



NAVAJO DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT FOR SELF RELIANCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 3, 2014

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Department for Self Reliance Partners to Instill Healthy Habits for Navajo Children.

Window Rock, Ariz. - Through its Nutrition, Education and Obesity Prevention (NEOP) program, First Things First collaborated with the Department for Self Reliance (DSR) to focus on the nutritional needs of children, healthy activity for the family, and strategies to prevent childhood malnutrition and obesity.

Customers of DSR's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are given an opportunity to earn a certificate from the NEOP program.

According to the DSR Senior Caseworkers, the certificate benefits DSR's customers on many levels. The certificate can be referenced on early childhood job applications; it is recognized by DSR as job training; and it can be applied as credit towards Northern Pioneer College's, Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

DSR customers, Jacqueline Nez and Teresa Begay are NEOP certificate recipients and are earning their CDA credentials. The CDA program consists of two years of class room study and 480 hours of work experience. Nez and Begay both confess that taking the classes has improved their parenting skills and they do more activities with their children. "I like spending time with my kids and the classes do help," said Nez.

Cassandra Bitsuie, NEOP Instructor, explained that the certificate is earned over eight sessions. Some of the NEOP classroom activities include, "learning to build a better plate with nutritional food items like fruits, veggies, wheat and dairy; family style dining; nutritional story time with reading and singing to the children; and exercising with the children with movement and activity," explained Bitsuie.

Fort Defiance DSR Senior Case Workers are all very excited that the program is being offered to their customers. "Parents have a lot of fun in the NEOP program, they have the opportunity to bring their children with them to the training," explained Marlene Smith, DSR Senior Case Worker.

For more information about DSR assistance programs please visit or call your local DSR office: **Gallup, NM:** (866) 704-6940; **Kayenta, AZ:**(928) 697-5660; **Montezuma Creek, UT Sub-office:** (435) 651-3535; **Shiprock, NM:** (866) 309-0346; **Tuba City, AZ:** (866) 731-7015; **Chinle, AZ:** (866) 700-5175; **Crownpoint, NM:** (866) 784-1694; **Fort Defiance, AZ:** (866) 860-9549; or **Greasewood, AZ Sub-office:** (928) 654-3910.

For more information about the NEOP program, contact First Things First Navajo Nation Regional Office at (602) 265-0009.



NEOP students, NEOP Instructor and Fort Defiance DSR Senior Case Workers pose to capture DSR's first certified NEOP class.

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