



# Timber Lake

\$1.25

# TOPIC

Vol. 109 Number 49  
USPS 629-680

CONTINUING THE *ISABEL DAKOTAN*

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## CIRCULAR:

Country Market

## Two more issues

Readers and advertisers are reminded that the *Topic* does not publish the last week of the year. The last two issues for 2019 are December 12 (deadline Monday, Dec. 9) and December 19 (Deadline Monday, Dec. 16).

## Simply Smiles planning foster home at LaPlant

An organization that has been working on the Cheyenne River Reservation for 10 years is planning to open the Simply Smiles Children's Village in LaPlant next summer. Read about it on pages 6 and 7.

## Sip & Shop and more

A full weekend of events, including Sip & Shop, the Isabel Christmas Fair, Santa Claus, and two Christmas Cantata performances are on the calendar this weekend.

See details on page 8 and on the Refrigerator Door on p. 3.



## 4-H youth recognized

Dewey County 4-Hers received recognition for their accomplishments of the past year at the annual awards event on Nov. 24. See page 9.



## Big snowfall over Thanksgiving weekend

Nearly a foot of snow across Dewey County over the weekend disrupted Thanksgiving weekend travel and left everyone with plenty of snow to move while digging out Sunday and Monday. It also served as an indicator that winter is here for good. TOP: Three

Bobcats and a pay loader cleaned up the yard at Biegler Equipment in Timber Lake Monday morning. BELOW: Fields of hay bales were covered by the blizzard.

## Senftner shares suicide message

By Jon Flatland

When Lynn Senftner walked through the front doors of Timber Lake High School last Tuesday, she carried a different message from the ones she regularly shared with her students when she taught music here several years ago.

Speaking to students and staff from Grades 8-12, Senftner, who now teaches in Onida, delivered a cautionary tale about depression and suicide and how both affected her family on New Year's Day in 2013 and every single day since. She was invited to speak as part of a section about mental health awareness in a new 8th Grade Lifeskills class.

Tate Senftner was an All-American type of kid ... a handsome teenager who excelled in both academics and athletics. A multi-sport standout for the Sully Buttes

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Lynn Senftner (RIGHT) with Timber Lake students who have received the Tate Senftner Memorial Scholarship awarded to a Timber Lake Middle School student each year:

FRONT (L-R): Carlie Lawrence, Natalie Lawrence, Hayes Burress; BACK: Lexy White, Isaac Kraft, Hank Kraft.

## Thieves steal liquor from R Rockin'

Two thieves stole several hundred dollars worth of liquor from R Rockin' Bar in Timber Lake on Tuesday in broad daylight.

Cafe owner Grady Kraft said two men entered a door that was left unlocked by a delivery person, entered the premises and went behind the bar. Kraft shared surveillance footage that showed the men take several bottles of alcohol before exiting. No cash was taken, he said.

"I'm guessing they watched my food truck get unloaded and when he was done they walked in, grabbed what they could and ran out," Kraft said.

One of the men was reportedly identified from the footage, Grady said. Tribal authorities are investigating the matter.

## Timber Lake Board hires new custodian

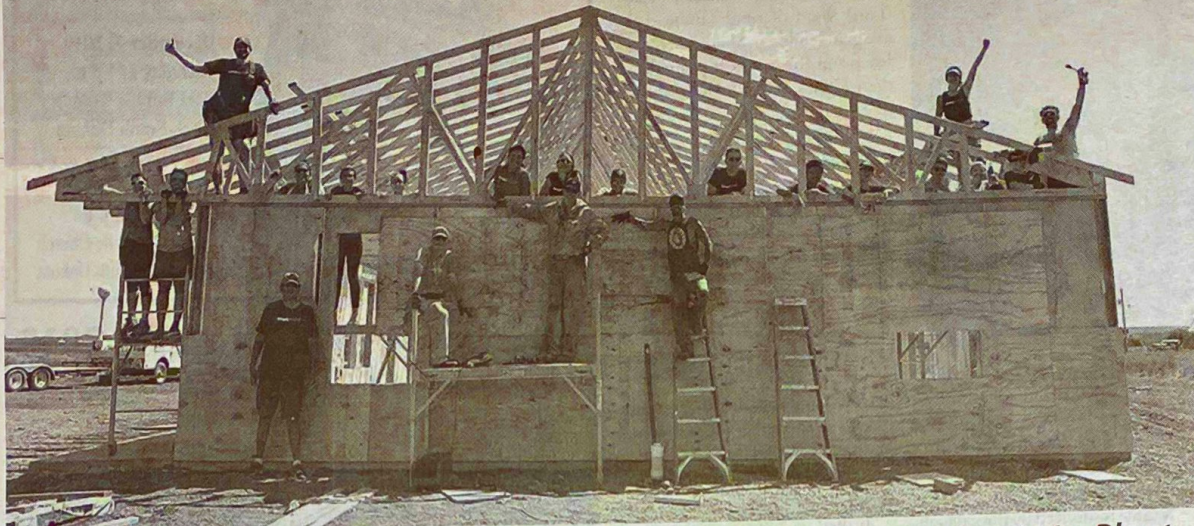
Meeting on Monday night, with two members absent, the Timber Lake City Board hired Rhonda Takes The Knife as custodian for the Community Center. Chairman Tom Hermes and members Jess Schlosser and Josh Lemburg were present. John Linderman and Mike LaCompte were absent.

The board reviewed applications in open session before having a brief executive session. Takes The Knife will start the 20 hour per week position this week at \$11.50 per hour. She replaces Katie Schlosser.

Other applicants were Norman

(Continued on p. 5)

# FOSTERING THE FUTURE



**Simply Smiles completes first phase of new Children's Village project in La Plant**

**By Jon Flatland**

Connecticut-based non-profit Simply Smiles has completed the first phase of a \$2.3 million, first-of-its-kind foster home project aimed at addressing the growing number of at-risk children on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation by fostering them to become leaders, role models and Lakota citizens of the world.

Bryan Nurnberger, president and founder of Simply Smiles Inc., recently announced construction was complete on the first of several foster homes. The organization plans to build the homes as part of the *Simply Smiles Children's Village in La Plant*, where an 8-acre parcel of land is being developed in partnership with the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and the State of South Dakota Department of Social Services.

The leased property is adjacent to the Sam D. Horse Community Center in La Plant, where Simply Smiles currently operates its programming. Nurnberger said the parcel will



"We have kids right now whose lives are at risk and we also have Native American adults who want to be caregivers, so bringing them together fills a small gap in the infrastructure."

**Hallie Riggs, Clinical Director, Simply Smiles Children's Village**

be used to build additional infrastructure that will work in conjunction with the existing community center property.

According to its website, Simply Smiles has been dedicated to providing bright futures for children, families and communities in southern Mexico and in the U.S. since 2003. The nondenominational organization has worked in partnership with the Lakota people on the Cheyenne River Reservation since 2009, providing a

variety of programs, including new home construction, community building activities, youth summer camp, educational initiatives, medical care and mental health support, food growing programs, and indigenous food initiatives. The group currently runs more than 20 programs on the reservation.

**THE NEED**

Hallie Riggs, Clinical Director of Simply Smiles Children's Village, says

an overwhelming number of Lakota children living on the Cheyenne River Reservation are unsafe in their homes. She added tribal, state and non-governmental agencies admit the current infrastructure does not adequately respond to the situation.

"That inadequate response often means a child remains in a crisis situation or that the intervention fails to uphold the core tenet of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which is to keep Native children within their culture to be raised by kin and community."

The numbers, said Riggs, are staggering.

On average, 16 Native American children are removed from their homes on the Cheyenne River Reservation each month. Native American children suffer 10 times the exposure to violence as the national average and 67 percent of Native American children account for 13 percent of the child population in

*(Continued on p. 7)*

## Simply Smiles Children's Village Timeline

November 2019

### 1st home built

Construction began on June 28, 2019.

April 2020

### First native foster parents

Training period begins for the first Native foster parents.

July 2020

### First 6 children

Doors open; first 6 children are placed in the care of the Simply Smiles Children's Village by the tribal court of the Cheyenne River Reservation.

Spring 2020

### Construction continues

Next two houses and the common building are being built. Development of the property (roads, utilities, etc.) continues.

December 2020

### 18 children

Two additional Native foster families will welcome the next 12 children into the care of the Village. (18 total children in our care.)

2021 - 2023

### Expansion to full capacity

Construction, parent recruitment, policy development, and training continue. The Simply Smiles Children's Village expands to full capacity of 6 homes and 36 total children.

**67%**

Native American Children account for 13% of the child population in South Dakota but represent 67.2% of the children in foster care.

**10x**

Native American Children suffer exposure to violence at rates ten times the national average.

**16** per month

Native American Children are removed from their homes on the Cheyenne River Reservation at an average 16 removals per month.

**Jail**

Native American Children on Cheyenne River have been placed in juvenile detention when there is nowhere else to place them.

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# Simply Smiles Children's Village ... (Continued from page 6)



Simply Smiles spent 10 years developing a custom home design that is appropriate for the extreme South Dakota climate and that is conducive to raising children within the norms and practices of the Lakota culture.



## Native American foster parents sought for new children's village

Simply Smiles, Inc. is seeking Native American foster parents for the Simply Smiles Children's Village at LaPlant.

The Simply Smiles Children's Village is an intentional community that provides the forum and infrastructure for Native people to intervene, protect, and help to raise the most vulnerable Native children.

The project is being executed in collaboration with Cheyenne River tribal governance and elders, and with licensing from the State of South Dakota Department of Social Services.

Native foster parents at the Simply Smiles Children's Village will ensure that Native children who have been removed from their homes on the reservation can remain with their "kin and community," fulfilling the letter and spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

Simply Smiles empowers its Native foster parents to raise Native children in an environment that is rooted in Lakota traditions and guided by trauma-informed, therapeutic healing practices. Applicants do not need to be certified foster parents. Training and certification is provided.

Native foster parents will live at the Simply Smiles Children's Village. They will work with the other foster parents in the village and be supported by mental health professionals, Simply Smiles staff members, and community elders to create a safe, supportive home environment in which the children in their care can heal, thrive, and become strong leaders, role models, and Lakota citizens of the world.

For more information about the Simply Smiles Children's Village and to apply to become a foster parent, please visit: [simplysmiles.org/crst-childrens-village](http://simplysmiles.org/crst-childrens-village) or call 203-810-4041.

South Dakota, but represent 67.2 percent of the children in foster care.

Madonna Thunder Hawk, a Lakota elder, activist and Simply Smiles advisor, calls the Simply Smiles Children's Village "exactly the response we need." Highlighted on the organization's website, Thunder Hawk argues, "Our people don't need another handout. The solution is clear: we need strong families."

"The Simply Smiles Children's Village is exactly the response **we need**.

Our people don't need another handout.

The solution is clear: **we need strong families."**



Madonna Thunder Hawk  
Lakota Elder, Activist & Simply Smiles Advisor

### THE PLAN

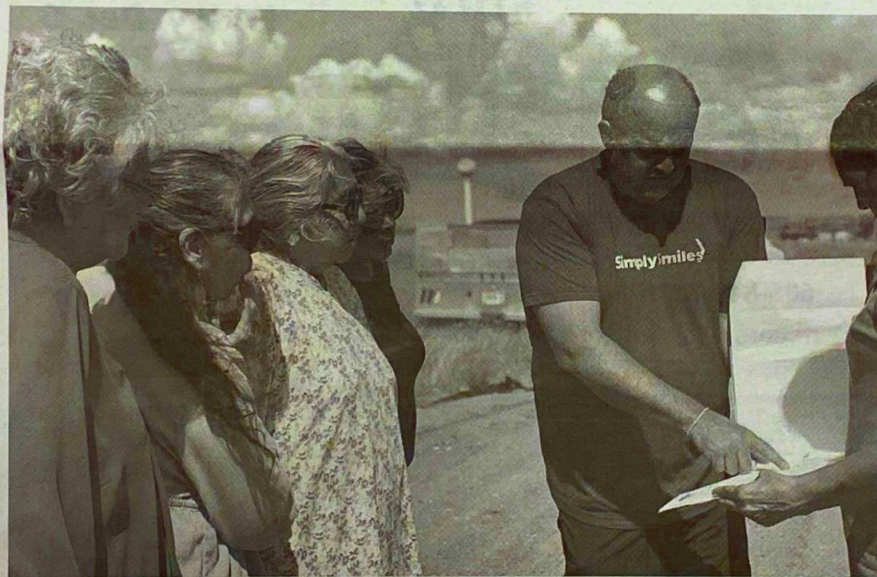
Between 2019 and 2023, Simply Smiles plans on constructing five homes to be used for foster care, a common building for activities, and a home for the village director to reside within. The completed village will have the capacity to house and raise 36 children at a time, provide a generations-long impact for hundreds of children and serve as a replicable model across Indian Country, which has the capacity to serve thousands of children.

While Simply Smiles and its donors are financing the project, the State of South Dakota has committed to funding the ongoing operations of the Simply Smiles Children's Village once the facility is built. Operational funding is provided on a per child, per diem, basis. The state has also licensed the organization as a "child placement agency," thus allowing Simply Smiles to license and manage foster homes.

The recently-completed first phase of the project carried a budget of \$425,000 and included construction of the first house. Simply Smiles says it spent 10 years developing a custom home design that is appropriate for the extreme South Dakota climate and conducive to raising children within the norms and practices of the Lakota culture.

Phase 2, to be completed in 2020, includes construction of two more homes at a total cost of \$400,000, as well as a \$375,000 common building. The third phase, scheduled for 2021, involves constructing two more homes and a director's residence at a total cost of \$600,000.

Using that time line, Simply Smiles is currently advertising for Native American foster parents to reside within the village (See sidebar at right). The first six children are scheduled to be placed in the home by June 2020, with 12 more children fostered by December of next year and a total of 36 by the end of 2023.



Alberto Omechevarria, president of Biscayne Contractors, Inc. and Children's Village partner, reviews the plans for the Simply Smiles Children's Village with the Wasagiya Najin, or Standing Strong

Grandmother's Group, which includes Lakota activists and Children's Village advisors Madonna Thunder Hawk and Marcella Gilbert.

### THE PROGRAM

According to Riggs, Simply Smiles Children's Village is guided by the principle of the Lakota kinship *tiospaye* and rooted in traditional values. With the goal of fostering Native children to become leaders, role models, and Lakota citizens of the world, the village has seven main objectives - the first being to offer child placement options on the Cheyenne River Reservation that fulfills the letter and spirit of the Indian Child Welfare Act by keeping Native American children who have been removed from their homes, on the reservation with kin and community.

That's one of the reasons the organization is advertising for Native American adults to serve as foster

parents in the homes within the village.

"We have kids right now whose lives are at risk and we also have Native adults who want to be caregivers, so bringing them together fills a small gap in the infrastructure," noted Riggs. "We believe Native adults should be parenting Native kids, so we require our foster parents to be Native American. That's one of the things that separates our model from anything else that's been done. We want these children raised to become strong Lakota leaders, but they can't do that if they don't feel safe in their home."

She said other objectives include supporting the reunification of children with their biological

families; inspiring and empowering the children to define themselves as Lakota; creating a safe, inspiring, resource-rich environment; providing access to high quality education; and creating a scalable model that can be replicated throughout Indian Country.

"We're joining the movement of moving kids away from institutionalized care and more toward family care. The entire concept of the 'village' is that the children and foster parents in these homes live together, heal together, grow together, support each other and ultimately, succeed together."