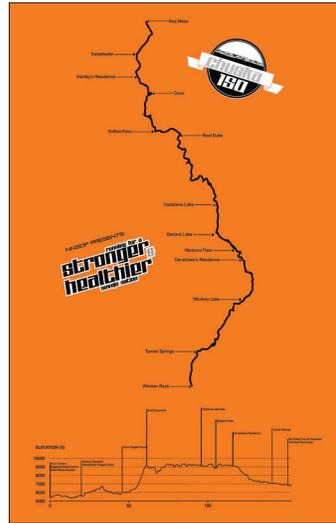
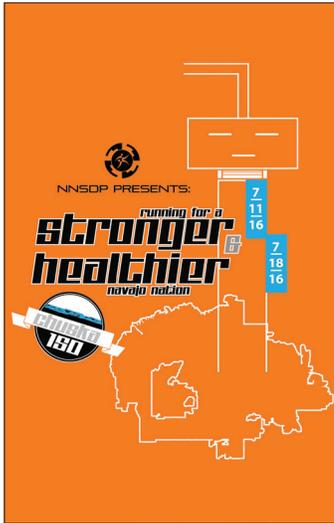




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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6th Annual Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation to Hit the Trails



The 6th Annual Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation will be taking to the trails this year, traversing the mountainous terrain of the Lukachukai, Tunitcha and Chuska Mountains for the Chuska 150.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— The 2016 Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation relay run is leaving the highways and headed for the trails this summer.

The 6th Annual Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation will cover a distance of more than 150 miles and take place from July 11 to 18, traversing the spine of the Lukachukai, Tunitcha and Chuska Mountains.

Dubbed the “Chuska 150,” the run will begin at Four Corners Regional Health Care Center in Red Mesa and travel through the chapter areas of Sweetwater, Cove, Roof Butte, Toadlena Lake, Tunnel Springs before ending at Window Rock for the start of the tribal council summer session.

Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez has been actively involved in the planning of this year’s relay run and has been meeting with

staff from the Navajo Special Diabetes Project for the past few months.

Vice President Nez participated in Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation since 2012. He is committed to running the entirety of this year’s event.

“The former vice president, Rex Lee Jim, established Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation,” Vice President Nez said. “We kept the initiative going and this year, we wanted to do something different.

“We’re taking to the trails and hitting the mountains,” he added.

The Chuska 150 will be a long distance ultra-relay run that will test the limits of participating runners, while providing an opportunity to see the scenic beauty of Mother Nature and wildlife.

By switching the format from pavement to trails,

burdensome planning logistics such as acquiring special event permits from three state departments of transportation won’t be necessary this year.

Vice President Nez said, “The trails will bring people closer to nature because they will have an opportunity to see the beauty of the Navajo Nation. It will be a lot cooler in the mountains as well, the trees will provide oxygen and shade for the runners.”

The daily mileage for the relay run will average anywhere from 20 to 25 miles a day, with the longest distance covering 29 miles for the fourth day of the run.

Tom Riggensbach, executive director for Navajo Youth Empowerment Services, has also been involved with the planning of the 2016 relay run.

The day from Toadlena to Roof Butte is going to be a real challenge, Riggensbach said, adding that there will be runners that will run the entire route. He said another alternative is to mountain bike the course or a combination of running and biking.

During the Memorial Day Weekend Vice President Nez and Riggensbach ran 41-miles of the mountain trails.

Office of the President and Vice President, NSDP, Navajo YES, Division of Natural Resources and Navajo Rangers met on June 20 to plan for the relay run. Same as last year, Navajo Nation tribal employees will be given time off from work to participate in the run.

Employees will be granted

administrative leave to participate in the relay run and their participation must be recorded by organizers.

There will be water stations every two miles for the course. Additionally, plans are to incorporate a daily theme for the duration of the run, ranging from suicide awareness, alcohol and drug prevention, and other topics affecting tribal communities.

“Over the years, I’ve talked to many people during the relay run and they shared their stories of overcoming adversity, whether it was drug addiction, alcoholism or diabetes,” said Vice President Nez.

This run brings families together to exercise, he said, noting that the message of strength, resilience and overcoming adversities is summed up in the title: Running for a Stronger and Healthier Navajo Nation.

The sponsoring chapters will be hosting health fairs to empower their communities and visitors to make better choices for their health, whether it is from exercising or eating healthy.

Vice President Nez encourages the public to participate in this year’s run.

Information:
www.nnsdp.org

