



# “Home at Last!”

Summer  
2024



# GREETINGS FROM KAY MEDICINE BULL

You can see it in Kenneth Beartusk's eyes. For four years the elders and staff at the Heritage Living Center have faced enormous challenges to 1.) Stay alive during Covid. 2.) Adapt to being displaced 250 miles from home for nearly a year when their entire building suffered a catastrophic event. It's been a long journey for Kenny and all the elders.

And as life and routines have been restored to normalcy - namely being back home - I am pleased we have returned to our traditional Signals newsletter format. It too was displaced when the Pandemic struck in early 2020, and was kicked further down in the calendar highway when a pipe-bursting disaster forced the 10-month evacuation in February of last year. Security cameras captured

video of ceiling tiles crashing to the floor in sudden bursting waterfalls - collapsing under the weight of pink, water-saturated insulation - in stunning video like you'd never witnessed, with the exception of special-effects in movies!

In my first "Greetings from Kay" I want to say it's a privilege to visit with you as the new executive director. Your executive director I'll say. It is you, our donors, who are responsible for keeping us operational at being a truly one-of-a-kind Native American assisted living facility. I

am stepping in where your friend Mike Skaggs left off. I inherited very stable conditions throughout in comparison to the destabilizations we have endured over the past four years, the last of Mike's 14 seasons as executive director.

I have lived on the Northern Cheyenne reservation most of my life, the exception being the years away while earning a college degree. I was here during Covid and here when the elders were evacuated from the HLC building that suffered such water damage it had to be shut down for repairs, an overhaul that took nearly a year. But I was working at the community college in Lame Deer, far from being in the middle of things with HLC like Mike.

I have learned there is a story to tell, a story of innovation and resilience in crises. A tale of hard exhausting work by the staff that consists of resident attendants, kitchen cooks, the maintenance crew, and then there is Jerry Thex, the building administrator.

When I asked Jerry about the past few years, he answered, "Man. Where do I start? It was long and tiring and emotionally draining when Covid hit. There was such uncertainty. We had to keep the elders safe. They were quarantined for months."

Jerry has an imprinted memory of watching elders visiting with family members during Covid. Jerry recalls, "We had a designated room for the elders to go in and speak through



Inspecting the catastrophic damage from broken pipes.

# SO LONG FROM MIKE

Mike Skaggs and  
Clinton Birdhat taking in the  
Powwow



I thought this article would be difficult to write, but it isn't. It is filled with joy about the future! Soaring Eagle has always been about serving, caring for, and protecting elderly Northern Cheyenne. They are amazing people who suffered some of the worst poverty in this country's history.

For donors who have given to Soaring Eagle for many years, I bet you remember the heart wrenching letters Father Emmett Hoffmann wrote to you about the suffering of the Northern Cheyenne. I remember reading some of his letters through tear-filled eyes. I grew up in a working class family in Nebraska where my dad managed a farm supply store. We always had

some food on the table, even at the end of the month, and clean clothes to wear. I didn't know poverty like that.

My letters to you tended to be more about the changes being made and progress. Yes, we've had disasters of fires, floods, and pandemics. One of the most fun letters was about needing the funds for new mattresses. The elders were so excited the day two trucks full of brand new mattresses arrived!

I'm thankful I've gotten to know the elders. Many of them have become close friends. Sadly, I've joined in the sorrow of some of their passings and had the honor of family members asking me to speak at a funeral. I now know how Father

Emmett felt when he presided over a funeral Mass.

Most of all I've enjoyed writing to our friends, sharing stories, and telling you of how your gifts transform lives. Letter readers and donors have written thousands of notes and tucked them in with their checks. I've had the pleasure of sitting at kitchen tables with donors across America and sharing our stories, hearing their stories, and what motivates them to help the elders.

For many Americans, moving to an assisted-living home or a nursing home is one of the most difficult life decisions that must be made. Part of that process is deciding what to take to your new place to make it feel like home. The down-sizing tasks are hard. For many elders, Heritage Living Center is the best place they have lived in their entire lives. As I write this article to you, I learned about a new resident who just signed her paperwork and selected which apartment she will move into. She is excited to be living here.

Soaring Eagle is in a strong position to do great things. Please support Kay Medicine Bull as she leads Soaring Eagle in the years ahead. You're going to like her!

an open screen window to family members standing outside. They had to make reservations. We set up a table and folding chairs outside the window for the visitors to go to talk to the residents inside the building. No hugs or handshakes. There were many tears from families separated from their loved one's."

When three years of Covid restrictions were finally lifted, a second calamity hit when the building flooded. It may not seem like bursting pipes could shut down and force the evacuation of a building the size of ours, but it certainly did. The damage was throughout, water from the top floors poured into lower floors. During the explosive exhale of water from the fire-suppression pipelines throughout the building, six inches of water flowed down the hallways carrying pink insulation before damming up in the stairways.

"We didn't know if we were going to recover. Didn't know if we would be closing, leaving the residents displaced. Didn't know if we going to have to furlough 24 employees," Jerry said. (Not a single staff member was laid off.)

When the building was evacuated Jerry and Mike faced a Think-Outside-The-Box moment. The residents had been moved to a hotel in Billings, but now what? And then, tenacious patience paid off. An assisted living home with an empty wing was located in Livingston (250 miles away) with exactly the number rooms we needed to house the residents long-term.

"The beginnings of Covid, going from a 15-day inconvenience at first, then having it turn into a three-year odyssey. We get through that and then the building goes into full disrepair. But we got through it, somehow." Mike said smiling.

"I need to make a point about this to you Kay. It's important. While all of this was going on, there were times I was still at peace. That peace

came from knowing our donors would come through for us. I had faith, I had a belief in them."

Now here we are in the summer of 2024. There haven't been any recent catastrophes, and the last thing I'm going to say is "What else could possibly go wrong?"

Let me tell you a story from my childhood, and...



Longtime resident Susie Tall Whiteman welcomes Kay to HLC.

# WHY THE HERITAGE LIVING CENTER IS SO IMPORTANT



**Susie Tall Whiteman and grandson Ruben.**

One summer in the 1990s during my teenage years I recognized for the first time a pattern I've never forgotten. Reservation elders whom I knew, the grandparents of my friends, became too feeble for their families to care for. They were placed in nursing homes in off-reservation towns and soon died. This happened every time it seemed. Three months and they were gone.

Was it the care? Absolutely not! I knew some of the tribal members who worked in those nursing homes, cared

for our elders, doted on them. But quietly we all knew what was happening. The loneliness that came over the old ones being away from family, away from their language, away from the traditions and Native ways of life; the loneliness and isolation was so complete they gave up.

Father Emmett Hoffmann envisioned a home for elders and The Heritage Living Center opened in 2002, with small apartment-styled spaces for 40 Native American residents. It was an amazing accomplishment. Throughout America most cities and towns have multiple assisted living facilities (ALFs). Of the 362 sovereign Native nations in the United States, I have been able to locate less than ten (Ten!) ALFs within reservation

boundaries. Don't hold me to that number, but I have exhausted the research and it's the figure I have for now.

I'll make my point now about the importance of the Heritage Living Center.

The average stay for a resident in an assisted living facility is 22 months. At HLC no one can recall any of our residents living with us for less than 22 months. And then there's Susie Tallwhiteman. She's been here since opening day! That

was 22 years ago! Susie is still the same, laughing and bantering with other residents. The only thing that has changed at all is she uses a walker, which she views as a nuisance.

Just about all of our residents move in well before they have lost their motor skills and independent thinking. When they arrive, they are free from the daily burdens that come with reservation life. What I believe from the bottom of my heart is this; living at the HLC prolongs and extends the longevity of lives not for a brief period of time, not for 22 months, but for years and years and years.

The Heritage Living Center stands high on a hilltop overlooking the great plains and small mountain bluffs in eastern Montana. A mile away across the Tongue River lies the 20x40 miles-wide Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. Our residents lived their childhoods there, raising families there, did everything there, while growing older. Within that landscape lies a people with a fascinating and powerful history. They come and live with us. The Heritage Living Center is the only one of its kind, anywhere in the world. I am so blessed to be here. You are invited to come and see us anytime!

*Kay Medicine Bull*



**Above:** HLC hosts an Annual Easter egg hunt. This is one event many of our elders reconnect with their grandchildren and great grandchildren.



**Left:** Gathering eggs and making memories.

# ELDERS EXPRESSING THEMSELVES



**Above:** David Swank dances to hand drums returning to HLC after the flood evacuation.

**Right:** George Spang gets a 'Welcome Home' hug.

**Below:** Last Bear Singers use traditional drumsticks to create their booming sound during our Open House in June.



DETACH, MOISTEN GLUE STRIP AND SEAL

# POWWOW WAS MAJESTIC

**Right:** Honoring traditions, celebrating heritage. A young traditional dancer leads grand entry at the Labor Day Powwow Celebration.

**Below:** Little ones carrying on big traditions..





# WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO WRITE MY WILL?

Many thoughtful donors have reflected on the impact of the world affairs in recent years on their lives and the lives of their loved ones and began writing their final plans for their property when they no longer need it. Such a final plan is usually accomplished with a well-written will or trust.

Wills and trust are tools used in crafting an estate plan. Some plans can be quite simple and others very complex. Just a little time spent with an attorney might be all it takes to write a plan that can put your mind at ease about what happens to your property at a future date. For some people with complicated financial matters and family situations, it may take a team of planners including a lawyer, accountant, and financial advisor to accomplish what you need.

Many people avoid writing a will because of uncertainty about the future. The opposite is true. Having a will helps “map out” a plan for later years and provides more certainty about the future and your peace of mind today.

## ***What if I Already Have a Will?***

If you have a will that is great. Much of the work is done. All that may be needed is an update

to make sure your plans reflect the way your life is today. But what if a good amount of time has passed since your will was written? Many of life’s events can change what our future plans need to reflect. Have you had any of the following occur in your life or the lives of loved ones?

- Death of a spouse
- Marriage or divorce – yourself or your children
- Second marriage
- Birth of children or grandchildren
- Death of children or grandchildren
- Death, physical relocation or losing touch with those you had previously designated as Personal Representative, Guardian, or Health Care or Durable Power of Attorney
- Adoption of children or grandchildren
- Graduation from college by children or grandchildren
- Retirement or starting a second career
- Buying or selling real estate
- Changes in investments or assets
- Selling a business, adding a business partner, ending a business partnership
- A significant change in health or loved one’s health
- Long term health care plans and changes
- Changes in long-time friendships
- Changes in charitable interests

If some of the above events have occurred since you wrote your will, now may be a good time to consider how your plans might be affected by some of life’s events. While having a will is key to accomplishing many of life’s goals, keeping your plans up to date is equally important.

## ***Where Do I Start?***

Like most projects, the will-writing process is difficult to start. Try beginning with four blank sheets of paper and at the top of one piece write **People**, on another write **Property**, then **Plans**, and on the fourth sheet write **Planners**. On each sheet write down names, assets, what you want to happen with your property and the people you know who can help you carry out your plans. You don’t need to create a long or complete list. It

is okay to have some gaps or not know exactly what you want to happen. The planners you listed can help you with that. Make an appointment with a qualified estate planning attorney. You and your spouse, family member or a close friend might want to go together.

Good attorneys have helped many people in this process, so they know how to guide you. Remember to be efficient and thorough during your time with your lawyer.

### ***Including Charity in Your Plans***

If you are charitably minded, giving to your favorite charity can add a satisfying dimension to your estate plan. How you choose to make a charitable bequest depends on several factors, including family relationships, property values, how disposable or non-liquid your assets are and your charitable interests. You will want to select charities that will be around for a long time. Some charities are short-lived by design. Be careful about leaving bequests to charities that might not exist in future years. Give consideration to the following ways to make a charitable bequest.

***Specific Amount*** – Naming a specific amount gives certainty to your bequest. For example, you can plan that Soaring Eagle will receive a specific amount through your will. This is probably the most common form of a charitable bequest. It will look something like: “To Soaring Eagle I give the amount of \$XX,XXX.” You will want to be careful to do all you can to make sure funds are available for the bequests you make. A person who makes charitable bequests in this manner may want to update his or her will more frequently or when asset values change.

***Specific Property*** – Giving a specific piece of property can be a wise form of making a bequest. This is especially true if the property can be used by the charity, like land for a conservation group or artwork for a museum. Oftentimes, a donor can give specific property to a local charity and preserve cash for family and causes like Soaring Eagle.

***Percentage*** – Stating a percentage of your assets or value of your estate can preserve a charitable bequest if your estate value varies or if a specific property must be disposed of in later years. By using percentages, your bequests remain intact although the values may fluctuate with the value of what you own.

***Give the Residue*** – Many donors will take care of family first with specific bequests, amounts or percentages. After specific bequests to family and friends are satisfied, then a charitable gift may be made with what is left, otherwise known as the “rest, residue and remainder.” By planning with this form of bequest, you can rest easy knowing that family and loved ones will receive their bequests before charitable gifts are made.

***Contingent Bequests*** – Although you might complete a thorough estate plan, something might occur that makes it impossible to complete a gift to an heir. Possibly a loved one predeceases you or a relationship changes due to circumstances you didn’t anticipate. A contingent

bequest to Soaring Eagle can be made if a named recipient is not available or able to accept a bequest.

A charitable gift in your will must be purposefully planned. Without a will, state intestate succession laws take over and seldom can an estate without a will make a gift to charity. There’s no time like now to consider the events and life changes you have witnessed and write or update your will. We will be pleased to discuss with you or your advisors the ways in which Soaring Eagle can help you meet your charitable goals. For more information contact us at 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.

## New Higher 2024 Annuity Rates

One-Life Annuity  
beginning July 1, 2024

Age	% Rate	Age	% Rate
65	5.7	78	7.6
66	5.8	79	7.8
67	5.9	80	8.1
68	6.1	81	8.3
69	6.2	82	8.5
70	6.3	83	8.7
71	6.4	84	8.9
72	6.6	85	9.1
73	6.7	86	9.3
74	6.8	87	9.5
75	7.0	88	9.7
76	7.2	89	9.9
77	7.4	90+	10.1

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

*"I learned that I could receive a good return with a gift annuity. It was even better than what my bank could offer me. I asked Soaring Eagle to send me information illustrating the benefits of a gift annuity. It was free and there was no obligation.*

*I was pleased to learn that a gift annuity was part gift and part investment. A future gift to help the Northern Cheyenne seniors and an investment to pay me a fixed income for the rest of my life.*

*The illustration they sent was straightforward and simple to complete, so I sent my gift for an annuity. Now, I can count on regular*

*lifetime payments and help care for the elders at Heritage Living Center. Plus, I received a tax deduction when I set up my annuity. Best of all, most of each payment is tax-free."*



Richard, Bainbridge Island, WA

*I RECEIVE HIGH FIXED PAYMENTS FROM MY SOARING EAGLE GIFT ANNUITY!*

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



## YOUR WILL KEEPS ON GIVING

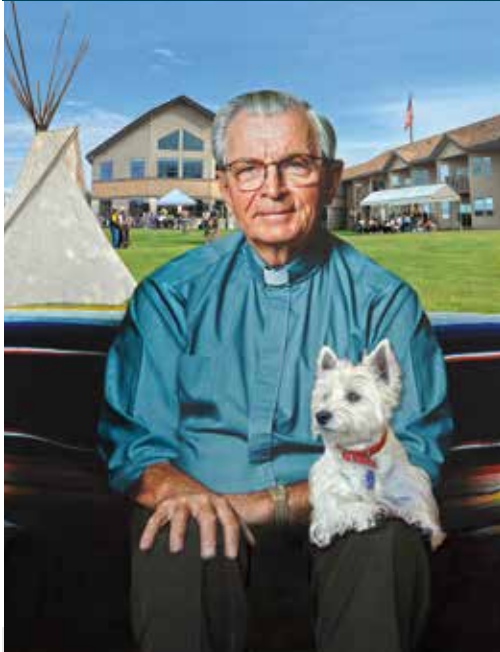
Please use one of the following sample forms of bequest when preparing your Will:

- 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 \$\_\_\_\_\_."
- 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)."
- 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."
- 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."
- 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.

# REMINISCE WITH FATHER EMMETT 22 YEARS AGO



**Father Emmett Hoffmann  
1926-2013**

This portrait of Father Emmett and faithful Fergie by John Warner is on display in HLC's main lobby.

Many people with health problems are waiting to move into the Heritage Living Center, among them my old friend, Clarence "Bisco" Spotted Wolf, the grandson of the famous chief who led the Cheyenne against General Crook at the Battle of the Rosebud and a week later fought against Custer in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876.

Bisco inherited his grandfather's place as Chief of the Northern Cheyenne Council of 44. Through the years he distinguished himself as a horseman and roper. At the age of seven he astonished his family

by roping an elk to feed his family! Popular with area ranchers, Bisco once roped 400 calves in a row without a miss at branding time.

It was Bisco who translated a 1973 tape recording of a chief's meeting and gave it to me to read. On the tape, several old chiefs, by then deceased, expressed their concern about elderly neglect and the need for an old folks home on the reservation. Chief Charlie Sitting Man's closing comments: "Father Emmett will help us," was a message from the grave. It touched my soul and brought me out of retirement to build the Heritage Living Center.

Since that day Bisco has become a guiding light as the Heritage Living Center emerged from early sketches to the final building plans. Last June 15, he was honored when we asked him to turn the first spade of dirt at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Heritage Living Center. But his work was not finished. After the ceremony, I asked him for one more favor: "When I'm not here, will you watch over the construction for me?" Throughout the construction phase, Bisco has never let me down. He calls me immediately when something needs my attention.

But Bisco and his wife Adeline now have health concerns that make it difficult to work and get around. Adeline is nearly blind and Bisco has

serious lung and heart problems.

They have worked hard all of their lives and now they deserve to live their golden years in the safe, warm environment of the Heritage Living Center.

The Cheyenne elders can't wait to move in! Even before construction began last August, a group of elders gathered around the building model display, vying for rooms with the best view of the Tongue River Valley, where most of them had grown up. Excitement has grown since they toured the building and saw the apartments, dining room, library, chapel, activity rooms and the beautiful views of their homeland.

The Heritage Living Center is the fulfillment of a need expressed by the old Cheyenne chiefs many years ago. They have all moved on to the "next camp," but I know that the chiefs stand with me in spirit as each day I ask "Maheo" our Creator God, to bless you for your generosity. Bisco Spotted Wolf and I send our greetings and gratitude to you for helping to make a "miracle" happen on the beautiful hill overlooking the Tongue River valley.

Your beggar friend,



THANKS  
FOR  
USING  
YOUR  
STAMP

SOARING EAGLE  
PO BOX 879  
BILLINGS MT 59103-0879





1234567890

# SOARING EAGLE GIFT INFORMATION REQUEST

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email *(Promise we will not share)* \_\_\_\_\_

**YES, I'm interested in a Soaring Eagle Charitable Gift Annuity. Please send me more information.**

Birth date(s) of annuitant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

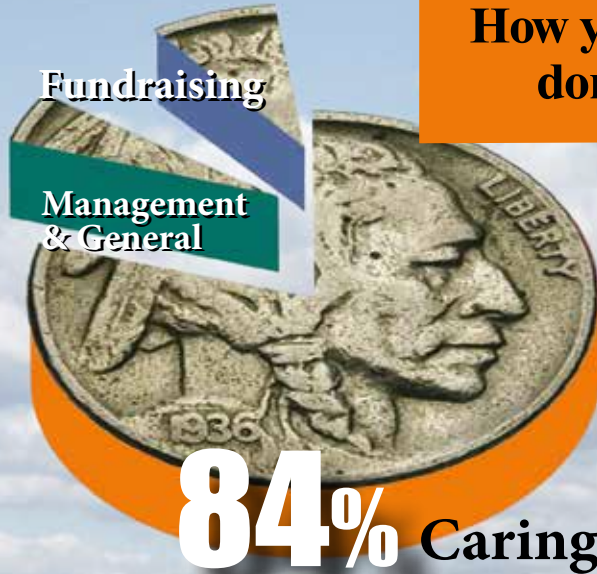
Annuity Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_ *Minimum annuity amount \$5,000 (up to 2 names/birth dates allowed per annuity.)*

*This is a non-binding proposal. Upon receipt of actual payment for an annuity, a formal contract will be mailed. For more information call (406) 256-8500.*

**Please send to me the following:**

Giving Securities     Giving Through Retirement Plans     Giving Through Your Will

# How your Soaring Eagle donations are used



For the fiscal  
year 1-1-2023 to  
12-31-2023

**84%** Caring for the Elders