



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., blesses Mountainview Center, Recovery Plus treatment facility for substance abuse problems

MURRAY CITY, Utah. – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., conducted a blessing dedication of the new Mountainview Center, residential treatment facility here last week.

The President was asked to conduct the ceremony by his friend Jim Morse, a Salt Lake County developer, who sat in as the patient. About 30 people witnessed the 30-minute ceremony and heard President Shirley explain its meaning and significance.

The Mountainview Center, which opened for business on Monday, is a technically-advanced, moderately-priced residential facility for 20 adult participants with substance abuse problems.

It was built with specifically-designed features to be safe and to support the residents and the professional needs of physicians through the “Recovery Plus” treatment program.

Murray City Mayor Dan Snarr joined President Shirley and numerous dignitaries for a ribbon cutting shortly after the blessing ceremony. He said he immediately supported the facility, as did the city, because he lost a son to a prescription drug addiction.

President Shirley said that in 2001 he lost his daughter, Tona Vee Paymella, who was 29 and a mother of four when she was killed by a drunk driver.



Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., conducted a blessing dedication of the new Mountainview Center, residential treatment facility, in Murray City, Utah. With the President, from left to right, is Jim Petersen, Jim Morse, John Robertson, Dr. Richard Lewin, Dennie Ikes, Dr. Keith Breiland, Curt Gray, Dana Kendrick, Robert Daugherty and Scott Proctor.

“Back home we are also wrestling around with trying to get at help for our own who are struggling with alcohol abuse and drug abuse,” he said. “We’re looking for help all the time.”

He said because of drug and alcohol abuse, the crime rate on Navajoland is high, and it results in domestic violence and teen suicide.

He said driving under the influence continues to be rampant but education campaigns are continuous through Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Division of Public Safety's Selective Traffic Enforcement Program.

"We have big challenges," President Shirley said. "I'd sure like to see a Recovery Plus on Navajoland somewhere."

The President said in Navajo thought, everyone is family regardless of race, creed or faith.

"We're all members of the five-fingered, intelligent earth dwellers called homo sapiens," he said. "That makes us all family. There are family members that are successful and there are those that have their challenges."



President Shirley assists Murray City Mayor Dan Snarr with the Mountainview Center ribbon cutting.

John Robertson, one of the center's principal owners, said a group of people decided to develop the center two years ago to help people with substance abuse "because it knows no borders."

"It is evident that in our society there is a 'these people' syndrome – the tendency to explain away the shortcomings and failures of people suffering from the disease of substance abuse."

He said the common belief are that these people can't get well, they don't want to get well, people don't want their families around them, and there is no hope for them.

"At Recovery Plus, we believe this attitude is morally unacceptable. We don't believe this 'these people' syndrome because these people are our people, our brothers, our sisters, our mothers, our fathers, our sons, our daughters, our friends. Everyone who suffers from the destruction of addiction has a similar story."

He said Murray City was selected for the first Recovery Plus center because of its access to 108 cities, access to a nearby hospital, and because Murray City was unanimous in support for center.

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