Dena Wilson knew by the first grade that she wanted to be a doctor. During her years at Red Cloud, she says she was challenged academically and gained the skills to help her pursue her dream. After navigating the rigors of being away from home, Dena found herself at one of the nation’s top medical schools: the University of Washington. Today, she is Acting Director of the Native American Cardiology Program, an Indian Health Services initiative providing critical care to Native people in Arizona.

Dena: Alongside my mother, it was Br. Denny that helped me the most. My mother and I were very close and he never stopped encouraging me. He helped open doors for me that I didn’t know how to open. Unfortunately Br. Denny passed away in 1994 [of a massive heart attack]. He had also wanted to be a doctor and when he died his parents gave me a stethoscope that belonged to him. When things would get hard, I would look at that stethoscope and say to myself, ‘I can do this.’ That support came from Red Cloud, and his faith and belief in me helped me to succeed.

Most days I’m traveling to small clinics across Northern Arizona, providing care in the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations. Growing up on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I knew that the Hopi and Navajo nations.

Dena Wilson
MD, FACC
Class of 1995

Meet Dena’s classmates and other alumni online at www.redcloudschool.org/alumni-profiles
**Nurturing Leaders**

“People often speak about the importance of youth to the future of the reservation. Of course, this also applies to the future of the Church on Pine Ridge,” says Fr. Peter Klink, S.J., who serves as the pastor of St. Francis of the Assisi Reserve.

Throughout June and July, six distinct vacation Bible schools were held in communities across the reservation for area youth. From Oglala to Pine Ridge, the programming has covered an area nearly the size of Connecticut since the 1960s.

Along with helping to engage the future leadership of the Church, Fr. Peter noted these camps also serve a wider purpose. "Nurturing a culturally sensitive faith and spirituality among our youth invites God into their lives,” says Fr. Peter Klink, S.J., who serves as the pastor of two churches on Pine Ridge, "and invites them to engage in the faith that they love.”

In sharing your prayers, resources and words of encouragement, we know we have a support system that extends far beyond reservation lands.

**Taking the Helm**

This spring, 39 seniors walked across the stage in our gymnasium to the strains of drumbeat to receive their high school diplomas. To introduce you to one of them is because her words tell more any story I could share with you.

Her name is Savannah. Dressed in a graduation gown with traditional Lakota regalia, she began her speech in Lakota and then spoke in English. She welcomed everyone with a warm handshake. She then identified her abrupt—extended family—and said, “I am seventeen years old. I humbly take courage and seek wisdom and know God. I give thanks to my mother. She has shown me how to attain a good education. She is a courageous and strong-willed woman.”

Lakota girls are taught to observe, they watch their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts and learn from them what it means to be a young woman. Savannah continued. “My mom warned me about my mom. Every time I think of her story I make me want to cry because she grew up from nothing but made the best out of everything. She came from a family of eight and graduated (from Red Cloud) high school with a family of her own. Despite all odds my mother never took no for an answer. She was relentless when it came to education. She wished education and would even walk five miles in the classroom in order to get them. I remember walking up to a dim light in the kitchen and I would see papers scattered across the table. Highlights were everywhere and it all seemed like chaos, but my mother’s eyes remained serene reading papers. I would crawl back into bed with my own tears and fall asleep but that image of her with all her papers and highlights remained in my head. I witnessed formidably. Years later after many sacrifices from her and the family, she was sitting in a stadium and I saw my mother in a graduation gown with traditional (Lakota) regalia. I asked my grandma Mary what was happening and she said, ‘Your mother is receiving her diploma for PhD.’ I had no idea.”

Savannah then turned to her classmates and said, “The lesson in this story is never take no for an answer, try to succeed, continue to persevere and keep your humility because you can do anything. My mother is my life and my example. With her and many of our roles models paving the way I encourage you to continue that path for the future generations because when you rise, we all rise.”

Savannah is now enrolled at Stanford University, where she has joined three other Red Cloud alumni, each pursuing their own path to a life that will allow them to also return to help their people. Their future is filled with hope and, in that, so is ours.

On the pages of this newsletter you will read of many others here at Red Cloud whose progress you enable each and every day. Like Savannah, they could not do their work without you. We could not do our work without you. We could not do our work without you. We could not do our work without you.