

**National Association of American Veterans, Inc.
Partner News June 2022**

The National Association of American Veterans, Inc. (NAAV) received a partnership letter from Native American Veterans Assistance, Charles Little Spotted Horse, a Disabled U.S. Marine Corps Combat Veteran and Oglala Sioux Tribal Member on June 28, 2022, Pine Ridge, SD. Read his letter to NAAV, Inc. below.



June 28, 2022

Ms Constance A Burns
PO Box 6865
Washington DC 20020-0565

Dear Ms Burns:

Below is a letter from Charles Little Spotted Horse:

As you know I am no longer on the board of NAVA. I was there in the beginning helping Major Ramsey start this organization. I still come by the offices from time to time to see how things are going. Additionally, I represent the thousands of Native American Veterans served by this organization.

I honestly **did not** want to write this letter. Clay asked me to "**please**" share with those who support NAVA, how I am doing. Well, not very well. He told me it might be therapeutic for me to be open and honest. It is not easy. Last year in October my youngest son was in an auto accident. He died. We made the decision to let the doctors harvest his organs to give others a chance to live. I am really lost right now. Life just does not seem fair sometimes.

Life was already a struggle at times dealing with PTSD, and my physical and emotional disabilities from my time in the Gulf War. Yes, there are dark days and lonely nights when I look to the stars and wonder what is coming next, then I lost my son. Now I do not know what is next. Clay is a good friend. He paid for funeral expenses and food. I am lost. I do not know what to say.

So here goes. I am very proud to call Clay Ramsey my friend. He has saved my life in so many ways. We were brothers in law many years ago. We were both married to Bear Killer sisters. Not an easy time. He stepped up when I challenged him to start this organization. He was there when I lost my son.

I was a lowly Lance Corporal in the Marines. He was a Major. Not a friendship anyone would have seen coming. I love him as my brother in arms and as a fellow Pine Ridge tribal member. He works harder and more hours than anyone I know. I tell him to take a vacation from time



"Here I am with my son and his little sister. I will miss my son forever. No parent should have to bury their child. I will get through this. Thanks"



Native American
VETERANS Assistance (NAVA)

P.O. Box 5053 • Pine Ridge, SD • www.nativevets.org
(605) 838-1500 • IRS Approved 501-c-3 Nonprofit 47-5548657

to time, but he says he did that before and has too much to do now. I honestly don't know how he does it. I tell him he is getting too old to work so much, but he does it anyway.

I know he does not like me telling you about him, but right now it is easier then telling you about me. He is actually a very private person. He leads a simple life of work and his children. I am proud of him. He has accomplished so much more than I ever thought possible with NAVA. I thought we would help a few veterans on Pine Ridge. He has built NAVA into an organization helping thousands of Veterans across five states. I honestly don't know how he did it. I know I was in the board meetings and in his office a lot, but what he has done amazes me and so many others.

Last year he told me NAVA achieved a goal of **exceeding** 65% program services. I asked him how much we exceeded it by and when he told me 80% I could hardly believe it. From a funeral discussion at our friend's funeral, to 80% of NAVA's contributions going toward program services is a **tremendous accomplishment**. Now I am personally dealing with the loss of my son, so I don't think much about those things. Life is just hard. Some days I hardly have money for food.

You know there are many things I could tell you about Major Ramsey, but he would not want me to tell you. I will anyway. He donated over \$58,000 of his own money, from his savings account to start this organization knowing he would never get it back. He left a good, safe job to do this. He turned down other job offers many would have jumped on in a heartbeat. Now me, I have never had those opportunities or that kind of money to donate, but he did. And he did it.

You don't meet many people like my friend, my brother, by mentor, Clay Ramsey. He cares more about me and others than he does himself. He read a draft of this letter and told me "NO" not to say these things. He asked me to give you an update from my point of view. So I am doing it. And I told him he has to send it.

He told me to talk more about NAVA. Clay Ramsey is NAVA. He started it from scratch. He built it to help not only the veterans on our own reservation in Pine Ridge, he also helps veterans and their families on about 20 different reservations across five states.

I am not really sure what else to say. I am at a loss for words most days. I thought I knew what pain was; then losing my son, it has been unbearable. I am struggling now. It seems you get two steps ahead and then boom you are completely devastated with a phone call no one wants to get. I am angry. I am sad. Not sure what I can do anymore. I'm sorry.

Sincerely,



Charles Little Spotted Horse
Oglala Sioux Tribal Member
Disabled USMC Combat Veteran

P. S. Major Ramsey was not entirely pleased with all I wrote in this letter. But it is the truth. So I am asking you to help him with helping my fellow veterans and their families.





Footprints



We will be known forever by the tracks we leave

The government tells us inflation is a little over 8%. Food prices sure seem to be up a lot more than 8%. When we go buy food items for monthly food boxes the prices seem to go up every month. Gas prices are even higher.

Food insecurity is a real life struggle on Pine Ridge and other reservations in the upper plains states. Recently during home food deliveries to elderly Native American Veterans and their families, I heard many stories of struggle. They complained about the increased prices at the reservation stores which are already priced a lot higher than stores in bigger towns. I notice that every time I go to reservation stores—prices are way higher.

This does not seem fair, but it is how it has always been. The smaller stores cannot compete with the large chain stores like Walmart without charging more for similar items. Several of the people I visited with also commented on the gas prices. I see that as well since our delivery costs have literally **doubled** with gas prices being so high.

The gas and diesel prices have doubled in our area of the country. It is painful every time we fill up the tank before and after deliveries. We recently filled up in Pine Ridge and the cost was \$157. Granted we were almost out of diesel, so it was almost a full tank. That has had a devastating affect on our small budget.

I wanted to share a little bit of one of my conversations. We were dropping off items to Karen. She has been a dear friend for many, many years. We help her out with hygiene items as well as food. It was a very emotional visit. I hugged her and held her close for a long time. You see last year during her battle with colon cancer, she had a colostomy bag put on her.

Today when I saw her she was crying as she hugged me from her chair telling me she got it taken off and was getting back to normal. Karen is a very kind and gentle lady who had tears running down her face as she showed me the scars where they closed her abdomen up from the bag.

I held her hand as she told me how important the help from NAVA has been during this very difficult time in her life. She wore the colostomy bag for over 11 months. Then she told me how she prayed for me and NAVA because we helped her so much. I did not know

(over)

what to say. As I kneeled down beside her chair she tried not to cry as she talked with me for several minutes.

This may not seem like much to many, but the monthly food boxes and hygiene supplies made a huge impact on her life. There is something I often say, we cannot be everything to everyone, but we do a lot. The help we provided Karen made a difference in her **quality of life**. Perhaps she gives us more credit than we deserve, but I am happy we have been a positive resource for her.

Life on many of our reservations is truly a struggle. Right here in the United States we have third world poverty conditions. The poor suffer the most, and now with this crippling inflation the elderly poor suffer even more.

The work we do is important. It was important to Karen who gave so much forty years ago in her service to this great country. Karen is not unique. There are hundreds of Native American Veterans and their families who we reach every month. All of this takes a great deal of logistical planning and work. None of this is possible without your help.

The heartfelt gifts you send to NAVA makes all of this possible. I beg you today to please find it in your heart to help us again. The dire economic situation we are faced with has a more devastating affect on the poor.

At another stop that day, an elderly man named Tony, who served in Vietnam in the United States Army told me he often eats just once a day to stretch his food budget. That breaks my heart. I wish I could drop him off a food box every week, but our budget just won't allow it.

We need your help. Veterans like Karen and Tony need your support to put food on their table. Please send your gift today so we can continue to provide much needed food and hygiene items.

Please stay on the team. Team NAVA is doing important work. Here is one of my favorite USMC pictures. Taken when I got my first commanding officer position as a young captain of Marines. Oh I miss the days of my youth.

—Chay

