TELLETHA VALENSKI
Servant’s Heart for the Navajo
We appreciate everyone who supports Navajo Ministries. Without current giving we could not continue to provide hope and restoration to Navajo children and many others.

Some of our supporters, in addition to their current giving, have made commitments to planned, or deferred, giving. These are donors who would like to give more to help in our outreach to children and families but they have limited resources. They cannot afford to increase their current giving or it could jeopardize their own needs. An alternative is to give a future gift when they pass on, no longer needing their resources to sustain themselves.

Some of those planned gifts can include bequests, life insurance, and charitable remainder trusts, among others.

Please consider contacting Navajo Ministries today to talk to one of our planned giving specialists to see if one of these charitable giving strategies will benefit you and Navajo Ministries. Call 505-325-0255 or 888-325-0255, or e-mail nmi@navajoministries.org. Thank You!

Our official name is Navajo Ministries, Inc. and our federal tax ID number is 85-0113191.
Dear Readers,

We hope you enjoy this latest edition of Navajo Neighbors, which publishes twice a year and always highlights what God is doing through Navajo Ministries. We also love to be able to provide an interesting and inspirational cover feature story in every issue. The Fall 2017 issue includes a great story on new Navajo Ministries Board of Directors member Telletha Valenski.

Telletha has a wonderful heart of service for the Navajo people and is constantly giving back to so many. We know you’ll enjoy getting to know her through this magazine.

Other stories inside include:

- Yes, I am moving on to the Austin, Texas area to be close to family, but Navajo Ministries already has a new President in place.
- Navajo Ministries was one of five global finalists for the 2017 Hope Awards for Effective Compassion for our work with children.
- The Education and Activity Center has welcomed cultures from around the globe this past year.
- Positive sports broadcasting has become a vital part of Vertical Radio’s lineup.

And, there’s certainly more inside these pages. We thank you for helping us instill hope, restoration and Christian values here at Navajo Ministries.

God Bless and thank you for your support,
Eric Fisher
Navajo Neighbors Editor
I arrived at Navajo Ministries on September 8, 2008 as the newly hired Director of Development. From the first day here, I knew that God was in control and that this organization was blessed to have a committed team of Christians called to serve others.

Nine years later, a lot has changed. Between promotions to Vice President in 2012 and President in May 2015, we have together experienced so much. The Education and Activity Center was opened in 2012 after three years of construction, we earned Charity Navigator four-star ratings and just this summer were honored to be selected for World News Group’s Hope Awards for Effective Compassion. Most important, though, has been the partnership we have had with our friends and donors across the country. We cannot thank you enough!

Here at Navajo Ministries, we have a mission to help instill hope, restoration and Christian values in all we do. Our staff fulfills this mission daily through the Four Corners Home for Children, KNMI Vertical Radio and Navajo Nation Outreach. They are some of the finest people I’ve ever known.

With that written, my season at Navajo Ministries has come to an end – actually on September 8, 2017. My wife Terri and I have moved to the Austin, Texas area to be close to our daughter and four grandkids. I also started a new job as General Manager of an Austin metro publication with Community Impact Newspaper, which owns and operates 22 papers in the Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas. I will miss you all, but will just say, “Until We Meet Again!”

I am also announcing that the new President of Navajo Ministries is Raymond Dunton, who has served on the Board of Directors here for more than 12 years. Raymond and his wife Tuggy were featured as the cover story in the Spring 2015 Navajo Neighbors (you can read the article by going to www.NavajoMinistries.org and clicking on the News link). They will be such a blessing to Navajo Ministries – and Raymond will be the first Navajo President of this organization.

Here’s a personal note to you from Raymond:

Yá’át’ééh

For over a dozen years as a Board of Directors member I have witnessed God doing some pretty amazing things in and through Navajo Ministries. And now serving as the Ministry President, I’m looking forward to seeing God at work during this new season. The entire staff and I are truly blessed to have you as ministry partners!

Ahéhee’

Blessings,

Raymond

Welcome aboard to my good friends Raymond and Tuggy! Once more, thank you all for an amazing nine years – and God’s blessings to you and Navajo Ministries!
Terpsmas Celebrate 30 Years of Ministry!

It was a joy to celebrate with Rick and Paula Terpsma as they completed 30 years of service at Navajo Ministries on August 15, 2017. Still very active in serving on our maintenance team (Rick) and heading up our ranch program (Paula), the Terpsmas have an abundance of memories to share. For 10 years, Rick and Paula served as houseparents in one of our homes that cared for children long-term. They also served as houseparents in our emergency placement home for a couple of years, and then as assistant houseparents. They have touched the lives of more than 100 children and several of them still come back to see “mom and dad” occasionally. Congratulations Rick and Paula! We love you.

Thank you Eric for Nine Years of Service and Dedication

The past nine years have proved to be filled with blessings. Eric Fisher joined our staff as Director of Development. He quickly progressed into the role of Vice President and for the past two-plus years has served as President. While we will miss Eric’s leadership, our prayers will go with him and his wife Terri as they move to Texas to be near their grandchildren. Eric, thank you for your service and dedication to God’s work here at Navajo Ministries these past nine years. May God richly bless you and your family; until we meet again.

San Juan River Bi-Fly reels in More Than $70,000

The 24th annual San Juan River Bi-Fly Tournament, the largest fundraiser for the Four Corners Home for Children, was another big success. With only 19 two-man teams participating, the Bi-Fly reeled in over $70,000!

Considered the premier fly-fishing tournament in the Southwest, anglers come from all over the country to experience this great tournament and raise needed funds for the children’s homes. Most of the funds raised come from the anglers themselves as they gather per-inch pledges prior to the tournament for the largest fish they catch.

Navajo Ministries thanks everyone who participated and helped make it another great event! Major sponsors were Citizens Bank, San Juan Regional Medical Center, Outback Steakhouse and San Juan Rotary Club.

The 25th annual Bi-Fly is scheduled for August 17-18 next year. See you there!

Big Thanks to the Youngs for Four Years of Service

Cliff and Kristine Young came to be houseparents on August 1, 2013. After a little more than four years of service we bid them farewell as they moved on to another opportunity. Where the national average for houseparents is about 10 months, four years is certainly phenomenal. Thank you Cliff and Kristine for your dedicated service to our children.
By Randall Jeffrey

Telletha Valenski has a heart of gold – or maybe it’s actually turquoise, the valuable stone used in Navajo jewelry.

She has a servant’s heart, especially for the Navajo people. Her life’s journey has taken her far from her home in the Navajo Nation, but God managed to bring her back. To go along with her big heart, she also has a bright mind. Telletha could be anywhere doing anything, but it’s evident to see that she doesn’t use all that she’s been given for herself. Her many talents and abilities she sees as gifts not to be hoarded but to be given away. That is why she chooses to be right where she is – helping people every day in the Navajo Nation.

She didn’t end up where she thought she would, but God has a way of steering us in directions we might never have chosen ourselves.

“Just because one door closes, it doesn’t mean another door won’t open. Now, I’m glad those things happened, because I learned from them,” Telletha said.

Telletha works at Northern Navajo Medical Center (NNMC), where she is a School Health Education Specialist. That certainly isn’t all she does, though. She also volunteers in many ways in the community. She is the President of the governing council at Dream Dine Charter School in Shiprock and she also volunteers much of her time at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington. In addition, Telletha is the newest board member here at Navajo Ministries.

She grew up in the Navajo Nation.
in the Crownpoint, New Mexico area. As a child her family moved around a lot due to her father’s job. They lived in different areas of Arizona and New Mexico, and eventually moved to the San Juan County area where they settled down in Kirtland, New Mexico. She graduated from Kirtland Central High School and then attended Northern Arizona University, where she received a bachelor’s degree in Psychology. Initially Telletha wanted to be a doctor.

“Then I did an internship at the hospital and found I didn’t want to do that,” she said with a smile.

Telletha quickly found out that being a doctor was not what she wanted to do. She thought maybe teaching would better suit her skill-set. So, after doing another internship one summer at Harvard University she decided, with some encouragement by a professor, to apply to Harvard. She eventually spent two years there heading in a different direction.

“It was good because I was teaching, but I didn’t realize how much my research was dependent on evolution and I couldn’t do it. After leaving Harvard I went back to Northern Arizona University to get a teaching degree in high school science, and again I had to teach evolution. I couldn’t do that again,” Telletha said.

Telletha said that her strong belief in God as the Creator contradicts evolution, and she could not teach something that went against what she believes. Most of her colleagues understood her position.

“Nothing can come out of nothing. It was God. He spoke everything into existence,” she said.

It takes faith to believe that, and Telletha believes that words speak life. Just as God literally spoke the universe into existence, we can speak life into a person or situation through our words.

It was a gift for Telletha, though, discovering that she liked to teach even though that path had closed. Today at NNMC Telletha gets to do quite a bit of teaching of physical education and diabetes prevention awareness, and helping people understand mental health issues. She may not be a teacher, but she definitely teaches.

“I’ve been doing that for 20 years now, working with the different schools of the northern part of the Navajo Nation,” she said.

Telletha couldn’t believe it had been 20 years already, but time flies when you’re doing something you love, and she loves helping people. She got a taste of life outside the Navajo Nation when she attended Harvard. She could have pursued interests back East – anywhere really – but she decided to come back home.

“I made a vow. I was receiving scholarships from the Navajo Nation when I attended Northern Arizona University, and I vowed that when I got my degree I would work back on the Navajo Reservation. It pulled me back. God held me to my word,” Telletha said.

These past 20 years Telletha has been giving back to the Navajo people through her job, and also her many volunteer pursuits. A big part is dealing with diabetes awareness. Diabetes is very prevalent among the Navajo. A normal diet of a Navajo today has a lot of frybread and other fatty foods. A traditional diet she says would be mostly meat and vegetables, but now it is frybread, tortillas, and white rice.

“The Navajo were known to be nomadic, but now we’re not moving. Now we’re stationary, in a sense,” she added.
A non-traditional diet, coupled with lack of physical activity, is what Telletha says has been the main contributor to this dangerous rise of diabetes cases among the Navajo. Telletha is hoping to help lessen the prevalence of diabetes among the Navajo, and she started with herself.

“I want to be a role model, so I have to be physically active myself,” she added.

Telletha doesn’t feel she can teach young people to be physically active if she is not active herself. But that isn’t really a problem for her, she has been mobile ever since she was 5. Back then she was always going somewhere on her bike, but now her activities have changed. She loves the mountains and what better way to get out in the great outdoors and be physically active than in the mountains.

“I do a lot of hiking. I like the adventure. I backpack hike,” Telletha said.

There are some friends Telletha likes to hike with, and every time they go on an adventure hike they always pray before they take off. She enjoys the risk of hiking in places that could be a bit dangerous. She doesn’t do anything too crazy, but when you’re hiking steep terrain it never hurts to pray for safety.

She added, “My most memorable hike was to Havasupai Falls at the Grand Canyon.”

Words are also important to Telletha. She believes that words can bring life, so she set out to put feet to those words and wrote a book. She wrote it a few years ago and is currently in the process of getting it published.

“I wanted to write a book, it was always something I wanted to do. I didn’t want to write a book just for the sake of writing a book. I wanted a book that would help other people,” she said.

Telletha received some good advice. She was told not to write about something she was going through, but something she has overcome. Telletha is certainly an overcomer. Telletha wrote her book to help others, like her, who have experienced sexual assault to better be able to overcome. Her hope is that others with similar experiences, or loved ones with those experiences, will be able to see how those events impact a child or an adult.

“I want my book to offer hope that they can overcome and still be the person that God designed and purposed them to be,” she said.

Telletha knows that for many people, traumatic experiences such as sexual assault can often hold them back. Too often they believe because they experienced a harmful situation, they are now disqualified from reaching their potential and being who Christ made them to be. That’s why she wrote her book; to offer hope that life can continue after sexual assault, or
abuse of any kind. You can still be successful. You still have value. There is still hope. Christ can bring you through.

For Telletha, a major benefit of writing the book was remembering how far God has brought her. She has been through a lot; not only the things she has experienced as an adult but also her childhood.

“I remember sleeping on a dirt floor, or sometimes sheep hide,” she said.

There was very little food and clothing, too. But she heard the good news of Christ and her life changed. She believed the good news. Telletha doesn’t think she’s that smart, even though she attended Harvard, has degrees and has been successful. She gives all the credit to Christ.

“I have the mind of Christ. He makes me smart,” she said.

Yes, Telletha is also a very humble lady. She also visits Guatemala. Her first visit was in 2009 and she tries to return nearly every other year. Much of the Guatemalan culture is similar to the Navajo culture. Those similarities make it very easy for her to work with the people there.

“When I go there, I feel like I go home,” she said.

Soon after her first visit, the College of Albert Einstein was founded there in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. That has been a big draw for Telletha. Her friend founded the college, which among other things, teaches English to students. This helps them find jobs in America or gives them access to occupations they would otherwise not have.

“A lot of people in Guatemala are still farmers,” she said.

That’s an outreach right up Telletha’s alley. Whether it be her job or her various volunteer pursuits, helping people is at the heart of all she does.

She keeps pretty busy – and always is full of energy.

Telletha has experienced a lot over the course of her life. Many challenges have come her way. What Telletha has learned, however, is to not allow the challenges in her life to stop her. She presses on through them because she knows God is with her and that she is here for a purpose. She wants others to see Him in her.

And, they do. Telletha recently saw evidence of that when she received a Community Service Award from the Navajo Nation Hall of Fame on August 30th. She doesn’t want recognition for what she does, but it’s hard for people not to recognize it.

Telletha Valenski always has a true servant’s heart, both for today and the days to come. God continues to be the author of her story.
A Foundation of **Hope and Compassion**

By Randall Jeffrey

This summer has been a whirlwind of activity. Of course that isn’t much different than any other summer except for one big difference. Navajo Ministries was nominated for the “2017 Hope Awards for Effective Compassion” through World magazine!

On June 16th we got word that voting was open and it just closed on September 1st. We experienced 11 weeks of writing, posting, sharing, handing out push cards, calling churches, and talking about it on the radio – and everywhere else! We have all said “Hope Awards” more times than we can count.

Of course it didn’t really start there either. Navajo Ministries and The Four Corners Home for Children have truly been providing Hope through Effective Compassion since 1953. Our nomination is a testament to what God’s being doing here for nearly 65 years!

The award is fitting though; Hope and Compassion are what the Four Corners Home for Children is all about. Our mission statement kind of says it all.

Navajo Ministries helps the people we serve through programs that instill hope, restoration, and Christian values.

Everything we do every day hinges on hope. Jesus is our Hope. Our children also have the hope of a bright future and of healing. Something that is not very likely before they walk through our doors. That says little about us and everything about Whom we serve. We are here to introduce and offer hope to children who have never known it!

The foundation of everything we do today and everything we have done since 1953 hinges upon helping children through acts and lifestyles of compassion that offer hope to a hopeless situation. Each of us is honored to be where we are and being used by God to do just that. As an organization, we have been tremendously humbled to be recognized and nominated.

Voting ended at midnight on September 1st. We finished 2nd with nearly 4,000 votes coming in. We are so appreciative of everyone who voted and all of you for your continued support as we continue to provide hope and healing to these precious children. ♡
The staff and children at Navajo Ministries occasionally get to experience cultures and traditions from around the world when mission teams visit our 16-acre campus. In the past year alone, the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand and a Korean church from Denver gave stirring performances in the Education and Activity Center.

Tim Symington leads a Maori team from New Zealand every several years to partner in ministry with the Navajo people of the Four Corners region. It has been our pleasure to welcome this team each time they come. This past year, the Te Puna Ora group spent about a week on the campus, working with the children and teaching them about life in New Zealand. They also sang Christian songs in their own language and performed Maori dances.

As a special reminder they said “He lwi Kotahi Tatou O Te Atua,” which translates into “We are one people of God.” We look forward to their next visit!

And, just this summer, the Disciple Mission Church of the Denver area arrived to stay in our Bunkhouse and lead Vacation Bible Schools in the Shiprock area. At the end of their week with us, they provided a classic Korean barbecue meal. The entertainment featured a synchronized drum performance and a beautiful Korean dance with colorful fans. Each of the nearly 30 VBS team members also shared how God is working through their lives. They plan to return again in 2018.

Navajo Ministries continues to make connections with fellow Christian churches and organizations all across the globe. Yes, we are all one people of God. ◇
Live Navajo Nativity has a New Date

Our annual Live Navajo Nativity will be held this year on December 16th from 6-8 p.m. on the Navajo Ministries campus at 2103 W. Main here in Farmington. Many will notice the date is different from in the past, we are having it sooner in the month to allow more staff to participate.

By Linda Eubank

It wasn’t very long ago that there really was no such thing as a Professional Counselor. Fifty years ago if you were having problems, you went to family, your best friend or your doctor. More often than not, people just didn’t talk about their problems. Families kept problems and struggles a secret.

When my father got very ill and my mother became a caregiver, I suggested she go get some counseling support. She looked at me and said “I’m not crazy!” And, her daughter is a Professional Counselor. Unfortunately, that stigma still exists in our world today. Yet there are many people, Christians included, who would never walk into a counselor’s office.

In Proverbs we are told that there is wisdom in counsel. If you have ever sat down with a counselor or a best friend and unburdened your worries, you know how liberating that can be. So why do we find it so difficult? It is an interesting phenomenon that we usually want to present ourselves as “totally together,” in no need of help, or healthier than the other guy. It can actually be pride driving us. The fear of showing ourselves flawed and an unwillingness to express it can lead to depression, anxiety, insomnia, physical disease, a compromised immune system, or any number of ailments. Doesn’t sound good, does it?

Consider sharing your burdens with others, professional or not. The body of believers will be healthier and more “real” if you do. And we often find it easier to help others in the same way we were once helped! That is what Jesus had planned for the church … a community of individuals who love Him and share their burdens as well as their praises.

Linda Eubank is a licensed professional clinical counselor with the Eubank Counseling Center, located on the campus of Navajo Ministries.
Vacation Bible School Connections

From the sea shore to the mountains, the 2017 VBS teams came to minister to children; both in the Navajo Nation and right here on our campus at Navajo Ministries. For nearly five decades, churches from across the nation have been bringing teams to this ministry in the summer months to interact with our children living in the Four Corners Home for Children and teaching VBS to youngsters in nearby churches in the Navajo Nation.

This year’s teams included:

- Grace Community Church in Hilton Head, South Carolina, serving at Riverside Bread of Life Church
- Vineyard Church of Knox County, Mt. Vernon, Ohio serving at Victory Life Church
- Concordia Lutheran Church, Steamboat Springs, Colorado serving at Desert View Church
- The Oasis Church, Farmington, New Mexico ministering to the children here at Navajo Ministries

What a joy it is to connect boys and girls living in the Navajo Nation with Jesus, the Light of the world. All the churches selected have Navajo pastors who enjoy the prospect of bringing in enthusiastic young people from across the nation to interact with the children in their churches. Here are some of the comments shared by team members:

“Great experience! Loved every minute of it!” “Some of the kids had hard lives ... just listening to them was impactful.”

“I was surprised at the level of relationship building we had with the kids and their parents. They captured my heart.”

“I feel like we planted some of the most important seeds I’ve ever planted in a VBS.”

“One of the kids said, ‘I’ve never had a “bestest” friend until I met you!’”

“This week has reminded me how BIG God is, how much Jesus is working outside of my world view.”

Our gratitude goes out to all those who came our way this summer to share God’s love with children here in Navajoland. ◇

Jim and Kay Baker, Co-Directors of Partnership Ministry
By Emmet Fowler
Vertical Radio General Manager

It has been about 21 years since Vertical Radio began broadcasting local high school sports on the air. So you might ask: why would a Christian radio station air high school sports in their station? Let me give you some insight …

Our mission statement at Vertical Radio is: “Christian radio for the community, not just for Christians.” What better way to get into the lives of families in our community than to broadcast high school sports. High school sports are always the pride of any community because it’s our children that are involved. Broadcasting the Game of the Week gets Vertical Radio out of the proverbial Christian “box” and allows people who may never turn to our station for music a chance to listen to the play-by-play of local kids playing football, basketball or baseball/softball.

Vertical Radio is also the official broadcast station of the Connie Mack World Series, the country’s premier amateur baseball tournament. People from around the country tune in to hear this tournament and the top talent that quite often get recruited into major college programs and even into the pros. Game of the Week is the three-time recipient of Best Sports Play-By-Play award from the New Mexico Broadcasters Association. That gives us great favor with our community!

Vertical Sports Game of the Week has been a God-send in this sense: it helps pay the bills! Business sponsors help underwrite the program, keeping funds coming in to our non-profit, non-commercial station. Quite honestly if it wasn’t for Game of the Week, Vertical Radio could very well be off the air. There was a time when individual donations were at an all-time low, but the Game of the Week was able to prosper and keep the station on air. Jeremiah 29:7 says it this way: Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper …

A Christian radio station impacting the community… that’s Vertical Radio.
Farewell to a Friend

When Kay and I came to Farmington in 1975 for our interview to work at then Navajo Missions, founder Jack Drake took us to see the Chairman of the Board, Dick Ullrich. As we visited with Dick, I was touched with the fact that he met with Jack for prayer every Saturday morning at the Mission. This was the kind of place we were looking for where prayer was vital to the ongoing ministry. Over the years Dick was a hands-on board member who provided lots of encouragement and support to our staff.

On March 30, 2017 after a productive 88 years of life, Dick went home to his Savior. His family encouraged friends to provide donations to Navajo Ministries in his memory. We are always blessed to have friends select departed loved ones to be memorialized with gifts that support the children living here. Some choose to honor a friend who is still living with a gift of honor. An attractive card will be sent to the family of the one you are designating. No amounts are ever mentioned. You can use the attached envelope in the center of this magazine to respond with your gift.

Thank you so much for considering this unique form of supporting the children living at the Four Corners Home for Children.

Jim & Kay Baker,
Co-Directors of Partnership Ministry
Donate Your Vehicle
to Navajo Ministries!  RUNNING or NOT

Wondering what to do with your used car or truck?

Donating your old vehicle to Navajo Ministries is convenient, easy and may qualify you for a tax deduction. And best of all, your donation of a used car or truck will make a big difference in supporting Navajo Ministries and the Four Corners Home for Children.

Why not donate your vehicle today? All you need to do is to complete our simple online form at www.navajoministries.org or call 1-866-628-2277 and we’ll take care of the rest. We will pick up your vehicle, arrange to have your donation towed, and provide you with a tax-deductible receipt, all at no charge to you. For more information, simply call 1-866-628-2277. THANK YOU!