



# News from the Field

Special Issue *"Committed to sharing God's gifts among all peoples of the world"* Native America 2008

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*The four things a man  
must do,*

*If he would make his  
record true.*

*To speak without  
confusion clearly,*

*To act from honest  
motives purely,*

*To love his fellow man  
sincerely,*

*To trust in God and  
heaven securely.*

## From the President

*Dear Friends,*

*It is with great joy and gratitude that I compile this report of our recent mission trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Joy that we were able to help so many people see clearly with a new pair of eyeglasses and gratitude that so many of our team members were clearly able to see and receive God's blessings. Life long dreams were realized by those participating and many lives were enriched not only by the ability to see better but also by the knowledge that God cares for them which was evident by the work of His people.*

*I am humbled by all that our gracious Lord has allowed us to accomplish in His name and freely offer Him all the glory. I am also extremely grateful for those of you who supported us financially and prayerfully. The team may have been the ones on the front lines doing the work but your support made all that we did possible. Thank you!*

*In His peace,*

*Carol Fanelli* Carol Fanelli



## TEAMWORK... by Maxine Rhoads

On June 14, 2008, nine people set off to conduct a free Eyeglass Clinic at the Porcupine Health Clinic on the Pine Ridge Reservation. We were all concerned that we wouldn't get a good turn out, but left this matter in the hands of the Lord. What we did know is that God was calling us to leave our families, and jobs, and set off to try to make a difference in someone else's life. What I suspected, but didn't truly realize, was the impact this was going to have on each and every one of our lives.

There is no way to go over every little thing that happened to each and every one of us for the next four days. A couple of times, I would just stand back and watch each person of our

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## DREAMS AND MEMORIES

*by Mary Ann Tragesser*

What an adventure I had in June! It was the fulfillment of a dream I had had since I was 10 years old (which was only 20 years ago!!!!). Anyway, after seeing an article in the paper about the trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, and knowing one of the people that was planning to go, I decided to call and find out more about the plans. Little did I know at the time, that not only would it be a life-changing experience, but that I would also make a whole new group of friends that are wonderful and generous people.

We left for Pine Ridge Reservation early in the morning, and after a long day of flying,

*(Continued on Page 2)*

arrived in Grand Rapids, SD. Our destination was the Porcupine Health Clinic where we conducted an eyeglass clinic for four days. I felt very comfortable screening people with the eye chart, so I did have the opportunity to meet and greet the more than four hundred people that arrived over the four days of the clinic. I met some wonderful people who were warm, friendly, and very accepting of us. Friends have said to me, "but weren't they very poor?", and my response must be, "yes, they were poor, but happy people".

I will always remember a couple of them. One was a little 7 year old girl named Jasmine. She was a precious child, and when I asked her father's age, her reply was "he should be dead!!" I was astonished, and asked her again to be sure I had heard her correctly. She repeated the sentence, and her father (he was really an uncle who was raising the child) said, "that's all she hears, because her dad died at 39, her uncle at 37, her grandfather at 35, and since I am already 41, she thinks I, too, should be dead. Heart disease runs rampant in their family, and it seems that all she can do is sit and wait for the ticking time bomb to explode. What a sad thing for a little 7 year old child to think about.



Another young man I talked with had an eye disease in both eyes. He is 22 years old and has already had one operation, which did give him fairly good sight in one eye. However, he said that his Indian health insurance would not pay for a second operation, so he will be blind in the other eye in a couple of years. Wow! Don't we all take so much for granted!!!

And, perhaps that was the ultimate message of the trip. We are so blessed to have access to excellent medical care. We always have the option of a second or third opinion. These people simply do not have that luxury. One man whose 16 year old son is facing the prospect of a leg amputation, wants a second opinion, but can't afford to get one because his living expenses won't be paid while he is staying near the hospital. And yet, they are a deeply spiritual and happy people. I would love to return next year, and perhaps see some of them again. And if I don't, I will always remember them, pray for them, and consider them some of the finest people I have ever met.

### "WE SERVE" by Tom Fanelli

Monday, June 16<sup>th</sup> was the first day of the Eye Clinic. After preparing for weeks for the trip, making sure we had an adequate supply of glasses to distribute, and that the refractor was charged and ready to measure vision strength, it finally all came together on that first day. As a member of the Lions Club it was a great feeling to watch the first patient as they were screened at the reading chart and then escorted to the refractor room to have their vision measured. It was just as I pictured it would be.

Then they were brought into the fitting room and we began the process of finding an appropriate pair of eyeglasses to fit their needs. I have to admit the greatest thrill for me was after we matched them with a pair of glasses and heard their exclamation, "I can see clearly! It's been a long time since I could see so well!" But the excitement did not stop there. One patient turned into two and then three and before I knew it we had seen 136 people that first day.

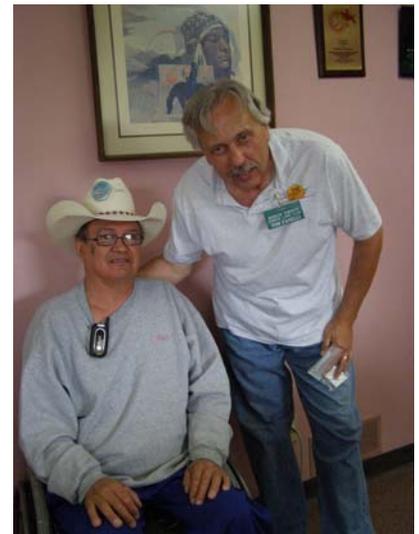
It continued on throughout the next three days with all the same emotions. Children, youth, adults – young and old alike came in to see if we could help them. What a way to live out the Lion motto, "We Serve." At the end of the week we

screened 471 people, helped 315 people see more clearly and made a lot of new friends.

Any Lion who has the opportunity to do something like this should take advantage of that opportunity. You will come away with a whole different view of what it means to make a lasting difference in the lives of others.

I also came away with a great appreciation for the other members of our team. I believe it was

because God brought us together that we were able to bond and work so well with each other. He held us in the palm of His hand as we shared an unbelievable experience, worked along side one another and simply enjoyed each other's company.



team working with all of these people. Our team was gracious, caring and captivated by the Lakota. The smiles of the men, women and children who could actually now see to read, crochet, bead, drive, or as several said, “now I can get a job” was so heart warming. Sometimes our tears of joy mixed with theirs, when any one of us could finally help someone see. And then there were the times when our tears of sorrow came when we couldn't help someone. To turn away someone because we didn't have the correct prescription strength was devastating. Not only to the person who left with a token pair of sunglasses in their hands, but to each of us who had to say the dreaded words of “I'm sorry, I can't help you out, maybe next year”.

As I sit here with my “readers” on, I wonder to myself, “How could I work if I couldn't read? How could I shop? I can't read a label without my glasses.” I've gotten so used to just picking them up and reading what I need to read and then going on with my life. How punishing it would be not to be able to read my Bible. I wonder, when one of us tries to explain to someone how exciting it was to help someone else read, if they can really understand how it felt.

I was asked to put into words one of my best memories. There were so many. There were two that will always be with me: On the first day of the clinic, after fitting several people with glasses, I was introduced to a young lady around 27 years old. She smiled shyly and sat where I placed her, and waited quietly while I looked through the bags, trying to find a pair of glasses that would look nice on her, but best of all match her prescription. I thought I had found several that might work, and took them back for her to try on. With each pair she would just shake her head and say “blurry”. I asked her to wait a while longer and went back to the bags. I found a couple pair and went back to her and had her try them on. As she tried on the second pair she glanced up at the window across the room and suddenly cried out, “I can see! There is a trailer across the road, I can see!” She started to weep, as did I. We hung onto each other for a few minutes, and then she left smiling.

On the last day of the clinic, my first patient was an 11 year old boy. He was so excited about getting glasses. I had him stand in front of the eye chart and asked him if he was having trouble reading the blackboard at school. He acted ashamed, and I reassured him that we would try to help him out. I can't tell you how many pairs of glasses we tried on him, and when I say we, I mean the whole team was looking through the bags desperately trying to find him a pair to match his prescription. His eyes were so bad that for him to look at the eye chart, he was squinting and could only read the first letter. I finally had to explain to him that we couldn't help him. After he left, I had to get away from everything. My mind was reeling with questions. How could God allow us to come this far and not help this young boy? How was he going to make it through the school year without being able to read the blackboard? He was going to miss the beautiful scenery, as he couldn't see. I



pray that the Lord will provide a way for this boy to receive a pair of glasses. I will never, ever not appreciate my eye sight, or take it for granted.

So on that note, what else do I take for granted? Taking a step out of my home, while others are wheelchair bound and are imprisoned in their homes because on the rez, people don't have the money or access to materials to install a wheelchair ramp. Not feeling well? I pick up the phone and call my doctor and get an appointment this week, just down the road. If you live on the rez, there are very few doctors. At the clinic they have a doctor come in one day a week, who examines eight people. Imagine that, I wonder when someone can get an appointment? The despondency that these people live with is undeniable. No jobs, no gas, no cars, no homes, no doctors, no one who cares. I'm thirsty, turn on the tap and get a drink. Not so on the rez, many carry gallon jugs across their land, over to their neighbor's spring. Imagine that, wasn't that happening during the 1800's in the US? This is the US, and our people are living in the dark past. Will we be able to help them out, what more can we do . . .

Pray and God will send us an answer. I want to thank God for allowing us to see his majestic beauty. I thank God for every man and woman on our team. Each one of us found our calling, each one of us pitched in. Several of us felt insecure, not knowing if we were going to be able to really help with the clinic. I think we all found ourselves that week.

In the days ahead, I pray that we all continue to learn from what God has put in front of us. I know I will. Each day on TV, I see the atrocities and horror of what is happening around the world, yet I know in my heart of what is happening right here in the United States of America. Land of the Free, God gave us Liberty! May we pursue our happiness knowing that we have brought one spark of God's love to many people and that we won't be forgotten. By our participation in this clinic, we have opened the door to the Lakota people's hearts.



Throughout the past 10 years, I have sought God's guidance as I pray, "here am I Lord, send me to the nations", yet I never felt an answer until this past March. While reading the Advertiser, a weekly publication delivered in Southern Lancaster County, I read with interest an article about a foundation called "We're all Gods Children". WAGC is a Christian based foundation which was teaming with the Sunrise Lions club from Manheim Township to conduct a free eyeglass clinic on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota and they needed a few more volunteers. I contacted Carol Fanelli, and was added to the list of volunteers to be interviewed. WAGC was trying to build a team who would mesh with each other and had a heart for the Native American people they would be working with and helping. To make a long story short, with God's guidance and hours of prayer a nine person team was formed, dates were set, vacation time arranged, and flight and hotel reservations were booked. I'm proud to say, I was a part of that team.

As we departed on Saturday June 14th the main concern on all of our minds was would the Lakota people be receptive to a group of strangers coming to help them and would they come to the clinic?

We arrived in Rapid City, South Dakota Saturday evening, picked up our rental vans, had a nice dinner and checked into our hotel rooms for the night. Sunday morning we departed Rapid City and set out for the rez to set up for our clinic slated to begin on Monday. We were greeted by one of our hosts, Stella White Eyes, and the men in our group were wished a Happy Father's Day, which I think inwardly impressed all three of us.

As Monday morning arrived, we traveled from our temporary home in Gordon, Nebraska and opened the doors

to the clinic at 9 am. Our concerns and fears were put to rest right from the start. By 9:15 am we had 24 people registered and beginning the process of having their vision tested and receiving eyeglasses to improve their sight. Our clinic ran Monday through Thursday, from 9 am until 5 pm and the days passed by much too fast.

On Friday and Saturday we toured many historic sites on the rez, and then throughout the area. We were fortunate enough to visit the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre, The Red Cloud Indian School and burial site, The White River information Center, and attend an actual Pow Wow. We also visited Crazy Horse Monument, Custer State Park where we saw free roaming buffalo, and historic Mt. Rushmore.

As we left the Porcupine Health Care Clinic, where our eyeglass clinic was held, it was with many mixed emotions. Even though we knew it was time to return to our families, homes and jobs, we also knew we had received more from these wonderful people than we could have ever given. They welcomed us with open arms and a trust that was unparalleled. Their forgiving spirit, even after what the American government and white "progress" has done to the indigenous people of America, is unbelievable. We all knew it wasn't good-bye, just farewell until next year, when we plan to return to provide more aid in one way or another. And I plan to join the team again as a committed volunteer with WAGC.

As I returned home I was left with some wonderful impressions. First I was impressed by how the Lakota young people not only display, but have the utmost respect for anyone older than themselves. I was equally impressed by how the family unit is the main foundation of Lakota life. Family means everything to my friends the Lakota, both young and old.

I returned home knowing God had blessed our trip, not only with success and a learning experience, but with many new friends both in the Lakota Nation and with the eight other team members I lived, traveled and worked with for one wonderful week.

Yes, this was my first trip to the Lakota Nation, but by God's grace and guidance it will only be the first of many. Jesus said, "if you've done unto the least of these my brethren, you've done also unto me". These people have so little, need so much, and are so grateful for any bit of help they receive. I truly feel blessed to have been a part of this mission.

First and foremost, I thank God for guiding me to WAGC (or them to me)! The relationships/friendships acquired cannot be matched. The folks we were able to assist were so appreciative. My “job” of doing the eye measurements with the refractor was most rewarding. I am amazed that I, as a lay person with no medical training, could use the current technology to assist others to see more clearly. With our team leaders, Carol, Heather and Maxine, we quickly meshed into a cohesive force.

Never having been in South Dakota or Nebraska, I’m still in awe of the expanse and rolling hills. I have multiple emotions on the “plight” of the Native Americans. A few have done well, but the majority seem destined to follow prior generations in abject poverty. Coming from my culture of self sufficiency, I have trouble accepting “full responsibility” for their lifestyle. Granted, there is not much to choose from for a livelihood on the reservation, but why do some do well and some do nothing? The only negative to the trip was the fact that we had to turn some away because we did not have a sufficient supply of higher/stronger prescriptions. Next time we’ll do better.



My strongest and deepest emotion welled up in me during Maxine’s “Smudging” ceremony in the Wounded Knee cemetery. It is still with me today and will probably remain part of my being for the rest of my life. Finally, I have never done anything as rewarding as this mission. Lord willing, I will have the opportunity to continue in future years.

### OF MEN AND BUFFALO *by Sheila Lefever*



My husband Don came home from a Lion’s Club meeting one Saturday and asked if I would be interested in going on a mission trip to Africa. He explained about We’re All God’s Children and how they distributed eyeglasses to those in need. I had been looking into volunteer work for some time and this really appealed to me.

The thought of primitive conditions had me dragging my feet but I figured with God’s help I could do this. Well, God was on my side this time, and the African trip was postponed. And then we were offered the exciting possibility of joining a mission team to work on an Indian reservation! Now I was really excited!

After a night at the WAGC warehouse sorting glasses, I kind of got the idea of exactly what we would be doing. As the weeks passed we received specific training, raised funds and grew together as a real team. Of course I had some doubts

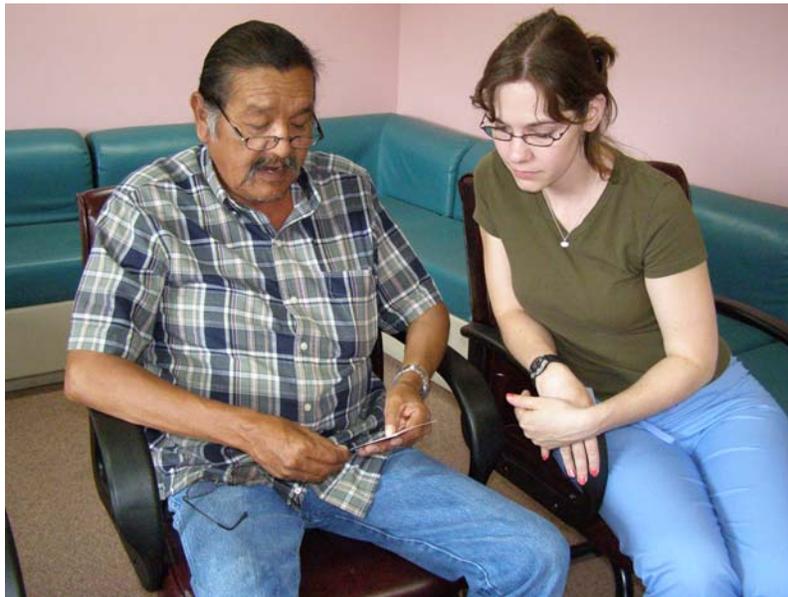
as to whether I would be of any real help. So I just put it all into God’s hands and prepared to go.

I entered the week with some doubt and trepidation. Would I really be an asset? But on the first day when I fitted a woman with a pair of glasses and could visibly see her light up because she “could see” I knew I was where I was supposed to be. If I helped only one person, the trip would be worth it to me. The rest of the week wasn’t always that easy. I had to tell some people that I just couldn’t “fit them,” and that was heart-breaking. I discovered that in spite of all their suffering, they all (at least the ones I worked with) had a sense of humor. It felt good to be able to make them laugh.

I sincerely hope Don and I get invited to go back again next year. We definitely are all God’s children. I believe we were all put here on earth to help each other. If there are others who feel the same, but do not have the time or availability to join the team, my hope is that they would be willing to give financially. Without the support of funds, we might not be able to continue to reach out to those who so desperately need help. And God will certainly remember those who did or did not follow His command to love our neighbors.

The eye-care, the people, the land, and the history turned out to be an unexpected emotional and spiritual experience for me that I will never forget. Of course the buffalo crossing the road absolutely made my day!

It is amazing to see the difference that recycled eyeglasses can make in two very different areas of the world. Last year, I took part in the eyeglass clinic in Kenya, Africa and it was a wonderful experience. This year I was given the opportunity to work with and train the Native American team members in how to conduct an eyeglass clinic in South Dakota. From day one, it was obvious that the reason free glasses were needed on Pine Ridge Reservation was similar to what I had seen in Kenya (extreme poverty) but the eye conditions were very different. As before, many children were having difficulty seeing their work in school or while studying. Some adults couldn't drive safely because they had major problems with their distance vision, or they couldn't see the close and intricate detail of their stitching or bead work. However, we found that the actual eyeglass prescriptions were extremely unique and quite different from what we had seen before. Each experience holds different memories, however it is still simply wonderful to see a person's face light up when they are finally able to see clearly with their new pair of glasses.



It takes a lot of work to organize an eye clinic. Not only do all the materials, such as glasses and the battery powered refractor which measures the vision in each eye need to be picked up, but the glasses need to be organized in numeric order. This makes the entire process run more efficiently when fitting glasses to a patient's unique prescription. Then the team needs to gain a basic knowledge of the testing and fitting process. For this trip both I and another WAGC team member trained the group on how to use the battery powered refractor and fit the glasses. The glasses were then packed up and shipped to the Porcupine Health Clinic on the reservation to await the mission team. Once we arrived, we reviewed the entire process and set up the clinic for the next four days. We were all very excited and ready to work.

Patients filtered in and out of the clinic all day long and the team kept moving. We worked very well together and the process ran smoothly. Patients would sign in with a Porcupine Clinic staff person. They were then sent back to Mary Ann, who did the initial examination with an eye chart. If the person met the criteria to receive glasses (20/50 eyesight or worse),

she would send them to see Don or Tom with the refractor. Both of these gentlemen had a long day of sitting in a dark room working with the equipment, but they loved every minute of it. Don made a lot of friends with his sugar free Lifesavers (he gave one to each patient) and Tom was simply his friendly self. From there the person would come up to the eyeglass fitting room, where either Max, Jack, Sheila or myself would work with them one-on-one. Persistence is an important part of the fitting process because sometimes you have to search long and hard for the right pair of glasses. At times we didn't have matches that would improve their vision because the patient had such a unique eye glass prescription that it was almost impossible to

find the correct pair. Usually though, we were able to find just the right pair and many happy people left with new glasses and a new look at the world. The last two team members, Carol and Jean, helped out wherever needed and kept people moving through the entire process. Each person was handed a bookmark with information on the saving power of Jesus before they left and most often we got some wonderful hugs and handshakes as a good bye and thank you. By the end of the 4 days, we had

seen almost 500 people and fitted 315 of them with glasses.

If I had to point out one area that really caught my heart, I would have to mention the children. They were just so great to work with. Some of them were all smiles and were excited about new glasses, while others were embarrassed and shy. Watching the team work with these girls and boys was quite an experience. It is so hard for me to imagine these children having eye problems such as these that go uncorrected. Some said that kids picked on them because they couldn't see the chalkboard and many had difficulty recognizing letters on the eye chart because of this. I never thought about the fact that it is hard to learn when you can't see what the teacher is writing on the board in front of you.

The team left with a better understanding of the needs of the Native American people. It was a learning experience for everyone and I certainly count it as a blessing to have been a part of such a rewarding project.



(Joshua, chapter 1, verse 9) The Lord said to Moses: "I command you: be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go."

As the 9 of us left our familiar surroundings of Lancaster County on June 14, 2008, and headed off to the Porcupine Clinic on the Pine Ridge reservation in SD, we had no true picture of what the outcome would be for the vision screening at the clinic. Our group had basic training on how to determine what prescription glasses we could try to work with, but the majority of us had never done anything like this before. We quite simply put our fear aside, and looked to God for His leadership, and walked in faith because we all knew He was with us every step of the way.

I had been anxious before leaving PA about getting the word out to the Lakota people on the reservation so that enough people would come to have their eyes checked. God answered all of my prayers from day one when 136 people came for eye exams, and the numbers increased each day. It was my job to greet the people once they had registered, and before they had the eye test. I would let them know what to expect as they proceeded on to Mary Ann at the eye chart and then on to Don with the refractor reading.

Each day more and more Lakota men, women and children came to the eye clinic and each day we eagerly looked forward to getting to know and serve more of these humble, gentle souls. It was such a pleasure for me to get to know each person a little better as I tried to put them at ease.

Several times I got to assist in the area where we actually fitted the prescription glasses. I will never forget Nathaniel, because I continue to keep him in my prayers. Nathaniel was about 23 yrs. old and his vision was very poor, as he could just barely see at a distance or close up.

He told me that he had not had a pair of glasses since 1998 and he had just recently been turned down for a job because of his bad eye sight. After giving him different prescription glasses which did not help, God took over and Nathaniel tried on another pair of glasses that enabled him to see so well that a huge smile took over his face and that said it all. He could now read the eye chart from top to bottom and when he looked outside he could see his world clearly once again. He thanked me many times and I was so happy and excited for him. Because I wanted to remember Nathaniel especially I asked one of my friends to please take a photo of Nathaniel and I, which she did.

My nickname "Flash" came about from all of the photos I took while at Porcupine Clinic which was a part of my job assignment too. Now you can look into the faces of these Native Americans and you will see "the suffering Christ," who asks us not to just look the other way and do nothing but to react in some way. For whenever Jesus lets us see a new circumstance where someone is hurting and needs a helping hand, it is Jesus who reaches out to us. He gives us the opportunity to serve Him through others. It is a "life and death" health situation for the 30 plus thousand Lakota Indians on the Pine Ridge reservation. It is also the "shame of our Nation" that this lack of health care, doctors, nurses, medicines, eye and dental care is destroying lives every day.

Will you be the one who will answer God's call to help His beloved, suffering Lakota people? Are you able to give your time, talent, or a monetary donation so that the We're All Gods Children foundation is able to return to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to bring God's healing power where it is needed the most?

God is always allowing us to make choices, as in Matthew 25, verses 37-40: "Then the just will ask him: Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we welcome you away from home or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we visit you when you were ill or in prison? The king will answer them: "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me."

God allowed Carol, Tom, Maxine, Don, Sheila, Heather, Jack, Mary Ann and I to share His love and care with our Lakota brothers and sisters and I am so thankful that He brought us together. Please consider assisting us in our work for the Lakota. We request that you please pray for us, the work God has given us, and especially pray for all of the Lakota people on the Pine Ridge reservation.

May God bless you.



118 Parklawn Ct.  
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*"Committed to sharing God's gifts among all peoples of the world"*



## Our Mission

To provide needed medical care, educate people in usable life skills, and transfer unused resources to areas of essential need both in and out of the United States.