




2025 ANNUAL REPORT


SERVING
AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES
SINCE 1986


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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2025 Walking Shield Annual Report

Our 2025 Annual Report is a reflection of my own personal and historical knowledge of Walking Shield from inception to where it is now. Join me on a journey from the past to the present. Together, with your support over the past many years, we have made a tremendous positive impact in Indian Country.

Walking Shield's Inception

Walking Shield was founded by Mr. Phil Stevens, a Lakota Sioux, in 1986, and for 39 years, we have worked closely with both on and off reservation Tribal communities to provide a variety of services to American Indian families throughout the United States. We are a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that partners with tribal governments, urban Indian service organizations, state and federal government funding agencies, non-profit grantees, corporate businesses, and foundations to bring our services to our nation's American Indian communities most in need.

Phil Stevens was a speaker for many conferences especially for American Indians in Sciences and Engineering. He was President of Ultra Systems and a major defense contractor with the Pentagon.

Dr. Castillo's Involvement

I was the Executive Director for the Southern California Indian Center from 1989 to 1998. I first met Walking Shield's founder, Phil "Walking Shield" Stevens when he contacted the Indian Center to provide hundreds of turkey dinners (with all the fixings) to help 500 families for Thanksgiving. He recruited most of the Aerospace Industries to join him in providing the fixings while a Foundation in Oklahoma helped provide the turkeys. In addition to these companies, he also enlisted the Marines from El Toro and Tustin military bases to help deliver the meals.

I joined Walking Shield in 1999 after my contract ended as the Executive Director with Southern California Indian Center. Phil retired in 2005, and subsequently, I became the Executive Director of Walking Shield. For the past 26 years, I have been honored to be part of Walking Shield's growth to help those most in need.

Humanitarian Aid & Holiday Gift Program

This is our oldest program at Walking Shield. I remember Phil telling me how an elderly woman on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation came up to him and showed him a doll with her head falling off. She said "Phil we are good seamstresses here on the reservation, but this is something we cannot fix." That was the beginning of our Holiday Gift Program.

Currently we distribute over 30,000 games and toys to over 60 on and off reservations and organizations. Many of these children would not receive a gift for the holiday if it was not for our donors and volunteers who pull and prepare product for each and every group. We have distributed over \$300,000 in gifts each year and are so thankful for our donors and our volunteers that make this possible.

We are grateful for the generous support of long-term partners who include Toys for Tots Native American Program, and a variety of numerous companies. Additionally, we receive gifts from local civic groups to include beautifully knitted blankets, beanie, scarves and mittens, as well as amazing hand-crafted wooden toys.



Children receiving
Holiday Gifts!

Infrastructure Support Program

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

In 1995 Phil received a call from the Pentagon. A defense contractor spoke to him about a new military program called Innovative Readiness Training (IRT).

IRT is a Department of Defense (DOD) military program exclusive to the United States and its territories that delivers training opportunities to increase deployment readiness while simultaneously providing key health care and infrastructure support to communities in need.



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

Education Program

Fourteen years ago, Walking Shield met with Southern California Edison's vice president Frank Quivedo at their Rosemead office to discuss the increasing number of American Indians entering college. Walking Shield gathered individuals involved in Indian education from the Greater Los Angeles community and 40 of us met at the University of Irvine's conference center to discuss how to get more Indian people into college. We developed long-term and short-term goals to strategically meet our objectives.

A smaller group of individuals from the original 40 volunteered to help with this process and soon thereafter we created Walking Shield's American Indian College Access Program. The College Futures Foundation in San Francisco heard about our program and paid us a visit to further understand this effort. They decided to help and provided \$100,000 for Walking Shield to provide up to 30 college scholarships for American Indians living in Southern California. For many years, they have continued to increase the funds to up to \$300,000 per year.

Since then, other foundations, corporations, and tribes joined us such as Union Bank Foundation, Wells Fargo Foundation, a Family Foundation from Los Angeles, Southern California Edison, Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, and Morongo Band of Indians to name a few.

As a result, to date we have provided over \$4 million dollars of scholarships and wrap around services including tutoring, books, food, and other types of support services. We now boast over 140 College graduates, and most have returned to their respective tribes or off reservations organizations to work within their fields of expertise. The heartbeat of our success is a program we developed called PARGE.

PARGE (Prepare, Admit, Retain, Graduate, and Employ):

PARGE is a culturally competent case management system which is thorough and takes a comprehensive approach.

Prepare: mentor and counsel high school students and their families to realize that a college education is a viable option.

Admit: provide counseling that focuses on exploring majors/career paths, selecting colleges, applying for colleges and universities, obtaining financial aid and adjusting to college life.

Retain: provide individual counseling through a proven four-tier case management approach to maintain or improve academic performance as necessary to remain in college and graduate.



This four-tier case management approach is the heart of Walking Shield's Education Program.

- Tier One – provides some assistance and monitoring for students with 3.3 to 4.0 GPAs- Mentored by our Education Program Assistant
- Tier Two – provides remedial support and monitoring for students with 2.6 to 3.2 GPAs- Mentored by our Education Program Manager
- Tier Three – provides early intervention assistance to students struggling with 2.0 to 2.5 GPAs to prevent them from leaving school or being placed on academic probation- Mentored by our Executive Director
- Tier Four – provides crisis management through personalized coaching and tutoring with students struggling to stay in school with a GPA below 2.0- Mentored by our Executive Director

Graduate: continue mentoring right up to commencement and celebrate their achievement not only as a personal milestone but one for their family, tribe and greater American Indian community.

Employ: assist graduates in launching their careers by offering support to enhance resume building, interview skills, internship opportunities, networking and other effective approaches to gaining employment.

Following are a few testimonials from our students:



Asinate Nakoma Lutu
San Carlos Apache/White Mountain Apache
Bachelor of Science Communications Disorders
California State University, Los Angeles
Class of 2023

“Walking Shield’s staff provided me with invaluable support during my academic journey. They assisted me in obtaining my Bachelor’s degree in Communication Disorders and ensured that my time at the University was a stress-free one. Between the academic support, the steady scholarships, and the supportive team, Walking Shield made sure I didn’t have to worry about school related necessities. Today, I currently hold a board-certification as a Speech Language Pathologist Assistant and work in an Orange County school district. I am forever grateful to Walking Shield and the entire team.”

Thank you, Walking Shield, for your unwavering support throughout my academic journey as I pursued and completed my bachelor’s degree in political science and Minor in Cultural studies. Your belief in my potential and investment in my education has had a huge impact on my success. I am especially thankful for Walking Shield for uplifting and supporting Native American students, providing not only financial assistance by also a strong sense of community and encouragement. Your support has helped me reach this important milestone, and I am deeply honored to have been a recipient of your generosity.”



Jacob Hawk
Southern Cheyenne Tribe
Bachelors Degree Political Science
Cal State University Long Beach
Class of 2025

Employment and Training Program

Walking Shield has long been committed to supporting our community in securing meaningful employment. The creation of the American Indian College Access Program marked a significant advancement in this effort. We firmly believe that education is a key pathway out of poverty.

Drawing on experience from previous comprehensive employment and training initiatives—such as the Job Training Partnership Act and now the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Grant—our staff is well-equipped to deliver high-quality employment and training services. Through our partnership with United American Indian Involvement, we are able to expand and enhance these opportunities. Below is a story of one of our former clients.



Isabel Satala (pictured left)
Diné (Navajo) & Hopi

Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in
Entrepreneurship - Cal Poly Pomona
Master of Science in Nursing - Western
University of Health Sciences

“I truly would not be where I am today without the support of Walking Shield and the WIOA (Workforce Program). Their commitment to uplifting Native students made it possible for me to pursue opportunities that shaped my passion for maternal and neonatal health. Throughout my academic journey, they ensured I had the tools I needed to start my master’s program by purchasing my first white coat, a school nursing jacket for clinicals, and an iPad that I used throughout my rotations and simulation practices. As I approached the end of my program, Walking Shield assisted with the costs of my Board of Registered Nursing application and my NCLEX exam. Even after earning my master’s in nursing, their support never stopped. They helped provide study materials for the NCLEX, as well as my first pair of nursing shoes and my first set of scrubs as a registered nurse. They have genuinely walked beside me through every step of this journey. I am excited to continue growing in my career and to stay connected with Walking Shield so I can one day give back, sharing my experiences with the next generation and inspiring future Native students to pursue their passions in higher education or healthcare.”



The Birth of our First Five Program

Seven years ago, I was on the Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico meeting with our fellow Native American Kellogg Foundation fellows who were selected by the foundation for a 3-year leadership effort called Kellogg National Fellows Program. About 20 of us gathered on the Pueblo to discuss positive social change for our various tribal communities. As a result, two areas of focus became apparent. First was to research best practices in positive social change within Indian communities and secondly, we needed to establish a zero to five program for our families and their children.

We collectively knew that real positive social change starts in the early years of life. By the time a child turns five 90% of their brain is already developed (<https://files.firstthingsfirst.org/why-early-childhood-matters/the-first-five-years>). Walking Shield took this to heart and over a two-year period researched best practices in Indian Country on raising children 0 to 5.

As a result, Keeping Curiosity and Hope Alive for Children Ages 0-5 (KeepCHA) was born. The Unihealth Foundation in Los Angeles helped us launch this program. KeepCHA’s 15 chapters can be found on our website. It contains training modules to explain each chapter and has been introduced to our native communities. A few examples of the chapters that you can find on our website include Prenatal Care and Cooking Healthy Meals.

Capacity Building Program

For 39 years, we have integrated our services and programs to assist tribes and off-reservation American Indian groups to improve the quality of life within our tribal communities.

Walking Shield has developed a program to build the capacity of partner tribes to meet their short-and-long term community development goals. Working with tribal leadership, Walking Shield staff and Senior Fellows work to build on existing assets to identify priority projects and programs, develop time driven work plans, and to compete for eligible financing to complete scheduled projects. Key areas of focus are land use and planning, affordable housing, water delivery and management, broadband, and community facilities.

Walking Shield works with Tribal leadership to research and support the development of these priorities into completed Tribal Community Improvement Plans that will serve as a multi-year work schedule to achieve priority infrastructure and projects. Plans will include annual submission of Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) applications to secure assistance, attract financial investments, and complete projects on schedule. IRT is a Department of Defense program which utilizes the talents of the various military branches to rebuild and strengthen America by assisting with infrastructure and healthcare.

Community Services Block Grant Program

In 2021, Walking Shield introduced our Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program which provides emergency supportive services for our American Indian communities. This program offers many services such as those listed below to qualifying American Indians residing in Orange County, Riverside County and San Bernardino County. Walking Shield's goal in offering this program, as a source of support at the most difficult times, is in step with our mission to improve the quality of life for American Indian families.

- Rental assistance provided for relocation and eviction prevention.
- Utility assistance provided for disconnection prevention, or service reconnection.
- Nutrition assistance provided for limited food resources.
- Supportive services provided for vocational education and employment.

Walking Shield's 13th Annual Charity Golf Tournament

Walking Shield's highly anticipated 13th Annual Charity Golf Tournament was held at Soboba Springs Golf Course in beautiful San Jacinto on September 15, 2025. Our golfers were in great form as we greeted many familiar faces and welcomed many new! In all, Walking Shield hosted 90 golfers who enjoyed 18 holes of golf, followed by lunch, raffles, silent auction opportunities, as well as a presentation by a Walking Shield Scholarship recipient who shared her academic journey and vocational success. This event would not be possible without the generosity of our volunteers, golfers, and the following sponsors and donors.



Team Soboba enjoying our golf tournament!

Thank you to our 13th Annual Charity Golf Tournament Sponsors & Donors!

CAHUILLA BAND OF INDIANS
SOBOBA FOUNDATION, INC.
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VIBE ORGANIC KITCHEN
WOOD RANCH
YAAMAVA'RESORT & CASINO

Donor Highlight

On October 20, 2025, Morongo Band of Mission Indians honored Walking Shield with a generous donation of \$25,000 at their annual golf tournament dinner. The Tribe has provided nearly \$3 million to local non-profits over nearly three decades.

John Castillo, Executive Director of Walking Shield, praised the Tribe's commitment. "For decades, Walking Shield has worked to improve housing, healthcare access, and educational opportunities for American Indian families," Castillo said. "This generous gift from Morongo will help us continue delivering critical services that directly improve lives in American Indian communities."



John Castillo (left) of Walking Shield with Morongo Tribal Council Member Jeanette Burns and Vice Chair James Siva.

Your generosity plays a vital role in meeting our fundraising needs. It empowers us to continue providing valuable resources and making a lasting difference in our community. Thank you for being part of the progress.

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Walking Shield, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization, and any contribution is tax deductible.

Please accept my donation in the amount of:

\$250 ___ \$200 ___ \$150 ___
\$100 ___ \$50 ___ Other \$ ___

Please mail your donation to:

Walking Shield, Inc.
3100 Airway Avenue, Suite 118
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

You may also donate online at walkingshield.org

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