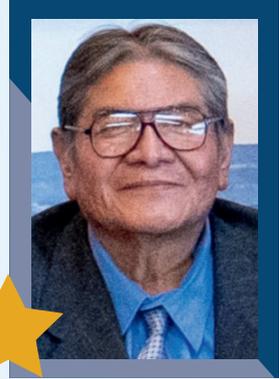


Volunteer of the Year

Christopher Luther

Native Language Volunteer
Pueblo of Laguna Detention Facility
Laguna, New Mexico



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Christopher Luther is a lifelong resident of Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico, residing in Paraje Village. For years, Mr. Luther has been a valuable member of the Pueblo by teaching the younger generations their native language and traditional Laguna customs.

Like many other Native American communities, Laguna is struggling to ensure the survival of its native language, Keresan. Over the years, the reduced practice of using the language has led to a void in sustaining the knowledge of this rare and beautiful language. The Pueblo of Laguna has been working very hard to ensure the survival of its native language, and Mr. Luther is one of the strongest assets in this struggle.

Mr. Luther, who is confined to a wheelchair and works full-time, still finds time to volunteer his services to the inmates of the Laguna Detention Facility; a group of men and women whom many others choose to ignore. Not only does he teach native language, native customs, and native cooking, Mr. Luther shows these inmates that there is a better and more honorable way of living their lives than by making the decisions that ultimately lead them to jail. Warden Chavez has received comments from former inmates who express how Mr. Luther has made a difference in their lives. In this way, he is not only an excellent volunteer, but he is an asset to the criminal justice system.

In addition to his work at the detention facility, Mr. Luther has devoted much of his efforts to the villages, community centers, senior centers, and—most importantly—early childhood development and Head Start programs. Mr. Luther recognizes that teaching the Keresan language to the young will be the most effective way of ensuring its survival.