

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Sage Memorial Hospital is to provide quality healthcare for the Diné people with respect, unity, beauty, harmony in honor of K'é an the sacredness of life.

A publication from Sage Memorial Hospital

# SAGE NEWS

## VISION STATEMENT

Sage Memorial Hospital's vision is to embrace the Diné philosophy of life while delivering innovative healthcare.

Second Quarter (JAN to MAR 2024)



Bee lá'í 'dlí (Together/Unity) | Hodíłzin (Sacred) | Hózhó (Beauty/Balance) | H'íłj (Respect)



## Meet Our Dedicated Healthcare Recruiter



**BRENDA YAZZIE**  
HEALTHCARE RECRUITER

**GANADO, Ariz.** - My name is Brenda Yazzie I am the Healthcare Recruiter at Sage Memorial Hospital. I have been in healthcare for thirty years in various roles. I am often asked "why recruiting?" and my answer is "to bring healthcare professionals to take care of our

Diné people and our surrounding communities. We all have elders and family members that we care for and knowing that our loved ones are being taken care of, is why I do it."

I am passionate about helping our Diné people to ensure that we are giving the best quality of care by making Sage Memorial Hospital's core values of Bee lá'í 'dlí (Together/Unity) | Hodíłzin (Sacred) | Hózhó (Beauty/Balance) | H'íłj (Respect) as a cornerstone of Sage Memorial Hospital's recruitment and retention program. Recruitment and retention in healthcare requires a strong organizational mission, vision and core value statements.

Sage Memorial Hospital provides behavioral health services, dental, diabetes & community health, emergency and urgent care, lab, medical imaging, medical/telemetry,

SEE RECRUITER | CONTINUE ON PAGE 9

## Sage Memorial Hospital in Navajo Nation constructs new facility to improve health care



**PHOTO** - Sage Memorial Hospital's new \$177 million medical facility is set to open in October. (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)

**BY MIA MILINOVICH**  
CRONKITE NEWS

**GANADO** - Desert stretches out around the little town of Ganado, which sits in the western part of the 27,000 square miles of the Navajo Nation.

Ganado is home to Sage Memorial Hospital, a Native-managed comprehensive health care system serving thousands of people in surrounding Navajo communities. The medical facility has operated out of its current facilities since 1930. Back then, the outpatient building, Poncel Hall, was home to the first Native American nursing school.

Now, 93 years later, Sage Memorial Hospital has built a 95,614-square-foot state-of-the-art hospital that is more than twice the size of the original hospital and will significantly increase patient capacity.

This ambitious endeavor aspires to provide better, more advanced health care to the Navajo Nation, but equally important is Sage Memorial's mission to incorporate and honor the traditions of the Diné, the name that Navajo people use for themselves.

The hospital's core values have been kept in the Diné language: bee lá'í 'dlí , meaning togetherness and

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## A Glimpse into the Future of Rehabilitation Services

**GANADO, Ariz.** - In our spotlight series featuring innovators at Sage Memorial Hospital, we interviewed Deidrea Salabye, Director of Rehabilitation Services and her team. Deidrea has been instrumental in expanding the Rehabilitation Services at Sage, bringing culture change to the department, and fostering a collaborative and supportive team environment.

Salabye took on the role of Director of Rehabilitation on March 2023, and since then has significantly worked on improving the department's services. Patients now have access to both outpatient and inpatient services, with specialized care for all ages from pediatric to geriatric. However, Deidrea recognizes that there is still room for growth and improvement.

"The department is not fully staffed yet," says Salabye. "We are in need of an Occupational Therapist and a permanent Physical Therapist. With additional staff, we can take in more patients and offer even better care."

"Our mission has always been to provide comprehensive Rehabilitation Services, from Speech-Language Pathology to Occupational and Physical Therapy," said Salabye. "Despite facing staffing challenges,

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## SAGE NEWS

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## CONTACT

P.O. BOX 457  
US 191 & SR 264  
GANADO, AZ 86505  
+1 (928) 755-4500  
INFO@SAGEMEMORIAL.COM

## SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK.COM/SAGEMEMORIAL  
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## CORRECTIONS

There was an error in the Q1 newsletter story about “Albert Tsosie and Shirlene Bigwater, who have provided exceptional care at SMH for four decades” (pg.7). In the newsletter, Albert Tsosie’s photo was mistakenly labeled as “ALBERT YAZZIE” instead of “ALBERT TSOSIE”. The digital copy has been corrected, but the physical copies still have the error. The error will be addressed in the next issue (Q2).

# Message from the Chief Operating Officer *Yá’át’ééh!*



**TINA JAMES-TAFOYA, MHA**  
COO, Sage Memorial Hospital

Sage Memorial Hospital is months away from moving into a new hospital and we are so ecstatic! The new Sage Memorial Hospital is more than doubled the size of our current facility, includes 25 inpatient beds, and will remain a Critical Access Hospital. The new hospital is located just west of the current campus. The new construction includes the main hospital, a Medical Office Building for outpatient clinics, a Human Resources building and a 27-unit staff apartment complex with one, two and three bedrooms.

The new hospital construction began nearly two years ago, is completely self-funded by Sage Memorial Hospital, including the construction of the two traffic intersection stop lights. The state of the art hospital will further help Sage achieve its mission of providing quality healthcare for the Diné people with respect, unity, beauty, harmony in honor of K’é and the sacredness of life.

Staff are diligently working

alongside our general contractor and sub-contractors, by providing subject matter expertise on patient flow, medical devices and equipment and healthcare best practices. Additionally, transition planning of department and clinic moves will be as seamless as possible, to ensure we do not interrupt patient care. Another key focus of planning is staffing, especially for the new services that will come soon after the opening of the new facility, services like Labor and Delivery, an Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and Surgery.

We are thankful for the patience of our staff, patients, and community. As with any major construction we have faced delays, fortunately Sage is a resilient organization and has overcome many challenges and we continue to progress forward. Look out for information about our grand opening later this summer and join us when we celebrate the determination and hard work of all those involved in this project.

## Sage Memorial Hospital Releases FY2023 Annual Report

**GANADO, Ariz.** - Sage Memorial Hospital (SMH) is pleased to announce the release of its FY2023 Annual Report. The report highlights the hospital’s achievements and milestones over the past year, including a successful Joint Commission Critical Access Hospital survey and expansion of healthcare services.

Melinda White, CEO, SMH, expressed her gratitude for the dedicated team at the hospital, stating that, “they have been the cornerstone of our successes, driving us to achieve these milestones and accomplishments throughout the year.” She also emphasized Sage

Memorial Hospital’s commitment to delivering quality healthcare services guided by our Diné culture and values.

The Board of Directors also expressed their appreciation for the community’s support and acknowledged the hard work of the entire staff, including the executive team. They reaffirmed their dedication to continuously improving and finding new ways to better serve the community while honoring the Diné philosophy of life.

The FY2023 Annual Report also showcases SMH’s financial stability and growth, with a focus on innovation and quality. This includes

the addition of new medical services and the implementation of UV robots for enhanced infection control. The hospital also received grants from Produce Prescription Pilot Program (P4) and the Arizona Foundation to support its mission.

The FY2023 Annual Report can be accessed on Sage Memorial Hospital’s website at <https://sagememorial.com/2024/02/24/sage-memorial-hospital-releases-fy2023-annual-report> “We encourage our community members, stakeholders, and the media to review this document to gain insight into the progress Sage Memorial Hospital has achieved in the past fiscal year,” said White.

***We are excited about our new hospital coming soon.  
Stay up-to-date at [www.sagememorial.com/grandopening](http://www.sagememorial.com/grandopening)***



## SMH Partners With “Good HealthTV” to Enhance Patient Experience Through Native American Health Focused Content

**GANADO, Ariz.** – Sage Memorial Hospital is thrilled to announce its partnership with GoodhealthTV, a pioneering health education network. This collaboration aims to deliver tailored health and wellness content specifically focused on Native American health issues directly to the hospital’s waiting rooms.

Recognizing the unique health challenges faced by the Native American community, this partnership will provide accessible, culturally sensitive, and informative content designed to educate, inspire, and empower patients and their families. The programming will cover a wide range of topics, including preventative health measures, traditional healing practices, nutrition, mental health, and much more, all tailored to address the specific needs of the Native American population.

“We are excited to launch this initiative with GoodhealthTV,” said Christian Bigwater, Public Relations and Marketing Director, SMH. “Our mission has always been to provide important healthcare information in a culturally respectful manner. By integrating GoodhealthTV’s specialized content into our waiting areas, we further our commitment to improving health literacy and outcomes within the Native American communities we serve.”

### About GoodhealthTV:

GoodhealthTV is the leading health education network dedicated to providing vital health and wellness information through engaging video content. With a focus on underserved communities, GoodhealthTV strives to make health education accessible and impactful, utilizing cutting-edge technology to reach audiences in healthcare settings nationwide.

**PHOTO LEFT-TO-RIGHT** - First Row: Florene Long-Curley (Admin Asst), Cynthia Bob (Rehab Tech), Eli Morales (Physical Therapist), Deidrea Salabye (Director/Physical Therapist), and Angela Curtright (Speech Pathologist) Second Row: Jeffery Meeks (Speech Pathologist), Truman Slim (Rehab Tech), Daniella Peters (Physical Therapist)

## Rehabilitation

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE 1

we have maintained a high level of service through our dedicated staff and innovative approaches to care.”

Salabye provided an overview of the department’s offerings, including plans for the new hospital, “We deliver both outpatient services in our clinic and inpatient services to those staying in the hospital, including our swing bed patients,” said Salabye. “The new space is designed with our patients’ privacy, dignity, and specific rehabilitation needs in mind, allowing us to offer a more individualized approach to rehabilitation.”

The new rehabilitation space will include two enclosed exam

rooms for PT/OT, a pediatric room, a speech-language pathology room, a significantly larger gym, and a room designated to ADLs (Activities of Daily Living) training. Our patient bathroom will also be designed to assist with shower and toilet training.

Salabye highlighted the importance of rehabilitation practical life skills, “We currently don’t have the space or equipment to practice life skills like dishwashing, dressing, laundering clothes and cooking. However, in the new hospital, we will have an area and a rehab clinic where we can do those things.”

“We are able to work on balance while performing complex activities because a lot of patients don’t care if they can curl a ten pound weight, they care if they can make themselves

dinner or do their dishes or sweep and mop their floors - so really tailoring to the needs of our patient is very important,” Salabye explained.

Salabye also gave praise to the staff, from the warm reception by Administrative Assistant, Florene Long, to the expert care provided by Physical Therapists Eli Morales and Daniella Peters, Speech-Language Pathologists Angela Curtright and Jeffrey Meeks, and the support of PT technicians Truman Slim and Cynthia Bob, “their ability to work with patients is just unmatched - I’m so grateful to have them. We just do a really good job at creating a safe place for patients to heal.”

# Project Chizh for Elders: Supporting Elders with Wood Donation Program

**GANADO, Ariz.** - Project “Chizh for Elders” is aimed at supporting the elderly population within the Sage Memorial Hospital service area by providing wood during the cold winter months. Under the guidance of Facility Director Jarom Prows and his dedicated team, the project effectively utilizes surplus wood from hospital construction activities, to supply the community’s elderly population with free firewood, crucial for heating during the cold season.

Since launching in mid-December 2023, Project “Chizh for Elders” has delivered over 42 loads of wood, making a real difference in the lives of elders in SMH service area, which includes the communities of Ganado, Steamboat, Klagetoh, Wide Ruins, Greasewood Springs, Cornfields, Kinlichee and Nazlini.

“The project is not just about providing heat but also about showing respect, care, and recognition to the elders, honoring their contributions to the community,” said Jonathan Hubbard, Facility Lead Supervisor, “The gratitude from the elders has

been amazing. They live in remote places with not much around, and they really count on this firewood to keep warm.”

According to hospital staff, many of the elders reached out to express their gratitude and even shed tears at the simple act of receiving firewood.

For some, this program has made a significant impact on their daily lives and well-being. One elder shared her story of how she had to use furniture to burn for heat and was struggling to keep warm without any access to firewood.

This project is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the facilities department in conjunction with the diabetes team. It focuses on providing assistance to the community’s most vulnerable members, who are identified through patient referrals. This ensures that those who are most in need receive the support and resources through this donation program.

“We are doing this because we care about our community, our elders, and preserving our culture,” says one



**PHOTO** - Wood pile for Project Chizh for Elders located adjacent to the new hospital.

of the employees spearheading the program. “These elders have so much knowledge and wisdom to share, and it’s important that we support them and keep their traditions alive.” Sage Memorial Hospital invites

the community to join in this effort to support their elders. Together, they hope to make a lasting impact on the lives of those who have given so much to their community.

## Partnership Announcement: SMH P4 Grant & Bashas’ Supermarkets



**PHOTO** - Official Sage Memorial P4 Grant Program logo.

**GANADO, Ariz.** - Sage Memorial Hospital and Bashas’ Supermarkets are pleased to announce a new partnership through the P4 Grant Program. This collaboration will provide patients with access to fresh, healthy food options through Bashas’ loyalty program.

The P4 Grant Program, focused on preventative health measures for Native American communities, has been working closely with Bashas’ to develop a voucher system that

integrates with the supermarket’s existing loyalty program. This will not only make it easier for patients to redeem their vouchers, but also allow for better tracking and reporting of purchases.

“We are excited about this partnership with Bashas’ because it aligns perfectly with our mission to promote healthier lifestyles in our community,” said Kathryn Barron, Director of the P4 Grant Program at Sage Memorial Hospital. “Their willingness to adapt and adjust as we continue to improve the program shows their commitment to our clients’ needs.”

One key aspect of this partnership is Bashas’ dedication to keeping administrative costs low, ensuring that all funds allocated for food purchases will go directly towards providing healthy options for patients. In addition, Bashas’ has expressed a desire to work with local ranchers and farmers to incorporate their products into the program.

To kick off the partnership, Sage Memorial Hospital will be distributing grocery bags with their logo at select

Bashas’ locations to promote the program and encourage patient feedback through surveys.

This collaboration between Sage Memorial Hospital and Bashas’ Supermarkets is just one example of how working together can make a positive impact on the health of Native American communities. The P4 Grant Program is continuously seeking new partnerships and opportunities for improvement, and this partnership with Bashas’ sets a great precedent for future collaborations.

### About P4

The Produce Prescription Pilot Program (P4) is a grant program authorized by Congress to increase access to traditional foods and produce for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. The program’s goal is to improve health care outcomes by reducing food insecurity and increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, and traditional foods. The P4 is part of the Indian Health Service’s (IHS) efforts to implement the Administration’s National Strategy on Hunger,

Nutrition, and Health.

The grant was awarded in the amount of \$500,000 per year for five years, commencing on July 1, 2023, and concluding on June 30, 2028. The initiative plans to involve 200 community members from Wide Ruins, Klagetoh, Kinlichee, and Greasewood, who experience obstacles to accessing fresh produce. The program aims to collaborate with healthcare and food sector organizations to establish Produce Prescription Programs. These programs will provide eligible participants with fruit and vegetable vouchers to enhance their access to fresh produce at local markets.

SMH is one of five tribal organizations to receive the grant. Other successful awardees include: Laguna Healthcare Corporation, Paraje, NM; Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okmulgee, OK; Sage Memorial Hospital, Ganado, AZ; Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Tucson, AZ; and Rocky Boy Health Center, Box Elder, MT. For more details on the P4 please visit [www.sagememorial.com/p4](http://www.sagememorial.com/p4)

# Sage Memorial Hospital meets with Arizona State legislators for support

**PHOENIX** - Sage Memorial Hospital representatives recently met with Arizona state legislators from February 26 - 29, 2024 to advocate for support in funding the installation of traffic lights on state highway 264.

The hospital, which serves eight Navajo communities within the Navajo Nation Reservation, is currently self-funding the construction of their new facility and has been tasked with covering the cost of the traffic light installation by ADOT. This unexpected expense has diverted resources away from improving healthcare services for their community.

During their visit, representatives from Sage Memorial Hospital met with 16 offices within the Arizona House and Senate to discuss the impact of this infrastructure project on their ability to provide quality healthcare services. They also emphasized the importance of collaboration between local and state government in finding a solution for sharing the costs.

Sage Memorial Hospital continues to seek assistance from local and state government in order to redirect resources towards their planned investments in healthcare services. They remain committed to opening their new facility in August 2024 and providing much needed healthcare services to the Navajo communities.



**PHOTO** - Sage Memorial Hospital Chief Operating Officer Tina James-Tafoya and Chief Executive Officer Melinda White in a meeting with Arizona State Representative Mae Peshlakai during a legislative visit on Feb. 26.



**PHOTO** - Sage Memorial Hospital Facilities Director and Chief Operating Officer Tina James-Tafoya in a meeting with Arizona State Senator Juan Mendez during a legislative visit on Feb. 27.



**PHOTO** - Sage Memorial Hospital Facilities Director and Chief Executive Officer Melinda White in a meeting with Arizona State Representative Nancy Gutierrez during a legislative visit on Feb. 28.

# New facility

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

unity; hodłzin, meaning sacred; hózhó meaning beauty and balance; and H'íli, meaning respect.

Navajo Health Foundation - Sage Memorial Hospital is a private nonprofit corporation governed by an all-Navajo board of directors. The new facility is entirely self-funded by Sage Memorial Hospital and is slated to open this fall.

Melinda White, the hospital's CEO, anticipates enormous benefits to the Navajo community.

"We want to be the best rural health facility," White said. "The space we're currently at is very tight, and we're not able to see as many patients as we would like. And in the new building, because there's a lot more space, we're able to have a higher patient volume."

## Community care & local impact

There are 12 health care facilities run by the Indian Health Service (IHS) within the Navajo Nation, but some Navajo residents must travel 50 miles or more to reach basic health services, and specialized services are even more scarce.

Dr. Kenneth Anaeme, chief medical officer at Sage Memorial Hospital, said the nearest hospitals able to offer specialized care are in Albuquerque and Flagstaff.

"If you have someone who's sick enough to require advanced care, now you're talking about a two-and-a-half-hour drive to the nearest tertiary center that can care for that patient," Anaeme said. "One of the issues we have is just the lack of specialized treatment capabilities here at Sage. So, that was causing a lot of distress for families."

Anaeme said Sage Memorial can currently treat some primary health conditions such as diabetes, influenza, urinary tract infections, pneumonia, traumatic injury, alcoholism and more.

"Health care should be efficient, easily accessible," Anaeme said. "It should be evidence-based, and it should be patient-centered. ... If we're trying to make the health care of our population efficient, not having delays in treatment, we need to have facilities that are state-of-the-art and that can accommodate things like telemedicine. the treatment of

a patient at the source, rather than having to rely on transportation to another place."

White said the move from the old cramped facility with outdated equipment to the new state-of-the-art facility will be a time warp. "We're going from one place to another, where everything is going to be literally electronic. It'll be very different, very, very different for us."

White got her start in the medical field at Sage Memorial many years ago.

"I actually grew up in Albuquerque, and at one point in my life, I used to say, 'I want to be a medicine woman,'" White said. "When I was very young and when I moved back to the reservation, I applied at Sage Memorial Hospital and started off as a medical records clerk."

White was one of 10 students accepted to a nursing program at Northern Arizona University, and went on to work as a nurse in infection control. After learning hospital administration through various mentorships, White went back to Sage Memorial, drawn by its community-driven mission.

"How can we actually put those two together," White said, "and create this hospital that accepts the traditional values, accepts the traditional aspects of it, and at the same time provides the Western medicine side."

The new hospital has generated excitement in surrounding communities. Delores Noble, 66, a resident of the Steamboat community, approximately 20 miles from Ganado, received care at Sage Memorial for years, then took on a role on the hospital's board of directors.

Noble currently gets physical therapy at Sage Memorial for piriformis syndrome, a condition in which a muscle in the buttocks spasms and causes pain, and she gets in-house dental care. Most recently, she's used the new cardiology services for concerns about heart palpitations.

Noble is satisfied with her care at Sage Memorial but said the lack of privacy in the small facility is a concern. The current emergency department does not have private rooms; instead, patients share one room, divided into sections by curtains.

"We don't have privacy, so it's really

**SEE NEW FACILITY | CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE 7**



**PHOTO** - Poncel Hall is the outpatient facility on the old Sage Memorial medical campus. It was part of the nursing school that opened in Ganado back in 1930. (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)



**PHOTO** - Melinda White, CEO of Sage Memorial Hospital, described the upcoming transition to the new medical facility as a "time warp." (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)



**PHOTO** - "Health care should be efficient, easily accessible," said Dr. Kenneth Anaeme, chief medical officer of Sage Memorial Hospital. "It should be evidence-based, and it should be patient-centered." (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)

# New facility

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embarrassing to hear conversations from the other patients, just a curtain away," Noble said.

In the new facility, there will be 12 exam rooms in the ER, giving patients privacy and space.

The construction of the new facility is visible from Highway 264, a road that many community members use daily, according to Noble. She said she's heard positive reactions to the prospect of the new medical facility.

"You can see, you know, the beginnings and the walls, as the steel beams went up," Noble said. "They saw it taking shape. You have that hope. You have that sense of, 'Oh, we can't wait to see our new hospital.' It's something that has been talked about, and it's finally coming true."

## Recent changes

A key issue Sage Memorial faces is limited care capabilities. Any time a patient has a critical care issue the hospital cannot address, the patient is flown to the nearest facility that can provide that service, often in Flagstaff or in the Valley, hours away from family members and their community.

In developing the new hospital, Anaeme and the medical team conducted a survey to determine what services were needed to keep patients from having to go off-site for additional care.

"We figured out that critical care services, cardiology services, general surgery services, those were probably our top three reasons for sending patients out," Anaeme said. "We decided to tackle them one at a time. General surgery services are somewhat not conducive to telemedicine, right? So that left us dealing with the other two."

Anaeme first established a contract with a cardiology provider who was able to see patients weekly via telemedicine. According to Anaeme, after seeing the work being done at Sage Memorial Hospital, the provider was inspired to switch to a hybrid practice, coming in person once a month to see patients. Before, the hospital could not offer advanced cardiology tests, but now it can provide in-house echocardiograms and stress tests.

As for critical care, Anaeme introduced the use of telemedicine carts.

"The critical care remains telemedicine because the critical care providers are out of state," Anaeme said. "But they're able to beam in through advanced technology that we have with our telemedicine carts, that are actually used to see patients. They can provide all the diagnostic testing we want."

## New facility and services

The new two-story building is nearing the final stages of construction.

Jarom Prows, the hospital's director of facilities, shared its progress as of April 10.

"I would say we are between 95 and 98% complete," Prows said. "Final paint has gone down, carpets, flooring, all the finishes are there. We are starting to do our punch walks ... you look for minor imperfections and call those out, to have a contractor fix them."

The new facility is full of technologically advanced equipment that staff will need to be trained to use. Other new services will include an obstetrics and labor and delivery ward, women's health services, orthopedics, general surgery and an expanded intensive care unit with four beds.

Prows said the team did not cut any corners in procuring high-grade equipment.

"We're getting all brand-new equipment, for the most part," Prows said. "We have a new X-ray machine, CT machine, mammography machine. We have really fancy, state-of-the-art OR booms."

The new hospital grounds will also house an optometry office, 16 dental chairs and a dedicated pediatric clinic. The team hopes the additional health care services will limit the amount of travel patients need to do.

## Project struggles & barriers

The project was originally set to be completed in November 2023, but unforeseen delays have complicated construction and the new prospective opening date is October 2024.

Prows explained how they had to navigate labor restrictions.

"There are laws and regulations in place to help keep our people here on the rez," Prows said. "We have this



**PHOTO** - Jarom Prows, facilities director of Sage Memorial, said construction of the new medical facility was "a long time coming." (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)

law, the NPEA, which requires us to hire Navajo first, hire quality Navajo candidates, and then you can get somebody else."

The Navajo Preference in Employment Act, known as NPEA, was enacted to "lessen the Navajo Nation's dependence upon off-reservation sources of employment, income, goods and services." Prows said the law still applies, even though the new Sage Memorial Hospital is on private property.

"We still reside within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation, so we still have to abide by the rules and regulations," Prows said. "Because of that issue, the project slowed way down. They had to advertise, they had to pull their workforce out and supplement it with the Navajo workforce."

The most notable delay came following a 2019 traffic study requested by the Arizona Department of Transportation, which estimated that the project would increase Ganado's growth by 14% by 2027. The result: Two new traffic lights along Highway 264 that would cost over \$6.1 million, and would be taken out of the hospital's budget.

"We tried working with our legislators," White said. "We went down and visited with several senators, several representatives, trying to ask if they could help us with funding because, again, we are a health care facility, and our business is health care. Not roads."

Prows said the two new traffic lights will be the first ones in Ganado.

"Highway 264 is one of the major corridors here on Navajo," Prows said. "It basically goes from Gallup all the way to Tuba City, almost from border

to border of the rez. St. Michaels and Window Rock have some traffic lights, but there are no traffic lights here in Ganado."

This budget cut postponed the construction of the hospital's new dialysis center.

"That money there that we've invested into the traffic lights could have and should have been invested into a dialysis center that we've already had slated," Prows said. "So we have a shell space at the new hospital, but we couldn't build that out because that money had to go to the roads."

Anaeme stressed the importance of accessible dialysis services within the new facility.

"Right now, the only option for treatment is to send them (patients) five-and-a-half-hours away to Phoenix," Anaeme said. "They're away from their family, and then eventually, when they get better, they make a trip all the way back here. If they require being in the hospital for an extended period, you may have family having to visit them in Phoenix for weeks at a time."

Despite the project delays the stoplights have created, Prows acknowledged that "it's the best for the community."

"It does help create a safety corridor here on 264, but that was one of those unexpected things that kind of came out of left field that we had to adapt and adjust to," he said.

## Staffing in rural settings

Staffing is another prominent struggle the Sage Memorial team faces. According to Dr. Richard

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# New facility

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Laughter, a psychiatrist and member of the hospital's behavioral health team, providers cycle through the Navajo Nation at a rapid rate.

"Right when you get to know your doctor, your counselor or your psychiatrist, they're gone," Laughter said. "After six months to a year. Maybe someone will stay a little bit longer, but that's very rare."

To help mitigate this issue, Prows and the construction team looked into providing on-site housing options.

"Home ownership is very difficult. So in order for us to get providers to come and treat our patients, we have to be able to provide housing," Prows said. "We built a 26-unit, multifamily apartment building over there, and we're supposed to be building two more."

The apartment complex is on the same grounds as the new facility.

Anaeme pointed out that providers are required to work at the "top of

their license," meaning they have to make many difficult decisions themselves due to the remote nature of their service.

Anaeme discussed some misperceptions about rural health care that impact the number of providers choosing to work in a remote area.

"Some people do tend to have an erroneous impression that being in a place like this, perhaps your medical practice will not be as advanced," Anaeme said. "Maybe they might think that they may have fewer opportunities to see some of the big diseases as compared to if they were practicing, for example, in Phoenix."

Anaeme is closely involved in the hiring process for new staff and has been developing recruitment plans to increase the number of staff on hand.

"For some, the rural area is off-putting so there's certainly a challenge," Anaeme said. "We do try to go to places. We try to go to the residency programs, to recruit for the area."

In Anaeme's experience, word of

mouth is a powerful tool in growing a strong staff of providers willing to tackle challenges in rural health care. He is originally from Nigeria and completed his residency in internal medicine and pediatrics at the University of Illinois.

After relocating to Arizona in 2002, working in hospitalist medicine and entering private practice, Anaeme heard about Sage Memorial through a colleague. Now, as chief medical officer, he hopes to use word of mouth to grow the staff for the new facility.

## Resilience

Many staff members at Sage Memorial noted both the community's dedication and their team's perseverance, all motivated to make a significant contribution to health care in the Navajo Nation.

"It's really a question of resilience, right?" Anaeme asked. "Resilience in the community. I'm the only non-Navajo member of the executive management team right now, although I have been formally adopted by the board chairwoman

into one of her clans. But I'm so impressed and honored to be a part of the Navajo community, trying to get first-class health care to its population."

For many team members involved in this project, the new hospital not only impacts the community at large but will help provide their own families and loved ones with the advanced care they need. Prows touched on the new hospital's positive impact on his own family.

"A lot of them kind of prolong their care or push off their care because of the dated hospital," Prows said. "Instead, they go to Gallup or they go to Ford when, in reality, this should be their home hospital."

The new hospital is an improvement from the nearly 100-year-old facility, one that will impact access and quality of care for the Diné people.

"This was and is one of the pioneers of health care here on Navajo," Prows said. "Just being able to continue that legacy is really rewarding."



**PHOTO** - The front entrance to Sage Memorial Hospital. Several new services will be offered, including a dedicated labor, delivery and nursery space. (Photo by Kevinjonah Paguio/Cronkite News)



# Recruiter

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE 1

optometry, outpatient clinic, pharmacy, rehabilitation therapy, and a mobile unit for community outreach. Our satellite clinic, Greasewood Springs Clinic provides outpatient care services, adult and children's primary care, dental, pharmacy, and basic lab services.

As a Recruiter, knowing the clinical services that we provide is crucial to the search and recruitment of the best and utmost certified healthcare professionals who provide the most adequate and safe care possible to our patients. Therefore, it is vital that we fill our positions with highly educated, highly trained, licensed and board-certified health professionals to enhance and deliver effective and efficient care while employed with Sage Memorial Hospital. It is imperative that recruitment stay involved with the hiring processes, to collaborate with department leaders, to identify vacant and non-vacant healthcare professional positions.

For marketing, we use billboards in North Gallup, New Mexico, and Cameron, Arizona, to reach our community. I'm optimistic about expanding our advertising strategy to use radio, newspapers, and social media in the future. My vision also includes adding QR codes on our mobile units linking to the SMH "Careers" page for wider job visibility. Additionally, I would also like to create an employee referral program because our employees are our best advocates.

Since, I took on the role as the Healthcare Recruiter my main objectives were to create and foster partnerships, market and promote, and find the best medical staff. Sage is now working with the Indian Health Service who now posts Sage's job openings on the [IHS.gov/jobs](https://www.ihs.gov/jobs) website. Other partnerships include working with our local universities, colleges, and technical institutions.

Also attending career fairs and virtual fairs to network and gain insight on other opportunities. Another aspect of recruiting is working with our younger generation who are enrolled in universities pursuing their healthcare education. Sage Memorial Hospital has partnered with several universities that have created Affiliation Agreements to

allow Native students to complete their clinical rotations at Sage and hopefully one day they return to work for Sage Memorial Hospital.

Sage Memorial invests in its clinical employees by providing Loan Repayment Options. Our employee benefits include Grand Canyon University discounted rates for employees who want to return to school. Verdguard (HMA) provides a comprehensive plan that covers medical, dental, pharmacy and vision insurance. Mutual of Omaha provides coverage for Short Term Disability, Long Term Disability, Life Insurance, and AD&D. Nationwide Retirement Plan provides coverage for 403(b) retirement plan. Other benefits include Traditional Healing Reimbursement, Employee Recognition Program, Personal Time Off & Paid Holidays, including two (2) Floating Holidays, free membership to the Hoo'zhoo'gii Wellness Center, Child Care Services, and on-site housing for eligible positions.

I am fortunate to have a talented



**PHOTO** - Healthcare recruiter Brenda Yazzie engages with attendees at a career fair hosted by the Navajo Housing Authority at the Navajo Nation Museum on April 25.

team to support our recruitment efforts here at Sage Memorial.

Please visit our careers page on [www.sagememorial.com](http://www.sagememorial.com) for vacancies

at Sage. Please contact me if you should have any questions at [brenda.yazzie@sagememorial.com](mailto:brenda.yazzie@sagememorial.com).



**Sage Memorial Hospital**  
NAVAJO HEALTH FOUNDATION

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### APPLY NOW

#### POSITIONS - OPEN UNTIL FILLED:

- Staff Dentist
- Dental Hygienist
- Certified Pharmacy Technician
- Staff Pharmacist
- Physical Therapist
- Respiratory Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Optometrist
- Director of Food Services
- MRI Technologist
- Radiology Technologist/CT
- Medical Technologist
- Family Practice Physician
- Produce Prescription Pilot (P4) Program Assistant/Driver (Grant Funded)
- Provider Enrollment Specialist
- Patient Account Representative
- Registered Nurse (ER, MTU & OPD)
- RN Supervisor (ER, MTU & OPD)

#### CLOSING DATE: 05/10/2024

- Dishwasher/Cashier
- Risk Manager Registered Nurse

#### CLOSING DATE: 05/14/2024

- Infection Preventionist/Employee Health Nurse

- Unit Ward Clerk - ER

#### CLOSING DATE: 05/15/2024

- Navajo Traditional Medicine Practitioner

#### BENEFITS:

- Affordable Health Insurance
- 403B Pension Plan
- Traditional Healing Reimbursement
- Short Term Disability, Long Term Disability, Life Insurance, AD&D
- Employee Assistance Program
- Employee Recognition Program
- PTO & Paid Holidays with (2) floating Holidays
- Wellness Center with membership
- Child Care Services
- Onsite Housing available for eligible employee
- Loan Repayment Program

-SCAN ME-



[www.sagememorial.com/careers](http://www.sagememorial.com/careers)



# EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

March 2024

**DENELLE HALWOOD, M.A.**



Ms. Denelle Halwood is an outstanding employee who stepped in and made a great impact in Employee Health. Her hard work goes beyond the core values of SMH. She has demonstrated by providing great patient care with respect and unity. She kept up with her dual role as a Medical Assistant and Employee Health Assistant, doing an exceptional job. Her recordkeeping skill made data easily available and she did not hesitate to be called upon when needed. She has done a notable job in transitioning the Employee Health Program. Ms. Denelle is described as a staff member who is a pleasure to work with and defines SMH.

SMH Mission, Vision, and Values are represented well with Ms. Denelle Halwood. SMH is appreciative of your service, Ahe'hee!



DELICIOUS DINÉ

# Cooking Classes



FAMILIES WELCOME!

What are we cooking?

- Stove Top Blue Corn Pine Nut Granola
- Blue Corn Mush Parfait

With Dietitian Denee Bex



Klagetoh Chapter House  
May 14, 2024  
11:00 - 1:00 PM MDT

Kinlichee Chapter House  
May 15, 2024  
11:00 - 1:00 PM MDT

Greasewood Chapter House  
May 21, 2024  
11:00 - 1:00 PM MDT

Wide Ruins Chapter House  
May 22, 2024  
11:00 - 1:00 PM MDT



Scan to sign up!

For more information, contact SMH Community Health Department (928) 755-4835



Link: <https://forms.gle/s9fFZ2bodTaASEGCA>

## Community Health to Host Cooking Classes as part of P4 Program



**DENEEX BEX**  
REGISTERED DIETITIAN & NUTRITION EDUCATOR

**GANADO, Ariz.** - The Community Health Department of Sage Memorial Hospital is excited to announce the "Delicious Dine' Cooking Classes," a series of engaging, family-friendly cooking classes designed

to celebrate and educate on the nutritional benefits of traditional Navajo dishes. These classes aim to encourage community health and wellness through food sovereignty, focusing on dishes that prioritize nutritional value and traditional

ingredients.

The classes will be led by registered dietitian Denee Bex and are open to all families in the surrounding Navajo Nation communities. Each class will showcase the "Blue Corn Mush Parfait" and "Top Blue Corn, Pine Nut Granola" dishes. The series begins at the Klagetoh Chapter House on May 14 continues at the Kinlichee Chapter House on May 15 and follows with classes at the Greasewood Chapter House on May 21 and Wide Ruins Chapter Houses on May 22.

"We, the SMH P4 Outreach Team and the Community Health Department, are so excited to be working and collaborating with Ms. Bex, chapter house leaders and community members with the "Delicious Dine'" Cooking classes," said Kathryn Barron, NP. "This will be the start of our Produce Prescription Pilot Program (P4) community

outreach nutrition education series."

"We hope to build on these events and include other events and activities in the future to support increasing access and knowledge to traditional foods, fruits and vegetables to the Dine people; and ultimately improving food security and food sovereignty on Navajo Nation through collaborative community partnerships," Barron added.

Bex is a passionate advocate for using traditional foods and nutrition to improve health outcomes in Native American communities. She has worked in indigenous communities as a clinical dietitian, diabetes health coach and group facilitator for more than 10 years and is excited to share her knowledge and expertise in cooking classes that celebrate traditional Navajo dishes.

"I recognize the power of building on our local food systems to increase

access to healthy and traditional foods, because that's how we will make a change in our communities," said Bex. "We must use our traditional knowledge of food to help heal our communities."

"I love my community and I am excited use my formal education to empower my people," Bex adds. "I'm proud to partner with sage Memorial because our mission to increases access to healthy and cultural response foods and education aligns."

Interested participants can sign up for the classes through the provided link: <https://forms.gle/s9fFZ2bodTaASEGCA>. For more information, please contact the SMH Community Health Department at (928) 755-4835.

## Mobilizing Healthcare: Increasing Access to Care



**GANADO, Ariz.** — The Mobile Health Unit Program is set to continue its mission of delivering exceptional healthcare services to those in need. Our team is excited to extend our reach and impact by announcing our itinerary for April through June.

Our dedicated team of healthcare professionals offers a wide range of services. We provide COVID and Influenza Clinics, DM Screening and Education, Sexual Healthcare,

HIV/Syphilis tests, STI Screening/Treatment, Harm Reduction Services, Walk-in Services, Adult Immunizations, and assistance with School and Employment Physicals. We are here to address your healthcare needs and ensure your well-being.

Stay tuned for more updates and we look forward to seeing you on the road. Below is the schedule and activities for the month of May.

**PHOTO** - Mobile health unit providing services to the surrounding communities.

## Mobile Health Unit Schedule for the Month of May

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/01 ID &amp; DM Clinic SMH OPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/02 Mobile Unit at Steamboat Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/03 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/06 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/07 Mobile Unit at Cornfields Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/08 ID &amp; DM Clinic SMH OPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/09 Mobile Unit at Nazlini Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/10 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/13 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/14 P4 Cooking Class &amp; Mobile Unit at Klagetoh Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/15 P4 Cooking Class &amp; Mobile Unit at Kinlichee Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/16 D &amp; DM Clinic SMH OPD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/17 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/20 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/21 P4 Cooking Class &amp; Mobile Unit at Greasewood Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/22 P4 Cooking Class &amp; Mobile Unit at Wide Ruins Chapter</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/24 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/27 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/28 Mobile Unit at Ganado Chapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/29 ID &amp; DM Clinic SMH OPD 9am-5pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5/30 Mobile Unit at Burnside Lowe's</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>05/31 CHN Home Visits</li> </ul>	

## Bringing Healthcare Closer to Home with TeleNephrology and TeleHealth Services

**GANADO, Ariz.** – Sage Memorial Hospital is proud to announce an expansion of its medical services, including the introduction of innovative hemodialysis programs. We spoke with Camille Sia, RN, about these developments and their benefits to the community.

“Our goal at Sage Memorial has always been to provide comprehensive, superior healthcare locally,” said Sia. “With this expansion, we’re able to further this goal by offering critical services like acute hemodialysis and TeleNephrology.”

To achieve this we have invested in state-of-the-art machines from NxStage, aimed to deliver key emergency dialysis treatments within the community, eliminating the need

for long travel distances for such care.

The inclusion of an acute hemodialysis service means our patients can now receive treatments much closer to home, in the presence of their families, reducing the stress of traveling to far-off healthcare facilities for acute treatments. Sia highlighted the significance of making this life-saving treatment accessible to patients in nearby communities who might lack such services.

“We’re excited to bring these services closer to where our patients live,” said Sia. “It’s about more than just convenience; it’s about providing care within their community, among their support networks.”

In anticipation of these services, Sage Memorial is training three staff

members as hemodialysis technicians and updating our facilities with the latest medical technologies to ensure the success and longevity of our dialysis program.

Additionally, our service expansion includes advancements in neurology, cardiology, telehealth, intensive care, and pulmonology. Sia is optimistic about the expansion into gastrointestinal services and, since April 2024, we started offering rheumatology services in our outpatient clinic to better serve patients requiring these specialties.

“We understand the critical need for a broad spectrum of healthcare services,” Sia explained. “We believe these new services will greatly improve the health and welfare of

our community, eliminating longer wait times on access to the said specialties.”

Sage Memorial is committed to providing accessible, top-tier healthcare to our community, constantly innovating and expanding our services to meet and exceed the community’s needs. Watch for more updates as we roll out these exciting new programs.

For more details on Sage Memorial Hospital and its offerings, please visit [www.sagememorial.com](http://www.sagememorial.com) or follow us on social media. For inquiries, get in touch with Camille Sia, RN, at [camille.sia@sagememorial.com](mailto:camille.sia@sagememorial.com).

# Measles in the United States — March 2024

## Updates on respiratory illness and vaccine-preventable diseases.

Thanks to a strong childhood vaccination program, measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000. Although overall childhood vaccination rates remain high in the U.S., measles still occurs frequently in other parts of the world. That's especially true right now. The World Health Organization has noted a significant increase in measles cases worldwide, with a 30-fold increase in Europe. This includes popular international tourist destinations for Americans, like England.

Measles can easily come to the United States by way of unvaccinated travelers, and measles cases have been increasing around the country. This most commonly happens when people who live in the United States visit countries where there are measles outbreaks. Once someone gets measles and returns to America, measles can spread if people in their community aren't up-to-date on their vaccinations.

Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to them can also become infected if they are not protected by vaccination (or, less commonly, prior infection).

The measles virus can stay in the air for up to 2 hours after an infected person left an indoor space. Someone can get infected by simply being in a room where a person with measles walked through.

In addition, people with measles can transmit to others when their symptoms are fever, cough, and runny nose, which look like common respiratory viruses.

Worse, measles can be very serious. Children younger than 5 years and adults older than 20 years are more likely to suffer from complications. Common measles complications include ear infections and diarrhea. More severe complications like pneumonia (lung infection) and encephalitis (infection and swelling of the brain) are possible and often require hospitalization and even intensive care. This is a real risk for people who are not vaccinated, especially for young children, adults, pregnant persons, and people who are immunocompromised. On average,

nearly 1 in 5 unvaccinated people in the United States who get measles need to be hospitalized. For example, in a recent outbreak in Ohio, over 40% of infants and children infected with measles were hospitalized.

When outbreaks do occur, local health departments lead the response. The playbook for ending measles outbreaks is decades old, and it works. People who are infected or who are exposed to measles but haven't been vaccinated are recommended to stay home and away from settings where unvaccinated people may be exposed, like schools and daycares.

By following these simple procedures, countless jurisdictions have successfully curbed local measles outbreaks and limited the illness and suffering that accompany them.

Key to maintaining the elimination of measles in the U.S. is vaccination. The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) is part of the national immunization schedule for all children and adults. Vaccination with MMR is the best and safest way to prevent measles. When both doses of MMR vaccine are given (typically when the child is about 1 and 4 years old), MMR is 97% effective at

preventing measles.

CDC recommends the safe and effective MMR vaccination as part of the routine immunization schedule for all children and adults, with special guidance for those travelling internationally. With spring break travel coming up and people going to and coming from countries that have seen sharp upticks in measles cases, the time to be sure you and your family members are up to date on their MMR is now.

**Last Reviewed: March 8, 2024 Source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases**

# Measles

IT ISN'T JUST A LITTLE RASH



Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children.



## MEASLES SYMPTOMS TYPICALLY INCLUDE

- High fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Rash breaks out 3-5 days after symptoms begin



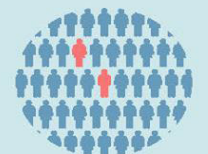
## Measles Can Be Serious



About 1 out of 4 people who get measles will be hospitalized.



1 out of every 1,000 people with measles will develop brain swelling due to infection (encephalitis), which may lead to brain damage.



1 or 2 out of 1,000 people with measles will die, even with the best care.



**You have the power to protect your child.**

Provide your children with **safe and long-lasting protection** against measles by making sure they get the **measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine** according to CDC's recommended immunization schedule.

[WWW.CDC.GOV/MEASLES](http://WWW.CDC.GOV/MEASLES)



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