



The Navajo Nation
Navajo Division of Social Services
Office of Executive Director

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Unique and Historical Partnership Opens Gentle Ironhawk Shelter”

Window Rock, AZ – On July 14, 2021, 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 efforts between the Utah Navajo Health System (UNHS), Inc. and the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services (DSS), Department of Family Services to open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter in Blanding, Utah.

The Gentle Ironhawk Shelter, a women and children’s home, was purchased by the Navajo Nation in 2018 to provide services for Navajo Utah residents. Up until now, the shelter has not been operational.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Navajo Nation Vice President, Myron Lizer expressed the administration’s full support of the partnership between the DSS and UNHS to open the Gentle Ironhawk Shelter.

UNHS is a non-profit community-based organization that has been influential in obtaining social and health services for its Navajo communities within Utah.

Hours before the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the UNHS Victim Advocacy Program received the *FBI 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 Michael Jensen, UNHS Chief Executive Officer proposed a collaborative solution to open the Gentle Ironhawk shelter to Regina Yazzie, DSS’ Department for Family Services Department Manager III.



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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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The Navajo Division of Social Services (NDSS) is under the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation's three branch government. Under the leadership of the NDSS Executive Director, NDSS programs and departments provide both social services, consistent with professional social work ethics and values, and human services in accordance with Navajo cultural values to help reduce and alleviate hardship.

Department of Child Care & Development | (928) 871 - 6629 | *Provides child care services to eligible individuals who are employed, in job training or enrolled in higher education.*

Developmental Disabilities Program | (928) 871 - 3696 | *Provides services to eligible members with Cognitive Disabilities, Autism, Epilepsy and Cerebral Palsy.*

Navajo Indian Child Welfare Act Program | (928) 871 - 7006 | *Safeguards the foster or adoptive placement of Navajo children to prevent the breakup of families.*

Department of Family Services | (928) 871 - 6556 | *Provides services to children, adults, and elderly whom are experiencing abuse, neglect or crisis.*

Department for Self Reliance | (928) 810 - 8592 | info@nntanf.org | *Administers the Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to eligible families caring for minor children.*

Navajo Treatment Center for Children & Their Families | (928) 871- 7679 | *Provides Outpatient Counseling and other mental health services to children, ages 4 to 17 years of age. Outpatient Counseling and aftercare services are offered to couples, groups, and families by referral only.*

Navajo Family Assistance Services | (928) 871 - 7978 | *Provides the following financial assistance to eligible individuals and households: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), General Assistance (GA), Burial Assistance (BA), Community Services Block Grant (CSGB), & Navajo Education Incentive (NEI).*