

## "Footprints"

"We will be known forever by the tracks we leave."

NAVA was started because Veterans' suicide. The hurt and pain it leaves behind is too much. We started this small organization to make a difference, and we do. We help with many different things from food to firewood. From water to blankets all with the laser focus of helping people. Those who give understand the joy helping when asking for nothing in return. Our **First Americans** are worthy of your gifts.

It is always a great day when we can reach out to hundreds of Native American Veterans and their families meeting an immediate need of hunger with good, fresh, nutritious produce. We all want to eat healthier and this day we provided hundreds of families that opportunity. With your help we can do more days like today.

As you can see from the pictures, we do what we say we are going to do. We are not lazy or stagnant. We get out there and do as much as we can to help people. This is not always easy. Some mornings we are up before dawn and on the road to meet delivery trucks and trailers to help people only to get home after dusk. We recruit programs and individuals to work with us to create and maintain that trust relationship in the communities we serve.

That is something we feel is unique to us. I am a retired military officer and enrolled Native American. I don't talk the talk, I walk it. I have lived it. I care passionately about Native American Veterans and their families. As a military officer, accomplishing the mission was important. We do that every day.

We at NAVA are working desperately to intervene to help so many with simple basic things. We help with immediate needs and some long term solutions. The immediate needs sometimes feel overwhelming, but we are there day in and day out to help people. That is why I am writing to you today.

We believe food is a **basic human right**. As you know some of our reservations are the poorest counties in America where unemployment is the highest in the entire country often around 60%. That leads to food insecurity. Every summer we purchase trailer loads of fresh produce to be distributed to Native American Veterans and their families. We partner with tribal programs to ensure fair and equitable distribution of products to help as many as we possible can. We at NAVA are different than many charities. We live and work on the reservations we serve. as possible.

We partner with many different organizations in the communities to extend our reach as far. We work with



BILLING PRODUCE					
Growers & Shippers of Quality Produce					
29657 Lakewood Pl. PIERRE, SD 57501					
605-224-6428 (Home) 605-945-1508 (Store)					
NAME	NAVA				
ADDRESS					
PHONE NO.					
DATE	8/4/2020				
SOLD BY	CASH	CARD	CHARGE	ON ACCT	TRUCK RETN
QTY	DESCRIPTION		PRICE	AMOUNT	
200	doz sweet corn		6.00	1200.00	
200	cantalope		2.00	400.00	
200	10# bag potatoes		6.00	1200.00	
3	boxes cil chumbes		35.00	105.00	
15	boxes assorted fresh fruit		25.00	375.00	
4	bags onions		30.00	120.00	
Thank you!				3400.00	
☺ donation				400.00	
Attention Will for delivery Pine Ridge, SD					
RECEIVED BY	TAX			TOTAL 3800.00	



Tribal and State Veterans Service Officers to reach out to more and more veterans in need. Often times those in the most difficult situations are the last to ask for help. We are always trying to find new and innovative ways to reach them. To help them with your help.

This day we created a drive -thru program where Native American Veterans and their families could safely drive -thru to pick up a box of fresh produce. We had safety masks. Even though sometimes we took them off to get a picture here and there.

The day was a great success. I even took several boxes of fresh produce in the back of my pickup to deliver to some homebound veterans I knew would not make it in to the drive-thru. I did a lot of driving that day, but it was worth it. To see the smiles on the leathered faces of so many—happy to receive a gift of love—food. I know many take little things for granted. Those we serve do not. They are incredibly appreciative of the smallest gestures of kindness.

A trailer load of fresh produce can run as high as \$3,000 - \$4,000 depending on the produce available at the time. This produce is fresh and grown in the states where we do the distributions. From sweet corn, to cantaloupes, potatoes, cucumbers, squash, zucchini even onions. 200 dozen ears of fresh sweet corn can cost \$1,000. 300 fresh cantaloupes can cost \$400. The labor to sort and make boxes **is free**. I have always believed in working with good volunteers. **“Invite good people and let them be good.”**

The long days are the best because we know we have done good. We have reached more people. Yes, we have the daily and weekly administrative things to accomplish, but sometimes I get to go do more of what I love reaching out personally to elders and veterans with a helping hand. I also get to hear stories of life and struggle and joy. Sometimes it is emotional hearing their stories of hardship. I always want to do so much more. Every year since our small charity started we have helped more and more people. We have a small staff at NAVA, but we have literally hundreds of volunteers who work with us to help people.

