

Elder Meals in Porcupine

By Roseanna Renaud Times Correspondent



Editors Note***This series about elder nutrition on the Pine Ridge Reservation was launched after the Department of Health and Human Services announced on March 18 it was awarding only \$21,810 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to the tribe for its Social/ Nutrition, Title VI-Elderly Meals Program.

PORCUPINE - It's 10:30 a.m. at the Elder Center in Porcupine and already the sixty meals needed for elders from Rockyford to Porcupine are stacked and ready for delivery in a donated grey

Pontiac Torrent AWD, driven by Porcupine District Administrative Assistant Robert Quiver. "I am one of the CAP workers who help out with the program," said Mr. Quiver. "The program has a big purpose in that it serves one meal to a large population of elders. Our elders are very important because they provide traditional knowledge to the people."

As part of the Porcupine District Elderly Development Project, Mr. Quiver authored a successful grant to purchase a van for use in food delivery and transporting elders and he is awaiting the \$45,000 funding from the Empowerment Zone.

Under the expert direction of Head Cook Geneva Quiver, three Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF workers, Tracy Zimiga, Kimberly White Crane, and Latoya Feather Earring cooked the daily meal and packaged it while hot using assembly-line speed that would put any military cafeteria to shame.



The luscious aroma of fresh baked dinner rolls wafts through the immaculate dining room, urging hungry elders to draw near. Turkey slices, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, and mandarin orange salad fills the remainder of the menu, which will be served directly at the table by the staff to about fourteen people. Others will drop by during lunch to pick up their feast. Elders need only come in and sit down and a hot plate of food is placed in front of them.

Mrs. Quiver, who has been Head Cook for the past sixteen months and loves the cooking aspect of the job, believes that Elders always come first and that they teach her many things. "Sharing, patience, understanding." said Mrs. Quiver. "I learn different meanings of respect from them."



From her centrally located service facility in Manderson, OST Meals for the Elderly Coordinator Fern Apple can reach out to all nine districts, including Porcupine, and oversees a yearly budget of \$178,000 in federal Title VI grant money that must stretch across seven feeding sites on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Last year the program prepared over 216,000 congregate or on-site, and home delivered meals. She is in the process of opening another

location at Red Shirt. Two other sites at Lacreek and Medicine Root Districts receive funding through the state under Title III. Title VI and III funds are grants used in service programs for older American Indians. Ms. Apple is pleased with the additional resources the program receives from such sources as National Relief Charities through their AIRC Food service (www.nrcprograms.org), whose goal is to "help Native American people improve the quality of their lives by providing opportunities for them to bring about positive changes in their communities." Research documented on NRC's web site indicates that the Native American community suffers from a much higher rate of food insecurity or hunger than the general population, taking a serious toll on their health and well being. This is especially problematic for elders who are naturally more prone to poor health.

Seventy-one year old Porcupine Elderly President, Winifred Janis, is acutely aware of the hunger and food shortage issue that not only plagues her district but Indian country at large. She is pleased with the staff and the quality of meals served to the elders in the Porcupine community. "This is really important to us," said Janis. "A lot of elders can't cook for themselves, and about this time of the month a lot of them don't have groceries so they depend on this. They really do make a good meal here using all the healthy food groups."



