

ThinkFirst
Navajo *Eve's Fund*

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005-2006

MISSION: To prevent brain, spinal cord, and other injuries on the Navajo Nation through culturally sensitive education, environmental modification, law enforcement, and public policy development.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives was incorporated in New Mexico on August 9, 2005. As required by federal law, its Board of Trustees was formed at the same time. The IRS declared Eve's Fund a tax-exempt organization on November 22, 2005. In 2005 ThinkFirst Navajo was established as a Chapter of ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. Sponsoring Physicians are Robert M. Crowell, MD (a retired neurosurgeon), Christopher Percy MD (Director of Navajo Health Promotion), and Deborah Waters, MD (Director of Rehabilitation in Shiprock). Our Staff was created in June 2005, with Arthur Hardy as Director, Cathy Livingston as Administrator, and Pamela Kueppers as Bookkeeper. Our Steering Committee of 14 is largely drawn from the Navajo community and IHS. Our administrative site is in Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, NM. Our speakers base in Gallup, NM is affiliated with Precious Life Foundation, dedicated by founder Cecelia Fred to the benefit of disabled individuals. Our annual budget is approximately \$60,000.

EDUCATION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Voices for Injury Prevention

Since June 2005, ThinkFirst Navajo VIPs (injured speakers) have spoken to more than 5,000 students all over the Navajo Nation. In the culmination of this effort, from April 11 to 18, 2006, Director Arthur Hardy and two other VIPs, Cecelia Fred and Chris Chischilly, (all paraplegic individuals) made educational presentations in 15 schools to more than 1700 students. Sponsoring Physician Bob Crowell and School Health Coordinator Darlene Begay accompanied the speakers. Navajo Health Promotion provided incentives for students such as water bottles and pencils. We strengthened links with local Injury Prevention Coordinators and School Principals. With this educational tour of the Nation, ThinkFirst Navajo moved into high gear in its mission of injury prevention. We aim to reach 10,000 students in 2007.

Education for Navajo School Teachers

On June 7 and 8, 2006 in Durango, Colorado, ThinkFirst Navajo participated in an educational retreat for about 170 Navajo school teachers. Dorothy Zirkle, RN, Ph.D, and former CEO of ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation, gave a keynote address reviewing the mission and methodology of the organization. In interactive breakout sessions, Dr. Zirkle and our Chapter Director, Arthur Hardy, presented the new ThinkFirst curriculums for 1-3rd grade and 5-7th grade students. Curriculum kits consisting of videotapes and printed materials have already been distributed to the 137 Navajo schools. The result of this educational retreat is that Navajo teachers have begun implementation of the ThinkFirst curriculums for younger students all across the Navajo Nation.

At the retreat's awards luncheon, ThinkFirst Navajo presented an award for excellence in injury prevention education on Navajo. This award commemorates the great contributions of the late Donna Leno, Coordinator of Injury Prevention at Kayenta Service Unit and mentor to many educators in this important work. The annual Leno Award consists of an engraved plaque and \$1000 for further education in injury prevention. In the presence of six members of the Leno family, the first annual Leno Award was given to Darlene Begay, School Health Coordinator, who works closely with ThinkFirst Navajo to arrange VIP presentations at schools all over Navajo. The Leno Award will be a potent motivator of Navajo educators in injury prevention.

PROMOTIONS

In the summers of 2005 and 2006, ThinkFirst Navajo had booths at the Intertribal Ceremonial in Gallup in August and at the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock in September. Director Hardy and VIPs gave brief educational/promotional talks at the booths. In addition, 10 hour-long presentations have been made at Health Fairs on Navajo. Videotapes, models of spine, skull, and brain enhanced the presentations. Our newly created ThinkFirst pencils and wrist bands were popular reminders to attendees of our message of injury prevention for all ages.

FUND-RAISING

As we enter our second year, we will seek financial support in several ways. We will appeal to those have already supported us in the past, such our many individual and corporate sponsors. Our deepest gratitude goes to San Juan Regional Medical Center which has already renewed their generous grant of 2005-6.

On September 29, we held a benefit for ThinkFirst Navajo in a magnificent barn in historic Lenox, Massachusetts. Board Member Zonnie Gorman delivered a superb lecture

on the Navajo Code Talkers. An auction followed. The event attracted 250 enthusiastic guests and generated a substantial profit. We anticipate more such events, both in the Southwest and in any other location where friends of Navajo are to be found.

ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THINKFIRST NATIONAL

In April 2005, Director Arthur Hardy and VIP Cecelia Fred attended the Annual Meeting of ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation, where they also underwent training and certification as VIPs. The national organization gave a warm welcome to Art, Cecelia and ThinkFirst Navajo.

On April 22-23, 2006, Sponsoring Physician Robert Crowell attended the Annual Meeting of ThinkFirst National. There he met with Board Members including President of the Board David Cavanaugh MD. Important new developments in injury prevention were presented on topics such as Drowsy Driving, the Boost ‘Em Up Campaign (booster seats for young children under 47” tall), new Teen Driving guidelines from the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, and the new ThinkFirst for Youth Curriculum (for youngsters 11-14).

PROGRAMS FOR 2007

On June 6, Sponsoring Physicians Chris Percy and Bob Crowell met with Members of the Steering Committee to discuss ongoing and new program initiatives. We established priorities, practical methods, and funding goals.

On-Going Programs

1. VIP Recruitment and training. We have identified a threat to the organization: the small number of speakers (Voices for Injury Prevention). Clearly vigorous

recruitment and training of more VIPs is mandatory. We have identified two candidates, and we will pursue them and other candidates until at least two additional VIPs are trained and ready to make presentations. Obviously more funding of VIP training will be needed. We have requested assistance in VIP recruitment from surgeons on or near Navajo – Dr. Marc Flitter, neurosurgeon in Farmington and Dr. Thomas Druehard, surgeon in Tuba City, and both have agreed to help.

2. Implementation of Curriculums. In addition, feedback from Navajo teachers demonstrates a need for further training in the use of the curriculums for grades 1-3 and grades 5-7. We will arrange for teacher-trainers to make a two-day sweep across the reservation to assist teachers in their effort to be as effective as possible with their young charges.

3. Grant-writing. To obtain funds for programs, the addition of grant-writing capability is important and urgent. We propose to share costs for a grant writer with IHS. Our plan is to apply for grants from private entities (such as the American Automobile Association) and government agencies (such as the Indian Health Service and National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration). Our most powerful asset in securing grants will be Dr. Dorothy Zirkle, a highly successful grant seeker in injury prevention. She has pledged her assistance in seeking grants and training grant-writers so that we may broaden our reach.

New Programs

1. Red Eagle Challenge is a new and promising experiential therapy for young people with drug and alcohol problems. To build self-esteem, Director Orlando Pioche leads youngsters through ropes training, kayaking, long-distance running and sweat lodge. A traditional 12-step program helps maintain sobriety. Careful records are to be kept regarding outcomes, with relapse rates as an important parameter.

2. GPS for EMTs to guide helicopters. In the field, far from city streets, EMTs on Navajo have had difficulty guiding helicopters to injury sites with minimum delays. We have purchased four GPS devices to help EMTs waste no time in bringing helicopters in for a landing at remote crash sites.

3. Mary Pope Osborne is the author of the Magic Tree House Series, an extremely successful book series for children of 4 to 12 years of age. She is one of the most successful writers of children's books in the world. She has written 55 books, including one on the Sioux. Ms Osborne has offered to visit Navajo schools in May 2007 to promote literacy and safety. Prior to her visit, Random House will send books to the schools for students to read in preparation for the visit. This is an act of extraordinary generosity on the part of a very busy and successful author, and we expect that its publicity value will be wide and helpful.

Possible Future Programs

In our June meeting of the Steering Committee, we identified a number of important potential programs. Unfortunately, funding is not possible at this time, but were dollars to become available, we may be able to support some of these programs.

Education

1. Injury Data Surveillance (IDS) is an ongoing program which should be able to provide annual mortality and disability data and trends over time. This data could be very valuable in assessing impact of our preventive measures. We have raised the idea of such studies to Cheryl Mason, Epidemiologist and Siona Willie, Director of Navajo Injury Prevention.

2. Pre- and Post-Intervention Data, including knowledge base, attitudes and frequency of risky behaviors and injuries. There is a substantial body of published work

with such data in urban settings. Dr. Dorothy Zirkle could facilitate utilization of existing testing tools from the San Diego experience.

3. Conversion of Curriculum to Navajo Tradition. This must be done as soon as funds are available; perhaps a grant can be secured for this purpose.

Law Enforcement:

4. Put more patrols on the highway. We are trying to work with IHS to fund this needed assistance.

Environmental Modification

5. Spreaders of Life for existing Jaws of Life for Kayenta EMTs.

CONSULTATIONS

On Programs

Louise Davis discussed with us “Peer Health Exchange,” a very successful health education program for inner-city high school students, with teaching by specially trained college students. While the defined program cannot be transferred to the Navajo Nation, the concept of health instruction by undergraduates to high schoolers might be tried on Navajo.

Tres Schnell, Director of Health Emergency Management in the New Mexico Department of Health gave us introductions to epidemiologists Elizabeth Janello-Sanchez in NMDOH and Cheryl Mason in the Navajo DOH. These valuable colleagues will be essential for statistical studies as outlined in the section on Injury Data Surveillance.

On Promotions

Producers/Journalists Olive Talley and Andrea Fleischer, both experienced in print media and television, discussed with us the methods and value of media exposure. They

conclude that at this time our public relations dollars are best spent at the local and regional level. In keeping with this idea, **Eric Fisher, Public Relations Coordinator at the San Juan Regional Medical Center**, recently completed a story on ThinkFirst Navajo, with special emphasis on educational presentations by VIPs to Navajo schools. The story, including a color picture of three VIPs, ran in the July number of the Quarterly Bulletin of San Juan Regional Medical Center.

On Fund-raising

Since we are a young organization, we have turned to experienced professionals to guide us in our fund-raising efforts. For example, **Shirley Jencks**, a professional fund-raiser for not-for-profit organizations, advised us to identify specific programs to pitch to donors with corresponding interests. **Deborah Gerhardstein**, a Board Member of ThinkFirst National, advised us on the auction at our September fund-raiser.

It's been a year of learning and growing. We look forward to more of both in 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Crowell, MD, Sponsoring Physician