



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

Contact: Alastair L. Bitsoi, Public Information Officer

Phone: (928) 871-7228

Cell: (928) 255-2943

Fax: (928) 871-7255

abitsoi@navajo.org

www.navajonationcouncil.org

December 7, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Office of Youth Development celebrates grand opening of Diné Youth Complex, thanks Navajo Nation Council for allocations

"The money our Council delegates voted upon is money well spent because it benefits families and children in some way or form. Parents are happy. The community is happy. The school districts are happy,"
– Yvonne Kee-Billison, program supervisor at the Navajo Office of Youth Development

FORT DEFIANCE, Ariz. – On Friday, the Navajo Office of Youth Development celebrated the grand opening of its \$3.2 million Diné Youth Complex, which features three baseball/softball fields with state of the art field lighting, a skate and bike park, concession stand, a 6,000 square foot office complex, paved parking area and a paved entrance leading to the complex. The grand opening was witnessed by more than 500 people, most of which were youth who came as far away as San Carlos and Tuba City, Ariz.



Navajo youth cut ribbon marking the grand opening of the Diné Youth Complex, a \$3.2 million project. (Photo courtesy of Office of Youth Development)

Before the grand opening festivities, Medicine Man Richard Teller of Window Rock, Ariz., offered a traditional blessing ceremony for the Diné Youth Complex Thursday evening. On

Friday, a ribbon-cutting ceremony conducted by area youth marked the grand opening of the three phase project. Phase two and three of the complex will include a new Boys and Girls Club facility, as well as a new playground, a ropes course, walking trail, wellness center and a paved eastern entrance to the facility.

Various speakers praised the efforts of those involved in the development and contribution of the project, including three youth guest speakers from surrounding communities. Dominic Clichee, Nike N7 Brand Manager at Nike, who is originally from Navajo, N.M, and brothers Jack and Kenton Kaulity of Fort Defiance, who are students at Northern Arizona University, shared their recent successes with the youth attendees. They expressed their gratitude to the Navajo Office of Youth Development for providing them with guidance, and opportunities the office provides to local youth, such as the well-equipped complex.

Those in attendance also witnessed a skate and bike competition, as well as demonstrations by Bryant Chapo, a Navajo professional skateboarder, from Albuquerque, N.M.

Two youth who recently relocated to the Fort Defiance area rated the skate park a "four" on a scale of one to five.

-more-

"This is what the community needs and what the Navajo Nation needs for its youth," said Nevin Poyer, 15, of Flagstaff, Ariz. "This is a touch and a dream come true. There are a lot of skate borders here on the Navajo Nation. The new facility will help keep kids from getting in trouble and help make us better skateboarders."

"The complex is a place for youth to gather and there is a real need for it here on the reservation," added Guy Tsosie, 15, also of Flagstaff.

Yvonne Kee-Billison, program supervisor at the Navajo Office of Youth Development, said the complex was a long-range goal of the community, and will help the office in providing internet, recreation and life skill development to area youth.



Honorable Harold Wauneka chats with Nevin Poyer, 15, and Guy Tsosie, 15, about the new Diné Youth Complex and its skate and bike park. (Photo by Alastair Lee Bitsoi)

"Our old office was in a Bureau of Indian Affairs building and at one point the BIA said they wanted their building back," Kee-Billison said, adding that the effort for a youth complex began in 2006. "As a result, we talked to the Fort Defiance Chapter and have utilized the chapter's recreation tract since. Underneath it all, the youth needed a different place, particularly for programs and recreation. With this new facility, we will be able to host activities year round."

Mrs. Kee-Billison said the completion of the three phase project could possibly be finished in the next five to eight years, depending on the availability of financial resources. In an effort to help provide a positive place for youth on the Navajo Nation, the Navajo Nation Council made two allocations to the Navajo Office of Youth Development for its Fort Defiance Diné Youth Complex. In total, the Council provided \$2.7 million to help the office achieve its vision.

"I also want to thank the Navajo Nation Council," added Kee-Billison. "The money our Council delegates voted upon is money well spent because it benefits families and children in some way or form. Parents are happy. The community is happy. The school districts are happy."

Honorable Harold Wauneka (Fort Defiance) said the new complex brings positive energy to the community of Fort Defiance, including surrounding areas.

"The complex brings positive energy, particularly for our youth because they have a positive place to go. In addition to recreation, our youth will also have access to the educational resources offered by the Navajo Office of Youth Development," said Wauneka. "This is a model facility for other youth facilities across the Navajo Nation, including the proposed facilities at Crownpoint and Shiprock, N.M."

Mr. Wauneka also thanked the event attendees for their efforts in bringing the complex to fruition: the Fort Defiance Chapter Administration and Officials, Office of the President and Vice-President, members of the Navajo Nation Council, Dyron Murphy Architects, Westpac Construction, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Navajo Nation Divisions, Departments and Programs, Miss Indian Arizona, and other local officials.

For more information, please visit www.dineyouth.com.