

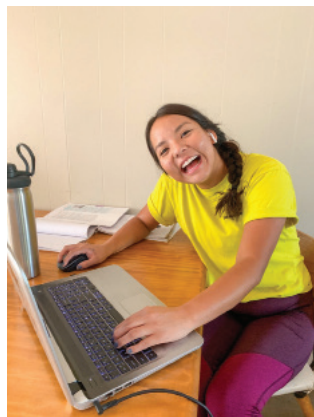
# Op-Ed: Indigenous Volunteers

By: Dr. Felina Cordova-Marks

As much as the COVID-19 pandemic will be associated with the year 2020, so will volunteerism and the big hearts that have led many to help others locally and on their homelands. This year we have seen the rise of numerous COVID-19 relief efforts, providing food, water, cleaning supplies, and assistance to family, friends and tribal members. The majority of relief efforts for Native and Indigenous communities have been targeted towards helping reservation communities. Indigenous Volunteers' efforts to help those living on reservations included organizing ongoing mask drives for the Hopi reservation and for Gallup Indian Medical Center, located on the Navajo reservation.



*Gallup Indian Medical Center healthcare staff handing out the donated masks to patients and those being tested for COVID-19*



*Indigenous Volunteer Kelsey Yonnie (Diné) hard at work*

Our organization also saw the gap that Native and Indigenous peoples living in urban areas may be experiencing in receiving aid and created the "Southern AZ Urban Native Indigenous COVID-19 Relief" fundraiser and outreach effort. As there is strength in numbers, we decided to collaborate on this with the University of Arizona Native Student Action Advisory Board (SAAB), and local non-profits including Indigenous Alliance Without Borders, Chukson/Tucson Water Protectors and the HONOR Collective. To date we have raised over \$27,000 via a GoFundMe and direct private donations. All funds raised have been for urban Native and Indigenous communities in Tucson. Priority for our outreach is given to elders, those with limited mobility, and the medically vulnerable in order to keep those at high risk safe at home. To mitigate potential risks to volunteers and recipients, all efforts have been via a virtual format. Volunteers receive a wish list (google form we created) from those in need and place orders online through Safeway for groceries (we add fruits and veggies to orders if not originally included on their wish list) and supplies (adult diapers, formula, etc.).

Safeway then delivers the groceries to recipients on our behalf. One of our volunteers and UArizona College of Public Health alumni, Kelsey Yonnie (Diné) describes what volunteering on our COVID-19 relief efforts means to her as, "Opportunities to help others come up every day and I wanted to take advantage of that by serving and loving my Indigenous brothers and sisters here in Tucson. Especially during this time where most people are thinking, 'survival of the fittest,' I want to pick others up and say you're seen and we will help even if that is as simple as ordering and delivering groceries for your family." Currently, we have helped over 130 families (over 550 total people) with our fundraising and outreach.

If you would like to donate to the Indigenous Volunteer efforts visit the gofundme:  
[www.gofundme.com/saz-urban-native-relief](http://www.gofundme.com/saz-urban-native-relief)



For more information follow on Facebook:  
Indigenous Volunteers

Contact:  
Dr. Felina Cordova-Marks, Organizer  
[felina@email.arizona.edu](mailto:felina@email.arizona.edu)