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NAVAJO SANTA VISITS UTAH FOR 16TH YEAR

Every year for the past 16 years, Utah Navajos have been treated to a weekend of Christmas festivities courtesy of the Ya'a'teeh Keshmish or Navajo Santa program. This year, the organization, which is chaired by Council delegate Kenneth Maryboy, held the celebration the weekend of December 3-4.

Council delegates Maryboy, Woody Lee, Tom Lapahe and Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan joined approximately 500 Utah Navajo residents for the annual celebration held outside Bluff, Utah on Saturday.

For Maryboy's family and the many volunteers who are part of the Navajo Santa organization, the day began before 8 a.m. as they worked to put up the tent and prepare a turkey dinner with all the trimmings for the guests. They also prepared the gifts for the community give-away.

The actual work in soliciting donations, sponsors and volunteers, however, is a year-round process and requires the help of all the members of the Maryboy family, especially his wife and children, and numerous others who are part of the Navajo Santa organization.

Utah Navajo families were given toys, clothes, blankets and hygiene packs. They were also given the opportunity to participate in games such as horse shoe throwing, chainsaw contest and dummy roping, for one-of-a-kind prizes like a Utah Jazz basketball cap signed by the players.

Following the give-away and contests, guests were treated to a delicious dinner served by volunteers as Navajo stories about the stars, narrated in part by Maryboy himself, played over loudspeakers.

The next day, Maryboy donned his Santa suit to make deliveries to Utah Navajo families in need. The Sub-For-Santa delivery matches up sponsors with families to purchase the items on their Christmas wish lists.

Council delegates will be attending various Christmas programs throughout the Navajo Nation during the holiday season. On Saturday, December 10, the Speaker is scheduled to attend the Ganado Chapter Christmas banquet.