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come in and release stress and anger out in a song. It also makes people feel good about themselves because they had their name out there in the world". Britton Astelford of White River High School took first place in the Junior/Senior Division for his business, "Britton's Run & Repair Service."

Tonia Young, Lakota Funds Success Coach, who had the privilege of assisting students from Crazy Horse School, including the Freshman/Sophomore winning team, Michael Dumont and Zachary Broken Leg, says, "for many of these students, the sense of accomplishment they feel after completing the business plan, then preparing and presenting their power point to the judges, is a victory in itself. It builds a sense of self-esteem that will benefit them the rest of their lives."

Winners were announced and presented with their awards during the Lakota Nation Invitational Semi-Final game. Winners of the Junior/Senior Division were awarded scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 to be applied to their higher education institution of choice. Winners of the Freshman/Sophomore division were awarded a variety of computer devices that could be used for educational purposes.



Freshman/Sophomore 1st place winners, Zachary Broken Leg (left) and Michael Dumont (right), with Crazy Horse High School Principal, Daniel Siebel.



Britton Astelford (center), Junior/Senior Division 1st place winner pictured with Lakota Funds Success Coaches, Kadem Fischer (left) and Tonia Young (right).

4th Annual Youth Business Plan Winners

JUNIOR/SENIOR DIVISION | PRIZES PROVIDED BY OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE CREDIT & FINANCE OFFICE, AND THE OFFICE OF INDIAN ENERGY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1st Place (\$1,000): Britton Astelford, White River High School, "Britton's Run & Repair Service"
- 2nd Place (\$750): Kyle Shawn Stead, Todd County High School, "Rez World"
- 3rd Place (\$500): Peter Delgado, Lower Brule High School, "Delgado Funeral Studio"

FRESHMAN/SOPHOMORE DIVISION | PRIZES PROVIDED BY LAKOTA FUNDS

- 1st Place (Apple iPad 2): Michael Dumont & Zachary Broken Leg, Crazy Horse High School, "Bigg Mike's Studio"
- 2nd Place (Dell Inspiron Laptop): Summer Dupri, Dupree High School, "Impresions, Video & Photography"
- 3rd Place (Dell Inspiron Mini Notebook): Kolby Hill & Jamalia Franzen, Dupree High School, "Big Hair, Beautiful Nails"

LAKOTA FUNDS is dedicated to enriching the lives of Pine Ridge Reservation youth through programs that educate and encourage habits of asset building. As such, we recently launched a unique matched savings program for grade school children. The Child Development Account Program is the first of its kind on an Indian reservation and focuses on building the family core. Lakota Funds seeds each Child Development Account with a \$50 deposit and matches the participating families' deposits by a 3:1 ratio. In addition, participating children and families take part in training and education to provide a solid foundation that helps children understand the benefits of savings and how to be responsible for their account. Starting in the 1st grade, children attend monthly lessons that include financial literacy education and child development activities. Each family also attends quarterly meetings where they participate in financial literacy and family building activities.

Read about the award we received for this program in the article on page 4.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT



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INVESTING IN YOUTH AND FAMILY

Our Mission

Lakota Funds is a community development financial institution (CDFI) leading an economic resurgence of the Oglala Lakota Oyate on the Pine Ridge Reservation through culturally appropriate strategies reigniting the traditional Lakota spirit of productivity, commerce, and trade.

IN TRADITIONAL LAKOTA CULTURE, societies were based on the notion of *tiospaye* (extended family) to create self-sufficient social units. Although much has changed since the Lakota lived freely on the Great Plains, the concept of *tiospaye* remains at the heart of Lakota culture today. In addition, great emphasis is put on building a brighter future for our future generations. Lakota Funds believes a strong focus on our youth and families is necessary in order to lead our people through a renewal of our traditional Lakota values into a thriving community, therefore this issue of our newsletter is dedicated to our youth and families.

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Lakota Funds
Investing in the Oyate

Quarterly chronicles of the economic resurgence movement on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

THE ECONOMIC RESURGENCE REPORT

YOUTH BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION WINNERS FROM PINE RIDGE RESERVATION

1



CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES PROGRAM CREATES OPPORTUNITIES

2



MOBILIZING RURAL COMMUNITIES AWARD

3



FREE TAX PREPARATION ON THE PINE RIDGE RESERVATION

4



Winter 2012

Reservation Youth Bring Their Best Ideas to 4th Annual Statewide Business Plan Competition

Lakota Funds Success Coaches assist high school students in preparing successful presentations and winning business plans.

Lakota Funds, Oglala Sioux Tribe Credit & Finance Office, and the Office of Indian Energy & Economic Development collaborated to sponsor the 4th Annual Youth Business Plan Competition held in conjunction with the Annual Lakota Nation Invitational on December 14, 15, and 16, 2011 in Rapid City, South Dakota. This year's competition experienced a dramatic increase in entries with nearly three times the amount of last year's competition. Doug Patton, Lakota Funds Youth Specialist and Success Coach, comments, "Last year we were thrilled to have eight participants, which was an increase over the previous year. This year we had 23 students participate, so we're ecstatic. It's gone from a half

day event to almost three full days now and outstanding presentations." High school students from all over the state that enter in the competition must submit a business plan and present their idea, including management and operations plans, marketing plans, and financial projections, to a panel of judges comprised of community business leaders. Local business owner, Heidi Cuny comments, "Serving as a judge for the business plan competition was a truly humbling and inspiring experience. These youth have a deep passion and desire to bring their ideas alive, not for their personal gain, but for the benefit of the entire community. Every idea was based on fulfilling a community need. We have so much to learn from these kids. I was thoroughly impressed

with the level of detail and thought that went into the entries."

Lakota Funds Success Coaches began assisting aspiring student entrepreneurs to prepare for the competition in November by outreaching to Reservation high schools and orienting students and staff with basic business plan creation. Participating students at Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, White River, Todd County, and St Francis High Schools received individualized technical assistance to develop their ideas into winning plans.

First place winners in the Freshman/Sophomore Division were Michael Dumont and Zachary Broken Leg of Crazy Horse High School with their business plan idea, "Bigg Mike's Studio," a music recording studio to be located in Wanblee, South Dakota. Mr. Dumont and Mr. Broken Leg emphasized, "Music can be therapeutic. It lets people

Continued on next page.

Child Development Associate Credential Creates Opportunities

Lakota Funds forms unique partnership for Pine Ridge residents to obtain a nationally recognized certificate, increase options for employment, and open possibilities for further education.

This past Fall, Lakota Funds established a partnership with Yvonne “Tiny” DeCory, a professor at Oglala Lakota College, to assist interested persons in obtaining a Child Development Associate Credential. This nationally recognized certification allows recipients of the credential to gain employment in day cares, Head Start programs, early childhood programs, reservation schools, or to set up day care in private homes. Kateri Montileaux, Success Coach / Community Involvement Specialist at Lakota Funds, comments on the program, “The overall goal of the program is to get people off TANF and into the workforce. There are so many Head Starts, programs for kids, and such a great need for child care on the reservation, that this certification almost guarantees the participants employment.”

Currently six students on the Pine Ridge Reservation, including Ardegene White Hawk, are enrolled in the Child Development Associate Credential program.

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

YOUR DONATION to Lakota Funds will help make a difference in the lives of the Lakota Oyate (People). Contributions from dedicated supporters like you help put an end to generational poverty on the Pine Ridge Reservation by reigniting the traditional Lakota spirit of productivity, commerce, and trade. To make an online donation, please visit lakotafunds.org/supportform.

Ardegene is currently working full-time at the Manderson Oglala Sioux Tribe childcare center and in the process of completing her Bachelor’s in Early Childhood from the Oglala Lakota College. The Child Development Associate Credential program is flexible to accommodate the schedule of working candidates. Ardegene comments, “The program that Lakota Funds is offering with Tiny works really well for me. I can work on the job while earning the Child Development Associate Credential.”

In addition, the time and work Ardegene puts into the program will count as twelve credit hours towards her degree. All candidates in the program have the option of applying their credit hours earned in the program towards their Early Childhood Associate’s or Bachelor’s Degree from Oglala Lakota College so that it will be easy for them to continue their education and maximize their investment.

For others like Lacey Weston, the Child Development Associate Credential is allowing her to fulfill a long-time passion. Lacey comments, “One day I would love to open my own day care. I really enjoy working with children and with my current schedule, the Child Development Associate program offered through Lakota Funds is just what I needed.”

The candidates in the program receive a total of 131 hours of instruction. Instructor DeCory is vigilantly committed to seeing her student to success and is willing to meet with them on a one-on-one basis if work or other commitments in their schedule do not allow them to meet at assigned times. This ensures the program’s nearly 100% success rate. Says Ms. DeCory, “I will not let them



Yvonne “Tiny” DeCory (left) instructs Lacey Weston (center) and Ardegene White Hawk (right) in the Child Development Associate Degree program.

fail. I will stick to them like a dirty diaper. If they are willing to put forth the time and effort, they will succeed.”

Classroom training, advising, and mentoring are provided along with on-site center/home observations, and all mandatory documents needed for the final assessment are prepared and provided by the instructor. In order to receive the Child Development Associate Credential, candidates must present evidence of his/her competence through written documentation and an oral presentation. This extensive application process includes:

1. Professional Resource File
2. Parent Opinion Questionnaires
3. Child Development Associate Assessment Observation
4. Early Childhood Studies Review
5. Oral Interview

Lakota Funds is Honored with Innovation Award

Rural Dynamics, Inc. Recognizes Forward Thinking Strategy in Lakota Funds’ Child Development Account Program



Left to Right: Success Coach Specialist, Kadem Fisher; Loan Portfolio Manager, David White Bull; Director of Asset Development-CCCS Rural Dynamics, Inc., Karen Heisler; and Rural Dynamics Inc., Executive Director, Tom Jacobson

On September 12, 2011 Lakota Funds was awarded the 2011 Mobilizing Rural Communities Innovation Award by Rural Dynamics, Inc. during the annual Mobilizing Rural Communities Conference held in Great Falls, Montana. Tom Jacobson, Rural Dynamics, Inc. Executive Director, comments on Lakota Funds’ award, “Innovation is the essential element of how we will transition from surviving to thriving in the rural places we call home. Innovative programs and services are the most effective ways to help communities prosper, businesses grow, and nonprofits achieve their goals. The award and recognition is based

on the mission that Lakota Funds is leading an economic resurgence of the Oglala Lakota Oyate on the Pine Ridge Reservation through culturally appropriate strategies. In addition, the establishment of the Child Development Account program, just one of Lakota Funds’ numerous programs focused on young people, is preparing the next generation for a successful future.”

David White Bull, Lakota Funds Loan Portfolio Manager, was honored to attend the event and receive the award. According to David, “Winning this award is and honor and the result of the hard work that our grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers and fathers put forth for us, so that we can continue the efforts they have created in making sure our future generations will have a thriving community.”

Lakota Funds’ Child Development Account Program is a matched savings program where families will deposit \$100 throughout the year in their child’s savings account, which will then be matched by Lakota

Funds 3:1. At the end of the school year the child will have \$400 in their savings account. Participants continue this pattern of savings from 1st grade through 8th grade, therefore growing the savings account throughout childhood, as the child grows. In addition, children and families in the Child Development Account Program receive financial education training. Doug Patton, Lakota Funds Business Success Coach and Youth Involvement Specialist who will be administering the program, states, “The Child Development Account Program is very unique in that it targets young children before they have the chance to develop poor financial habits. In this program we are focusing on developing habits of asset building without having to reverse habits of wasteful resource management. We are getting to our community members before the payday lenders, high interest credit card offers, and other predatory lenders. We think this is where the real impact will be seen in our future generations.”

INNOVATION | WHAT WE ARE BUILT UPON

For the last 25 years, Lakota Funds has been paving the way for innovative solutions to community development challenges on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. By combining different services and products in a flexible, synergistic and locally appropriate way, Lakota Funds has constructed a successful strategy for reservation community and economic development. Since 1986, Lakota Funds has helped thousands of artists and aspiring entrepreneurs and helped establish hundreds of businesses.

Among the strengths of Lakota Funds model are:

1. Lakota Funds has been sustainable, significantly outlasting most other governmental and charitable approaches to community and economic development on the Reservation.
2. Lakota Funds has had positive effects on household and personal consumption for residents of the Reservation.
3. Lakota Funds has had positive effects on the broader economy of the Reservation.

WE LOVE TAX TIME!

IN THE 2010 TAX SEASON, LAKOTA FUNDS’ VITA SITE PREPARED 245 TAX RETURNS. THIS WAS AN 87% INCREASE OVER 2009’S VITA SITE ACTIVITY. OVER \$227,000 IN EITC DOLLARS WAS RETURNED TO PINE RIDGE RESIDENTS. THE VITA SITE PROCESSED APPROXIMATELY \$453,000 OF OVERALL FEDERAL REFUNDS. IN ADDITION, IT POTENTIALLY SAVED OUR COMMUNITY OVER \$75,000 IN TAX PREPARATION FEES.

Tax Refunds Infuse the Local Economy on Pine Ridge

Lakota Funds Hosts a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Site and Promotes Wise Resource Management to Boost Local Economy During Tax Season

As the tax season is upon us, Lakota Funds prepares for their fourth year hosting a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site to provide working families on the Pine Ridge Reservation with free tax preparation. For the 2011 tax filing season, seven Lakota Funds employees who have been trained and certified by the IRS as volunteer tax preparers will help community members with their tax returns in hopes of keeping valuable tax refund dollars in reservation communities.

In keeping with our mission of promoting economic growth and sustainability on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the tax preparers at Lakota Funds’ VITA site help families and individuals receive every tax benefit available to them, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is the most under utilized federal program available. In 2009, 20-25% of eligible workers did not claim the EITC, leaving \$10 billion in potential refunds on the table. For the 2011 tax season, the EITC can provide working families with over \$5,000 in refunds. By maximizing tax refunds to residents on the Pine Ridge Reservation, Lakota Funds’ VITA site directly effects families’ and individuals’ ability to become or remain financially stable.

By using the VITA site instead of a commercial tax preparer, tax payers not only save hundreds of dollars in tax preparation fees, they also avoid pressure to take out a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL). RALs are often advertised as “fast cash” and provide tax payers with a cash loan on their tax refund. What many of these loan recipients don’t know is that RALs usually come with excessive interest rates and steep fees that eat up a significant portion of their refund. Data shows that the Pine Ridge Reservation has some of the highest uptake rates of RALs in the nation. Tawney Brunsch, Lakota Funds Executive Director, is passionate about combating this type of predatory lending. She states, “The majority of our population lives below the poverty level, and under those circumstances, it is extremely difficult to resist the lure of instant cash refunds. However, we need to keep educating our people and encouraging sound financial decisions that will perpetuate long-term economic stability for our community.”

Instead of RALs, the Lakota Funds VITA site offers the option of having the IRS direct deposit refunds into the tax payer’s bank account within 7 to 10 days.

MOBILE VITA

Lakota Funds Developed the Concept of a Mobile VITA Site to Maximize Their Reach on the Reservation and Help Residents Overcome Distance Barriers

The Pine Ridge Reservation covers nearly 3,500 square miles and is larger than Delaware and Rhode Island combined. Much of the reservation is rural and isolated without regularly maintained roads, and many of the residents do not have reliable forms of transportation. Lakota Funds knows these conditions create barriers for people to access services, so they developed the concept of a mobile VITA site. Each week throughout tax season certified VITA tax preparers will venture to a different district within the reservation to provide free tax preparation, ensuring they serve as many tax payers as possible. This is just one more way Lakota Funds’ innovation is creating opportunities for families of the Pine Ridge Reservation.