I WOULD CHOOSE NAVAJO MINISTRIES
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.

Navajo Ministries is a Charter Member in good standing with ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability).

Sponsor a specific child or one of our children’s homes at the Four Corners Home for Children for $25 a month (or more) and receive monthly updates, photos and biographical information.

Call Kay Baker at 888.325.0255
For More Information

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Navajo Neighbors
Since 1953 Navajo Ministries, Inc. has been instilling hope, restoration and eternal values in the lives of all those we serve! As the Naat’áni (President) of this life-changing ministry, it is my responsibility to maintain the integrity and credibility of this undertaking and cast vision for the future.

When I was approached by the NMI Board of Directors and asked to prayerfully consider accepting the position of President and CEO of this grand ministry, I made it a serious priority to seek God’s direction. Something of this magnitude is not to be taken lightly — and trust me, I hit my knees before the Throne! Bottom line, I accepted the appointment with a deep understanding that God wanted to accomplish great exploits (see Daniel 11:32)!

Historically NMI has caught the attention of those who have a desire to serve, even though we are in an obscured location in the Four Corners Region. People are willing to make sacrifices in order to make a significant difference in the lives of the Diné (Navajo People).

In this issue of the Navajo Neighbors you will not only encounter the passionate and compassionate staff of NMI, but also a fabulous story of one of our children who benefitted from our programs. On page 6 you’ll read about Sonseeahay “Sonnie” Begay-Rodriquez, her personal experience with NMI and how that influenced her in choosing a career. Beginning on page 10 you’ll get an up-close view of our Four Corners Home for Children and on page 12 you will learn how our Ranch Program is meeting a significant need in the lives of our children. On page 13 you’ll begin to understand the importance of our children staying connected to their language and culture. Wow — then there’s the article on page 14 regarding the Navajo Code Talkers!

Navajo Ministries is funded by individuals, families, and organizations who believe in what we are doing. Their prayer and financial support is making a major difference in us fulfilling our mission. We are committed and focused, and we are determined to do great exploits with God through partnerships with those who catch the vision!

Ahééhée! (Thank you) Bóhóníihí nihik’íjíidoó (The LORD bless you).

Serving together,
“I remembered one night in Utah when my older sister was holding me and telling me to be quiet because someone was banging on the door. It was my mom’s boyfriend and he was MAD! I didn’t know it then but as an adult looking back, I can see that they had a violent relationship. Then, I just knew that we were scared all the time … but that was normal.

When I came to Navajo Ministries, I saw a husband and wife who took care of us without yelling, screaming and fighting, and that became my new normal.”

Sonya soon settled into life at NMI and noticed how very different this new life was in comparison to what she had known in the past. She enrolled in first grade, then second and then third. She was amazed that she got to stay in the same school each year, rather than moving from one school to the next, year after year. She continued to feel safe and enjoyed the sense of family that she felt at NMI. Before she knew it, she was in middle school and then high school.
Things didn’t always go smoothly for Sonya. She struggled through her teen years like most teenagers do. In her own words:

“I didn’t sail through high school. It was a developmentally difficult time for me but I also rationalized my own behavior. I felt like all my poor decisions were someone else’s fault. I didn’t do well in 9th grade and spent most of 10th grade trying to catch up so I could graduate with my class.

Rebellion is natural for a teenager and I believe I would have been rebellious even if I hadn’t lived in a children’s home. Part of my rebellion might have stemmed from the rules I lived under, but most of it can be attributed to consequences for my own decisions and behavior.”

There were many things about those teenage years at NMI that Sonya enjoyed. One in particular was the opportunity to be around younger children and help care for them. This would prove to be a factor in Sonya’s near future as well as a huge influence in her long-term career choice.

After graduating from Farmington High School, Sonya moved off grounds, but she wasn’t gone for long. Sonya returned to NMI to work in the childcare department. She became an assistant house mom in the House of Hope, an emergency placement program. Sonya was able to care for precious children who were separated from their families due to a crisis situation. She served in that capacity for some time before taking on the responsibility of house mom in that same program.

Sonya was able to care for and relate to the children in the House of Hope in a unique way because of her own life experiences, which included coming to NMI as a child, spending twelve years there, and growing up with children of all ages.

Her history with Navajo Ministries is full and rich and when asked about her fondest memories she is quick to answer:

“Early in my time at Navajo Ministries, when I was still a little girl, my house mom made me a dollhouse. That might seem like a normal, inconsequential thing to some people, but it was huge to me. While caring for numerous children, she took the time to create a dollhouse for ME. She built it and decorated it. When she realized that the main room should have a clock on the wall, her husband took his watch apart, removed the face and attached it to the wall in my dollhouse. I loved it then and I love it still. It is something I treasure and will never forget. A dollhouse is something little girls take for granted but if I hadn’t come to live at Navajo Ministries, I would have never had a dollhouse.”

“Another one of my very best memories is of being in the Live Navajo Nativity that NMI does for the community each Christmas. Most of us complained about having to stand out in the cold and especially as we got older. We acted as if we didn’t like it but we did. We looked forward to it each year and it was a highlight of our time there. I wouldn’t trade my memories of Nativity Night for anything in the world…”

Today, Sonya is an In-Home Service Practitioner for Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) for the state of New Mexico. She enrolled in, and worked hard at, San Juan Community College in Farmington. She received her Associate’s Degree, then began an internship with CYFD as a Permanency Planning Worker. She was tasked with creating treatment plans for parents, addressing urgent needs, keeping track of their progress, and working with parents to help them get their children out of foster care. Sonya remained in that position for two years and had a 100% success rate, reunifying seven families in one year’s time! During her two-year internship, she was able to earn her Bachelor’s Degree and enroll in her Master’s Program which she has completed.

When asked to reflect on her life, her take on God, and what she would change if she could, she looks me directly in the eye and simply states:

“God… I absolutely adore Him. I turned my back on Him many times - as a teenager, a young adult and during the dark time when my mom passed away, which was just after we began building a relationship. After I came back from her funeral, I curled up in a ball on my bed and cried. While I was praying, I felt a hand on my body. It was a protective hand and I couldn’t move. I KNEW it was God and I KNEW I was going to be okay. I’ve walked with Him ever since.

I’ve been given many opportunities in life and I don’t know if they would have been available to me if I hadn’t come to NMI. My mom came from a poverty that is very hard to crawl out of and I think if I had stayed with her I would have remained in that. Resources were available to me because I grew up at Navajo Ministries. My mom also did not have a spiritual understanding of Christ and I believe it is because of NMI that I have faith. Without that, I would not be where I am.”

When asked point-blank what she would change if she could, she responds with confidence:

“If I could go back to that six-year-old girl who was dropped off at Navajo Ministries and change it, knowing everything I know today, I wouldn’t. I wouldn’t change anything… I would choose Navajo Ministries.”
I started putting a plan in place. I called the Associate Pastor, Steve Reid, at Prescott Life Church, introduced myself and told him what we were thinking. He thought it was awesome.

Knowing he had to stick to his budget, our house dad asked Pastor Steve if it would be possible for them to bunk for the night on the floor at the church. Pastor Steve said he thought he could do better than that.

Pastor Steve contacted Mr. Greg Mengarelli, Mayor of Prescott, who is also the Executive Director of United Christian Youth Camp (UCYC). They arranged for the family to stay in a 40-bed cabin at the camp (at no cost) and included dinner in the Chow Hall Saturday night after the movie.

House dad’s comments: The camp was amazing! They had basketball, zipline, rock wall, ropes course, archery, paintball, gaga ball, static course and on and on. The food was amazing too, it wasn’t like fast food or even camp food, it was a delicious buffet and the girls ate WELL!

The girls enjoyed the film and it raised questions in their hearts about their faith. They stayed up most of that night talking about Christianity and how to share their faith with others in real and practical ways.

The next morning during services at Prescott Life Church, our house parents were called on to share how they came to be there. They explained that it wasn’t logical or practical and might not make sense to some people but God put it on their hearts and He was in it.

After the service, Pastor Steve and his wife took the family out to eat and while there, they were able to minister to and share their faith with an employee at the restaurant.

House dad’s comments: There comes a point in our Christian walk where we have to put our faith into action. We have to share our faith – not in a weird way but in a real way.

On the way home, Brittney, 13, mentioned that Reckless Love was her favorite song. Everyone in the van began to sing it and they sang it over and over again. In the words of Danielle, 16, “I would definitely take that trip again.”

The girls in the House of Love got to see a lot more than a movie that weekend. They got to see God at work. You might even say they got to see the finger of God.
One of the unique features Navajo Ministries has on our 16-acre campus is a small ranch. In fact, at one time we raised cattle for beef – we even had our own brand! A lot has changed since then, primarily for the purpose of meeting the needs of our children.

Animal therapy is a powerful tool. Studies have proven that the children see animals as peers... at this point they identify much better with animals than humans. They are able to begin developing nurturing skills as they are taught to take care of an animal. The animals can open a non-threatening, emotionally safe, communication for children. Another huge benefit to animal therapy is the fact that animals are very accepting; therefore, children are readily able to experience unconditional love. There are other redeeming qualities children can gain from animal therapy: socialization, mental stimulation and empathy, to name a few.

All of our children are placed under our care due to abuse and neglect. This trauma they’ve experienced is extremely debilitating; therefore, a safe and secure environment is paramount before we can start providing the help their wounded souls need. That’s where the animals in our ranch program come in. Each of the children are assigned daily chores in and around the barn, and all their interaction with the various animals, under close supervision, provides the much-needed connection which leads to a healthy human connection. It is such a wonderful demonstration of God’s healing touch!

Paula Terpsma is our Ranch Manager and she is very passionate about the service they provide to our children here serving in this vital capacity. They are able to begin providing the much-needed help their wounded souls need. That’s where the animals come in. Each of the children are assigned daily chores in and around the barn, and all their interaction with the various animals, under close supervision, provides the much-needed connection which leads to a healthy human connection. It is such a wonderful demonstration of God’s healing touch!

One of the biggest challenges we face on a continual basis is the cost of running our Ranch Program: the hay, grains, supplements, veterinarian & ferrier fees, buying lambs and chicks, etc. We appreciate all those who partner with us through their generous donations and contribute to our children’s programs. We are able to provide this magnificent program to our children due to our generous donors and sponsors. Allow me to express to each of you a heartfelt thank you for your support and for helping to make our after school program possible.

During our After School Program our Children are learning their Diné Bizaad (Navajo Language) and Culture. Generally, when children are removed from their families on the Reservation, they lose their connection to their language and culture and become totally immersed in the Biligáána (Anglo) worldview. We believe it is vital for our children to stay connected to their language and culture; therefore, our childcare staff includes Miss Nina Benally, a Navajo Elder, to meet this significant need.

Some of our children come to us fluent in their Navajo language and can have conversations entirely in Navajo. However, others may only understand Navajo but not speak it, or they may not even understand it at all. Regardless of the child’s fluency, Miss Nina is keeping the class work and homework assignments very practical and relevant.

Besides all the classroom learning, the children will learn their culture through hands-on traditional projects such as sheep shearing, butchering and cooking. They will learn the process of carding, spindling, weaving, and dyeing the wool, which is an important part of Navajo culture. Ultimately they will learn to use the wool in weaving traditional rugs.

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Navajo Code Talker
Christmas Luncheon

“Diné Bizaad Yee Atah Naayéé’ Yik’eh Deesdlíí” - meaning “The Navajo language was used to defeat the enemy.”

This past December Navajo Ministries had the exceptional honor and privilege of hosting the Annual Code Talkers Christmas Meal in our Education & Activity Center! This prestigious event is provided for the remaining Navajo Code Talkers, their families and the Descendants of those Code Talkers who have passed away. Each family member looks forward to this Annual Reunion to reconnect and give honor to whom honor is due.

When I found out that this special group did not have a venue for their families to gather, I immediately offered our facilities and began to rally our staff and food services so this celebration could take place! Wow – what an opportunity... I must admit I was pretty excited for NMI to serve those who gave so much for our country.

Perhaps I can give a little history of the Navajo Code Talkers. During World War II, the enemy were masters at breaking all of the U.S. military communication codes. Philip Johnston, who served in the military, had spent his childhood on Navajo Reservation with his missionary parents. He had learned the Navajo language and knew that it was the most difficult language to learn. He had the idea that the Marines could use this complex language to communicate, and the enemy would not be able to understand what they were saying or what their plans were. He passed this idea on to military intelligence. As a result, a Code was developed that was never broken by the enemy, and that made all the difference in the outcome of WWII. The Code was finally declassified in 1968 and in 1982 President Ronald Reagan declared August 14 to be National Navajo Code Talker Day. There are only 8 Code Talkers still alive today.

Special Note: During this extremely emotional event I was presented with a Navajo Nation Flag. Words cannot describe how that made me feel – I was completely overwhelmed! You can be sure that the flag will be displayed with great honor, respect and pride!

Remembering
Navajo Code Talker,
Alfred K. Newman

Alfred K. Newman, Sr., one of the original remaining Navajo Code Talkers, passed away on January 13, 2019, at the age of 94. He and his wife Betsy have been friends of Navajo Ministries for many years. We featured Alfred and the wonderful story of the Code Talkers in a previous issue of Navajo Neighbors. (You can retrieve the article at NavajoMinistries.org and click on News and thenNavajo Neighbors, Fall 2008.) As a Christian, Alfred carried his little New Testament with him into battle, finding comfort in Psalm 91.

Perhaps you have a relative or friend who has courageously battled sickness and disease and have finally made their way into the arms of God in heaven. If so, this page is a reminder that you can memorialize your loved one through a Living Memorial gift. Or if you have a friend still living that you would like to honor you can do that also. All Living Memorial gifts received benefit the ongoing care of children living here at the Four Corners Home for Children.

Upon receiving your donation, a lovely remembrance card will be sent to the family of the one you are honoring. No amounts are mentioned.

When Alfred made it back home to New Mexico, the desert brush amid the canyons and mesas were a sight for sore eyes. He has now made it to his eternal home in heaven, where he has heard his Lord say, “Well done good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21).
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