



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Speaker Morgan is pleased with movement of eyeglass project

Project will help more than 9,000 Navajo children

"We have thousands of Navajo children who have vision problems. The lack of glasses is a very real challenge. That in turn, makes getting through school very difficult." — Marilyn King-Johnson, Executive Director, Division of Dine Youth.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan and the 21st Navajo Nation Council are pleased to announce the movement of the Navajo Department of Education's Bishop Optical Eyeglass Project.

Speaker Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) sponsored Legislation No. 0689-07, which passed by a vote of 79-1 on Dec. 19 during a special session. This legislation relates to education and finance and amended the Navajo Nation 2008 fiscal year budget to appropriate \$495,000 to the Navajo Department of Education for this project that will help thousands of Navajo children.

This immense collaborative effort between Speaker Morgan, Bishop Optical, the Office of Diné Youth (ODY), and restaurant owner Sammy Chioda has resulted in an exciting plan to provide approximately 9,000 Navajo children with a pair of eyeglasses and a large pizza for every child that receives new glasses — a commitment from Sammy Chioda.

Marilyn King-Johnson, ODY Executive Director, explained that she held a meeting at Sammy C's Rock'n'Sports Grill in Gallup, N.M. to discuss the project when Chioda overheard discussions for this project.

Chioda offered to donate gift certificates worth \$10.99 to every child that receives new glasses through this project.

In explaining the importance of prescription eyeglasses, King-Johnson described a conversation she had with a gentleman, she asked him to remove his glasses for a brief moment. She explained that the man began squinting and it was obvious that he desperately relies on his glasses for sight.

"See? Now imagine being a little Navajo kid at school trying to learn and think how that child feels and how he can't adequately learn because he does not have glasses," King-Johnson explained.

"We have thousands of Navajo children who have vision problems," King-Johnson added. "The lack of glasses is a very real challenge. That in turn, makes getting through school very difficult."

"I've seen too many youngsters not being able to see very well early in their lives," Chioda added. Chioda has — thus far — is committed to donating more than \$100,000 worth of pizza gift certificates to Navajo children who will be recipients of this eyeglass program.

"I think that this is going to be a huge and successful project for Navajo children," Chioda said with excitement in his voice.

Speaker Morgan said that he will do whatever he can to continue to help Navajo children and this is just one of many projects on the list of challenges that his office is tackling.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.