reach their full potential. One of the world's oldest and most respected international child development organizations, CCF works in 31 countries and assists approximately 13.2 million children and family members worldwide, regardless of race, creed or origin.

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