

Carleton Albert, Sr.,

Getting Rid of Barriers, No Matter How Small

Recently a young woman came up to Carleton Albert, Sr. (Zuni), shook his hand and said, “I will always remember you and what you did for me.”

Carleton knew who she was but had forgotten one incident: He had met her when she was 10 years old. Carleton was a coach and was taking a group of youth to a track meet in Albuquerque. The girl thought she couldn’t go because she didn’t have a sleeping bag. Carleton didn’t hesitate and said, “We’ll find you a sleeping bag.”

The girl went to the track meet and participated. Now the young woman has children. “Because of what you did, I tell them nothing is impossible,” she says.

“I never realized the impact of my

statement,” reflects Carleton. “I never thought something as small as a sleeping bag could be a barrier.”

Removing Barriers

Carleton has faced barriers much greater than a sleeping bag. Carleton has always loved running. He was a long-distance runner in high school and college. A few years ago, he was literally stopped in his tracks by walking pneumonia. “I was afraid to even ride a bike,” he says. “It broke me down.”

Carleton eventually overcame pneumonia, but it left him with asthma, which affects how much he can exercise. These conditions have given him empathy for people struggling with health issues such as diabetes.

Carleton Albert, Sr. (Zuni), mirrors the motivation of fellow TLDC members. “We have to always keep in mind where we come from and who we represent.”

When he is voicing his ideas of how to fight diabetes, he imagines the faces of people in his hometown of Zuni. “It isn’t communities that we empower to fight diabetes. We empower individuals.”



“To fight diabetes, a person needs an understanding of self,” says Carleton. “We need to find the time to take care of ourselves in healthy ways. Everything goes back to the self, to owning up to who you are, taking care of yourself, and moving forward.”

Being Responsible

Carleton believes one of his responsibilities is to role model a healthy lifestyle with behaviors that prevent diabetes.

“Every day, I ask myself: Am I role-modeling what I say? Am I walking the talk?” he says.

Carleton acts on his words daily. At the Pueblo of Zuni, he tries to exercise regularly by riding his bike and going to the local fitness center. He says, “I hope youth and adults see a person who is trying to show self-discipline and act in moderation.” He also hopes they overlook it when he has an occasional soda pop, and admits, “I still have my faults.”

Listening, Then Acting to Help

Carleton says he is grateful for the opportunity to serve on the TLDC. He hopes he is making a strong, positive impact as a tribal leader, by doing what he says, by listening to the needs of the people, and by removing barriers to healthy lifestyles—no matter how small.

