



## The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### Dennehotso Chapter celebrates groundbreaking of new multipurpose building

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*— Sylvia Laughter, former Arizona State Representative*

**DENNEHOTSO, Ariz.** — The community of Dennehotso celebrated the groundbreaking of a much-needed multipurpose building on March 24 at an event that attracted a large crowd of community members, tribal dignitaries and well wishers from across the Navajo Nation.

The \$2.7 million facility, designed by David N. Sloan and Associates from Albuquerque N.M., was made possible by several financial contributors, including: the state of Arizona, the Transportation and Community Development Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council; the Navajo Capital Improvement Office; the Navajo Division of Community Development; the Tuba City Abandoned Mine Lands Administration; the Utah Navajo Revitalization Fund Program, the Dennehotso Chapter and the Navajo Design and Engineering Department.

The 8,092-square-foot facility will be used for multiple purposes and it will include space for the new senior citizens center, a dining room, an activity room, a reception area, a resource library, office space, a conference room and a youth area.

The new facility is expected to be completed in approximately 10 months after nearly three years of work and planning by the community. George Hubbard with the Navajo Nation Design and Engineering Department will continue spearheading and coordinating the project.

Katherine Benally, Navajo Nation Council delegate for the Dennehotso Chapter, thanked many people and agencies for their contributions to making this facility a reality and she especially thanked retired Arizona State Sen. Karen Johnson (R-Mesa).

"In 2007, Karen Johnson sponsored legislation for our multipurpose facility at the Arizona State Legislature," Benally said. "We received \$450,000 from this and it was because of this, I was able to carry the award letter around and ask other agencies, 'Can you match this?'"

"Without her, we would not have this building, she did this for us and that is why we are here for the groundbreaking today," Benally added. "We involved many agencies and many contributed to this facility."



Navajo Council Delegate Katherine Benally thanks the community and various agencies for their assistance in making the Dennehotso multipurpose facility a reality. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

Sylvia Laughter, former Arizona State Representative and community member of Dennehotso, also thanked Sen. Johnson as well.

"Senator Karen Johnson cares about Native Americans," Laughter said. "She lived in Showlow for many years, where she befriended a Navajo woman and they became lifelong friends. Karen's love for Navajo people came long before this project, she has a great love for Navajo people, she has a big heart and she never hesitated or questioned our intent."



Tribal dignitaries, community members and local community leaders participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Dennehotso multipurpose facility. (Photo by Joshua Lavar Butler)

Laughter explained that many people helped move the project forward and many community members traveled down to the Arizona State Legislature to support the legislation when it was entertained.

"You all contributed to this project," Laughter told the crowd. "You all voted to approve it as a community, you all participated and you all worked together and supported one another. We want to show other chapters what working together can do – it's an incredibly historic day!"

Laughter accepted a gift, a beautiful red Navajo rug, on behalf of Johnson.

The Honorable Lawrence T. Morgan, speaker of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council, was a guest speaker at the event and was thanked for his help in this project.

"I congratulate the Dennehotso Chapter, the community, its leaders and Council Delegate Katherine Benally for making this building a reality," Speaker Morgan said. "The effort of this community shows persistence and perseverance, and it is a model to be duplicated for other Navajo communities across our great Navajo Nation. Be proud of your efforts and of your accomplishments today, thank the leaders of this project and take care of the facility that will serve as a central meeting point for this community."

Benally presented Speaker Morgan with a large woven basket and also acknowledged everyone who helped.

A traditional Navajo lunch was provided by the staff from the local senior citizens center and various community members.

The Dennehotso Chapter thanks the following individuals and agencies for their support: Harvey McKerry, former chapter president; the local senior council and senior citizens; staff with Dennehotso Senior Center; Arizona State Legislature; former Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano; Sylvia Laughter, former Arizona state representative; Navajo Council Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr.; Arbin Mitchell, division director for Navajo Division of Community Development; Casey Begay and Marie Begay with the Capital Improvement Office; Fred Marianito, director of Design and Engineering; Beverly Coho with Navajo Business Regulatory; Marty Ashley with Navajo Office of the Controller; Navajo Department of Justice; Office of Management and Budget; Tony Dayish with the Utah Trust Fund; Ray Tsingine with Western Navajo AML; Tincer Nez Jr. with Western Navajo NAAA; Architect David Sloan and the Arizona Department of Economic Security.