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Rosebud Reservation featured on CBS's "The Early Show"

BY TEDDIE HERMAN, TRIBUNE STAFF

ROSEBUD - About a week ago Rosebud Reservation made the national news on CBS's "The Early Show". The segment, entitled, "People Who Care", lasted about six minutes and profiled Phil Stevens, founder of The Walking Shield American Indian Society, of California, and the contributions he's made to the Rosebud Reservation.

Scott Frazier, Coordinating Producer of the morning show, said the show is doing a five-part series on "people who care", people who go the distance to help their fellow mankind. The crew of CBS has been traveling throughout the United States, covering stories that depict the generosity of its citizens.

"The Walking Shield American Indian Society provides humanitarian, medical care and housing to Native American tribes throughout the United States," stated Harry Smith, anchorman of "The Early Show" and narrator of the segment.

"Operation Walking Shield' has provided 963 houses for over 5000 homeless and needy American Indians," Stevens said during the interview.

Of the 963 homes provided by "Operation Walking Shield", eighty-five of those homes have been delivered to the Rosebud Reservation. Francis Two Charger and his family live in one of those homes in the Two Strike community. CBS followed Phil Stevens as he made a visit to the Francis Two Charger family, while that doesn't air on the show, their next visit to a family, who live in an old R.V. while waiting for a house, airs to show the "deplorable conditions" of the reservation. The family received groceries and other essential items. Their next stop was at Alfred Bone Shirt's residence. He pointed out to the cameraman the black mold that exists throughout his trailer and has rotted out the floor.

Smith commented Bone Shirt has diabetes and lung cancer and, therefore, shouldn't be living with these conditions. Smith explained that despite the assistance offered by Operation Walking Shield, the tribe's needs are still great.

"They've (Walking Shield) helped me with clothing, food and they've come in and helped fix some of the roads," Bone Shirt said on camera.

Ned Metcalf, who was involved with The Walking Shield Housing Support Program's initial slideshow that illustrated the substandard housing conditions of which many people of the reservation live with and assisted in getting the Walking Shield homes to the reservation, was interviewed. "There is a waiting list (for homes) of about 1500 people," he explained. He also added "there is an 82 percent, or more, unemployment rate."

Smith narrates that by using his management expertise and the experience of working with the U.S. Military, Stevens has brought the military to the reservation for assistance. Because of Operation Walking Shield, stated Smith, the National Guard Medical Staff have come to the reservation for their readiness training.

"To a certain extent it's a clash of two cultures. The military culture that works on split second timing and the Indian culture that has worked typically by the phases of the moon. And, when we bring these two things together - and, we have done that successfully - now, we can get the programs done," Stevens said to all of America, watching the show.

This part of the segment showed the filming at the Indian Health Service while National Guard members treated patients during an eye exam and a foot x-ray.

Lt. Cathy Baumiller, Projects Manager for the SD National Guard, said of her fellow guardsmen, "They were happy to finally do a humanitarian mission," versus serving in a war torn country. Off camera, during our interview, she said 200 personnel work at the IHS for two weeks at a time. "They also get to be a part of the Lakota tradition which they really enjoy. People here are generous and invite them to be a part of their culture." She also said the Air Force assists at the IHS as well.

Dr. Tim Ryschon also made the big screen by explaining that the National Guard treats about 20 percent of the patients at the hospital, which is about "20,000 patient encounters."

While making their rounds at the hospital, Stevens delivered baby quilts to three mothers with newborn babies, which also aired.

Their next stop on the agenda was to travel to Spring Creek Elementary School and film "the 75 year old wooden school without any fire sprinkler system", however, time was running out and they had to cancel the trip so that they could get back to Rapid City to make their flight.

At the end of the segment, in regards to Phil Stevens, Smith summed it up with, "Driven to provide Native Americans the same chance he had to achieve the American dream, until he can do that he's determined to be the Walking Shield amongst his people, to protect, honor and serve."

The segments will run every Friday morning and USA Today's "USA Weekend Report" will run a companion article in 700 national newspapers the following Saturday.

Having begun Sept. 3, the "People Who Care" segments are leading up to USA Today's "National Make a Difference Day", which is slated for the final Saturday in October.