

Elders

Jesse Clairmont

Being Helpful is Contagious

By Helen Oliff, National Relief Charities



Jesse Clairmont prepares for his daily delivery

"Let's go... they're hungry out there!"

"How many do you need, Jesse?"

"Six for now."

Who is Jesse and who is he talking to?

Jesse Clairmont is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. He's talking to Mike Husman, the manager of Buche Foods in Mission, SD. The food store is a reservation program partner of National Relief Charities (NRC) and their American Indian Relief Charities (AIRC) program in Rapid City, SD.

So what do the three have in common?

They all help ensure that the AIRC Breakfast in a Bag food gets to elders on the Rosebud Reservation every month. But as Jesse knows, it doesn't happen easily!

Jesse Clairmont, Rosebud Sioux

Jesse Clairmont has a long history

of service. Currently, he works for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe as the Elderly Affairs Coordinator, a responsibility that he takes seriously. Working with the Elders in his community "comes with both hardships and humor," he says. Many of the elders on Rosebud are homebound and have come to rely on Jesse as both a friend and an advocate.

Jesse speaks very fondly about the elders of Rosebud and is grateful he was chosen to serve them.

Raised by his grandparents, his grandfather seems "present" in many of Jesse's conversations. Jesse is sure that the simplest advice his grandfather ever gave him was also the most helpful. His advice: "Whatever you do, just be helpful."

Whatever you do, just be helpful

Today, being a helper is Jesse's nature. He has become the greatest gift of his grandfather.

In more than one way, Jesse puts his gift into action. The AIRC Breakfast in a Bag service is just one example. The AIRC breakfast foods are stocked by Buche Foods, who marks the items in the store that go into the \$25 food bags. Jesse makes several trips to Buche's to pick up these nutritious foods and then delivers them to elders on Rosebud who are 62 or older.

Sometimes he makes 15 deliveries a day. The deliveries give Jesse a chance to serve his elders but also to check in on them, many of whom are isolated or homebound.

At times on his deliveries, Jesse has come across hardships. Recently, one elder was days away from being evicted. She had used her rent money to lay her daughter to rest. Jesse informed the housing authority and she was able to stay in her home.

On another occasion, Jesse learned that compounded problems with water lines had left an elder without water in her home. He let the water resources personnel know and they took care of her right away. Yet another time, Jesse found an elderly man without a screen door. After delivering the AIRC breakfast bag, Jesse got a screen door, took it to the elder's home, and installed it himself.

Sometimes Jesse even delivers a breakfast bag with a refurbished appliance for an elder in need—although Jesse would never take the credit for what he accomplishes. He says, "I have a lot of kolas (friends) that help out when a fellow elder needs something."

Many of Jesse's Lakota friends are the result of 40 long years of tribal service. He looks on his kolas as "the younger ones," the up and coming elders. He wants the younger ones to get involved on Rosebud and to stay involved so that the work they do will become contagious and spread to others.

We congratulate Jesse for his lifelong service and for making a difference to the people of the Rosebud Indian Reservation. ♦