Imagine the pride and joy of walking into the classroom on the first day of school with a brand new backpack filled with notebooks, pencils, crayons, a ruler, and much more. That pride is powerful and can give a needy child an important fresh start. For years, Running Strong has provided thousands of backpacks filled with needed school supplies to children of American Indian communities.

Anita Begay and her husband have been helping their Blue Gap community with a summer day camp for Diné (Navajo) reservation children. They requested backpacks filled with school supplies to hand out to the many native youths they help. Many of the students were thankful for their brand new backpacks filled with everything they needed for school. They sent us thank you notes telling how much they liked the highlighters and how the backpacks doubled as umbrellas too! Students who were used to making do were happy to get their own backpacks that were brand new. Parents expressed gratitude for having extra help with school supplies.

Anita is just one of a handful community leaders that Running Strong supports through our School Supply Program. Thanks to you 6,860 backpacks, filled with all the supplies that these little learners need, are on their way in time for Back-to-School.

And it doesn’t stop at school supplies…

Menominee students fill their “Smart Sacks” for the weekend!

Running Strong staff members recently visited the Menominee Indian School District in Wisconsin, where Running Strong funds the Smart Sacks program. Through the program, you help to provide kids in Pre-K through 5th grade with healthy food to take home so that they don’t go hungry on weekends or school breaks.

Our staff met with the energetic young students at the primary school and were put to work in no time! They helped hand healthy food to students who moved along the line of food. By buying in bulk, $35 provides a “Smart Sack” to a child for the entire school year! With your help, we can feed over 400 hungry children each week. That’s over 12,000 Smart Sacks this coming school year!

INSIDE:
- Billy Mills!
- Summer Food Boxes
- Team Running Strong
- Legacy Society
- Gardens Are Blooming
- Virtual Tour
- BBB Seal of Approval

“Thank you Running Strong and the people who work there, tell Billy Mills thank you. Now I have a brand new backpack with everything I need for school. My mom said thank you.”

8-year-old girl, Diné (Navajo) Indian Reservation
An Incredible Dream Come True

Fifty years ago, an orphaned American Indian by the name of Billy Mills stunned the world and beat the odds to win a gold medal in the 10,000 meter race at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. His amazing victory has been called one of the biggest upsets in Olympic history.

In the 50 years since that race, in order to “give away” to the people that helped him achieve his dream, Billy has visited American Indian communities throughout the U.S. He speaks to youth about healthy lifestyles and taking pride in their heritage. And the children that he meets know that he wants every one of them to create a dream and work to achieve it.

This year, we are commemorating Billy’s accomplishments with special events around the country. And with Billy, we will also be celebrating dreams — the dream that Billy had and the dreams of today’s American Indian youth.

One event that will take place is the Billy Mills Honoring Wacipi (pow wow) on the Pine Ridge Reservation at the Lakota Dome Prairie Wind Casino and Hotel. The pow wow is extra special because our very own Billy Mills will be in attendance celebrating the anniversary of his gold medal win. A native of Pine Ridge, Billy has been the national spokesperson for Running Strong for 28 years since cofounding the organization in 1986.

Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter to stay up to date with the latest plans for this extraordinary year!

Team Running Strong Celebrates 10 Years of Running Strong!

We asked Elysia Whislter, Team Running Strong 2014, what drew her to Team Running Strong.

Billy Mills! He’s such a hero and such a model for humanity. It’s not just about, or even mostly about, his Gold Medal win or even the obstacles he overcame to achieve that win. It’s about what he’s done every day of his life since that win, which is to give back to others, because he really cares about and strives to help his fellow human beings and his community.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Team Running Strong, our charity team in the Marine Corps Marathon. Runners and walkers, from first-timers to the experienced, will come from all over the country to raise money and awareness about the challenges facing American Indian Youth.

To support Elysia or any of the other marathoners, visit Team Running Strong at www.IndianYouth.org today.

Summer Food Boxes are Feeding Children on Pine Ridge

Last month, 800 Pine Ridge families received food boxes from Running Strong! We added this shipment to our food delivery schedule after hearing from our volunteers that their #1 priority was food. It is so difficult to see a hungry child and not be able to help. In August, thanks to supporters like you, we will be sending nearly a thousand additional boxes to help feed hungry children so that they have the energy to start the new school year right. Food boxes include meat, veggies, beans and other staples, enough to feed a family of four for a week when food runs out. Thank you!
Heartfelt thanks to Running Strong for American Indian Youth® Legacy Society Members! We apologize in advance for any misspellings. Please call 1-800-337-3543 to correct the spelling of your name.

By including Running Strong for American Indian Youth®, a project of Christian Relief Services, in your will or other estate plans, your legacy gift becomes a lasting tribute of your commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of American Indians and their well-being. Legacy gifts provide an estate tax deduction and have a tremendous impact on Running Strong’s ability to continue to fulfill its mission. For legacy questions or if you have already included Running Strong for American Indian Youth® in your will, please use our hotline by calling 1-800-337-3543 so you can be recognized, too!

To include Running Strong for American Indian Youth® in your will, include our tax number and mailing address: Running Strong for American Indian Youth®
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8301 Richmond Highway, Suite 900
Alexandria, VA 22309
Tax ID# 54-1884868

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @RunStrong4AIY to keep up with Running Strong!
For many living on reservations, fresh fruits and vegetables are not readily available. American Indians experience food insecurity at higher levels than the many in the United States and experience diabetes at an alarmingly high rate. But these challenges are not the results of individual choice. Instead, they are largely due to a lack of access to fresh produce. On the Pine Ridge reservation there are few food stores, and many cannot afford to eat a healthy diet.

So years ago, we developed our organic gardens program to provide fresh produce for Pine Ridge and other communities. Our community gardens and communal greenhouse programs together feed hundreds of families each year. And this year has been no exception…family gardens have thrived this summer!

“We’re Running Strong with the oldest ways of the people, for the people, and along with them.”

Tom Cook (Akwesasne Mohawk), Slim Buttes Agricultural Development Program
Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

Over 250 gardens in eight of the nine districts of Pine Ridge Reservations are growing tomatoes, potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips, melons, peppers, corn…the list is bountiful! Running Strong’s packets of seeds – many of which you helped to provide, along with additional supplies, technical support, and even new and improved irrigation systems have made fresh food a reality for so many!

We Meet the BBB Standards for Charity Accountability!

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance National Charity Seal carries a lot of meaning for both donors and charities. For donors, the appearance of the seal in a charity’s mailings, on its website, in newspapers and magazines or elsewhere is a clear and concise sign that the charity meets the Alliance’s Standards for Charity Accountability. Donors may not know that for charities, putting the seal in their materials is the culmination of a demanding process.

Before national charities can even apply to use the seal, they must undergo evaluation by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, the nation’s most experienced charity evaluator. And the evaluation process is anything but superficial. The Alliance’s standards go way beyond what the government regulators require and involve rigorous scrutiny of a charity’s governance, effectiveness, finances and publications. We are proud to meet these standards year after year!

This Year’s Running Strong Tour Is Sold Out!

This year’s Running Strong tour of the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservations is sold out! Tour alumni and caring supporters near and far will spend a week together visiting the programs you make possible from Sept 7-13, 2014. We’ll celebrate at the end with a very special Honoring Wacipi (pow wow) for Billy Mills!

Be sure to follow along with the bus virtually with photos on our website, www.IndianYouth.org. We hope you can come with us next year!