



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
January 24, 2014

**MEDIA CONTACTS**

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253  
Jolene Holgate | 928.308.4174  
Chrissy Largo | 928.637.5603  
nmlb.communications@gmail.com

**Health, Education, and Human Services Committee  
update regarding the Thoreau Community Youth Center**

**WINDOW ROCK** - On Thursday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee met with Priscilla Manuelito, manager of the Thoreau Community Youth Center, to discuss the current status and issues concerning the youth center.

Manuelito said the youth center has implemented two suicide prevention and intervention programs to help children at the middle school level within their community.

“About five years ago, Thoreau had a serious issue of high amounts of suicides that happened in our area. The State of New Mexico and even at the national level, indicated that Thoreau had the highest level of suicides,” stated Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), who represents the community of Thoreau, located approximately 32-miles east of Gallup, N.M.

The creation of one program, called “Project K’é” is a mid-school curriculum that works in collaboration with other organizations such as Signs of Suicide, Natural Helpers, and National Indian Youth Leadership, which will be incorporating their programs into the middle schools to ensure the prevention of suicide in the Thoreau area.

“We have intervened as a community center. We found out from a youth one day that they were contemplating suicide and was seeking assistance from a caring adult and that’s where we stepped in,” explained Manuelito.

According to Manuelito, the youth center was on the verge of closing due to funding shortfalls, however, the center received financial support through grants.

Manuelito has also created a “post-vention” team that is designed to help the families of children that take their life, if needed. Taking careful precautionary initiatives for prevention and intervention and educating the community about suicide is the primary goal of Project K’é and the “post-vention” team, she added.

“I wanted to thank [Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie and Jonathan Hale] for being presenters during some of our youth conferences. They stepped in to help with that. Much of our

motivational speakers have really benefited our children. These are the type of programs we are trying to implement,” stated Manuelito.

Manuelito further explained that the community of Thoreau receives help from the county, state and Navajo police and hospitals.

“The assistance that we need from the Navajo Nation Council is to encourage the Department of Behavioral Health in our area and any other people that you might think who may benefit our program to continue to meet and form that collaboration with each other,” stated Manuelito.

EHSC member Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) advocated for continued partnership between all entities, and expressed appreciation for the program’s initiative by paying special attention to the needs of Navajo youth.

“This is valuable information. Attention needs to be brought to this. This is the type of information that the committee is always hearing about and we need this information to be disseminated,” stated Delegate Butler.

EHSC members accepted the report with a vote of 5-0.

###

For news on the latest legislative branch activities, please visit [www.navajonationcouncil.org](http://www.navajonationcouncil.org)