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# NAVAJO

NEIGHBORS

Summer 2023 Edition



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**2** From the President

**4** Our Path to Four Corners Home for Children

**5** At Peace

**9** A Blessing, Not a Burden

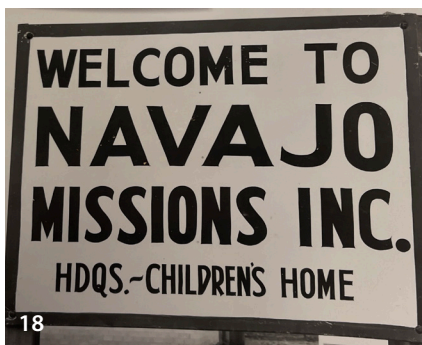


**13** Campus Updates

**14** From the Director of Development

**15** A Neighbor to the Navajo

**18** Celebrating 70 Years



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT



## DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the 2023 Navajo Neighbors magazine. This edition of Navajo Neighbors marks the 70th Anniversary of Four Corners Home for Children! For an entire Biblical generation, we have served children from Navajoland. Some of the first children in residence at Four Corners Home for Children are now grandparents!

As you turn the pages of this magazine, you will read stories of events that transpired over the past 70 years. You will also see pictures of children and staff that have called our campus home. Our feature story comes from the heart of a man who lived at FCHC in 1986 as a nine-year-old boy. Journey with Jon Tsoisie through a life of doubt and confusion to discover God's truth.

You will also hear from:

- Josh and Tiffany Kincaid, who share the path God used to bring them to FCHC as House Parents.
- Taylor Benally, a recent former resident of FCHC, who has taken what he learned here about God's peace and is applying it to his life as an adult.
- And Ben and Eunice Stoner, our "Neighbors to the Navajo," who were called to serve for two years and turned it into over 50!

Our new Director of Development, Jeff Hendricks, will share some thoughts with you, and you will read an update on the new facility for our House of Hope. It is an exciting time on our campus with new programs, new staff, and the beginning of an entirely new generation! Praise God!

This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.

Psalm 102:18 (NKJV)

*Reich*

**ANNETTE REICH**

*Editor of Navajo Neighbors Magazine  
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# NAVAJO NEIGHBORS

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Four Corners Home for Children helps the people we serve through programs that instill hope, restoration and Christian values.

## ABOUT FOUR CORNERS HOME FOR CHILDREN

Four Corners Home for Children 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 program for mothers and children, 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, Four Corners Home for Children 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 Four Corners Home for Children 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.

## PUBLISHER

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# OUR PATH TO FOUR CORNERS HOME FOR CHILDREN: The Kincaids



When navigating via compass, which you no doubt do in this modern age, you use what is called an azimuth—it is your heading. An azimuth is the line between where you are and where you're going. In the "going" process, however, you might deviate from the azimuth—what with there being hills and trees and such—and be forced to recalibrate. By the time you arrive at your destination, the path you took will likely be anything but straight.

Tiffany and I met in Dallas, Texas, at a job orientation. What started as a workplace friendship and college amicability blossomed into what can best be described as a sturdy marriage. I realize "sturdy" is not the most romantic term for a marriage, but our friendship-first relationship endured 12 moves, two deployments to Afghanistan, five career paths, two later-than-usual bachelor's degrees, and two kids of our own. By the grace of God, the Word as our foundation, and a sick propensity to giggle through the hard stuff, we remain.



Tiffany was the reluctant small-town girl who knew in her heart that she would "never" live in Farmington, New Mexico. I was the bounced around, nomad-of-a-kid who had just enough life experience by age 12 to know I was going to live in the big city and have no more than one child. We knew our destinations. We like to think that God hears our plans and laughs, but in His infinite kindness and fatherly compassion, I believe a better picture than laughter would be a knowing smile.

Tiffany and I had our own ideas about ministry, and by "our own," I mean the same ideas as everyone else. We dove into occupational ministry as children's pastors, convinced that this was it; this was the end-all/be-all will of God for our lives—our destination. We shifted around in church/pastoral roles for a decade before we hit a wall, then life in ministry didn't seem to be in the cards anymore. This felt like an odd roadblock if not a dead end. It seemed especially odd, considering I had just finished my degree at Moody Bible Institute the previous year. That, on the heels of a great awakening in our little family of four, that brought us to a deeper dependency on the Word of God. We became a vastly different family than we were at the start of our ministry careers. But our destination evaporated, and we had no heading.

What do you do when there are no opportunities that line up with or fit into your theological convictions? How do you keep from uprooting your family yet again? What is the path of God for you that somehow includes your eccentric array of experiences?

Even with hindsight, I can only speculate when it comes to the mind of God. To step too far in that regard is dangerous. But from what I see, God accomplished something in us that would seem the inverse of the norm. One would think you start out working on your family and work "ministry" out from there. One would think that because that is the biblical model. From establishing marriage in Genesis to the "first the Jew and then the Gentile" pattern of Romans, God is family-first. It took our awakening to see that we went about it backward. We approached ministry from a "go out and minister first" mentality, hoping our kids would see our devotion and catch on. Though, upon returning to the Word, we saw that God desired Tiffany and me to fulfill our roles in the family and raise our children up in the knowledge of the Lord to be men and women of God. Our new destination was to look like Jesus, and that meant making our family our primary ministry. He took us from pastoring to parenting, and it has made all the difference.

When we were approached to consider being house parents at Four Corners Home for Children, we laughed. We laughed for a while. We would have a rough day, bring up the idea of being house parents, and laugh again. Slowly, we stopped laughing. The admonishment of the book of James that "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" grew too compelling. We laughed, but God knew. He had been setting us up with talents and experiences that I can only hope will benefit the ministry and the children He brings.

We can never know where the path will lead; those are the secret things of God. All we can do is trust the path-maker and take one step at a time.

**May your path be bumpy.  
May your destination be  
to look like Jesus Christ.  
And may the Word light  
your way.**

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# AT PEACE: Taylor Benally



As a child, Taylor Benally spent a good bit of time at Four Corners Home for Children (FCHC). Actually, it is safe to say he grew up here. Taylor was a little boy when he arrived and a young adult when he left. There is much to be said about Taylor, and I could spend days writing about him, but I think Taylor's story should be told by him.

*I was no stranger to foster care when I came to Four Corners Home for Children in 2013. When I arrived, I was scared and thought it would be the same as*

*everywhere else I'd been. I assumed I would stay a few months and then be moved somewhere else. It always happened that way, and I was used to it. I had no idea that this time would be different. This time I did not leave; this time, I stayed. Here we are, eight years later, and I am still here. I have finished school, graduated with high marks, and am preparing for my future.*

*Although staff came and went, I learned a lot from one particular set of House Parents. They helped me with music*

*and taught me to clean, cook, and be self-sufficient. More importantly, they introduced me to Jesus and the Bible. This is what eventually transformed my life. I wasn't a true believer then, but I said I was. They talked logically to me and explained things using facts and history, which is how I best understand things. We had a "War Room" in the house for a while, where we could sit and pray or read the Bible in peace. I enjoyed being in the War Room and loved the solitude with just me and God.*

*Being at Four Corners Home for Children allowed me to make good friends. I tried to make friends with everyone, but with Sonny and Connor, it came easily. Connor was my age and had been here since he was two years old! I thought Connor was pretty cool, and I wanted to be his friend. Sonny and I became friends quickly, and then we found out we were cousins! Sonny will always be part of my life. Sonny and Connor are lifelong friends; actually, they feel more like brothers.*

Taylor joined the worship team at his church during his senior year in high school. His faith grew, and his closer walk with the Lord became evident. In April of 2022, Taylor competed at the Assemblies of God Fine Arts Competition in Albuquerque. Before the main event, Taylor presented his sermon on the topic of peace at the Oasis Ministries in Farmington:

## PEACE

Speech given by Taylor Benally at  
Oasis Church Ministries  
Farmington, New Mexico

What is the definition of peace? It is freedom from disturbance: tranquility. Often, we see Christians lose peace when the storm comes. We must remember what the Bible says about peace. There are three things we need to remember to have peace.

The first is trusting in God's Word. Trusting in God's Word and His promises could lead us to peace. In this place of chaos, there is much we can hope to draw on from the story of Jesus calming the storm. The disciples were crossing the sea, but as darkness rose upon them, there was a huge storm. The storm shook the ship violently. The water was coming

over the sides; the moment was very chaotic. The disciples looked over and saw Jesus sleeping. They were questioning among themselves how He could be asleep in a time of chaos. They were losing their faith.

The disciples were too focused on the moment and forgot Who else was in the boat. They woke Jesus, and the moment Jesus spoke, the storm stopped. The chaotic storm was brought to peace. Jesus questioned his disciples on why they lacked faith. The disciples were so caught up that they forgot they could be at peace if they had faith in God's Word. A lot like in today's society, people forget God's Word and get caught up in chaos. If we just remember what God says, we'll be able to find peace.

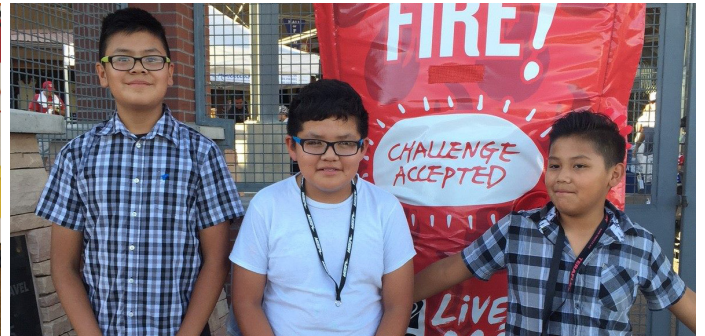
Luke 8:24-5 says, "The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!' When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped, and all was calm. Then He asked them, 'Where is your faith?'" The disciples were terrified and amazed. 'Who is this man?' they asked each other. 'When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!'" (NLT).

The second thing we must remember is to trust in God's presence. A lot like the disciples on the boat, we find ourselves stuck. We forget Who else is on board. We need to trust in God's presence because we know that He is everywhere, at any time. My favorite verse says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, so why should I be afraid?"

The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble? (Psalm 27:1 NLT). The verse shows that we shouldn't be afraid, for we know God's presence is always near us. When we acknowledge God's presence, we find a sense of peace.

I want to share a little story about my life. Growing up, I went through a lot of foster care homes and had a traumatic childhood. I had to go through therapy and counseling and regularly moving from place to place. Throughout all this, there has been a lot of chaos. I couldn't find a center, just where to be; I couldn't find anywhere. I was just stuck and couldn't move anywhere.

I went to church and soon found God, and it gave me a sense of peace, and it felt comforting because no matter



what happened and even if I couldn't find a reason, I knew it was God, and he was doing His plan, His work, and teaching me along the way. A lot of non-believers are confused and get scared. They can't find a reason why something is happening, but we Christians know God's work and plan; we have faith we can find peace.

The third thing is trust God's power. Sometimes as humans, we forget how much power God has. Sometimes we lean upon our own understanding because we think God can't handle the situation. God has the power and strength to deal with the problem. If we don't lean on God's power, we find ourselves lost. In the story of the disciples on the ship, Jesus had the power to stop the storm with His words. They lost faith because they forgot Jesus has the power over weather. We must not forget Jesus' strength as the disciples did in that moment. Though we often find ourselves in the most destructive storm or difficult event, we can always trust God's Word, God's presence, and God's power. We should always depend on God, for He can bring peace. After all, why shouldn't we trust the Prince of Peace?

When asked about others at Four Corners Home for Children who might

have impacted his life, Taylor shares the following:

*In addition to the House Parents I mentioned earlier, three people immediately come to mind. One man in leadership at Four Corners Home for Children was strict with me. He was brutally honest about decisions I made and how consequences from my choices could be life-long. He did not enable me or allow me to just skate by. He held me accountable. That is exactly what I needed.*

*One of the women at FCHC was also helpful and treated us older boys with respect. She frequently asked us our opinions on things, getting our input on decisions that would affect us. She made us feel like adults, not little children. She was also trustworthy, and we knew that if she made a commitment to us, she would keep it.*

*One last man I would like to talk about is someone who took me under his wing. He allowed me to work with him, and he entrusted me with responsibility. This man did not just tell me what to do; he showed me how to do it. He had faith in me, even when I didn't have faith in myself. He trusted me – that means a lot to me.*

On Taylor's last day at Four Corners Home for Children, he was asked to reflect on his time here:

*I feel old. I have been here half of my life. For me, that's a really long time. If I hadn't come to FCHC, I would have grown up in the foster care system. I might have remained scared of things like before, and I might not have become a Christian. I have been happy to be an example for new children who come to live here. I have tried to befriend them and teach them good and right things. I have always wanted to influence new children here.*

*I am a little sad to leave, but I know it will be a relief to go to somewhere new. I am glad to have freedom and independence, but it is scary in some ways, too. I know the door to Four Corners Home for Children is always open to me if I need something or just need to call.*

*As I leave campus, I am looking forward to many things. I am most eager to continue growing spiritually. I am still questioning some things but am excited for my new life, and for new stories. My story is still developing but one thing I know for sure as I leave; I know that I'll have God with me.*





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SPONSOR  
BRITTNEY

Brittney has called Four Corners Home for Children her home since April 2015. Brittney recently moved into our House of Grace, where her houseparents are Jeff & Liz Hendricks. Brittney is excited about being in a home with fewer children. Brittney's birthday is May 11, 2006, and she is in the 10th grade at Four Corners Academy for Excellence for the 2023-2024 school year.

Brittney enjoys history and social studies best. She also enjoys doing crafts of any kind and putting jigsaw puzzles together. Her favorite activity is attending weekly youth services at church and participating in social events with her church friends.

As Brittney's sponsor, you will receive monthly updates on her progress and activities. This will assist you in knowing how to better pray for her as she continues in our care. You are invited to write to her occasionally and remember her on her birthday and at Christmas. Brittney will be glad to respond to your letters and cards.

If you'd like to sponsor Brittney for \$40 or more a month please go to [4ch4c.org](http://4ch4c.org)



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# A BLESSING, NOT A BURDEN: Jon Tsosie

BY: ANNETTE REICH



*When I was nine, my mom realized she could not take care of both her mother and me. That is when she brought me to Four Corners Home for Children. I understood it as well as a nine-year-old can, but deep inside, I struggled.*

Jon Tsosie was nine years old in 1989 when he came to live at "Navajo Missions" (Four Corners Home for Children)." Jon's house mom described him as a fine young man; friendly, loving, and in love with the world. Jon was a good student; he loved science, music, and art. He received good grades in school, and shortly after coming to the mission, he made the honor roll. Jon got along well with the other children in the home. In his free time, Jon loved to draw, build model airplanes, and ride his bike – straight downhill! Jon also liked to fish and work with the animals on campus. Like other boys his age, he loved to play Nintendo when he had free time. When asked the common question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Jon always answered, "I want to be a pilot!"



On one of Jon's early evaluations, his house mom noted that he had no negative issues, only common behaviors for a boy his age, such as teasing other kids and needing to be encouraged to follow through with his chores, homework, and cleaning his room.

After being at the mission for just a month, Jon started asking questions about Jesus. One of the highlights of his week was going to church on Sunday. He particularly enjoyed Sunday school. Jon liked to read his Sunday school book, and his teacher loved to talk to him about the Bible. She took extra time each week to work with him, helping him understand what he was reading. God's Word soon began to take root in Jon's heart.

I did not know Jon when he lived at Four Corners Home for Children (FCHC), but I had the pleasure of meeting him 32 years later. By then, the Word of God had spread from Jon's

heart and spilled over into his life. I met Jon and his wife, Charmaine, in 2021 at Grace Fellowship Community Church in Chinle, Arizona. Jon and his beautiful family are active in their church and their community. Jon was introduced to me as a former child who lived at FCHC. When I asked Jon about his time at FCHC, he hesitated, then commented that he was always treated well. His hesitation piqued my interest, so I asked if we could meet soon and discuss his experiences. Jon honestly shared that he still struggles with having been placed in a children's home, but he was willing to meet with me and possibly interview for FCHC's Navajo Neighbors magazine.

Jon and his family arrived on a beautiful, picture-perfect summer day in 2022. They onto campus and parked in front of the guesthouse where they would stay for the night. As the family unfolded from the car, I noticed Jon staring wistfully at the house. With a heart full of emotion, he commented, "Wow, we will be staying in the same house I lived in when I was a young boy." We spent the day together talking, reminiscing, and fellowshiping.

As we talked, Jon began to reminisce about his childhood, including the time he lived at FCHC:

I was born in Utah. My mom and dad were living in and around Brigham City. My father was in the Air Force; he was a very smart man who worked on F-4 Phantom jets. I never got a chance to know him; he passed away when I was only a year old. My brothers were much older than me, so I was like an only child. I spent a lot of time alone in my room,

watching movies and finding things to do by myself.

My grandmother became ill when I was eight, and my mom, Rosalie, was her only caretaker. As my grandmother's health deteriorated, my mom spent most of her time caring for her. When I was nine, my mom realized she could not take care of both her mother and me. That is when she brought me to Four Corners Home for Children. I understood it as well as a nine-year-old can, but deep inside, I struggled. I understood that my grandmother was sick, but questions lingered in my mind. Was I a bad kid? Did I do something wrong? Was there another reason my mom didn't want me to live with her anymore? Was I a burden? I was uncomfortable talking about my feelings then, and as an adult, I kept all the unanswered questions inside.

Jon continued to talk about his time at FCHC. Jon remembered the model airplanes he built with his house dad, the steep hill where he rode his bike, the animals in the ranch program, and Sunday School. Jon also remembered going along on our "Christmas Caravans" to the reservation to distribute Bibles, coats, clothing, and toys. This Christmas tradition stuck with him and impacted his life. Even among Jon's good experiences while living at FCHC, he showed a certain sadness when he talked about it. The unanswered questions lingered and nagged at him all his life.

Jon describes his struggles with relationships and an inability to trust even those closest to him. That began to change when he met his wife, Charmaine. One pivotal day, Jon walked into a convenience store in Chinle,



Arizona, when Charmaine happened to be working. Jon and Charmaine connected quickly and began talking regularly and spending time together. They enjoyed one another's company. Jon comments that Charmaine was always happy to see him. Charmaine describes Jon, at the time, as someone who put up a guard people could not penetrate, but she saw something else in him - his demeanor, smile, and something inside him was evidence that he had a gentle soul. Jon credits Charmaine with helping him cope with things from his past.

She helped me begin the healing process.  
- Jon Tsosie

Charmaine comments,

I have the gift of encouragement, and I love doing that for Jon. I felt like he needed encouragement, a cheerleader. I have a relationship with Jesus, and I felt Him calling me to challenge Jon to think differently. It was my duty. Since I

first met Jon, the change in him has been transformational. He has grown from a seed to a flourishing plant.

Throughout the years, Jon has seen the staff from Four Corners Home for Children, at his church in Chinle regularly giving updates on the ministry and the children. He realized how much they care about God's children. Being back on campus, staying in the house Jon lived in, and learning new information about his time there, have also brought healing. Jon's doubts, fears, and apprehensions faded as he glanced through his file from long ago. Jon did not fully remember all that took place when he lived at FCHC, and looking through his paperwork was eye-opening - Jon's mother did not abandon Jon. She did not leave him at a children's home.

Rosalie brought Jon to FCHC in September of 1989 when he was nine. Rosalie visited him on campus just three weeks later and came to see him twice every month for the nine months he lived there. Rosalie

also took Jon home for the weekend on numerous occasions. Two months after he moved in, Rosalie joined Jon and his "Mission family" for Thanksgiving. That was a very special day Jon and Rosalie enjoyed tremendously.

As Jon continued reading through his file, he came across a letter his mother wrote to Kay Baker, the Director of Children's Services for FCHC. The letter is dated September 14, 1989, just one day after she brought Jon to FCHC:

Kay,  
It is very quiet here without Jon. I do miss his laughter and his hugs. I know I have made the right decision.  
Kay, it is freezing in this house. Jon is probably nice and warm and ready to enroll in school. I have to go over to my mother's as soon as I get this in the envelope. Have a nice day, and may God bless you and all the workers.  
Sincerely,  
Rosalie



9-14-89 6:45 AM

Kay:  
Enclosed is the physical paper for Jon.  
It's very quiet here without Jon. I do miss his laughter and his hugs.  
I know I have made the right decision.  
Kay it's freezing in this house. Jon is probably nice and warm up and ready to enroll in school.  
Have to go over to my mother's as soon as I get this in the envelope.  
Have a nice day.  
May God bless you and all the workers.

Sincerely  
Rosalie

Jon read the letter and then laid it down on the table. We sat silently for awhile, giving Jon time to process his thoughts and find his voice. When asked how he felt, he looked at Charmaine, took a deep breath, and replied:

*I wasn't a burden. I was not a burden. I understand now. My mom was obligated to care for her mother; no one else could. She could not take care of both of us at the same time, so she brought me to Four Corners Home for Children – not because she wanted to, but because she loved me and knew they would take care of me. My mom came back for me as soon as she could. I am blessed. I now wish other kids had the same opportunity that I did.*

*I have had so many questions that have now been answered. Mom's letter tells me a lot – she didn't do this by choice but by circumstance. She did not leave me.*

When Rosalie came for Jon to take him back home with her, she brought another letter she had written to Jim and Kay Baker:

*I am very grateful that there are loving and caring people like those at the mission. I would like to express my sincere thanks for the mission being there when I needed someone to care for Jon. Jon has changed a lot in his attitudes toward everyday living, but most of all, he knows now that we cannot do anything without Jesus Christ. Jon can set his priorities and accomplish his goals through Jesus, and let his light shine for the Lord.*

*Sincerely,  
Rosalie*

*Jon is doing just that. Jon, Charmaine, and their family live in Chinle, Arizona, near Rosalie.*

Jon is a guide for jeep tours and loves working in the heart of Navajoland. Jon enjoys sharing Navajo history and culture with tour guests, especially in the beautiful Canyon De Chelly. Looking back and reflecting on his life, Jon firmly believes that with God, anything is possible. His favorite Bible verse is Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." It is a great verse, and it describes Jon Tsoie perfectly.



**I was scared to tell my story, but maybe it isn't even for me. If my story helps other children or adults, I am glad I could tell it. I want to use it to help others, especially the kids at Four Corners Home for Children.**

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# CAMPUS UPDATES



## HOUSE OF GRACE:

This new teen transitional program focuses on teenagers who are in out-of-home placement. The program provides basic needs and life-skills training teens will need as adults, whether they are continuing their education or beginning their careers. Skills like budgeting and finance, how to apply and interview for a job, cooking, household management, and more. This program is a launching pad for our young adults to enter the world successfully.



## HOUSE OF HOPE:

Our emergency placement provides shelter and care for up to six children. We developed this program to provide services to children who have been removed from their homes due to a crisis. Children often come to the House of Hope with only the clothes they are wearing. Our loving staff provides for the children's needs for clothing, food, shelter, and most importantly, love and compassion. This program is currently on hold until we complete construction on a brand-new facility. We are in the final stretch of raising money for this essential program and hope to begin filling this home with God's precious children by the end of September!



## HOUSE OF MERCY:

This facility is home to our Navajo Nation Outreach program, which has grown and expanded beyond our dreams! We have renovated a campus building for addiction recovery classes, Bible studies, and addressing the needs of our community and the Navajo Nation. In addition to Celebrate Recovery classes on Tuesday nights, we are helping meet the physical needs of people who come to us for help.

At least once monthly, we set up a booth at the Shiprock Flea Market to distribute Bibles in Navajo and English and solar-powered audio Bibles in the Navajo language. Each time our team is on the scene, there are numerous opportunities to minister to and pray with people. God is using our Navajo Nation Outreach team in mighty ways, and we are blessed to serve in this manner.

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT



After my wife Liz and I moved from Iowa to New Mexico, we began reflecting on the many friends and memories we made over the last 22 years in Grimes, Iowa. We are excited to join Four Corners Home for Children and begin a new season in our life in Christ. We eagerly look forward to working alongside wonderful people who have dedicated many decades to serving God in the four corners region.

Likewise, many of you partnered with the staff of Four Corners Home for Children and Navajo Ministries for decades, providing financial and prayer support and volunteering your time to make a difference in the lives of the people of this region. Your donations provide food, clothing, and shelter for some of the most vulnerable children in our country. The financial gifts also support staff members who love these children unconditionally, serve as the hands and feet of Jesus to those in addiction recovery, and deliver the written and spoken Gospel to many in the Navajo Nation. Your prayers provide emotional support for our staff as they battle for the Lord daily and offer comfort to the children living away from their families.

Liz and I did not move to New Mexico for a job or an opportunity to do something different. We were called to Farmington to be part of a movement, joining the Lord's battle taking place in the four corners. All of us at Four Corners Home for Children are very thankful to be partnering with all of you in that battle and appreciate all your financial and prayer support!

If you are interested in learning more about planned giving, please reach out to me at (505) 324-5231 or [jhendricks@4ch4c.org](mailto:jhendricks@4ch4c.org).

**JEFF HENDRICKS**

*Director of Development*



# NEIGHBOR TO THE NAVAJO: Ben Stoner

BY: ANNETTE REICH



Some years ago, while listening to Vertical Radio, I heard a short segment with a man speaking a word in the Navajo language and then giving the English translation. He repeated the word numerous times before signing off with his signature statement, "Hlgo0nee', until you hear Ben-again." It was catchy and grabbed my attention, but what stood out was how this man made the Navajo language sing. I looked forward to an opportunity to meet this Navajo man.

For those of you who know "Ben-again," you are already laughing. Why? Because the man on the radio was not Navajo, the man on the radio was Ben Stoner, from East Berlin, Pennsylvania.

Born and raised in Adams County, Ben met and married his wife, Eunice, in 1970, and two months later, moved to New Mexico. While attending Messiah College, Ben heard of an opportunity to participate in a two-year mission assignment at the Navajo Brethren in Christ Mission (BIC), located near the Blanco Trading Post in New Mexico. The opportunity was for Ben to teach in the elementary school and Eunice to serve as the school cook. The Stoners were eager to serve out their two years, but alas, two years in New Mexico has turned into 52!

As a boy in Pennsylvania, our church family was very mission-minded. We had an annual camp meeting, and as dairy farmers, we had to stick close to home for milking, but every year on "Missions Day" at Roxbury Holiness Camp, we drove 90 minutes to reach the camp. After the service, my father drove home to milk the cows and returned for the evening service. My family supported missions, and we had numerous family members who were overseas missionaries. I accepted the Lord at the young age of five at that camp, and I know God called me to be a missionary from the beginning.

Eunice was flattered when Ben asked her to join him in the mission field. Having a similar church background to his, Eunice did not hesitate when it was time to leave for New Mexico to begin their married life as missionaries. Ben taught elementary students at the BIC Mission while Eunice made their meals. Ben also made home visits to all of his students. At that time, the director of the Mission was a psychologist who soon noticed that Ben was not made for an institutional setting and would fare better out in the field. He secured a place near the Salvation Army in Farmington for the Stoners to live and minister. Ben describes their time there,

We were in the heart of downtown

Farmington, a target-rich environment for ministry. In my 22 years, I had only seen two intoxicated men. The streets of Farmington were filled with people who were drinking or already drunk. We lived between two main bars, and encountered 20 or more individuals every day drinking and sleeping on the streets. It was culture shock for us, but we never second-guessed our calling; why we were there. We were ministering to people.

We led a mid-week prayer meeting, made home visits, and conducted youth activities, in addition to Ben teaching at the Navajo Methodist Mission school. After that season, we went to the Chaco community for three years. We made preschool and home visits there - oh, the muddy roads! When we moved there, we had two small children and were without electricity and utilities!

Ben and Eunice had been with the BIC Mission from 1970 to 1986 and after 16 years, began feeling God calling them to a change. Ben had managed a trailer park for three and a half years, and he and Eunice were part of a Nazarene church. Their Bible study group consisted of business professionals, and one evening, a man approached Ben and told him he should be doing something other than fixing trailers. That is about the same time Jim Baker, President of Navajo Missions (now Four Corners Home for Children,) talked with Ben about a job opening in reservation ministry. The job entailed conducting summer Vacation Bible Schools in Navajo communities, leading Bible studies in

homes, and meeting physical and spiritual needs.

Unsure where to begin with summer VBS plans, Ben remembered his days in Chaco, teaching preschool 11 years earlier. He remembered the regional meetings in Shiprock, New Mexico, and other meetings here and there. After asking the Lord how to begin, Ben was reminded of the preschools in the region where he had taught. He went to those areas and in each one found someone he knew from years before. God steered him in the right direction, and doors began opening. Ben wanted to do a VBS in two specific places and remembered people in those locations. They were quite a distance away, and after two years, he had yet to make the trip there. Ben was in Walmart in Farmington one Saturday and ran into people from both places! Ben arranged the VBSs in the middle of Walmart since God had brought the people to him!

Along the way, Ben picked up the Navajo language. His first exposure to the language was from a man at the BIC.

Although we taught classes in English, hymns and Scripture were in the Navajo language. I loved hearing the language. After a few semesters of Navajo Language at San Juan College, I could read and speak in Navajo. It is a beautiful but complicated language. Verbs are tough; I can understand the language more than I can speak it.

-Ben Stoner



*Ben is humble, to hear him speak in the Navajo language is beautiful. He has taught Navajo reading language to many, including Navajo people.*

*Ben and Eunice are church planters or church "starters," as Ben likes to say. The Stoners held regular Bible studies for home groups. They met some folks through a Nazarene camp and began meeting monthly, then weekly. There was a connection between that group and others meeting in their home, which became the start of Light of Life Mennonite Church. After five years, they began another home group that continues today.*

*When asked about their struggles along the way, Ben replies,*

*We often prayed for things that never came to pass, at least not as quickly as we desired. We wanted to see folks sold out for Christ, to see people come to know the Lord and make Him known to others. That's a process, and it is in God's timing.*

*Grins spread across the faces of both Ben and Eunice when asked about monumental moments in their ministry,*

*After serving the Navajo people for 15 years, I met up with three people I had lost track of. All of them had come to know the Lord in that time. One was a 4th-grade student I'd taught years ago. Another I had met at the Methodist Mission School. Two of the three called me out of the blue to tell me they had accepted Christ. The third telephoned, looking for books on Christian living. I had*

*no idea he had become a Christian!*

*When asked about important things they had learned along the way, Eunice speaks up,*

*One of the critical things to know and do is to listen. Be willing to listen and learn. Be aware of different worldviews and pay attention to cultural things. We are not here to change culture but to introduce Jesus into culture.*

*The Stoners are still going strong and have impacted many lives in and around Navajoland. After their two-year (plus 50) commitment, there are no plans to step out of ministry. God still has work for them, and they graciously continue to serve as God has called and equipped them to do.*



The Stoners have three children, two serving in ministry with their spouses, and seven beautiful grandchildren. Although no longer serving in reservation ministry for Four Corners Home for Children, Ben is still very involved with the Navajo people and teaching Navajo language reading to all interested. It is always a joy when Ben swings by the FCHC offices or is on campus for an event. When he arrives, you can usually hear someone say, "Here comes Ben-again!" Some things never change, but then, some things never should.

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