

Springtime greetings from the elders and staff at Heritage Living Center. What an eventful winter we had in Montana. Snow followed by spring-like thaws, snow, thaw, bitter cold and more snow. We know winter is a time for the earth to rest, but we are certainly thankful when it is over.

We have followed the news about snows and tornadoes across the plains, torrential rains in Houston, eastern seaboard storms

and record setting heat in the northwest. We can't forget the devastating fires in Fort McMurray, Alberta, our neighbors who are a 14 hour drive to the north. Over 930 miles away, the smoke from the fires blanketed much of Montana for several days. We remembered the 2012 fires when we were evacuated from our homes knowing what our Canadian friends were going through.

On April 1, we were blessed with important

ceremonies at Heritage Living Center. The Center opened 14 years ago and at that time, four prayer cloths of red, black, yellow and white were tied to a hoop and hung high in the chapel window. Over the years, direct sunlight faded the prayer cloths to where they were nearly colorless. It was time for some new cloths, but in keeping with Cheyenne tradition it isn't as simple as tying new pieces of fabric to the hoop. Sundance Priest,



New prayer cloths are hung in the chapel window

Tony Three Fingers, and Sundance Priestess, Johanna Red Neck, came to conduct the ceremony required to replace the prayer cloths. Mr. Three Fingers blessed each elder and staff member. He also entered each apartment, 40 in all, to cleanse and bless the resident's living quarters. Following those blessings, new cloths were ceremoniously tied in place and carefully placed back in position.

While at the Center, Mr. Three

Fingers made it possible for us to remove a safety hazard for the elders. In August 2012, during Heritage Living Center's 10th anniversary, prayer cloths were used to bless the Center and tied in trees at the ordinal compass points. The western prayer cloth was tied to a pine tree later killed by pine bark beetles, which devastated western forests in recent years. The dead tree is near a pathway the elders frequently use to reach Father Emmett's



Tony Three Fingers blesses each person with new prayer cloths

gravesite. We couldn't remove the tree without special handling of the prayer cloths. Mr. Three Fingers performed the ceremony to properly remove the cloths, laid them on the ground so the tree could be cut down. It was a day that will be remembered for many years.

We faced two major emergencies this winter. In the winter newsletter, I wrote how our maintenance team needed to shovel the roof to remove snow and ice to keep a leak from entering near our dining room. We also needed to replace a van that we simply wore out. Friends responded to my pleas for help and we were able to have our roof repaired and purchase a new van. Our dining room is now dry and we are transporting the elders to their doctor appointments, some of which are a 250 mile round trip from the Center. All of the elders and staff join me in sending a THANK YOU as big as Montana's sky.

I mentioned that Heritage Living Center opened 14 years ago. With that comes repairs and maintenance as our building gets tired and equipment and furnishings begin to wear out. It is remarkable how well our staff and residents take care of their home. We find ways to fix things, but sometimes even skilled repairs can't fix something. Recently, we found our 14 yearold dishwashing machine breaking down. We find ways to keep it going. The staff have learned where to stand to avoid being sprayed with scalding water, but that is dangerous and someone will get burned. As I write, many of you have responded to help us buy a new dishwasher along with our operating expenses.

In this newsletter, you will find a green envelope. Please help us with a special gift for the much needed building fixup and repairs. Prayers are being said to bless our donors for their generosity to bless us with a new machine to clean the loads of dishes we must do each day.

July 15 and 16 will be a special time for the Cheyenne. The Fort Robinson Breakout Memorial in Nebraska will be dedicated that weekend. Edna Seminole is one of the tribal elders who began planning for this memorial monument to be built 15 years ago. You will read more about Edna and what is planned for the dedication ceremony in this newsletter.

I've also included an article about two of our staff members, their grandpa who is a resident, and their baby - all part of the Heritage Living Center family. I hope you will enjoy meeting the Foote family. They are good, hardworking folks. Good neighbors. Good friends.

The elders share stories of their families and themselves. It is hard to believe the hardships they endured. Hunger, sickness and neglect. It is difficult to forget, yet you and your donations help erase, day by day, some of those memories and fears. Thank you for your friendship and generous gifts.

With a grateful heart,

Mike Skaggs



# THANK YOU!

Your gifts paid for our roof repairs and new transport van.



# MONUMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT FOR EDNA SEMINOLE



Fifteen years ago Edna Seminole made the pilgrimage from Montana to Fort Robinson, Nebraska, to visit the site where, in 1879, her ancestors had made a heroic, desperate escape from Army imprisonment during the freezing Great Plains winter. After her visit, she and those with her left in tears, heartbroken.

Edna Seminole in front of Dull Knife painting

They all knew by heart the story of what happened 122 years earlier. What crushed their spirits was the lack of any tangible recognition of the Fort Robinson Outbreak, one of the American Army's many infamous episodes during the final Indian campaigns, and the Cheyenne's most legendary act of courage and will.

"There was an old wood sign with bullet holes through it, that's all." Edna says. How could this be, they wondered, during the long drive home. Their thoughts then turned to "What can we do about it?"

Determined to get a proper memorial erected on the site, Edna, Rose Eaglefeathers and Fern Shoulderblade began

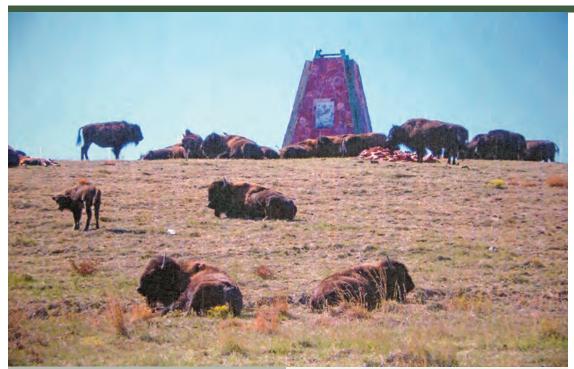
fundraising on the reservation. Starting with \$200 seed money from Edna's son Vincent Whitecrane's employer, they discovered "meat bingo" games were a foolproof ticket to raising cash. (The Heritage Center had not been completed yet, the bingo games were held in Lame Deer).

"Cheyennes love their meat," says daughter Eva Foote, who is a favorite does-everything employee at the Heritage Center. "They had the best cuts, pork, beef, ham...everyone wanted in on those games." Edna and Rose were among the first to move into the Heritage Living Center in 2002 bringing their hopes and plans for the monument with them.

Then there was a breakthrough with the land. A friend of the Cheyennes who "always wanted to do something about a monument" owned the land surrounding the site and donated 400 acres of his ranch. The monument would be built on higher ground overlooking the Fort Robinson State Park. Archeologists found evidence which showed some of the Cheyenne fought with soldiers at this spot minutes after the escape.

Another friend who owns the famous Pipestone rock quarry in Pipestone, Minnesota - the only place on earth where pipestone is found and most Indian pipe bowls are made of it - concluded the right thing to do was donate the many massive slabs of the sacred red-colored stone it would take to be the face of the monument. Another group of people from Wisconsin wanted to make a difference. They arrived at the site one summer loaded with construction equipment and gave two weeks of their time to labor over the project.

Then the project stalled when people and other tasks took them away from it. "We ran out of money



Bison surround the Fort Robinson Breakout Memorial, as if drawn to the monument

too," says Vincent, Edna's son who was heading a weekly meeting of the Northern Cheyenne Fort Robinson Descendant's Committee at Dull Knife College in Lame Deer. Vincent was among about a dozen tribal members with a ton on their plates at the meeting - the dedication of Edna's monument was only six weeks away.

Over time more money was raised, architects got involved, and the monument project was back on track. "It is her monument, right?" I asked the group. "I mean, without Edna (and the two other women in the beginning) it doesn't exist, right?" Silence. "Yes." Edna says quietly, making direct eye contact.

The enormous significance of the Fort Robinson Breakout is brought into full perspective when Vincent says, "This is about healing and honoring people. We are all from here," pointing to a picture of Fort Robinson. In other words, the Cheyennes living on the reservation today are all direct descendants of the 149 men, women and children who burst out of that solitary wooden barracks and into the frozen night on January 9, 1879.

On July 15 and 16, 2016 the monument will be dedicated in a ceremony that promises to garner national attention. Hundreds of Northern Cheyenne will make the drive to attend the dedication of the monument, listen to speakers and powwow into the night for two days. Fort Robinson is several miles from the nearest town, and the committee

in Lame Deer was detailing what else needed to be done to turn the location into a self-sufficient little town for two days. A powwow arbor with shade, water, mosquito control, dust control, camping sites, gravel pathways, restrooms, poster distribution...were among the topics discussed, which included a teleconference with associates in Nebraska.

Throughout Edna listened, sometimes smiling, rarely speaking. Vincent and the many others have taken the reigns on the logistics and details. Edna appears concerned, as if still wondering if the dream will actually come true. "She doesn't like the idea of speaking in public," daughter Eva says. "They want her to."



Edna's son, Vincent Whitecrane fields ideas from the group

Edna has spoken though, for actions speak louder than words. She found a mission and clung to a calling after most her age have settled into retirement. "It's a wonderful story, huge. It's a national story, what they got done here. Amazing." says an admirer.

## THE FORT ROBINSON BREAKOUT

Editor's note: The following is the text from a video posted on YouTube by Wayne Lehman, published on April 18, 2012. The narration, through the voice of Mareatha Charette, presents a Chevenne viewpoint of the Fort Robinson Outbreak. It was produced by the Culture Center at Chief Dull Knife College in Lame Deer.

In the summer of 1877, 972 Northern Cheyenne were moved to Oklahoma to live with the Southern Cheyenne. By the following summer of 1878, many Cheyenne people were sick or dying of malaria and measles. They were unaccustomed to the hot, humid climate of Oklahoma, and they were starving.

Chief Little Wolf and Chief Morning Star, also known as Chief Dull Knife, went to the Indian agent, John D. Miles at Fort Reno. "Let us return to our Northern homeland," pleaded Little Wolf. But Agent Miles said, "No! You must remain in Oklahoma."

continued below flap ▼

Early in the morning of September 9, 1878, 207 Northern Cheyenne began their march north to their homeland. They slipped through the lines without being seen. Less than a third of the Cheyenne were warriors. The rest were women, old people, and children. They left most of their belongings and shelter behind. There weren't enough horses so some had to make the journey on foot.

To reach their homeland, they would have to travel hundreds of miles across populated country. Telegraph lines and The Morningstar band moved towards the Sioux Agency and Chief Red Cloud headed Northwest. The six week march took its toll. With only rags to wrap around their feet, they trudged on in the bitter cold.

On October 23, 1878, the Morningstar band was caught in a snow storm two days from Fort Robinson. There, they accidentally ran into some cavalry. The soldiers were just as surprised as the Northern Cheyenne. The Northern Cheyenne raised a white flag and the soldiers were relieved the Cheyenne had decided not to fight. Commander J.B. Johnson parleyed with the Cheyenne leaders for two long days. Meanwhile, more soldiers and artillery were brought in.

Morningstar insisted, "My people simply want to reach Red Cloud and the Sioux people so that they could find food and shelter." He was told: "The Sioux are no longer in Nebraska. They have been moved North, to Dakota territory." Then Captain Johnson ordered the soldiers to take

The Northern Cheyenne leaders met. Some wanted to move north, others said it was better to die in Oklahoma on the reservations, than to be hunted down and killed by soldiers. Chief Little Wolf listened carefully to what was said, then made up his mind. "We will return."

Again and again Little Wolf went to Agent Miles, saying, "I do not want to see blood spilled here. If you are going to send your soldiers after us, let us get a little distance away from the agency. Then if you want to fight, we will fight you, and make the ground bloody at that place."

Agent Miles placed troops around the Northern Cheyenne Camp to prevent escape.

three railroads crisscrossed their path. Thus, if they were seen, troops could be moved in quickly by flat-cars to block their march. So, with only a few horses and the people weak and near starvation, it seemed only a matter of time before the little band would be captured or killed.

With clever maneuvering, the Cheyenne were able to hide their trail. On four occasions, they had to fight major battles, but each time they forced the soldiers to a standstill. The people kept moving, picking up horses and cattle whenever they could.

Huge numbers of troops, the entire division of the Missouri, were mobilized to block their march. The Little Wolf band wintered on the Lost Choke Cherry Creek. the Cheyenne to Fort Robinson.

The Northern Cheyenne were compelled to turn in their weapons which they did, but cleverly, they turned in only the useless ones. The best ones had already been taken apart and hidden beneath women's clothing.

Though the Cheyenne were given some freedom to hunt at Fort Robinson, they worried that they would be sent back to Oklahoma. Morningstar expressed the feelings of the Northern Cheyenne: "We will not go there to live. That is not a healthy country. And if we should stay there, we would all die. We do not wish to go back there, and we will not go. You may kill me here, but you cannot make me go back."

For two months, they were free to roam near the Fort, but when a warrior escaped, they were all imprisoned in the freezing barracks. A sudden cold snap had sent the temperature down to forty below zero. On January 3, 1879, the Northern Cheyenne were informed that they again would be sent back to Oklahoma. Again they gravely replied, "We prefer to have the soldiers kill us outright than to die slowly in the South." Captain Henry Wessells told the Cheyenne: "Agree to go, or starve and freeze."

The Northern Cheyenne would not agree to go, so they were denied food and firewood. A few days after that, Wessells ordered, "The Cheyenne are to get no more water." He then offered to take care of the women, children, and old people. The Cheyenne turned down this offer, and still refused to go back.

On January 9, Captain Wessells called the leaders to a council. Fearing a trap, the people refused to let Morningstar attend. Three other leaders went. Nothing could persuade them to return to Oklahoma. Wessells ordered the chiefs to be put in irons, but one escaped to tell what happened.

The Northern Cheyenne prepared to fight. Rifles were taken out of hiding. Men without guns armed themselves with the women's knives or with pieces of boards. The Cheyenne were desperate now even though the soldiers did not attack. For days, they had been without food, water, or firewood. They were even scraping windows for the frost to quench their thirst.

At about ten o'clock the night of January 9th, the Northern Cheyenne made their bid for freedom. Smashing out the windows of the barracks, they shot at the sentries. They broke down the door, and the people streamed out into the snow. Some ran straight to the creek for water. Though they were weak from hunger and thirst, and numb with cold, the Cheyenne moved quickly, heading for some bluffs two miles from the fort. Behind them the soldiers

were firing, the way strewn with dead and wounded Cheyenne.

For twelve days the soldiers hunted the Cheyenne. In the end, of the 149 imprisoned at Fort Robinson, 61 were killed. Many of the survivors were badly wounded. It was thought by these survivors that Morningstar was dead. However, he and his family did reach Pine Ridge Agency in Dakota several weeks later.

Most of the captured Cheyenne were later taken to Pine Ridge and allowed to remain there with the Sioux. The Northern Cheyenne had paid dearly to live in the North.

In 1884, they were granted a reservation in Southeast Montana where many Cheyenne still live. In 1994 the Northern Cheyenne reclaimed the remains of those who died during the breakout. They are buried on a hill overlooking the small town of Busby.

## MEET THE FOOTE FAMILY -Your Donations at Work

Christian Foote credits Heritage Living Center with saving his grandpa's life and his, too. Christian is HLC elder Richard Foote's grandson. Richard came to us on a bitterly cold February night when he was out of food and heat. Your gifts paid for the staff who helped restore Richard's health and well-being.

Christian is the second youngest worker at the Center and when he came to work for us, it was the moment he claims his life got a whole lot better. He heads a young family with Virginia LaForge and baby, Layla. They first lived in a small camper where he says, "We barely had room for a bed and a few other things. We had two heaters that didn't work well and slept under five blankets to stay warm."

Working as a substitute in our kitchen with no regular hours or regular pay, he was glad to be there washing dishes, pots and pans. His work ethic, learned from his grandpa, paid off. The day he was promoted to be one of our cooks he was bouncing around the dining room, and our residents, seeing how excited he was, congratulated him. With a full-time job, Christian moved out of the camper and into a rental where the heat worked. It was a home where he and Virginia could provide for their baby girl.

Christian admits making mistakes in his life. He is invited to speak to

groups of youth who won't listen to older men. "They listen to me. They know I've been where they are now. I'm glad I can help some avoid the trouble that waits for them."

This past winter, we distributed food boxes for the elderly living on the reservation. Christian learned what we were doing, went home, and returned with bags filled with soup, canned goods and pasta. He wanted to be part of helping hungry elders who didn't live at HLC.

Christian enjoys cooking for the

elders, but admits, "Sometimes a meal doesn't turn out as expected. Cooking for 40 elders with special dietary needs and eating challenges is different than cooking at home. I want them to enjoy their meals and get the good nutrition they need to stay healthy. They know they can critique my cooking and I won't take it the wrong way. We have a mutual respect."

Virginia works part-time as HLC housekeeper. When both parents

work, great-grandpa Richard dotes on and plays with the baby who celebrated her

first birthday in May. Richard made a make-shift stroller for Layla utilizing his walker, so that he could remain safe while walking around the Center with her. The elders adore her and taught her to pat-a-cake and blow kisses. A little girl never had so many grandmothers and grandfathers.

"I don't want to think about where I would be today if it hadn't been for the Center. I appreciate the opportunity given to me to make a better life for my family. We are truly grateful," says Christian.



Richard, Layla, Virginia and Christian Foote

## GIVING TO CHARITY THROUGH YOUR IRA

Qualified Charitable Distributions Now Permanent



For several years, many donors who owned IRAs could choose to give to Soaring Eagle through their IRA accounts. Income placed in traditional IRA's are sheltered from taxes until a donor turns age 70 ½. At that age, the donor is required

to start withdrawing funds called a Required Minimum Distribution from their IRA and pay taxes each year on the amount withdrawn. If a donor wanted to make a charitable contribution from their IRA, then that gift came from their after-tax funds. Taxes were paid first and what was left over was available to pay retirement expenses and make charitable gifts.

In recent years, Congress enacted legislation, usually at the end of the year, which allowed

donors to directly transfer funds or assets from their IRA account to charities and not recognize the funds as income. No taxes were paid on that income and the entire amount went directly to a donor's favorite charity. Unfortunately, under the old rules, late in the year Congressional action forced last minute decisions and worse. Often a well-intentioned donor did not have enough time to send instructions to their IRA custodian to make the direct transfer to their chosen charity by the end of the year.

In December 2015, Congress passed the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015 and the President signed the legislation into law. The PATH Act now makes Qualified Charitable Distributions from an IRA a permanent law. Donors no longer must wait for Congress to act. Donors can now plan for withdrawals from their IRA and other retirement accounts to meet living expenses and their charitable gifts.

One strategy is to take distributions from non-IRA accounts (401k and other qualified plans) for living expenses and make direct transfers to charity from the IRA account. Check with your financial advisor to determine the best way to withdraw retirement funds and make charitable contributions.

The requirements to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution are as follows:

- Funds must be transferred directly from the IRA to the charity.
- Applies only to distributions from IRAs.
- IRA owner must be age 70<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> or older on the date of the donation from the IRA to the charity.
- The maximum limit is \$100,000 per person in a single year.
- Must be to a public charity like Soaring Eagle.
- The QCD counts towards satisfying the IRA owner's required minimum distribution (RMD) obligation for the year. It is important to note that the limit for a QCD is \$100,000 regardless of the donor's RMD amount. For example, if the donor's RMD is \$10,000, he or she can give up to \$100,000 as a QCD. If the donor's RMD is \$150,000 then he or she can give a QCD of up to \$100,000.

### **Join Other Soaring Eagle Donors**

Now that the legislation is permanent, many Soaring Eagle donors have chosen not to wait until year end to make donations to us utilizing the Qualified Charitable Distribution option when they plan for their required minimum distribution. Such gifts help us care for the Chevenne elders at Heritage Living Center earlier in the year, rather than at year end.

If your IRA holds securities, bonds and mutual fund shares you may want to consider transferring assets directly to Soaring Eagle without converting to cash. We will mail, fax or email instructions on how to accomplish such transfers. Please contact us for how to transfer an asset from your IRA.

Check with your IRA advisor to see if a Qualified Charitable Distribution to Soaring Eagle can fit in with your annual financial goals utilizing your IRA.

To learn more about how to give through your IRA or other gifts that require planning, please contact Mike Skaggs, CEO, Soaring Eagle, P.O. Box 879, Billings, Montana 59103, or call 406-256-8500.

The information in this newsletter is presented to Soaring Eagle's donors and friends to provide general information and encourage charitable giving. Soaring Eagle is a public charity incorporated in the state of Montana and does not engage in rendering legal, tax, financial, or any other professional advice. Consult your own professional advisors as it pertains to your individual situation. Consult an attorney if your plans require the creation of or revision of a will or other legal document. Tax deductions vary based on numerous factors including personal financial circumstances, tax codes, and applicable federal discount rates, which can change each month. Charitable gift annuities may not be available in all states.

### Soaring Eagle **Annuity Rates**

Age	% Rate	Age	% Rate
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66	4.8	79	6.6
67	4.8	80	6.8
68	4.9	81	7.0
69	5.0	82	7.2
70	5.1	83	7.4
71	5.3	84	7.6
72	5.4	85	7.8
73	5.5	86	8.0
74	5.7	87	8.2
75	5.8	88	8.4
76	6.0	89	8.7
77	6.2	90+	9.0

Lower two-life rates are available. Please contact us for information.

"I learned that I could receive a good return with a gift annuity. I asked Soaring Eagle to send me information illustrating the benefits of a gift annuity. It was free and there was no obligation. It was straight forward and simple to complete, so I sent \$10,000 for a 7.2% annuity. Now, I can count on my payments for the rest of my life and help care for Cheyenne elders at the Heritage Living Center. I received a tax deduction when I set up my annuity. Best of all, most of each payment is tax-free."



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To learn more about the benefits of a Soaring Eagle gift annuity, please use the coupon in this newsletter or call Mike Skaggs at 406-256-8500, Soaring Eagle, PO Box 879, Billings, MT 59103.

# Your Will Keeps on Giving

Please use one of the following sample forms of bequest when preparing your Will:

- A. Giving a Specific Amount "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana, the sum of \$
- B. Giving a Specific Property "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana, (identify specific property, example: 500 shares of XYZ stock)."
- C. Giving a Percentage "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of my estate."
- D. Giving the Residue "All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, I bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana."
- E. Giving a Contingent Bequest "I give, devise, and bequeath to Soaring Eagle Public Charity, a corporation created under the laws of the State of Montana, located at Billings, Montana my bequest to (name of intended recipient) should he/she not be living or be able to accept my bequest."

The above are sample forms only. Consult your attorney when preparing any legal document.

To learn more about giving to Soaring Eagle through your will, request our free booklet "Giving Through Your Will" by writing or calling: Soaring Eagle, PO Box 879, Billings, MT 59103 406-256-8500.

Although the past is gone, I get a lot of pleasure from childhood memories that seem to become more meaningful to me as time passes. More than 50 years ago, when I first came to live among the Northern Cheyenne, I was lonesome for my family back in Wisconsin. I eagerly looked forward to my annual summer trip home to the farm for two or three days of relaxing and visiting with my parents.

As I grew older, my visits home gave me deeper insight and appreciation for the Cheyenne awe and reverent feelings for their ancestors, who willingly sacrificed their lives in the Cheyenne escape from Ft. Robinson in 1879.

The U.S. Cavalry had locked the Cheyenne in a barracks for many days without food, water or heat. This was in the middle of January and we can only imagine how the elderly people, young parents with children and pregnant mothers suffered in the crowded barracks. They had to decide whether to watch their children die, or to break out of the log building, knowing that some wouldn't live in their desperate attempt for freedom.



# Reminisce with Father Emmett

9 Years Ago...

On the cold night of January 9, 1879, with snow on the ground, they broke out and ran for cover. Most were shot down before they made it to the tree line and others were chased for miles and killed, including the little children. Only a few lived and eventually made it back to their Montana homeland.

Today, the elders living at the Heritage Living Center are the descendants of the few who survived the Ft. Robinson tragedy. Every year the elders return to Ft. Robinson to memorialize those who willingly fought against impossible odds and gave their lives to save their people. The annual trip is a celebration of life

as the Cheyenne, joined by the Arapaho, Lakota and other tribes, hold traditional dances and pray to honor their heroic ancestors, especially the little children who were slaughtered with their mothers and the sick, old people who couldn't run fast enough.

The Heritage Living Center stands in direct contrast to the cruel, unjust and barbaric treatment of the Cheyenne by the military. The chiefs longed to see a

home where elders would be cared for with respect and where they would no longer go hungry and be forgotten as they struggled to survive. I know that the chiefs are pleased as they look down from above and see what your generous gifts have accomplished.

Every need the elders have can only be provided with your generous help.

I begin each day asking God to bless you for all you do for the elders and before bed at night I ask Maheo, Creator God, to be with you and grant you restful sleep and good health.

Your beggar friend, Father Emmett



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