



The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Councilwoman Hope MacDonald Lone Tree delivers 4,000 backpacks for the third consecutive year to help Navajo students succeed in school

TUBA CITY, Ariz. – For the third consecutive year, thousands of students from the Western Navajo Agency received backpacks with school supplies, thanks to the efforts of Councilwoman Hope MacDonald Lone Tree and the Office Depot Foundation's initiative to help Navajo students succeed in school.

On Sept. 1, students of Tuba City Boarding School, ranging from kindergarten to the sixth grade, gathered to receive their new backpacks, which ranged in color from pink, yellow, blue, dark blue or shades of multicolor. The back packs consisted of a ruler, crayons, a glue stick, a pen, pencil, a pencil sharpener and an eraser.

Since 2000, the Office Depot Foundation has organized a National Backpack Program that they strongly believe makes a difference in a child's academics by boosting their self-esteem and by building self confidence. In its 10th year, the Office Depot Foundation has donated more than 2.3 million backpacks students across the United States, including the Navajo Nation.

Well aware there are not many families who can afford adequate school supplies for their children, MacDonald Lone Tree began working closely with the Office Depot Foundation in 2008. And for the past two years, the Navajo Nation has participated in this donation program and received a total of 8,000 backpacks with an additional 4,000 backpacks this year.

"I thank the Office Depot Foundation for extending their compassion to Indian Country, particularly children on the Navajo Nation. Many Navajo families are finding it more and more difficult to provide some of the basic necessities due to financial hardship," MacDonald Lone Tree said. "Our children need and deserve every opportunity there is for quality education and the materials to help them become the best that they can be. Our children have big dreams and we need to work together to make these dreams a reality."



Top photo: Students pose for a picture after receiving their back packs from the Office of Depot Foundation, who delivered 4,000 back packs to the Western Navajo Agency. Bottom photo: Councilwoman Hope MacDonald Lone Tree talks with students about their new backpacks, encouraging them to stay in school. (Photo by Laphillda Tso)

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With smiles radiating through the gymnasium, students thanked MacDonald Lone Tree for her time and expressed gratitude for their new backpacks. Students held on tightly to their backpacks appreciating their new gifts as they repeatedly took-off and put-on their backpacks or quickly opened them to compare the contents.

When asked what his thoughts were about the annual backpack drive, Antonio Dale, a sixth grader, said, “The backpacks are great because they are used to help keep assignments and school books together. I like it because now students won’t lose their paperwork.”

The backpack distribution also coincided with spirit day at the Tuba City Boarding School to which Principal Don Coffland said was a successful occasion for the students.

“They are nice backpacks,” Coffland said. “The notes we send home and the students’ homework have a place to go now. I saw the students smiling as I was walking into the gymnasium and I want to thank all the participants for another successful day.”

MacDonald Lone Tree extends her gratitude to the following programs and entities for their efforts in assuring that every child in western Navajo received a backpack: Navajo Nation Office of Youth Development, To Nanees Dizi Boys & Girls Club, Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation’s Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Injury Prevention Team, Navajo Nation Department of Behavioral Health - Tuba City Service Unit, Tuba City Boarding School, Tuba City Unified School District, and the Tuba City Police Department.

She also expressed her appreciation to the National Foundation for Women Legislators and the Office Depot Foundation for including students in Indian Country -- particularly the Navajo Nation.

Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan commended and thanked MacDonald Lone Tree for her efforts in providing much needed educational tools to help improve the lives of Navajo youth – the future of the Navajo Nation.

“Thanks to the efforts of Honorable MacDonald LoneTree and various organizations, our Navajo youth will have book bags as the school year begins. This is an important matter to our youth because book bags do increase self-confidence and will help our students achieve at high levels,” Speaker Morgan said. “Through the partnership with the Office Depot Foundation, MacDonald-Lone Tree is demonstrating her commitment to increasing the quality of education for children on the Navajo Nation.”

Backpacks will continue to be distributed to schools in the areas of Dennehosto, LeChee and Leupp Chapters of the Western Navajo Agency.



Councilwoman Hope McDonald Lone Tree and Tuba City Boarding School Principal Don Coffland. (Photo by Laphillda Tso)

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