Running Strong Dreamstarter™ Grant Program Kicks Off this Spring

On the 50th anniversary of Billy Mills’ historic gold medal win, Billy and Running Strong had the idea for the Dreamstarter™ Grant Program. This program helps 10 Native youth realize their dream to better themselves and their communities. This is the first year of a five year grant program that will annually provide $10,000 grants to 10 deserving Native youth with dreams around the themes of wellness, arts and culture, education, and any of the themes in the final year.

This year, each Dreamstarter™ will implement their projects using the theme of wellness to develop programs in adaptive sports, fighting diabetes in the Native American population, promoting fitness, mentoring college dentistry students, and more! (See the Dreamstarter™ profiles inside.)

Last month, all of the Dreamstarters™ and their mentors were brought to the Dreamstarter™ Academy in Washington, DC. They participated in workshops on how to make their dreams a reality, networked with each other, and participated in some fun and educational activities including a private tour of the U.S. Capitol (courtesy of U.S. Rep. Don Beyer of Virginia), a Washington Nationals baseball game, and some one-on-one time with Billy Mills himself.

It was a trip that will forge life-long memories in these commendable young people as they make their way into adulthood and become leaders in their communities.

“I’m so inspired by our first class of Dreamstarters™. The Dreamstarter™ program is one more step towards overcoming the poverty of dreams among so many Native young people. The Dreamstarters™ come from communities and tribes all over the country. They are bound together by the idea that, despite the challenges, their dreams can guide them to build a strong future for themselves and for their communities. I look forward to working with each Dreamstarter™ over the next year, to helping them grow into leaders, and to watching their dreams come to life.”

Billy Mills, 2015

INSIDE:
- Meet the Dreamstarters
- Team Running Strong
- Running Strong 26th Tour
- Heat Match Update
Meet the Dreamstarters™!

Breanna Potter, 20
Cherokee
Sallisaw, Oklahoma
Mentoring Organization: Brushy Cherokee Action Association
Breanna’s dream is to create the “Brushy Youth Dream Team” to educate American Indian youth about prevention of diabetes by living a healthier lifestyle and motivating young people with information about healthy eating and physical fitness.

Nathaniel Christianson, 16
White Earth Chippewa,
Callaway, Minnesota
Mentoring Organization: White Earth Land Recovery Project
Nathaniel’s dream is to develop a media room for high school students. The “KKWE Student Dream” will help the students learn public broadcasting, music editing, program production and positive work skills and ethics, with the help of a local radio station.

Ronnie Godfrey, 15
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux
Summit, South Dakota
Mentoring Organization: Summit School District 54-6
Ronnie’s dream is to initiate “Weights for Wellness” to provide safe workout equipment for all members of the community. The equipment is part of a larger effort to promote healthier lifestyle choices through activities such as weight training and nutrition classes.

Noah Blue Elk Hotchkiss, 16
Southern Ute/Southern Cheyenne/Caddo
Durango, Colorado
Mentoring Organization: Disabled Sports USA – Adaptive Sports Association
Noah’s dream is the “Tribal Ability Program” which hopes to reach out to disabled American Indian youth about the benefits of adaptive sports as a way of promoting self-esteem and self-sufficiency. Noah will hold basketball clinics in different Native communities for paralyzed Native youth.

Rashaun Nez, 20
Navajo
Lower Fruitland, New Mexico
Mentoring Organization: Capacity Builders, Inc.
Rashaun’s dream is “Navajo Youth Builders” to improve the strength and wellbeing of his community by creating fitness and wellness classes that address the community’s dire health issues such as obesity and diabetes.

Jacquelyn Nielsen, 17
North Western Band of Shoshone Nation
Vancouver, Washington
Mentoring Organization: Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.
Jacquelyn’s dream is “Discovering Yidong Xinag Mentoring Program” to strengthen health, wellness, cultural resiliency factors and fostering peer-to-peer relationships.

For more information, photos, videos & much more visit our website www.IndianYouth.org today!
Meet the Dreamstarters™!

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @RunStrong4AIY to keep up with Running Strong!

Ronnie Godfrey, 15
Cheyenne River Sioux
Gilbert, Arizona
Mentoring Organization: A.T. Still University of Health Sciences
Ronnie’s dream is to initiate “Weights for Wellness” to provide safe workout equipment for all members of the community. Part of a larger effort to promote healthier lifestyle choices through activities such as weight training and nutrition classes.

Cristin Haase, 24
Oglala Lakota
Rapid City, South Dakota
Mentoring Organization: The Earth Circle Foundation
Cristin’s dream, “Mentorship for Future American Indian Dentists,” will implement a dental student mentorship program to attract and mentor American Indian dental students. The program will provide information on admissions and the application process, prerequisite courses, and mentorship during their student years.

James Pine, 23
Standing Rock Sioux
Bismarck, North Dakota
Mentoring Organization: Sacred Pipe Resource Center
James’ dream is to initiate “Lakota Forever Running Camps” — running programs on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation for children in every district and community.

Jacquelyn Nielsen, 17
North Western Band of Shoshone Nation
Vancouver, Washington
Mentoring Organization: Wisdom of the Elders, Inc.
Jacquelyn’s dream is “Discovering Yidong Xinag Mentoring Program” to strengthen health, wellness, cultural identity, and other resiliency factors among Native youth by fostering peer-to-peer mentor relationships.

Darius Sparks, 19
Standing Rock Sioux
Bismarck, North Dakota
Mentoring Organization: Youth Works
Darius’ dream is “Athletes as Warriors: Fostering Resilience in Native Youth,” which will teach youth in foster care how to develop positive life skills such as coping (defense), goal-setting (offense), relationship-building (teamwork), and perseverance (winning/losing) through the game of basketball.

Samantha Yellow Fat, 25
Standing Rock Sioux
Bismarck, North Dakota
Mentoring Organization: Youth Works
Samantha’s dream is “Native American Support Groups, Including Grief and Loss Group,” to create a support group specifically for adolescent Native Americans, to help them cope with the grief and loss they experience at disproportionate levels.
Running Strong Tour: 26 Years and Still Going Strong

This year’s Running Strong Reservations tour is scheduled for September 13 – 19, 2015 and, as always will allow supporters like you to see first-hand the programs that you make possible. For one incredible week, Running Strong staff will guide you through the Pine Ridge and Cheyenne River Indian reservations in South Dakota and ensure that you receive an intimate taste of Lakota culture and learn about American history from a different perspective.

In addition, the tour includes the opportunity to see revered cultural landmarks, a visit to Mount Rushmore, and to make the tour even more memorable, a chance to meet with our National Spokesperson and Olympic gold medalist Billy Mills. Check off the tour information box on the enclosed reply form to receive more information or visit www.IndianYouth.org to register and pay online.

You Helped Provide Heat this Winter!

Thanks to you, our Heat Match program helped nearly 1,000 Pine Ridge families stay warm this winter.

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Greenhouses Get Gardening Season off to an Early Start

The growing season for fruits and vegetables in South Dakota is short, and the community gardens supported by Running Strong for American Indian Youth on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation need all the help they can get to produce a bountiful crop. That’s why, with your help, Running Strong donated a special type of greenhouse – a hoop house – to the Slim Buttes Agricultural Program on Pine Ridge. The hoop house protects gardens from the intense desert heat of the summer and the frigid cold climate of South Dakota winters.

The vegetable seedlings that are getting their start in the greenhouse include tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, melons, beans and more and this year, we hope to have more than 20,000 plants harvested by the end of the growing season.

From a beginning of only six community gardens 30 years ago, this gardening program on Pine Ridge has grown into an agent of community change, and we eagerly await the harvest of this year’s anticipated bumper crops!

Team Running Strong 2014

Running Strong offers a guaranteed spot in the Marine Corps Marathon (which sells out every year), an honoring ceremony with teammates, family, and friends, training and fundraising support, the opportunity to participate in the only charity team benefitting American Indian children and families, and even tips from Olympic gold medalist and Running Strong spokesperson, Billy Mills. Tell a friend!

Registration is open now – register today at our website, www.IndianYouth.org!