



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo youth benefit from summer youth employment opportunities

WINDOW ROCK – Members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council were pleased to receive letters of appreciation from Navajo youth from the community of Mexican Water for the summer youth employment and enrichment opportunities afforded to all 110 chapters through legislation passed by the Council.

In May, Council members unanimously voted in support of legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Seth Damon that approved funding in the amount of \$2 million for chapters to provide employment and enrichment opportunities for Navajo high school and college students.

According to Martha Saggboy with Mexican Water Chapter, the funding allowed a total of 28 students, ranging from the age of 14 to 21, to be employed at the chapter. Saggboy explained that the students were divided into two groups that were each employed at the chapter for a two-week timeframe.

“It meant a lot to them. Many of them hardly get anything, but the money they earned will help them buy things for school, even if it’s just a pair of shoes,” stated Saggboy. “The letters they wrote – they meant it from the heart.”

Delegate Damon said he is appreciative of the time the students took to write letters to the Council members and said he believes the funding is helping hundreds of Navajo youth.

“The funding is fulfilling its purpose and that is to help Navajo students and their parents by offsetting some of the cost of obtaining an education and in return, communities are benefitting from the work that the students produce,” Delegate Damon said.

Among other tasks, Saggboy said the students conducted research on Navajo history, culture, government, and past and present Navajo leaders. The students worked in groups to compile their findings, which are now displayed throughout the chapter facility to allow all community members to learn from their research.

The students were also provided CPR training, food handlers training to be used for school fundraising events, and guidance on creating and developing resumes for employment applications and letters of intent for scholarship applications.

Council Delegate Davis Filfred who represents the community of Mexican Water, said community members are pleased to see youth being productive and giving back to the community.

“I am proud of our local students and I am thankful to my colleagues for supporting them,” Delegate Filfred stated.

Saggboy also noted that some of the students encountered difficulties in securing consistent and reliable transportation from home to the chapter on a daily basis, and recommended that some funding be allocated for transportation purposes in the future.

“Overall, the students enjoyed the experience and they were able to overcome the transportation issues by catching rides with one another,” said Saggboy. “Many are looking forward to working again next summer if the funds are available.”

In the letters to Council, many of the students said they will use the money they earned for tuition and to purchase items for school including school supplies and clothing.

Juwan Tsosie, a 17-year-old recent high school graduate, said the learning experience will help him obtain future employment to help pay college expenses.

“I can use the money for my own school tuition at Diné College and pay for my own gas and books needed for school,” wrote Tsosie. “I thank you, the Navajo Nation, for making this opportunity available not only for me but for other teens.”

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