

LFC Supports Head Starts on Pine Ridge Reservation

Lakota Friends Circle (LFC) has long supported education initiatives across several reservations, including two schools—Marty Elementary on the Yankton Sioux Reservation, serving 60 students, and Rosebud Elementary on the Rosebud Reservation, serving more than 300 students—as well as 17 college-bound students through our scholarship program.

This year, instead of taking on an additional school, we have chosen to support the **300 children enrolled in Head Start programs across the 10 districts of the Pine Ridge Reservation**. Administrative offices are located at **Oglala Lakota College (OLC) Head Start in Kyle, SD**. Within those 10 districts there are 22 Head Starts and 9 Early Head Starts. The main office will distribute items where most needed

About the Head Start Programs

These programs were previously operated by the Tribe, but due to management challenges, oversight was transferred to **Oglala Lakota College**. While conditions for learning have improved, significant gaps in resources remain.

There are two programs:

- **Early Head Start** (ages 0–3)
- **Head Start** (ages 3–5)

Families attend at no cost, as most do not meet income thresholds. Children are bussed to school and receive breakfast, lunch, and snacks daily.

Winter Clothing Support

Following conversations with the Head Start director, an urgent need for winter clothing was identified.

Thanks to LFC donors and a partnership with **Operation Warm**, we have secured:

- **250 coats purchased at reduced cost**
- **50 additional coats donated by a teen group**

All 300 children will now have a winter coat.

Still needed:

- ✓ Hats and mittens for **250 children**

Age and gender breakdown available upon request.

We are grateful to our skilled crafters who are helping meet this need.

Additional Needs

Blankets

- Approximately **100 blankets** needed for 4–5-year-olds during nap time
- Children without blankets lie directly on mats

Training Pants

- Many children are still learning toilet skills
- **Requested:** 50 pairs of **3T–4T** training pants
- Centers have access to washers and dryers

Socks

- High demand

- Bomba socks will be distributed when received
 - Handmade socks welcome
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Books for Classrooms and Home

Classrooms currently have very limited books, resulting in repeated use of the same titles. Our goal is to supply enough books for:

- Classroom learning
- Rotation between districts
- Children to take home

Requested topics include:

- ABCs, numbers, early learning skills
- Animals, insects, dinosaurs
- Occupations (doctor, nurse, store owner, truck/train driver)
- Nature and environment
- Native American culture
- Other age-appropriate themes

Expanding book access supports vocabulary, comprehension, and early brain development.

Classroom Centers and Learning Materials

Each classroom includes **four learning centers**, which children rotate through daily. Some districts are well supplied, while others lack materials entirely. Each classroom receives only **\$500 per year** to cover essentials such as:

- Writing materials
- Tissues and wipes
- Diapers
- Craft supplies
- Toys and learning tools

The Four Play Areas

Head Start believes that **play is an essential part of learning**. Children develop physical, intellectual, social, and emotional skills through exploration and hands-on activities. The classroom is divided into the following areas:

Manipulative (Small Motor) Area

- Builds fine motor and early thinking skills
- Includes puzzles, stacking toys, shape sorters, peg sets, and small building sets

Active Play (Large Motor) Area

- Supports balance, coordination, and strength
- Provides space for movement-based learning

Dramatic Play Area

- Encourages imagination, problem solving, and cultural understanding
- May be set up as a home, grocery store, post office, doctor's office, or veterinarian clinic

Discovery Area

- Invites exploration of natural and scientific materials
- May include simple tools and items from the natural world

A **Library / Listening Center** also offers a quiet space with books, puppets, flannel boards, and seating for early literacy practice.

Suggested Donations

For infants and toddlers (0–3):

- Stacking rings, blocks, rattles
- Cloth or board books
- Soft dolls or stuffed animals
- Age-appropriate wooden puzzles

For ages 3 and up:

- Picture books and Montessori-style toys
- Duplo blocks, wooden puzzles, sturdy toy vehicles
- Dolls, dinosaurs, farm animals, action figures
- Dress-up items (helmets, capes, crowns, doctor sets)
- Art supplies (crayons, finger paints, glue sticks, construction paper, safety scissors)
- Play-Doh and sensory items
- Small whiteboards, chalkboards, flash cards

- Simple games (Candyland, Chutes and Ladders, etc.)

Please Avoid:

- Battery-operated toys (cost and safety concerns)
- Items posing a choking risk
- Books or clothing depicting realistic owls or coyotes, cartoon versions are acceptable.

Clean, gently used items are welcome if complete and in good working condition. Please visit this [website](#) to learn about preparing used toys for donation.

Updates will be shared as specific needs arise.

How to Help

Please send donations to:

Oglala Lakota College Head Start
P.O. Box 490
490 Piya Wiconi Road
Kyle, SD 57752 Phone: 605-455-6125

Please enclose a **self-addressed stamped envelope and charity form** so the director can send a note of acknowledgment.

To learn more visit their website:

[OLC Head Start](#)