



# EVE'S FUND

## Promoting Native Hope & Wellness

*We sponsor programs in literacy, injury prevention,  
mental health, and education for Native American youth*

Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives

Annual Newsletter

December 2012

## Navajo VIPs Reach More Than 2,500 Students

### *Injury survivors share personal stories and "Think First" message*

On a cold night nearly three decades ago, 23-year old Doris Dennison was in a small pickup truck headed from Tuba City on the Navajo Reservation to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, more than 600 miles away. The truck had one bench seat, with just enough room for three adults.

Doris sat between her sister, Darlene, who was driving, and her husband, who was sleeping. Because there was no room in the truck for a car seat, Doris held her one-month old son, Randall, in his cradleboard, a protective baby carrier used by Navajos.

No one was wearing a seat belt.

In the early morning hours—somewhere in Utah—Doris had just removed baby Randall from his cradleboard when the truck hit a patch of black ice and overturned three times. Everyone was thrown from the vehicle.

Doris' husband was not seriously injured in the crash, possibly because he was asleep at the time. Darlene fractured her spinal cord and was paralyzed from the waist down. Doris—with an even higher spinal cord fracture—became a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the neck down.

Baby Randall died two days after the accident.

### **Personal Stories Make an Impression on Students**

Today, Doris and Darlene share this powerful story with thousands of students each year through our ThinkFirst Navajo program. As you can imagine, the sisters have quite an impact on their young audiences, and when they say that wearing a seatbelt would have protected them from a life of pain and paralysis, the students listen.

"Ms. Dennison's sharing of how [the injury] impacted her life and how she is still suffering made a huge impression on the students," said Rosa Gutierrez, Educational Counselor at Tohatchi High School.

The personal stories of our Navajo VIPs (Voices for Injury Prevention) are at the core of the ThinkFirst program. Doris and Darlene—along with VIP Cecelia Fred—have spoken to more than 2,500 students this year, teaching them to "think first and use your mind to protect your body."

### **Interactive Program Keeps Young People Engaged**

Echohawk Lefthand, our program director, also plays a major role in each ThinkFirst presentation. He teaches the students about injury causes and prevention methods, all while keeping everyone engaged with his sense of humor and youthful energy.

To demonstrate how a child's brain can be injured without a safety helmet, Echohawk asks the tallest kid in the audience to drop a cantaloupe. The students watch while the melon explodes all over the floor. When a second cantaloupe is dropped—while inside a helmet—it remains intact. And the students get the message.

In 2012, our ThinkFirst team traveled hundreds of miles around the Navajo Nation, visiting schools in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah. This was possible because of our donors' generosity and the financial support we received from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, which awarded us a second Quality of Life grant.

Thanks to the scheduling wizardry of our new part-time program coordinator, Bernice Lefthand—and the efforts of our entire ThinkFirst Navajo team—we met our goal of reaching 2,500 students this year.



*Sisters Darlene Singer (l) and Doris Dennison (r),  
ThinkFirst Navajo VIPs (Voices for Injury Prevention)*



## Students “Travel the World” With Magic Tree House

Reading is more fun for students at three Navajo schools, thanks to another generous gift from the Magic Tree House.

This past academic year, Eve’s Fund presented Bluff Elementary and Navajo Elementary with a Magic Tree House Teaching Bookshelf that includes 20 copies of 28 books in this bestselling children’s series, which is written by Mary Pope Osborne. Bluff Elementary is sharing the books with students at nearby Montezuma Creek Elementary.

With a Teaching Bookshelf, teachers can borrow 20 copies of a book for their class, allowing all students to read the book at the same time. Also, several classes can read different titles in the series simultaneously.

Because the Magic Tree House books are fun to read *and* educational, teachers find it easy to make connections with their curriculum. Students especially love how the book’s main characters, Jack and Annie, travel around the world and through time to be present at important moments in history.



“My favorite thing is that we get to go all over the world with Jack and Annie. Thank you very much for making it possible for us to travel so many places in our minds,” wrote Francisca, a Bluff Elementary third-grader.

During the 2012-13 academic year, we will be donating three more Teaching Bookshelves to Navajo elementary schools so more students can “travel so many places” in their minds.

## 100 Kids Get Safety Helmets

Most children on the Navajo Nation don’t have their own bikes, but sometimes they do have access to shared bicycles (or ATVs). Unfortunately, because safety helmets are in short supply on the Reservation, these young people are at higher risk for preventable brain and spinal cord injuries.

Eve’s Fund started raising money for safety helmets last year as part of our ThinkFirst Navajo program. As a result of our online campaign called “Running for Eve’s Fund,” we were able to distribute 100 new helmets at the Shiprock Marathon in May.

Members of our Boy Scout Troop 928 handed out helmets to children who had completed the 10K or 1K Fun Run. The scouts talked about the importance of wearing a safety helmet and helped make sure each child was properly fitted.

## Scholarship Students Succeed

When we first met Nicole, one of the initial Eve’s Fund scholarship recipients, she was a high school senior at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, N.M. Her goal was to graduate from high school, attend New Mexico State University, and major in environmental engineering.

Well, she’s on her way. At a time when nearly 50% of all Native American students drop out of high school, Nicole beat the odds and is now attending New Mexico State.



2012 Eve’s Fund Scholarship winners (l-r): Tesla Sleepy, Leisha Yazzie, Isaiah Yazzie, Marissa Morgan & Shaniya Katoney, Not pictured: Brandy Clark

This year, Eve’s Fund doubled its scholarships to \$6,000, enough to cover all required student fees for six Navajo Prep students. We hope with our financial assistance easing some of the financial burden, all of the Eve’s Fund scholarship recipients will complete high school and attend college.

## Bringing HOPE to Navajo Students

For the fifth year, Eve’s Fund has co-sponsored a suicide prevention program called Native H.O.P.E. (Helping Our People Endure). The two-day workshop was held in October at Whitehorse High School in Montezuma Creek, Utah.

Ninety-five students participated in the program, which addresses suicide prevention and related risk factors while incorporating Native culture, traditions, spirituality, ceremonies, and humor. Students learned how important it is to “break the code of silence” and reach out for help when in distress.

Eve’s Fund is committed to this mental health initiative because of the high rate of suicides among Navajo youth. We’re happy to report that participating schools have found the peer-counseling program to be a big success.

## Giving Back With Navajo YES

Often, hard work can bring great rewards. That’s what many young people on the Navajo Nation discovered this summer after putting in more than 1,000 hours of physical labor during the annual Tour de Rez, which combines mountain biking and hiking with education and community service.

Again this year, Eve’s Fund offered financial support for the Tour, which is run by Navajo YES. Our contribution was used to support trail restoration in the Carrizo Mountains, extending new routes over five miles. We are a proud supporter of this program because it promotes health and wellness for Native youth.

## Eve's Fund Troop 928 Makes an Impact

### *Navajo boy scouts learn life skills and help community*

It's Monday night in Red Mesa, Arizona. As the clock approaches 6 p.m., members of Boy Scout Troop 928 gather at the local junior high school for their weekly meeting. For these 16 boys, it's a time to forget about problems with school, friends, or family and focus on the positive. *Focus on the work that is turning them into hopeful, responsible young men.*

After a fun game to loosen the mind and body, the group recites the Scout Oath and Scout Law. This reminds each boy of the person they strive to become: someone who is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, courteous, obedient, and kind, among other things.



Next, it's time to put those words into action. Throughout the meeting, the boys show respect for their leaders and one another as they learn new tasks and plan for upcoming events. These scouts—all between 11 and 15 years old—know how to plan every part of their camping trips, from organizing meals to assigning cooking and cleaning tasks.

This year's outings included a weekend of fishing and hiking, a family backpacking trip, and a difficult hike that tested everyone's will and self-discipline.

During camping trips, the boys develop character and responsibility as they learn new skills and put them to use for the good of the unit. "Through such experiences, the scouts gain a sense of achievement and a feeling of true independence, which is of more value than almost anything else," said Echohawk Lefthand, troop scoutmaster.

Even beyond the lessons learned while camping are those learned while helping others in the community.

This year, the scouts showed their compassion by chopping and delivering wood to elderly Navajos. They also delivered water to local Navajo families and picked up trash in the community.



The Troop Color Guard demonstrated its commitment to service by appearing at school events, community programs, and public meetings upon request.

During July, the troop attended a weeklong camp at the Gorham Scout Ranch in New Mexico, thanks to financial support from Eve's Fund, ambitious fundraising efforts by the boys, and "camperships" from the Boy Scouts Great Southwest Council.

The members of Troop 928 grew this year, as scouts *and* as young men. The year's experiences had a positive impact on the boys' lives, as they noted in a recent letter: "We are learning to be better role models to our fellow students, family, and community members. This is preparing us for high school, college, and even life. Thank you Eve's Fund for supporting our troop."

## ThinkFirst Navajo to Expand Outreach in 2013

### *Thousands to benefit from injury prevention program*

Thanks to grants from Con Alma Health Foundation and New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability, Eve's Fund will broaden its ThinkFirst Navajo program in 2013 and teach at least 3,000 more students how to prevent brain and spinal cord injuries.

With funding support from Con Alma (and matching funds from Eve's Fund), ThinkFirst Navajo will train two new VIPs and two new Health Educators, who will visit schools across the Navajo Nation in New Mexico.

The Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD) grant also provides funding for ThinkFirst presentations in New Mexico, as well as increased peer support for our paralyzed VIPs. The grant will help us reach more at-risk youth while boosting the skills, confidence, and independence of the Navajo speakers who are so critical to the success of our ThinkFirst Navajo program.

"I believe that ThinkFirst Navajo is saving lives and preventing spinal cord injuries," said Dr. Marc Flitter, neurosurgeon at San

Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington, N.M. "There appear to be fewer Navajo youth among our hospital admissions for traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries."



*ThinkFirst team, front (l-r): VIPs Darlene Singer, Doris Dennison, Cecelia Fred. Back: Barbara Crowell Roy, Bob Crowell, Echohawk Lefthand & Bernice Lefthand*

## Our Story

In 2005, Dr. Robert Crowell established Eve's Fund for Native American Health Initiatives in memory of his daughter, Eve Crowell, who died earlier that year.

Our overall mission is to promote hope and wellness among Native American youth through literacy, injury prevention, education, and mental health programs on and around the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah.



Thanks to the support of numerous individuals and organizations, Eve's Fund has made a positive impact on thousands of young Native Americans since 2005, but there are thousands more still living without hope for a better future. These are the young people we want to reach in 2013 and the years to come.

Eve's Fund is actively managed by Eve's family members along with a non-paid board of directors. Find out more at

[evcrowellfund.org](http://evcrowellfund.org).

## Board of Directors

**Robert M. Crowell**  
*Founder & Chair*

**Marc Flitter**

**Barbara Crowell Roy**  
*President*

**Zonnie Gorman**

**Echohawk Lefthand**

**Wyatt E. Crowell**  
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**Lewis Pollock**

**Derrick Watchman**

**Ksenija Topic**  
*Secretary*

**Ela Yazzie-King**

## Our Team

**Echohawk Lefthand**  
*Director, ThinkFirst Navajo*

**Cecelia Fred**  
*VIP Speaker*

**Bernice Lefthand**  
*Program Coordinator*

**Doris Dennison**  
*VIP Speaker*

**Marge Demary**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Darlene Singer**  
*VIP Speaker*

*Our sincerest thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.*

—Barbara Crowell Roy and Bob Crowell

### Did you know?

- ❖ Poverty in the USA is greatest among Native American children.
- ❖ Injuries and violence account for 75% of all deaths among Native Americans aged 1-19.
- ❖ Young Native people, 19 years and younger, are at greater risk of preventable injury-related deaths than others in the same age group in the United States.
- ❖ Only 21% of Native youth graduate from high school and only 1% from college. The average literacy rate for Native youth is one-third that of the rest of the population.
- ❖ Suicide is a profound problem for Native American youth—the suicide rate among this group is 2.5 times the national rate for all youth.
- ❖ Native American drug and alcohol abuse are at rates substantially higher than the national average.

### How You Can Help

We rely on donations and grants to carry out our mission and are grateful for your contribution of any amount. Every dollar will be put to good use.

You can make a secure, online donation at:

[Donate](#)

Or, send a check to:

**Eve's Fund**  
**P.O. Box 73**  
**Dalton, MA 01227**

*Please include your email address and mailing address so we can update our records.*

**Tel:** 800-646-2952

**Website:** <http://evcrowellfund.org>

**Email:** [barbaracrowellroy@evcrowellfund.org](mailto:barbaracrowellroy@evcrowellfund.org)

