

# FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN-HE SAPA

## Fall 2025

# NEWSLETTER

## Friends in the Field

This Fall, our Friends of the Children – He Sapa team, including our incredible Board Chair Lila Mehlhaff and Executive Director Walt Swan Jr., spent the day at the Back to School Bash at Main Street Square in Rapid City!

We loved meeting so many wonderful families and community members, sharing about the amazing work our mentors do every single day to support our youth.

To make the day even sweeter, we served up pizza and fresh watermelon to everyone who stopped by our booth, because nothing goes better with great conversations than good food!

A huge thank you to everyone who took the time to learn about our mission and connect with us. Together, we are building brighter futures for the youth in our community.



Pictured left to right: Walt Swan Jr. Executive Director. Brent Pinkerton, Mentor; Coleman Eagle Elk, Mentor; Hattie Dunham, Mentor; Tyresha Grey Horse, Rapid City Program Director



Ptehincala Hohu  
Canunpa

The Lakota way of life guides us in achieving our mission at Friends of the Children – He Sapa. Using these values as a basis for decision-making can pave the way in which we live our lives providing balance and meaning. Enjoy our most recent installment of our Traditional Teachings online series from respected Elder Richard Two dogs “Interpreter of the Sacred”. Find these teachings and more on our [official Youtube Channel!](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

## Circle Gatherings

### Caregiver engagement event spotlight

The Friends of the Children – He Sapa team hosted a caregiver engagement event at Wounded Knee District School, and what a beautiful gathering it was! Caregivers are the heart of our two-generation approach. By creating space to come together, share stories, and support one another, we strengthen not only our youth, but entire families and communities.



Over pizza and games, our staff provided caregivers with an opportunity for self-reflection on individual progress of each youth and themselves, an important part of the 2Gen approach and our mission. Assessing relationships provides Friends and Supervisors with useful information vital for intentionally planning the next year of service to each youth and family.

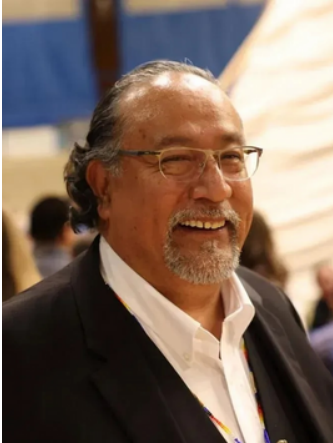
We're so grateful to every caregiver who joined us, and to Wounded Knee District School for welcoming us into their space. These moments remind us: real change happens when we walk this path together.

## Words of Woksape

### Culture isn't what we do, it's the heart of who we are

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## Message from our Executive Director

### From the desk of the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible work we've accomplished together over the past year - and share a glimpse of what lies ahead.

Thanks to your continued support, we've made significant strides toward our mission. From hiring new Relatives to expanding our community outreach, each milestone is a testament to the dedication of our staff, and community partners. Whether you contributed time, resources or expertise, please know that your involvement has made a real and lasting impact.

Looking forward, we are excited about several upcoming initiatives including a new Literacy Initiative and FriendRaising events. These efforts are designed to deepen our impact and respond to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

We remain committed to transparency, collaboration, and growth. If you have ideas, feedback, or simply want to get more involved, I invite you to reach out - your voice matters to us. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.

With gratitude,

Walt Swan, Jr.

Executive Director

Friends of the Children- He Sapa

## Upcoming events

Exciting things are happening with us in the future. Check out our upcoming events, we would love to see you there!

**September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025:** Cultural Teachings with Richard Two Dogs.

Topic: Lakota Mental Health: The mental health diagnosis from the Lakota World View" email [tgreyhorse@friendshesapa.org](mailto:tgreyhorse@friendshesapa.org) for the zoom link to participate live!

**October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025:** Indigenous People's Day Parade in Downtown Rapid City. Come see our program youth and mentors on our very own float!

### Behind the scenes

In the month of August, our mentors spent 408 hours and 15 minutes with our program youth! That's a total of 24,495 minutes. Every minute that our mentors spend with our youth matters. Our relationships with youth and caregivers is vital to the "Nation building" work that we do every day.

### Did you know?

Each of the Program youth have goals in four outcome areas, these areas are:

1. Learning and Education
2. Community Involvement and Belonging
3. Social Emotional and Life Skills
4. Health and wellbeing

Be on the lookout for future Newsletters for a deep dive into each of these outcome areas!

### Never miss a moment

We revamped our social media presence! Follow like and share each of our pages, a little support goes a long way in supporting this work

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsHeSapa/> Instagram: @friendshesapa X (Formerly known as Twitter): @FOTCHesapa

## Partner Highlight

This work would be impossible without our incredible partnerships of the Black Hills Area. This newsletter, we are honored to present our partner in breaking generation poverty, United Way of the Black Hills.

United Way of the Black Hills' mission is to unite people and resources to improve lives in the Black Hills by delivering measurable long-term solutions to community issues in education, financial stability and health. Through financial contributions, professional development trainings for our Leadership staff and sometimes simply a supportive ear when the work gets hard, United Way has left an impact on us here at Friends of the Children - He Sapa.

Lila Wopila Tanka United Way!

