

Navajo youth participate in bike ride to promote drug and suicide prevention

Written by Staff Report
Friday, 24 July 2015 04:39



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— Approximately 60 Navajo youth from Dilkon and nearby communities participated in a five-day bike ride, beginning at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort and ending in the capital of the Navajo Nation to promote methamphetamine and suicide prevention among Navajo youth.

The bike riders concluded their nearly 200-mile long journey at the fairgrounds in Window Rock on Sunday, where they were greeted by members of the Navajo Nation Council and other groups who participated in the annual horse and bike ride event as part of the Summer Council Session.

“The bike ride keeps the minds of our youth strong and allows them to commit to a positive cause,” said Claudia Jackson, who organized the third annual bike ride, adding that there is a tremendous need for youth empowerment in Navajo communities due to the overwhelming rates of drug use and suicides among Navajo youth.

Jackson said that within the last six months, a total of four Navajo youth have committed suicide in and around the community of Dilkon. She also stated that Dilkon Youth Services has had to intervene in three cases in which youth exhibited suicidal tendencies.

On July 19, Jackson along with Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) encouraged the youth to remain strong-minded and to avoid substance abuse in order to build a stronger community and a prosperous future.

Jackson thanked Delegate Shepherd, who rode with the group, for supporting the group with food, lodging, and other resources along the way.

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“We are very thankful to Delegate Shepherd and his chapters for assisting our group with food, showers, and shelter,” stated Jackson.

After the completion of the five-day bike ride, Jackson said the group is now looking to create a bike riding club for youth to participate in on the weekends.

“I believe it will provide the kids with something to look forward to every weekend and help them to remain strong to overcome challenges they may face down the road,” added Jackson.

Jackson also expressed her appreciation to Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’l’í) for participating in the bike ride and for continuing to encourage and empower Navajo youth to live a healthy and positive lifestyle.

The bike riders began their journey at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort and continued through the communities of Leupp, Dilkon, Tsidi To ii, Tolani Lake, Indian Wells, White Cone, and Klagetoh before concluding the five-day ride in Window Rock.

The group made their way to the Council Chamber on Monday morning for the opening ceremony for the 2015 Summer Council Session, where they were acknowledged and recognized as role models for all Navajo youth across the Navajo Nation.

She also thanked the Office of the Speaker, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, Navajo County Sheriff’s Office, and the Navajo Nation Police for contributing to the bike ride as well.