



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2012

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Tsaile-Wheatfields Chapter dedicates new senior citizens center building

TSAILE-WHEATFIELDS, Ariz. – Blessed with songs, corn pollen, and the community spirit of persistence, a brand-new senior citizens center now stands tall in the heart of the Tsaile-Wheatfields community. Over 100 people attended a building dedication ceremony here on Wednesday to celebrate its long-awaited completion.

“Today is very emotional,” said Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’izhi), who praised the hard work of many individuals in the local area and at the Navajo Nation level who made the center a reality for the senior citizens in this area.

Tears of both happiness and gratitude streamed the faces of many attendees who knew first-hand of the chapter’s long struggle to get past obstacles and red-tape to create a center for their elders.

Until now, Tsaile-Wheatfields was among a small number of chapters on the Navajo Nation that did not have a senior citizens center where their elders could go to socialize, eat lunch, and receive information on particular topics that affect their lives as seniors.

“It is such a gratifying feeling to know that twelve years and more of prayers, commitments, and dedication has come to fruition,” said Leonard Teller, a former delegate who represented the Tsaile-Wheatfields and Lukachukai Chapters on the previous 21st Navajo Nation Council.

Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) spoke that morning, recalling how tenacious Teller was in his push to obtain funding to make the Tsaile/Wheatfields senior citizens center a reality when the two served together on the previous Council.

“It makes me very happy to stand before you all today, and to witness how your efforts have resulted in this beautiful building that sits here today,” said Speaker Naize, who had participated in the facility’s groundbreaking in June of the previous year.

Of those who attended Wednesday’s celebration, no other individuals were more appreciative and proud of the building’s completion than the elders who first envisioned a center they could call their own over a decade ago.

It was, indeed, the elders who had a major say in the design and layout of their facility, said Tsaile-Wheatfields Chapter President Zane James. They met several times with the architectural designer, requesting for special design features that would reflect the unique landscape around them.

Every morning, the sun rays will flood in from giant overhead windows on the east side to greet the elders inside. The warmth and brilliance of the sunlight will then stretch down the main corridor, approximately 45 feet in length, until it hits a large portion of the structure’s western interior wall.

The elders asked for the building's entrance to be designed in such a way that they could look outside and enjoy a clear and magnificent view of Tsaile Peak, a respected geological landmark standing 6.3 miles east of the facility, said Delegate BeGaye.

"This is truly their building," Delegate BeGaye remarked. "And after planting the seeds of vision for this center over a decade ago, it's fitting to have the dedication ceremony on this particular day in this season of harvest. It is very befitting."

Located near the Route 12 and Route 64 junction in Tsaile, the new senior citizens center sits on a nearly 8-acre parcel of land. Local elder Pauline Clauschee relinquished her grazing rights to the land so development could occur – an action that was honored by her community that morning.

The senior citizens center is just one of a number of facilities that is a part of master site plan for the lot of land that will soon include a multi-purpose facility, an elderly group home, a day care center, and a traditional Hogan.

The site plan emphasizes intermingling between the community's elderly and youth populations, which leaders and community members say will create pivotal opportunities for elders to pass on cultural and traditional knowledge to the young generations.

While that is the plan for the future, today the elders of Tsaile-Wheatfields are just happy they have a place in their community to call home.

"It is their thoughts, their dreams, and their admonishments (hashké) that made this vision a reality," said former delegate Leonard Teller. "Today is their day."

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