

Community honors champions

Written by Story and photo by Stuart Noggle For the Sun
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Valley Pirates Championship Celebration

SANDERS, Ariz. — The Valley of the Pirates was flooded with blue and gold spirit March 11 as local fans lined the highway to congratulate the Arizona 2A Girls State Basketball Champions.

The team was carried through town in a parade held in their honor. Arizona Department of Transportation, Apache County Sheriff's Department, Puerco Valley Fire District, Sanders Unified School District, and the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders led the procession as community members cheered the Lady Pirates.

The parade ended at Valley High School with a parent-organized community dinner. Back-to-back gold trophies were prominently displayed for all too see.

Valley High Senior, Shevelle Six, said, "I'm proud to wear the number forty-two on my back and the name 'Pirates' across my chest."

Taniah Thompson, also a senior, was overwhelmed by the show of support; she said, "It sends tingles up my spine every time people say, 'You're a state champion!'"

Parents, fans, and dignitaries were in attendance to offer words of wisdom to the star athletes.

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Pirate alumnus Raymond Smith Jr., Navajo Nation Council Delegate, and Larry Noble, Navajo-Hopi Honor Rider, expressed thanks for the girls hard work and dedication.

Doyel Shamley, Apache County supervisor, presented certificates acknowledging the Lady Pirates' tremendous accomplishment. The celebratory day was concluded as proud parents and fans snapped photos with the Sanders Champions; everyone looked forward to next season and the promise of a three-peat.

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