

"I Hope Someone is Watching"

Bobette Patton

By Helen Oliff,
National Relief Charities

PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION- Bobette Patton is proud to be an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and a resident of the Oblaya community on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

A mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and wife of 20 years, Bobette and her husband Lloyd provide for a 3-generation household. After Lloyd retired from the USO and their first 4 children emptied the nest, Bobette's sister passed away. The couple took in Bobette's niece and 3 children. They are also planning to adopt another child.

Bobette is passionate about helping people. Most days you can find her at the PHS Indian Hospital of Pine Ridge helping people with Contract Health. The Pine Ridge hospital has about 58 beds and 5 full-time physicians.

For most Americans, the emergency room is the last stop for healthcare, but the Pine Ridge hospital is not equipped to deal with every trauma. In Contract Health, Bobette does the paperwork to refer patients out to Rapid City or Sioux Falls (SD) or Scotts Bluff (NE) for accidents and injuries, broken legs, H1N1, and treatment of cancer or other life-threatening illnesses. Bobette has worked at the Pine Ridge Hospital for 3 years.

"I want people to have what they need"



Oblaya is a community of 200 people, most of them quite elderly or very young. Bobette creates opportunities for them by volunteering as a Program Partner with National Relief Charities and its AIRC program.

"I want people to have what they need. Being a Program Partner lets me be who I am and do more for my people."

Since 2003, Bobette has received support from AIRC for 40 different projects. Through AIRC services such as Healthy Living, Community Events, Grow, Easter, Christmas, and Thanksgiving, she brought diabetes screenings, dental education, community cleanups, a bulk goods distribution, a community garden, youth activities and animal welfare to her community. These activities bring both unity and practical benefits.

The incentives from AIRC such as toilet paper, diapers, and water also go a long way since many here live on fixed incomes.

"Without NRC and the AIRC program, things would be harder here," Bobette says.

Bobette's compassion and commitment extends to all of the Pine Ridge Reservation. She was elected to the board of the Porcupine Day School and has served for 2 years. The school is for pre-kindergarten through grade 8 students. The board oversees compliance for issues such as policy, travel budgets, special events, drug testing, and hiring and firing.

Bobette is also Secretary for the Empowerment Zone Board where she has learned much about the funding and restrictions on funding allotted to the Pine Ridge Reservation for economic development.

Despite all such obstacles, Bobette is hoping to empower Oblaya with the 10-year dream of securing a community building... a place where they can hold wakes, start a community food bank, and set up a computer lab to keep kids in school and drug-free or help them get a GED.

Her dream may come true in May, but Bobette says, "I'll believe it when I see the Elders sitting in the building."

"I hope someone is watching."

Bobette says the kids keep her going...

"A lot of them don't get to do things or have things. I want to show them there are different ways."

She thinks of the Elders too: "Doing something for them brings them attention and reminds people that the Elders are an important part of our life."

In 2008, Bobette Patton was acknowledged by National Relief Charities "for appreciation of exemplary service in her community and exceptional partnership with AIRC."

Bobette's main hope?

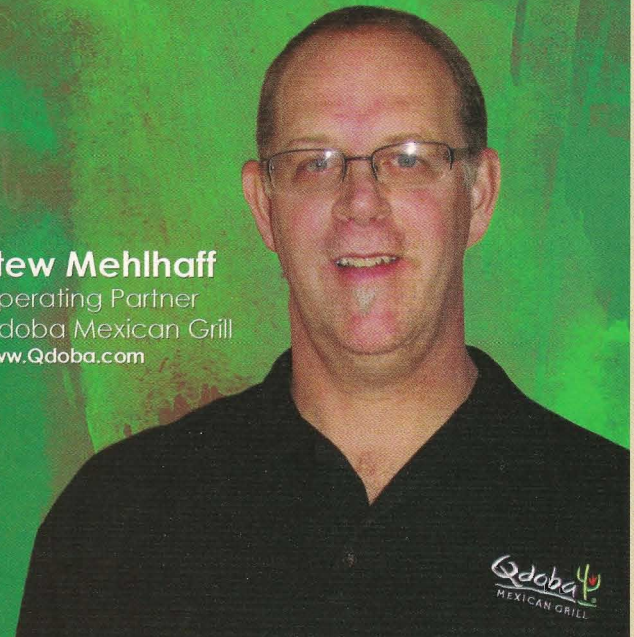
"I hope someone is watching and that, when I go, they will want something better for the children and want the elderly to know that people care." ♦

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