

# 4th Annual Blackfeet Children Fund events bring gifts, joy to families

By GREGG PAISLEY  
For the Glacier Reporter

worked up a list of children at the Nurturing Center and other locations.

Sharon Brown, Special Agent for the BIA Office of Justice Services, Blackfeet Criminal Investigations Unit, helped organize and assist with events. Wendy's daughters, Brooke and Fierra Running Crane, helped at the events as well. Lockley Bremner, Browning Mayor and Oki Communications Manager, enabled key aspects of the plan.

In 2013 the plan started with a simple question: "What can we do that would be most valuable and useful to these kids? What would really enhance their lives and capture and excite their imagination?" We decided the thing that would mean most would be to give each child 9 - 17 years old a nine inch Wi-Fi Android tablet with customized keyboard case (i.e. in a color of their choosing and with their name on it) and headphones - essentially a little laptop PC that can surf the Internet, watch YouTube, stream movies, do homework, Facebook, email, download music and educational apps, etc. These Android (by Google) tablets do the same things as iPads and Windows tablets do, but it's all free so they won't be asking adults for a credit card number to buy apps, tunes, etc. - an obvious consideration given the circumstances of both the children and the adults looking after them.

The idea was to give our children something they would use every day to entertain, learn, explore, communicate and connect with - even escape to - the outside world: to broadly expand their lives and perspective from our isolated reservation and be part of the big world out there, just like kids everywhere these days.

The younger kids each got a nice assortment of toys and



Former Mayor Lockley Bremner and Wendy Linn Bremner, at left, helped prepare Christmas gifts for deserving children in and around Browning. Willie Sharp Jr. and Wendy Linn Bremner, bottom right, hand out all sorts of prizes to kids last Christmas.

The Blackfeet Christmas Fund decided to give every child identified by local authorities as needy, a nine-inch Wi-Fi Android tablet, pictured at bottom left, with customized keyboard case that will encourage and allow kids to enter the cyber age.



clothes purchased especially for them. This year the Fund got a big boost from the Friendship House Association of American Indians Inc. in San Francisco, one of the oldest and largest charities of its kind. They sent boxes with enough gifts to add extra toys to every large gift bag we prepared for the younger children, so those kids each got several items. You should have seen their little eyes light up when they saw all that stuff.

The Fund held events at the Nurturing Center, at BIA offices, and volunteers delivered gifts to kids who couldn't make it or who were in remote



locations. Tablets were given to Alan Lukin's program for the homework center and to Sharon Brown for use in the BIA/FBI offices where they interview children as part of abuse investigations. Tablets also went to KBWG and Oki Communications so they could provide support and test suitable apps for the kids.

The Fund raises virtually all of the money from donors who live off the reservation (except for Tony Sitzmann and the Paisley family, each of whom have donated over \$2,500 to the Fund in 2010-13), and has never asked for or received any Tribal money and operates with no connec-

tion to Tribal government.

However, it is good for the kids to have Tribal leaders involved in our events, so this year we invited BTBC members from both sides of the current political division. If you visit the website listed in the Fund's Thank You advertisement in this paper (www.americanindianpartnership.com) you will find pictures from the events, including Tribal leaders that attended to help out, as well as a complete list of the 300 donors that have contributed in 2010-13.

This year, last minute donations gave us some unexpected cash so we asked the Nurturing Center if they need-

ed anything. They said they needed outdoor play equipment. So we bought them a large, heavy duty, metal, powder-coated outdoor play center - swings, slide, monkey bars, trapeze bars, gymnast rings and fireman pole - that will arrive in January. That ought to be fun for our little sweethearts and give them some exercise.

In 2014, there will be big changes and expansion for the Fund. It will start operating under the name American Indian Partnership - new name, same mission - and will expand to year round operations and branch out into new projects.

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