BRANDON TODACHEENIE

Persevering Through Every Obstacle
Mission Statement
Navajo Ministries helps the people we serve through programs that instill hope, restoration and Christian values.

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About Navajo Ministries
Navajo Ministries was established in 1953 for the purpose of caring for dependent children, regardless of race, religion or national origin, and for printing and distributing Navajo tracts and hymnals.

The ministry has expanded over the years to include: a non-commercial Christian radio station, KNMI Vertical Radio 88.9 FM and Navajo Nation Outreach, providing spiritual, emotional and material encouragement to those living in Navajoland.

When a donor expresses a preference as to the use of donated funds, Navajo Ministries will make every effort to honor their request and in most cases this is done in exact compliance with the donor’s wishes. However, the Board of Directors, in ensuring that Navajo Ministries carries out its exempt purposes required by law and effectively uses available funds, accepts the responsibility of applying funds in accordance with objectives of the ministry.

Views and opinions expressed in Navajo Neighbors by those interviewed are not necessarily those of Navajo Ministries.

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Letter from the Editor
Dear Readers,
Welcome to the Spring 2018 edition of the Navajo Neighbors, which publishes twice a year and highlights what God is doing at and through Navajo Ministries. It is our privilege to be able to share these stories of hope and inspiration, and recent happenings in our part of the world.

This issue includes a cover story on Brandon Todacheenie—The Navajo Ninja. Brandon has competed on the show, American Ninja Warrior, his story is one of perseverance and refusing to stay down when life or obstacles knock us down. I think you’ll enjoy his story.

Other stories include:
- We celebrate Jennifer as she prepares to graduate high school and prepare for life beyond Navajo Ministries.
- A special gift was received recently and the story surrounding it is pretty special too!
- A New Era has arrived at Navajo Ministries.

And, there are other stories inside that will interest you. Thank you for partnering with us in changing lives through hope, restoration and Christian values. We dedicate this edition of the Navajo Neighbors in the memory of Eric Fisher, former President of Navajo Ministries and Editor of this Navajo Neighbors.

God Bless and thank you for your support,
Randall Jeffrey
Navajo Neighbors Editor
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Serving Together to Carry Out the Mission

I love this time of year – “Daan” (Spring) is an exciting season consisting of the months of “Wóózhích’ií” (March), “T’žįįchíłí” (April), and “T’įįtsi’í” (May).

The translation of Wóózhích’ií is “First Cry of Eaglets” which were hatched in February. Sometimes it’s referred to as “Squeaky Voice” but either way you get the idea. I recall when my own children were newborns, making all kinds of noise trying to get my attention for the purpose of having their needs met. Two boys and two girls - each about 18 months apart from the other. At one point I had three of them in diapers! Yup, I heard a lot of “squawking” back in the day… many times accompanied with a very distinct odor. As parents we have the primary role of meeting our children’s needs, and a safe environment is one of those basic needs.

Here at our Four Corners Home for Children we are committed to meeting the needs of children who have been neglected or abused. Providing and maintaining a safe home, through God’s love, we can give them the proper attention to benefit their body, soul and spirit. Our children come to us either through the CYFD of New Mexico or the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services. Currently, under our care, we have ages ranging from 4-months to 18-years old.

All of our Navajo Ministries departments work together in supporting the efforts in meeting every need these precious souls have. I’m so proud of our staff and volunteers making-up each of these departments; FCHC houseparents, The After School Program, The Ranch Program, KNMI Vertical Radio, Eubank/Second Chance Counseling, Development, Maintenance and Administration. Another vital member of this magnificent team is YOU! We would not be able to meet these essential needs without all of our prayer and financial partners! Thank you for joining us in this life-changing endeavor.

“May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the One who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence.”

- 2 Peter 1:2-3 (NLT)

“Ahhee’ (Thank you)! Bóhóníihii ník’tsjíídoó (The LORD bless you).”

Serving together,
Raymond M. Dunton
President

NEWS AND VIEWS

Community Partnerships
Making a Difference

The Farmington community is such a wonderful community to be a part of. We receive support and have partners all across the country, but there is something special about our hometown! We want to recognize three special community partnerships that have recently made an impact here.

Family First Chiropractic and Wellness Center chose Navajo Ministries for their 2018 Charity of the Year, which means that through various means they will be raising funds for us all year long!

Then there was “Cookies for a Cause” through Chick-fil-A in Farmington. That took place during the entire month of February – they donated $.25 to the Four Corners Home for Children for every cookie purchased all month long. They raised and donated over $2,500!

Last, but certainly not least is our partnership with NTEC – Navajo Transitional Energy Company. They awarded us a grant of $10,000 to complete much needed repairs and renovations in the House of Faith.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our children!

65 years and Counting!

This year we celebrate 65 years of ministry here at Navajo Ministries! We are excited for the upcoming fall issue of the Navajo Neighbors which will highlight stories throughout our 65 year history. We are grateful for these past years as we look forward with expectation to the years to come and all God is leading us to.

Txt2Give Up and Running!

We are always searching for new and fresh ways to continue doing what we do; to continue being effective in providing Hope and Restoration to those we serve. Some of those opportunities may be small but we must not overlook them. One small way we have stepped forward is by implementing Txt2Give! You can now securely text a donation to Navajo Ministries and make a difference in the lives of those we minister to. It’s easy – just text the word “Give” to 505-726-4949. It’s never been easier to make a difference!

Ahhee’ (Thank you)!

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Perseverance. That word holds a lot of meaning for Brandon Todacheenie – The Navajo Ninja!

Brandon grew up in Shiprock, New Mexico in the Navajo Nation. This young man, who is married and has a daughter, has such a desire to influence people of all walks of life. He has certainly been an example to many, especially those of the Navajo Tribe. While talking with Brandon, a verse from Hebrews came to mind.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” – Hebrews 12:1-2a

While many people all around watch his example, Brandon is running the race that God has set before him, with focus, tenacity and perseverance.

The past four years Brandon has been trying to get on the NBC show American Ninja Warrior. He had participated twice before, but then this past season in 2017 he made it onto the show.

He ran the course, making it past many other participants, and to his surprise, qualified for the top 30. He’d get to come back a second night. He made it even farther that second night, falling on the sixth obstacle. So Brandon has officially been in three American Ninja Warrior competitions and made it on TV once. Brandon kept getting knocked down, but he kept getting back up.

“It was a great experience for me, just learning from my failures and pressing forward,” Brandon said.

Brandon refuses to settle and he continues to persevere! So Brandon isn’t done yet; he intends to keep applying to be on the show and continue to train in the meantime, doing so in various ways. He goes to an obstacle gym in Albuquerque; where he does his most intense training. There are many different obstacles available, which is great because the obstacles on the show are always different and he needs a wide range of experience to improve his skills and chances.

A trip to the big city isn’t possible all the time though, so of course he does his own training Rocky-style in his own front yard.

Brandon started watching the Japanese American Ninja Warrior. He had participated twice before, but then this past season in 2017 he made it onto the show.

In 2014 he was a “walk-on” in Denver. He qualified, but didn’t get to run the course. In 2015 he made it on in Houston and fell on the second obstacle. In 2016 he went to Oklahoma City and fell on the third obstacle. Then in 2017 Brandon finally made it onto the actual show in Denver – he made it on TV!

Brandon said, “Getting that call was exciting, but I think my wife was more excited than I was!”

Brandon and his wife, Michelle, on the set of the American Ninja Warrior TV show.
Navajo Neighbors

Brandon said, “One thing I tell the kids is to keep trying and do your best.” The interest eventually formed into a program of ministry.

Brandon's fascination with obstacles goes beyond the physical, of course. Brandon also uses it for another purpose. Brandon builds obstacles for kids and goes around to schools and other groups and talks to them about being more active, staying healthy and overcoming obstacles.

Brandon said, “One thing I tell the kids is not to walk up to an obstacle but run up after an obstacle knocks them down. It was life-changing. If it wasn’t for Jeffrey, I might have given up.”

Brandon did not grow up in a Christian home, but it was his sisters who influenced him for Christ. In high school he started attending youth group at Four Corners Community Church where Jeffrey O’Connor was serving as Youth Pastor.

Brandon said with a laugh, “I grew up around my older sisters listening to Christian boy bands. That was my first Christian influence.”

Jeffrey reached out and formed a connection with Brandon. He had a passion about American Ninja Warrior. He gave the kids the opportunity to try out the obstacles and to be little ninja warriors for a day!

Unlike the time Brandon grew up in, we live in an age where we are electronically driven, especially children, and this physical activity is so important for them. Brandon is also able to speak to them about getting back up after an obstacle knocks them down.

Last year in Shiprock, during the Shiprock Fair, Brandon held his first competition for kids. Over 50 kids participated, and Brandon hopes to continue to put these on.

Brandon said, “By doing ninja warrior stuff, I feel more confident in myself and that I can overcome obstacles - both physical and spiritual. I know God has my back.”

By overcoming these physical obstacles Brandon is better prepared to overcome the obstacles that life throws at him. That is what Brandon has exemplified through his tenacity to keep trying out for American Ninja Warrior.

Brandon stayed pretty busy speaking at conferences, doing kids’ programs, training and participating in various events. God has given Brandon a platform to speak hope and life into the lives of others. And he is making the most of it. He has a huge heart for people and everything he does centers around that.

Brandon said, “I’m blessed to be able to do this and I hope people see Christ in me.”

Brandon has a long-term dream of opening his own ninja warrior obstacle gym one day, full of different obstacles and training platforms. This long-time Four Corners resident hopes to open it one day right here in his back yard. Not his literal back yard though.

Today though, Brandon is excited to be preparing for season 10 of American Ninja Warrior! He got the official call just before we went to print and he will be traveling to Dallas to compete once again. We are excited for him to have another opportunity to stand on his platform and show the world what God can do when we are willing to persevere! Look for the Navajo Ninja this summer.

In this life we are guaranteed to get knocked down a time or two – the question is whether we will get back up. With God in our corner we have the power and strength to persevere, get back up and press forward into all that God has for us! That’s Brandon’s story, we pray it is yours as well. Persevere!
Jennifer’s Journey

By Randall Jeffrey

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

In August of 2013, Jennifer made that first step when she entered our care here at the Four Corners Home for Children. That step wasn’t her choice though, but a step that she took nonetheless. She has involved herself in Flag, plays the flute in band, and participates in theater. Her grades are mostly A’s and B’s too.

This May she will graduate high school. We are so proud of Jennifer. She is a wonderful young lady, and it has been our privilege to be a part of her life. To see her experience such growth has been an honor. We look forward to seeing what God continues to do in her life as she moves into this next stage of life.

After graduation, Jennifer plans to take a year off from school and figure out what the “real” world is all about. She will be working and living on campus here at Navajo Ministries as she makes that transition. Then she’ll hopefully go to college after that. Jennifer wants to travel, have a family, and be an actress one day.

Here is what Jennifer had to say about her five years at the Four Corners Home for Children:

“I’ve grown a lot here, learned new things and expanded my horizons. It’s been a long journey. It’s been great!”

Please join us in praying for Jennifer as she moves into her future. This verse from Jeremiah is fitting for all graduates, but especially for Jennifer.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11

Hope

By Randall Jeffrey

Last September we received a very special gift – this Navajo rug. Sandra Bonham, now a ministry supporter, graciously donated it to us. The rug itself is unique and very special, but the story behind this rug is truly magnificent!

Sandra purchased this rug from the “Heard Museum” in 1991. It was made by a Navajo lady named Sadie Begaye. Sadie had been commissioned to make this rug for a missionary, but upon completion she could not find the missionary, so she sold it to the Heard Museum. When Sandra saw the rug, it resonated with the culture her mother had, for so long, appreciated. But maybe the most significant part of her story is that her father-in-law was Richard Bonham. Richard served in the Marines during WWII in the Pacific Islands. While in Bougainville and Iwo Jima, Richard served alongside Navajo Code Talker Billy Toledo.

She searched over the years, until early last year she stumbled upon the Navajo Ministries Facebook page. She followed us for several months, checked out the website and just knew this was where the rug belonged. When she contacted us we were more than thrilled to accept.

That would be an interesting story in itself, but there’s more! Sandra’s mother supported Native American children for many years until she passed away. The rug just resonated with the culture her mother had, for so long, appreciated. But maybe the most significant part of her story is that her father-in-law was Richard Bonham. Richard served in the Marines during WWII in the Pacific Islands. While in Bougainville and Iwo Jima, Richard served alongside Navajo Code Talker Billy Toledo.

They lost touch after the war, but were reunited years later. They would remain friends until both of their deaths. Both Richard and Billy spoke publicly about the Code Talkers and even did an interview together once for 60 Minutes.

The connections involved with these relationships and in bringing this rug to Navajo Ministries are so intriguing. Now, Sandra supports out children monthly. She is one of so many across this country making a difference in the lives of Navajo children.

Sandra has long had a connection with the Navajo and even more so today as she found a home for this Navajo rug we mutually decided to name, “Hope.” You too can give hope by becoming a monthly sponsor of one of our children.
A New Era Begins at Navajo Ministries

The Navajo people are so rich with strength, heritage and beauty. The Navajo culture of course permeates nearly everything we do here. That’s truer now more than ever before. These past few months have been interesting, fruitful and beneficial here at Navajo Ministries. We are excited for all God is doing.

A very significant event took place in October and that was Raymond Dunton joining the staff of Navajo Ministries as our President. Raymond made history by becoming our first Native American President in the 65 year history of this organization. We are sitting in a New Era.

Raymond is not defined by his culture alone though – he is more than capable of filling this position as President and he is up to the task. He is certainly leading in fresh ways and taking us places we have never gone before.

His Navajo heritage though is a major part of who he is and bringing that to the table here at Navajo Ministries is a wonderful blessing.

“Raymond is the fourth man to serve in this role of President. Being Navajo brings a fresh perspective and a connection that we have never had before. Considering we work extensively with the Navajo, we believe that this connection will prove to be invaluable in the years to come, to continue to be effective in all God has called Navajo Ministries to.

“I’m excited about what the future holds. This journey ahead of us is promising,” Raymond said.

We don’t know exactly what this new era will look like, but the future is hopeful and bright. We are excited to have Raymond serving as President and look forward with great expectation to all that is yet to come.

I Met The Enabler

Our last issue of Navajo Neighbors last fall, featured Telletha Valenski on the cover. Since then, she has completed her first book and it has been published; “I Met the Enabler.” We are so proud of Telletha, her perspective, and how she has allowed God to use her – even in her pain.

We thank Telletha for her willingness to serve on the Board of Directors here at Navajo Ministries and for her humility in putting her life down on paper.

Christmas Connections to Our Navajo Neighbors

I’m sure you have read the words of our Lord in Matthew 25 where He shared with His disciples, “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, thirsty and you gave me something to drink, a stranger and you invited me in, and needing clothes you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me, in prison and you visited me.” The lesson we can take away from these verses is that we minister to Christ when we help those in need.

Each year because of the support of our friends both near and far, we are able to provide God’s love to over 300 deserving Navajo families in many remote areas of the vast Navajo Nation just before Christmas.  We could fill this page with comments received from the Navajo pastors. Here are just a few of their experiences:

“One of those we visited was so excited, happy and thankful. One mother said, ‘I only saw these things happen on TV! I never thought this would happen to my family.’” One couple was found living in an 8x8 shed with tarps covering the roof. A mother and her five children (including a new-born) came out to receive gifts. In addition to the gifts, we shared the fact that Jesus loved them. They were so happy.”

Many thanks to those who helped us bring joy to our Navajo neighbors this past Christmas.

Jim and Kay Baker, Co-Directors of Partnership Ministry
When a loved one passes from this world into eternity with Christ, we who are believers have the assurance that we will one day be able to be with them again in heaven. Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me. In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-2)

Eric was on our staff for nine years serving faithfully as Director of Development, Vice President and President. He and his wife, Terri, moved to Texas last fall to be near grandchildren. We are sorry to report that Eric passed away on December 24, 2017. He was loved and respected by many in our community. Please be in prayer for his family as they continue to grieve his passing until one day we will all meet again.

This page serves as a memorial to those who have passed on to heaven and have been remembered through gifts sent to help our staff care for boys and girls who come to live in our homes at the Four Corners Home for Children. An attractive card is sent to the family of the one you are designating. No amounts are mentioned. Thank you for considering of sharing a gift through a Living Memorial.

Jim & Kay Baker, Co-Directors of Partnership Ministry
MONUMENT VALLEY
CANYON DE CHELLY
GRAND CANYON

PETRIFIED FOREST
PAINTED DESERT
AZTEC RUINS

FOUR CORNERS NATIONAL MONUMENT
PLUS MUCH MORE!

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* Early Bird Registration Deadline: June 30, 2018  ** Double Occupancy