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## **NAVAJO NATION HONORS FALLEN NATIVE AMERICAN WARRIORS**

The Navajo Nation is once again taking the lead in honoring Native Americans who have given their lives in service of their country. Last week, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Navajo/Hopi Honor Run was held to pay tribute to all fallen Native American warriors of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Yesterday, a Navajo Nation delegation including Council delegates left the capital of the Navajo Nation for the capital of the United States with the theme "Honoring our Fallen Heroes."

The delegation attended a ceremony in Oklahoma City today and will be attending another ceremony on Thursday, May 25, at Pembroke, North Carolina, hosted by the Lumbee Tribe. The same day, the Council delegates are scheduled to give a presentation to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The delegation includes Council delegates Curran Hannon, Ray Berchman, Lorenzo Bates, Tom M. White Jr., Omer Begay Jr., and Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan, who will be joining them in North Carolina from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Budget Advisory Council meeting.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Navajo/Hopi Honor Run drew hundreds of motorcycle riders to pay tribute to the fallen Native American warriors of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

The run honored:

- U.S. Army SPC Clint Lamebear
- U.S. Army SPC Lori Piestewa
- U.S. Army PFC Sheldon Hawk Eagle
- U.S. Army SGT Lee Duane Todacheene
- U.S. Army PFC Harry N. Shondee, Jr.
- USMC LCPL Quinn A. Keith
- USMC CPL Bernice K. Yazzie
- USMC LCPL Jonathan Grant
- USMC LCPL Kevin B. Joyce
- U.S. Army CPL Lyle J. Cambridge
- U.S. Army SGT Marshall A. Westbrook
- USMC CPL Brett Lee Lundstrom

- U.S. Army SGT Clifton J. Yazzie
- USMC Haitak Yerby

Joining local riders for part of the run beginning in Flagstaff, Arizona were riders on the national run with Operation Carry the Flame and Rolling Thunder. The president of the National Gold Star Mothers Judith Young was part of the Operation Carry the Flame motorcade. Operation Carry the Flame was recently named the fundraiser for the National Gold Star Mother memorial to be built on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Gold Star Mothers have lost a son or daughter in the service of the country.

The family of the late Cpl. Bernice K. Yazzie and the family of the late Sgt. Clifton J. Yazzie began the honor run from the Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park in Window Rock, Arizona along with Council delegates Larry Noble, Raymond Maxx, Roy Laughter, Raymond Berchman, Tom M. White Jr., Philbert Tso, Curran Hannon, Omer Begay Jr., Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan and nearly 60 other riders the morning of May 17, 2006.

The riders rode to Ganado, Arizona, where they were met by the family of the late Harry Shondee Jr. Council delegate Willie Tracey welcomed the honor run to the Ganado Pavilion where the Ganado U.S. Naval Sea Cadets raised the flags. Also honored at the stop was the late LCPL Kevin B. Joyce, who came from nearby Klagetoh, Arizona.

From Ganado, the run went to the Gold Star Mother Park in Beshbitoh, Arizona. The Gold Star Mother Park, which has been recognized by the Navajo Nation, the state of Arizona and the United States government, is dedicated to the memory of the late Mary Pete Nelson who lost a son, Walter Nelson, in World War II. Ms. Nelson's family sang a memorial song and a flag song during the stop.

The riders ate some lunch at the Hopi Veterans Memorial Center before heading out to Flagstaff, Arizona, to visit the Piestewa home. There, they were welcomed warmly by the family of the late Lori Piestewa who graciously opened their beautiful home to them. The riders were allowed to tour the house which had been built for the family by the popular ABC television show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." They also visited the memorial room for the late Piestewa which holds the honors that she received and photos from her life.

The honor run extended to Tuba City, Arizona on the first day. On the second day, the honor run came from Tseyi Canyon, near Kayenta, Arizona, to Nenahnezad, New Mexico, where the riders paid tribute to the fallen warriors from the area. From Nenahnezad, the riders traveled back to Window Rock, Arizona for a ceremony to honor the Gold Star Mothers of the Navajo Nation.

The ceremony, sponsored by the Navajo Nation Council, included a candle lighting ceremony, a name reading, blessing of the flame and a rose petal ceremony before the motorcycles riders arrived.

After the arrival of the bikes, King Cavalier, the president of Operation Carry the Flame, presented the National Flame to Judith Young and the Gold Star Mothers of the Navajo Nation. The torch is in honor of all Gold Star Mothers and Blue Star Mothers. Speaker Morgan, who rode in with the bikers from Nenahnezad, and President Joe Shirley carried the Gold Star wreath to the flame as Leroy and Sevier Nelson sang an honor song.

The Honor Run ended at Rock Springs Chapter House.

Select photos are available at the following web addresses:

<http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/Honor-Run-2006-1.htm>

<http://www.navajonationcouncil.org/Honor-Run-2006.htm>

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High resolution photos available upon request.