



SERVING
AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES
SINCE 1986


2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Walking Shield's mission is to improve the quality of life for American Indian families by coordinating programs that provide shelter, healthcare, community development support, educational assistance, employment development, and humanitarian aid.

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Dear Friends,

Walking Shield wishes you and yours the happiest of holidays. In the past, we would distribute biannual newsletters to keep you up to date on the services and programs we provide to improve the quality of life for our American Indian communities. In lieu of these newsletters, we will send an annual report of our accomplishments throughout the respective years. We appreciate all you do to support our efforts to help American Indian Families in need. We hope you enjoy our 2022 annual report.

2022 Walking Shield Annual Report

2022 was an incredible year for Walking Shield. With your help, we worked to improve the quality of life for American Indian people in a variety of ways and celebrated with gratitude some very special moments. Highlights of 2022 included coordinating efforts to improve healthcare and infrastructure on reservations, receiving Champion of the Year Awards, providing humanitarian aid throughout the year, and hosting our 10th Annual Charity Golf Tournament! With the support of donors like you, Walking Shield continues to offer programs and services which make a difference in the lives of American Indian families and communities every day. The following report provides a glimpse of our work in 2022. We thank you for your continued partnership in our efforts to improve the quality of life for American Indian people.

OneSight Partnership

For over 30 years, Walking Shield is privileged to continue to our partnership with OneSight, bringing vision care to American Indian communities experiencing poverty and with limited access to vision care. We have found that, on most reservations that we assist, over 71% of children and over 95% of adults need corrective eyewear. We provide a complete free eye exam and provide free brand new glasses for those who are visually impaired, which are made onsite.

This year, along with our OneSight partners, Walking Shield coordinated a vision clinic hosted at Rincon Indian Reservation. Our OneSight vision clinic received an overwhelming positive response, with 888 people in attendance and a 92% need rate for corrective eyewear. Many of those who attended included families with young children, and elders, which made this event especially gratifying.

Coordinating quality vision care is one of the many ways that Walking Shield is working to advance health equity for American Indian people. Bringing quality vision care to communities in need is important not only for eye health, but also for overall health and wellbeing. For example, diabetes rates are significantly higher in American Indian communities than in the general population. Because access to healthcare is often limited on rural reservations, eye exams provide a way to detect underlying conditions, such as diabetes and diabetic retinopathy, so that treatment can then be coordinated. With your generous support, Walking Shield plans to bring much needed vision care to La Posta Indian Tribe and the surrounding Reservations in 2023.



Families receive vision care at Rincon Indian Reservation 2022

Education

The goal of Walking Shield's Education Program is to increase the number of American Indian students receiving the support they need to raise college enrollment/graduation rates, obtain gainful employment, and be prepared with the tools of digital literacy competency in an ever-changing world of technology.

Walking Shield is currently assisting 40 college students with scholarships. Through the generous support of AT&T, we are pleased to offer a new program to assess and help to meet students' digital needs. A survey we conducted reflected high numbers of students attending school virtually, needs for computer and printer access, WI-Fi, secure storage, and enhancing digital literacy. With your support, Walking Shield will work to meet the digital needs of our students.

In November, Walking Shield was thrilled to host our 10th Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Native Oaks Golf Club in Valley Center, CA. Our golf tournament had to be postponed for two years due to the pandemic but is now back in full swing. This was our very first event with Native Oaks Golf Club, and it was a great success! All proceeds benefit our American Indian College Access Program.

We would like to thank our sponsors including Barona Band of Mission Indians, Morongo Band of Mission Indians, San Luis Rey Indian Water Authority, San Pascual Band of Mission Indians, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, and all the donors who contributed to our 10th Annual Charity Golf Tournament. We look back on the past 10 years with gratitude for donors who have helped make this event so rewarding for our golfers, for our students, and for Walking Shield.

Through the generous support of foundations, companies, and individual donors, Walking Shield has over 120 college graduates who are now gainfully employed in their fields of study or pursuing graduate degrees. In 2023, Walking Shield will expand our Education services to Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. We thank you for your generous contributions, which help American Indian students reach their dreams of a higher education.



Alumni enjoy Walking Shield's 10th Annual Charity Golf Tournament

Humanitarian Aid and Holiday Gifts Program

The Humanitarian Aid and Holiday Gift Program is our longest-standing program and represents some of Walking Shield's most fulfilling work. With the contributions of our partners, such as Yarn Spinners and Toys for Tots Native American Program, Walking Shield has distributed over \$300,000 worth of gifts and donated products in 2022. These donations benefit American Indian people, many of whom are experiencing poverty. Products include items such as jackets and blankets for the cold winter months, 80,000 reader glasses, and much more, which we distribute for those in need.

The holidays are just around the corner, and excitement is in the air! Walking Shield's warehouse is positively brimming with toys and gifts. This work is always so fulfilling and delightful, and the need is so great. With a dedicated team of volunteers, Walking Shield is poised to send thousands of toys and gifts to American Indian Reservations.



A child enjoying her holiday gifts.

We are so grateful for our partners, volunteers, and donors who give so much back to American Indian communities. With this support, we experience the best gift of all, both during the holidays and throughout the year – bringing joy to children and families.

Infrastructure and Healthcare Support Program

Through our Infrastructure and Healthcare Support Program, Walking Shield partners with U.S. Military branches to coordinate the construction of roads, wells, bridges, other vital infrastructure needs, and healthcare missions on American Indian reservations.

This summer, Dr. John Castillo, Executive Director, and Marvin Thurman, Operation Walking Shield Program Manager both received the CHAMPION OF THE YEAR AWARD for the work they have done with the Operation Walking Shield mission and for their exemplary work to help implement the Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) Program's mission. The annual award ceremony was held on August 31st at the 2022 Joint Workshop for Operation Mission Planners in Virginia. Walking Shield is grateful for this incredible honor, as we continue our work to improve the quality of life for Tribal communities.



***Dr. John Castillo receives the IRT
Champion of the Year Award***

In July through September, the U.S. Army National Guard built the foundation for Heart Butte Senior Center, and construction is still in progress. Walking Shield worked to coordinate this project with the Blackfeet Nation, and our U.S. Military partners. Heart Butte Senior Center will provide a place for seniors from the Blackfeet Nation to gather to share meals and activities and will also provide home delivered meals for seniors.

This summer, Walking Shield also helped to coordinate a medical mission with our partners at Hoopa Valley Tribe and the U.S. Military, during which 93 troops came to the Reservation. Those who came consisted of medical doctors, dentists, ophthalmologists, respiratory therapists, nurses, and admins. One of the beneficial services provided was an active shooter drill, to help Tribal members increase gun safety knowledge. Services also included 507 dental procedures, which helped to wipe out the backlog of people sitting on waitlists for dental care.

Workforce Development Program

Partnering with United American Indian Involvement (UAI) who has been awarded the U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Grant for Indian and Native American Program, Walking Shield serves the American Indian community residing primarily in Orange County. This program provides job seekers access to employment training, support services, and the education necessary to succeed in today's competitive job market. The program's goal is to provide a long-term career path to low-income, unemployed, and under-employed American Indians to minimize the disparities they face in the workforce.

We are so proud of our 12 students who graduated in June. This summer, we were delighted to celebrate our graduates at a festive event with our partners at United American Indian Involvement (UAI). Graduates and their families enjoyed music including a performance by a traditional drummer, inspiring speeches, community, great food, and Hawaiian shave ice!



***Walking Shield staff join with students to
celebrate their accomplishments***

Community Services Block Grant Programs

Walking Shield's Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program and our CARES Program both provide emergency supportive services for American Indian communities. Never has the need for emergency services been so great as during these difficult times. With the support of the CSBG and CARES Act grants, in 2022, we assisted Native American families with access to food, rent, utility and transportation assistance. Walking Shield will expand our services to Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in 2023.



Families receive personal necessities

Keeping Curiosity and Hopes Alive for Children Ages 0-5 (KeepCHA)

Through our program for Keeping Curiosity and Hopes Alive for Children Ages 0-5 (KeepCHA), Walking Shield offers culturally relevant resources for parents, families, educators, and communities to provide opportunities and enriching experiences for children. Research indicates that the mind of a child is 90% developed by age five. <https://azpbs.org/2017/11/early-childhood-brain-development-lifelong-impact/>. The first five years of a child's life are a critical time for cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and social development, which sets the foundation for everything to come. They also provide indicators of those who will most likely attend college.

Walking Shield spent over a year researching best practices, bringing together 22 chapters of culturally relevant materials for American Indian families to support children ages 0-5. Earlier this year, we received an overwhelming positive response to our KeepCHA website after sending it out to many organizations who serve American Indian people. Walking Shield is excited to expand our KeepCHA program in 2023. We plan to recruit American Indian Early Childhood Education professionals to help present and share our KeepCHA program within the American Indian community. We are also working with our partners in American Indian tribal governments toward the delivery of this program for the tribes that we serve. Please visit our KeepCHA program at: <http://walkingshield.org/keepcha-keeping-curiosity-and-hope-alive-for-children-0-5-and-their-families/>

SoCalGas Partnership Program

Partnering with SoCalGas, we raise awareness about their energy and money-saving programs called Customer Assistance Programs (CAP) for low-income individuals and families. We work to ensure that all our clients who are eligible for SoCalGas CAP programs are informed about this opportunity. We help assist clients with paperwork and utilize social media platforms to outreach within the American Indian community. We network with other service providers such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) each month.



Walking Shield staff conduct outreach to share SoCalGas energy and money-saving programs.

Thank you to our partners donors, sponsors and volunteers



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Holiday Gift Distribution Program 2022

