



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2021

**Historical partnership allows Gentle Ironhawk Shelter
to resume operations under the Utah Navajo Health System**



PHOTO: Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer, Council Delegates Amber Kanazbah Crotty and Nathaniel Brown, and partners mark the reopening of the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter in Blanding, UT on July 14, 2021.

BLANDING, UT – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation Vice President Lizer, 24th Navajo Nation Council members Amber Kanazbah Crotty and Nathaniel Brown, representatives from the City of Blanding, and the Utah Office for Victims of Crime commemorated the collaboration between the Utah Navajo Health System, Inc. and the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, Department of Family Services to open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter, a women and children’s home, which was purchased by the Navajo Nation in 2018 to provide services for Navajo Utah residents.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Vice President Lizer expressed the Nez-Lizer Administration's full support of the partnership between the Division of Social Services and Utah Navajo Health System to open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter and reopen operations to help Navajo families.

“On behalf of the Nez-Lizer Administration, I am honored to be part of this celebration to commemorate the partnership that has developed in the last few years to provide much-needed services for our Navajo people in the state of Utah. Each of the partners involved have dedicated their time and resources to work through the challenges and create solutions to reopen the shelter. While we commend the reopening of the facility, we also continue to focus our attention to the root causes of the problems that create the need for such shelters. We must continue to work together with all of the partners to resolve those issues,” said Vice President Lizer.

Utah Navajo Health System is a non-profit community-based organization that has been very influential in obtaining social and health services for Navajo communities within the state of Utah.

Prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the Utah Navajo Health System Victim Advocacy Program received the Federal Bureau of Investigation Director’s Community Leadership Award. FBI special agents nominated UNHS for this award for their efforts in keeping communities safe against crime, violence, drugs, and terrorism.

“We are honored to be in partnership with a prestigious Victim Advocacy Team and with an organization that has proven to provide proactive solutions for their community. Through our partnership with UNHS, the Navajo Nation can open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter. We look forward to establishing more partnerships like this to benefit all DSS shelters,” stated Deannah Neswood-Gishey, DSS Executive Director.

Director of the UNHS Behavioral Health Department Rick Hendy and Utah Navajo Health System CEO Michael Jensen worked with Department for Family Services Department Manager III Regina Yazzie to develop a collaborative solution to open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter.

As a result, a partnership between UNHS and DSS was established. On June 8, 2021, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez signed an agreement to lease the facility to UNHS to administer operations of the shelter. In support, Vice President Lizer encouraged other community organizations, the City, and local law enforcement to replicate the UNHS and DSS' unique and historical partnership to ultimately benefit families and individuals in need of protection and care.

“When Rick and Michael proposed a partnership to reopen the shelter, Mrs. Neswood-Gishey and I did not hesitate to take the opportunity. After the purchase in 2018, the shelter has not been operational as envisioned, mostly due to the challenges of our protocols. The partnership with UNHS allows the shelter to be what it was always meant to be, a haven for women and children. And that was always the ultimate goal,” stated Regina Yazzie.

For more information contact DSS Department for Family Services Department Manager III, Regina Yazzie at (928) 871-6619 or Delilah Goodluck, Communications Manager for the DSS Office of the Executive Director at (928) 871-6851.

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