



ST BONAVENTURE INDIAN MISSION
AND SCHOOL

MISSION MESSENGER

P.O. BOX 610 • THOREAU, NM 87323-0610 • 505-862-7847 • WWW.STBONAVENTUREMISSION.ORG

Summer 2017



*Navajo Nation President
Russell Begaye
Visits our Mission and School*



(Continued on page 7)

The Director's Desk...

Blessed are the Peacemakers

Dear Friends of St. Bonaventure,

When I was first hired 11 years ago as the Executive Director of St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School, one of the very first directives the Board of Trustees gave me was to lower the crime rate. After years of experience with people in poverty I see that crime is endemic. But, as I have done with nearly every day since I have been here, I welcomed the challenge and began to build bridges in the community.

With the assistance of the Navajo Police, McKinley County Sheriff's Dept., State Police, FBI and the District Attorney's office we procured a federal grant called Project Safe Neighborhoods and over a five year period we were able to decrease violent gang related crime and domestic violence by 25%. In this often times isolated community on the Navajo Reservation we recognize all of our first responders as friends to the community.

A couple of months back, one of our Navajo Nation police officers was killed in the line of duty. We soon learned that many Navajo Nation police officers lack proper protective gear. Through a retired police officer in the mid-west and friend to the Mission – a very generous gift was made and we purchased enough lifesaving protective gear for 12 of our Navajo Nation Police officers. Presenting these items of body armor in memory of all of the fallen first responders is one of the accomplishments I will always be most proud of here at St. Bonaventure.

Your commitment to St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School is also a commitment to all of the brave men and women who desire positive change for our communities and our Navajo brothers and sisters in Christ. Thank you for being a part of such great work we do here in the name of our loving Lord.

Blessings and Peace,



Chris Halter



Protecting & Remembering those who protect us

Bullet proof vests and helmets donated to Navajo Police



A lack of manpower and outdated equipment are just a few of the challenges facing the under resourced and overstretched Navajo Nation Police department.

But thanks to the joint efforts of a retired Minneapolis police officer and St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School – twelve Navajo Nation Police officers are now equipped with state-of-the-art ceramic armored vests and tactical helmets.

The new equipment will prove especially vital in Operation Dloo Yazhi (Little Prairie Dog) which targets violent gang, drug and gun crimes on the reservation. Upon receiving the new vests, Sargent Wallace Billie, a 26-year veteran of the Department, gratefully acknowledged St. Bonaventure Indian

Mission and School's years of work in support of the Navajo police.

St. Bonaventure is proud to support the men and women serving in the Navajo Police Department. Thank you for helping us give lifesaving equipment to our first responders and protect those who protect us.



Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:13

With roughly 200 sworn police officers to protect an area the size of West Virginia, every last officer on the Navajo Nation Police department is an important part of keeping the Reservation safe for our children and families.



Sadly, since 2015, three Navajo Police officers have been shot and killed in the line of duty. Fighting crime requires an extraordinary level of bravery and profound sense of duty. And that is precisely what characterized Officers Alex Yazzie, Samuel Redhouse, and Houston Largo. They were good men who chose duty and service to others and made the ultimate sacrifice for us all.

Thank you, Alex, Samuel and Houston. Your lives of service will never be forgotten!

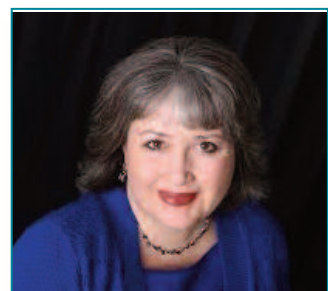
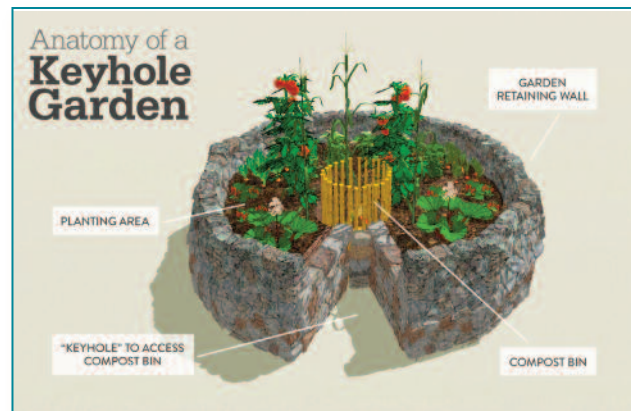
Growing A Garden in the Desert

Keyhole gardening offers hope for growing food in parched soil

Limited access to water and fresh nutritious produce are a basic fact of life on the reservation. This was true long before foods high in fat and calories were introduced into the Navajo diet back in the 1960s. This departure from traditional Navajo foods resulted in one of the most dramatic increases of adult diabetes in history.

The prevalence of diabetes continues to be a cause for concern among the Navajo. In an effort to improve access to healthy foods on the reservation, St. Bonaventure is working with members of the community like Stana Martin.

Stana comes from a Midwest family that has been organic gardening for many years. She is also dedicated to helping the Navajo provide fresh produce for themselves to maintain a healthy diet. With help from a group of volunteers, Stana is teaching the Navajo how to grow vegetables in the desert using a technique borrowed from a World Food Bank project in Africa called keyhole gardening.



Thank you, Stana, for sharing your knowledge and experience with us!

The gardens are usually six feet in diameter and are built using stones or discarded lumber such as pallets. The soil can be made up from horse manure, sand, charcoal or locally sourced dirt. The center of the garden is open to allow kitchen scraps to be added daily to enhance the soil and add water.

This summer, Stana is testing two beds to compare productivity between one with added nitrogen rich fertilizer and one with just compost. She promises that by the end of the season she will have collected enough data to determine which type of garden will work best on the reservation. Stana's first crop will consist of peppers, tomatoes, beans, carrots, squash and cantaloupe.

We are all very excited about this new endeavor and taste our first crops!

Fit for Life

Local Residents Making Big Gains at New Fitness Center

Poor diets and reduced physical activity are among the main causes of high levels of obesity and illnesses such as diabetes on the Navajo reservation. But rather than managing symptoms with costly medications, more and more treatments plans are focused on dietary changes and reintroducing physical exercise into people's daily routines.

The St. Bonaventure Fitness Center, also known as the Sgt. William C. Stacey Memorial Fitness Center, opened last April with high hopes of being part of the solution.

One local couple, Sharrae and Jessie Rodriguez, decided to become members not long after attending the Grand Opening and seeing the new equipment available for working out. At the time, Sharrae was greatly overweight and Jessie was managing his diabetes symptoms with the help of daily medication.

After four months of intense cardio and weightlifting sessions, the couple achieved extraordinary results both in weight loss and improving their overall health conditions. Sharrae reduced her pant size by eight sizes and Jessie lost 73 pounds. Jessie is now free of diabetes and able to stop taking the medicine for it.

St. Bonaventure wishes to congratulate Sharrae and Jessie on their success. You are proof hard work pays off and your achievements in the fitness center are an inspiration to us all!

Funding for the Fitness Center was made possible in part by a donation from Friends of the Poor, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of people living in low-income communities. The fitness center is membership based and all proceeds are used to support St. Bonaventure outreach programs.



*Sharrae and Jessie Rodriguez
Before and After*



Building a Home Sweet Home

Volunteers, St. Bonaventure staff help disabled veteran remodel home



Disabled US Army veteran Robin Wood lives alone just a few miles from the St. Bonaventure Indian Mission. He's a proud member of the Mount Taylor (Tsoodzil) Honor Guard and attends functions across the Navajo Nation. For income, Robin spends his days hand crafting Navajo jewelry to sell at a market in nearby

Gallup, NM. He concedes it's a modest way to make a living but rather than despairing, Robin faces each day with strength and dedication.

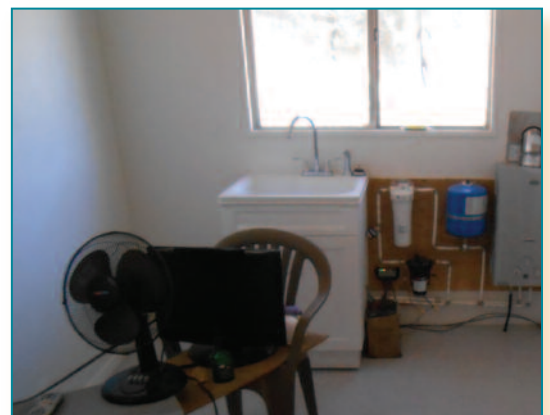
For most of his life, Robin lived in a home without running water, electricity or heat. The exterior walls of his makeshift dwelling had no siding, the interior walls had no insulation or drywall and the wood floor had no tiles or trim. The freezing cold winter months were especially difficult for Robin.

Over the years, Robin would purchase building materials whenever his financial situation allowed in hopes of one day building a more complete, comfortable home. However, due to his disability Robin was unable to perform the labor himself and much work remained.

Robin's precarious living conditions did not go unnoticed by St. Bonaventure Mission staff. This spring, volunteers from across the country came to St. Bonaventure to help Robin finish remodeling his house.

Today, the outside of Robin's home has siding, there is insulation and drywall on the inside and the floor is finished with floor tiles and trim. And, through our partnership with Dig Deep, Robin also received a 1,200 gallon water cistern, pump, sink and a solar lighting system.

St. Bonaventure would like to thank all of our wonderful partners, volunteers and benefactors for your vital role in making special housing projects like this possible. Your generosity and lovingkindness are making a profound impact in the lives of men, women and children living on the Eastern Navajo Nation. God bless you!



Russell Begaye Visits our mission and school

Continued

As the 2016-2017 school year drew to a close, St. Bonaventure Indian School students, teachers and staff proudly welcomed Navajo Nation President, Russell Begaye, for his first visit to campus. Following a tour of the school grounds, the assembly of students gave President Begaye a presentation showcasing their Navajo language skills. The presentation included songs in Navajo and a short video highlighting the need for more school buses.

President Begaye encouraged St. Bonaventure students to stay connected their Navajo language and culture. Particularly, he asked the young children gathered in the auditorium to appreciate their elders, listen to their stories and receive their words of wisdom. He also underscored the importance of eating healthy foods and exercising, reading books and being kind to one another and the needy in our midst. President Begaye concluded his address by commending the St. Bonaventure teachers and administrators and thanking them for their vital role in shaping future Navajo leaders.



Thank you, President Begaye, and your staff for taking the time to join our students and school staff and sharing your words of encouragement with us. We look forward to your next visit!

Simple Needs...

St. Bonaventure Indian Mission strives to meet the many needs of our community, and hygiene products continue to be high on that list of needs. Everyday personal toiletries: Toilet paper, hand sanitizer, facial tissue, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap and shampoo are always in high demand.

As are cleaning supplies: Laundry detergent, dish soap, paper towels, as well as simple household items like pots and pans, dishes and glasses, bath towels and blankets (it does get cold in the desert at night!) are always appreciated.

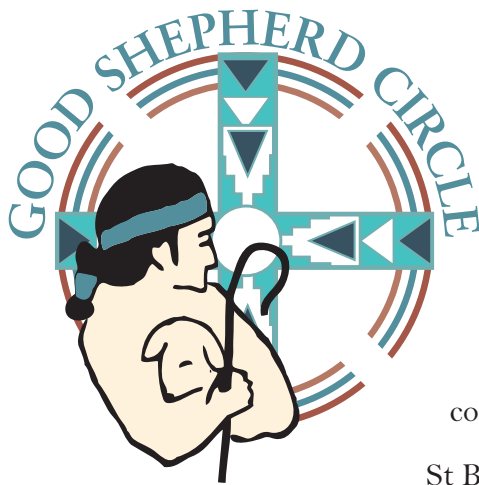


The Mission's Thrift Shop provides our families with clothing and some household items but donations are always welcome and accepted with grateful, humble hearts!

If you are interested in helping us provide any of these much needed supplies you can send a donation box via UPS or FEDEX to:

St Bonaventure Indian Mission & School
25 Navarre Boulevard West
PO Box 610 • Thoreau, NM 87323

*Thank you for
thinking of our families!*



Join Our Circle of Love!

Are you a committed donor to St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School? Do you believe in the good work we do to improve the lives and futures of Navajo children and their families? Would you like your donations to go further and work harder for these families?

Lastly... *are we sending you too much mail?*

If you answered YES to any of those questions I ask you to please consider joining our Good Shepherd Circle.

St Bonaventure's Good Shepherds are among our most faithful and generous friends. They are support we can count on and that is vital to the running the mission and school.

It's easy to join. Just fill out the form below, tell us the amount you'd like to send, monthly or quarterly, by mail or you can charge it directly to your credit card.

As a Good Shepherd you will see a lot less mail from us. This help us decrease fundraising expenses, thus providing more funds to better serve the needs of the Navajo people.

When you become a Good Shepherd Circle member you will receive thank you letters from the mission, each expressing how your generosity is helping the mission, school and the Navajo families that live on our reservation.

You will also receive the MISSION MESSENGER newsletter to keep you updated on everything that is going on at St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School.

Less mail and more impact!

I thank you for considering this giving option and may God bless you!

Join the Circle online on at: www.stbonaventuremission.org.
Click "Monthly Giving" in the Donate menu.

YES! I would like to join the Good Shepherd Circle.

Please accept my gift of \$ _____ in support of St. Bonaventure Mission and School.

☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly

☐ I would like to charge my gift to: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express ☐ Discover

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Card # _____ Security code _____

Join by Phone: 505.862.7847 or call Toll free: 877.989.4100

Mail to: GOOD SHEPHERD CIRCLE

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