



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

Welcoming New Beginnings: Labor and Delivery Coming to Sage Memorial Hospital

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital is proud to announce the upcoming opening of its Labor and Delivery Department later in 2026, with a target open date in late fall—a major milestone in expanding care for families across our community.

Leading this effort is Dr. Matthew Nelson, whose journey to Sage Memorial is rooted in both professional passion and personal connection. Originally from Connecticut, Dr. Nelson studied cultural anthropology at Utah Valley University before earning both his medical degree and Master of Public Health at A.T. Still University. He also completed a master's degree in medical anthropology at the University of New Mexico, with work focused on understanding illness and wellness through a cultural lens—an experience that helped shape his commitment to patient-centered care.

Dr. Nelson's connection to the Navajo Nation is personal. His wife is from Ganado, and for more than two decades, their family has called this community home. Over the years, he has witnessed the challenges families face when traveling long distances for healthcare services, especially for essential care like prenatal visits and delivery. These experiences inspired him to dedicate his career to improving access to care locally.

After completing his training in family medicine, Dr. Nelson worked in communities including Kayenta, Tuba City, Gallup, Flagstaff, and Hopi. During this time, he developed a strong passion for obstetrics—supporting mothers



through pregnancy, assisting in surgical deliveries, and working in the operating room. He later completed advanced training in high-risk obstetrics, becoming a family physician with surgical OB expertise.

After practicing in several locations, including Page, Ariz., Dr. Nelson and his family remained committed to returning to Ganado. In January 2025, that goal became a reality when he joined Sage Memorial Hospital. Since then, he has

worked closely with the team to build the foundation of the Labor and Delivery program—developing policies, preparing staff, and ensuring the department is ready to serve families with excellence.

Even before formally opening, Sage Memorial teams have already responded successfully to unexpected obstetric situations requiring local evaluation and delivery support. These experiences

SEE LABOR & DELIVERY | CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

Relatives First at Sage Memorial Hospital



Melinda White
Sage Memorial Hospital
Chief Executive Officer

I want to take a moment to reaffirm who we are and the standard that guides our work each day: Relatives First.

At Sage Memorial Hospital, Relatives First is more than a commitment to patient care. It is a reflection of who we are and the values we uphold. Every person who walks

through our doors is treated as family. We are called to care for each relative with dignity, compassion, kindness, and respect, ensuring they feel welcomed, heard, and supported throughout their healthcare journey.

Our work is grounded in our Navajo values:

Bee lá'í 'dlį – Together / Unity
Hodíłzin – Sacred
Hózhó – Beauty / Balance
H'íłį – Respect

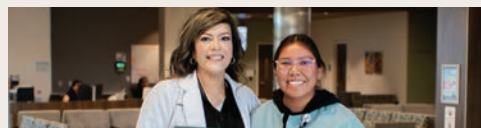
These values remind us that the work we do is sacred. Every role within our hospital plays an important part in promoting healing, restoring balance, and strengthening the trust our community places in us.

SEE RELATIVES | CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE



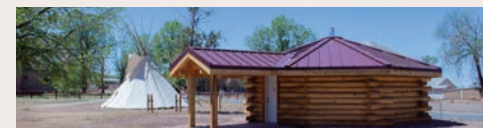
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SAGE NEWS

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Labor & Delivery | CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

have reinforced the importance of strengthening maternal and newborn readiness and reflect the commitment of staff preparing to serve local families safely and compassionately. Once open, the Labor and Delivery Department will include three delivery rooms and serve a growing number of families. Currently, around 30 prenatal patients are receiving care at Sage Memorial, with an initial group of mothers expected to deliver locally once the program opens—close to home and surrounded by family support.

For many families, access to local maternity care means more than convenience—it means fewer hours spent traveling for prenatal care, greater continuity throughout pregnancy and postpartum recovery, and the opportunity to remain closer to family, culture, and community during one of life’s most important transitions.

From the beginning, the goal has not simply been to reopen obstetric services, but to build a program shaped by community voice, local relationships, and the needs of families across the region. The focus has been on creating a sustainable model of care that reflects both clinical excellence and the values of the community it serves.

The program is also introducing innovative, family-centered care models. Through dyad care, both mother and newborn can be seen together by the same provider, improving convenience and ensuring continuity of care. Sage Memorial has also recently welcomed Dr. Ouellette, who brings similar training and experience, including FM/OB and MPH credentials, further strengthening the program’s clinical leadership.

In addition to clinical services, Sage Memorial Hospital is committed to supporting wellness beyond the delivery room. The program is exploring ways to integrate culturally responsive practices and strengthen connections with traditional and community supports so that mothers and families feel cared for in ways that reflect both medical and cultural priorities.

Meet the Team Supporting Labor & Delivery

Shaiyaia Fowler, a medical assistant, has been working alongside Dr. Nelson since 2025. She attended Utah State University and completed her medical assistant training in Mesa, Arizona. She is currently continuing her education in nursing at the University of New Mexico. Shaiyaia began her career in outpatient care before transitioning to community health, where she conducted home visits. She later returned to outpatient services and is excited about the opening of the Labor and Delivery Department and the continued expansion of services available to the community.

Lenora Burbank, MSN, RN, joined Sage Memorial Hospital in February 2026 after more than 20 years with the Indian Health Service at Chinle Service Unit, where she served as an obstetric nurse, supervisor, and Assistant Chief Nurse Executive of the Inpatient Departments. In 2025, she joined the IHS Headquarters Division of Nursing as a Forensic Nurse Coordinator. Lenora earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Northern Arizona University in 2005, followed by a Master of Science in Nursing – Clinical Systems Leadership from the University of Arizona.

At Sage, Lenora is focused on building strong, comprehensive policies for labor and delivery. Her goal is to ensure patients receive consistent, high-quality care—from the moment they

enter the hospital to the time they return home. She emphasizes that healthcare should go beyond the basics, sharing her belief that “nursing doesn’t stop at the walls of the hospital—it’s continuous.”

Lenora encourages all mothers, especially first-time moms, to seek support whenever they need it—even for simple questions. Whether it’s breastfeeding guidance, understanding a baby’s needs, or reassurance during those early days, she wants families to feel comfortable reaching out. Her approach is rooted in compassion and safety, treating every patient as she would a member of her own family.



Photo - Sage Memorial Hospital Labor room.

Relatives | CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

As employees of Sage Memorial Hospital, we are ambassadors of our organization. We have made a commitment to treat every relative with the highest level of respect and compassion. That commitment begins with something as simple as acknowledging each person who enters our facility and continues through every interaction they have with our team.

Living our Relatives First philosophy means going beyond what is expected. It means:

- Personally walking a relative to their destination rather than simply giving directions.
- Taking the time to explain care, procedures, and instructions in a clear and respectful manner.
- Offering reassurance during moments of fear, uncertainty, or stress.
- Ensuring relatives and their families understand the next steps in their care before they leave.

Whether our elders need assistance navigating our facility, understanding medical instructions, accessing services, or communicating through interpretation, we step in with compassion and without hesitation. We do not pass them by. By doing so, we honor our elders, our culture, and the pledge we have made to serve every relative with respect.

This commitment is central to the Sage Memorial Hospital experience and to our journey toward Diné Excellence. Diné Excellence reflects our dedication to providing care that honors our traditions, restores balance, respects the sacredness of life, and ensures every relative feels cared for as a member of our own family.

Sage Memorial Hospital Advances its Journey to High Reliability with Successful 2026 Joint Commission Survey

Zero high-risk findings and continued progress in quality and patient safety

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital (SMH) proudly announced today that its 2026 Joint Commission Triennial Survey marks a significant milestone in its ongoing journey to becoming a High Reliability Organization. The survey resulted in zero high-risk findings across four programs along with a 45 percent reduction in findings for its Critical Access Hospital program compared to 2023.

Joint Commission surveyors evaluated the Critical Access Hospital, Rural Health Clinic, Patient-Centered Medical Home, and Home Care – Durable Medical Equipment programs between April 30 and May 15, 2026.

“At SMH, quality and patient safety are our top priorities,” said Melinda White, CEO. “We are proud of this successful survey, which reflects the dedication of our entire team and strengthens our commitment to providing the highest standard of care to our relatives and community. This allows us to continue advancing our PCMH model and quality health care we deliver every day.”

Chief Quality Officer Lori Livingston echoed White’s sentiments and highlighted the hospital’s ongoing efforts. “We began our journey to become a High Reliability Organization in 2023 by strengthening policies, procedures, and safety initiatives across the organization,” she said. “These efforts have created a strong culture of safety, which is reflected in the results of this survey and in how we deliver healthcare.”

“We are especially pleased to have earned new Joint Commission accreditations for our Rural Health Clinic and Home Care – Durable Medical Equipment programs, along with certification for our Patient-Centered Medical Home,” Livingston added. “The RHC survey, in particular, is one that very few organizations complete, and we are grateful to have reached this important achievement.”

For more information about The Joint Commission, visit www.jointcommission.org.

Welcome our New Chief Nursing Officer Yolanda Burke



Yolanda Burke, RN MSN
Sage Memorial Hospital
Chief Nursing Officer

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital is excited to welcome Yolanda Burke as our new Chief Nursing Officer. She officially stepped into this role on Monday, May 11, 2026 during Hospital Week. Although this is a new title for her, Yolanda has already been part of the Sage Memorial Hospital team since February 2025, serving as the Assistant Chief Nursing Officer and making a strong impact across the hospital. Yolanda’s journey into nursing started many years ago. She attended Arizona State University and graduated in 1997 with a BSN in nursing; she also obtained an MBA/MSN from Grand Canyon University. After obtaining her nursing license, she began working at Tuba City Regional Health Care, where she gained valuable experience and mentorship. She shared that the Chief of Quality there helped guide her early on in her career. Over the years, she continued to grow professionally, working through different nursing specialties and places. Coming to Sage Memorial Hospital means a lot to Yolanda on a personal level. She was born right here in Ganado, Arizona, and still has family living in Greasewood. She talked about how this feels like a full circle moment in her life. Her relatives always believed she would come back, and now she feels like she is exactly where she is meant to be. Her inspiration to become a nurse comes from her family. She has a few cousins who are registered nurses, and they inspired her to follow that path. Her grandmother also played a big role in her life, always reminding her to learn everything she could. Her father/mother

and later her children kept her motivated to keep pushing forward and reaching her goals. Outside of work, Yolanda enjoys reading and has four bookcases filled with books. She also loves hiking and camping whenever she has the chance. Patient centered care is very important to Yolanda. She believes in taking the time to listen to patients and their families and treating them as relatives. She wants to make sure the hospital is a safe and respectful place for everyone. She also shared how important it is to support nurses and show appreciation for the work they do. She is especially excited about the new nursing programs coming to Sage Memorial Hospital. With ASU and NAU planning to bring students next spring, Yolanda is looking forward to helping grow the next generation of nurses, including local high school students who may start early through dual enrollment. Yolanda is truly excited for what is ahead, and Sage Memorial Hospital is proud to have her leading the nursing team.



Photo - Yolanda took part in the Sage Experience Podcast with Acacia Williams which aired on July 13th. See full episode on Sage Memorial Hospital’s Youtube page.



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 AND THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE.

VISION STATEMENT

SAGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL’S VISION IS TO ENHANCE THE DINÉ PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE WHILE DELIVERING INNOVATIVE HEALTHCARE.

CORE VALUES

- BEE ŁÁÍ ‘DLJ (TOGETHER/UNITY)
- HODÍLZIN (SACRED)
- HÓZHÓ (BEAUTY/BALANCE)
- IL’ÍLJ (RESPECT)



Pharmacy Services Driving Innovation and Better Care at Sage Memorial Hospital

GANADO, ARIZ. - At Sage Memorial Hospital, the Pharmacy Department continues to play a vital role in advancing patient care through innovation, efficiency, and a deep commitment to serving relatives across the region. Under the leadership of Pharmacy Director Patrick Fonge, the department has made significant progress in improving access to medications, reducing wait times, and enhancing the overall patient experience.



Dr. Patrick Fonge, PharmD
Sage Memorial Hospital Pharmacy Director

One of the pharmacy's most impactful accomplishments has been the dramatic reduction in prescription wait times. In the past, patients could wait up to 24 hours for medication refills. Today, thanks to workflow improvements and a strong commitment to patient-centered service, the pharmacy strives to fill prescriptions the same day they are received whenever medications are in stock. This shift has improved continuity of care and reduced the risk of complications caused by treatment delays. "Our goal is simple—put patients first," said Fonge. "We want to ensure that every person receives the right medication, at the right time, in the safest way possible." To support this goal, the department has implemented advanced automated technologies that improve both efficiency and safety. A new vaccine dispensing system now allows outpatient clinic staff to quickly access and administer vaccines without waiting for traditional pharmacy processing. This system reduces delays, supports busy clinic workflows, and helps ensure that relatives receive timely immunizations during their visits.

Expanding Access Through PickPoint Technology

A major innovation transforming pharmacy services at Sage Memorial Hospital is the introduction of PickPoint remote dispensing machines. These units installed in both the Emergency Department in Ganado and at the Greasewood Clinic function similarly to a secure "medication vending machine," allowing patients to quickly receive prescriptions closer to where they receive care.

Unlike traditional dispensing models that require patients to travel back to the main pharmacy, PickPoint technology brings medications directly to rural care sites. When a provider prescribes medication, the order is reviewed and verified remotely by the pharmacy team in Ganado. Once approved, the provider simply scans a code at the PickPoint unit, and the machine dispenses the exact medication needed.

For many relatives, especially those living in Greasewood and other remote areas, this innovation significantly reduces travel time, eliminates long



Photo - PickPoint Remote Dispensing Machine located at Greasewood Clinic.



Photo - Dr. Patrick Fonge, Pharmacy Director registering medicine to put into the PickPoint machine.



Photo - Dr. Patrick Fonge, Pharmacy Director refilling the PickPoint machine.

waits, and improves access to essential medications. Medications commonly stocked in the PickPoint units include antibiotics, pain relievers, and treatments for common conditions ensuring patients can begin treatment immediately.

Beyond convenience, the system also includes built-in safety checks, barcode verification, and labeling processes that ensure accuracy and compliance with pharmacy standards. This combination of speed and safety reflects Sage Memorial Hospital's commitment to delivering high-quality care regardless of location.

PickPoint technology represents more than convenience it is a meaningful step toward healthcare equity, helping ensure that distance is no longer a barrier to timely treatment.

Meeting Growing Demand with Excellence

As services have expanded, the Pharmacy Department has seen a significant increase in demand. Daily prescription volume has grown from approximately 300–350 prescriptions per day to nearly 500 prescriptions daily. Despite this growth, the pharmacy team remains focused on delivering personalized, high-quality care to every patient.

Staff continue to prioritize accuracy, patient education, and respectful service, ensuring that each relative understands their medications and feels supported throughout their care journey.

Looking Ahead: Removing Barriers to Care

The Pharmacy Department is continually exploring new ways to innovate and better serve the community. Future plans include potential medication delivery services for elderly relatives, individuals with limited transportation, and patients managing chronic conditions.

In every advancement from automation to remote dispensing the focus remains the same: improving access, enhancing safety, and supporting healthier communities.

Compassion at the Core of Care

While technology continues to drive improvements, pharmacy leadership emphasizes that compassionate care remains the foundation of their work.

"Healing is about more than medication," Fonge shared. "It's about treating people with dignity, showing empathy, and making sure they know someone cares."

Through innovation, dedication, and a commitment to patient-centered service, the Pharmacy Department continues to strengthen healthcare delivery and ensure that every relative receives the care they deserve when and where they need it most.

Celebration for DAISY Award Recipient Ernasha McIntosh MSN, APRN, FNP



Photo – Sage Memorial Hospital proudly celebrates Ernasha McIntosh, MSN, APRN, FNP, as the recipient of the Daisy Award for Extraordinary Nurses.

GANADO, ARIZ. - This month, we proudly recognize Ernasha McIntosh MSN, APRN, FNP recipient of the prestigious DAISY Award, for her exceptional dedication to serving relatives, families, and the community with compassion, leadership, and excellence.

As a Family Nurse Practitioner and Assistant Chief Medical Officer with the Golden Eagles PCMH Team, McIntosh's approach to healthcare is rooted in servant leadership, faith, culture, and compassion. Inspired by a desire to serve others as God intended, she was guided into nursing by her parents, who taught her that healing, advocacy, and caring for others is sacred work. McIntosh views healthcare as a modern extension of the traditional healer role within the Navajo community and considers it a privilege to walk alongside patients throughout their healthcare journey.

Receiving the DAISY Award was both humbling and meaningful for Ernasha. She shared that the recognition reflects not only her own dedication, but also the teamwork and collaboration required to ensure every patient receives compassionate and respectful care. One relative's interaction especially reminds her why she chose this profession, when a patient once shared that McIntosh

had "saved her life." Moments like these continue to motivate her to advocate for relatives and ensure they feel heard, valued, and cared for during vulnerable times.

Originally grounded in both traditional Navajo and Christian teachings, McIntosh believes compassion means meeting people where they are without judgment and caring for them physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. She proudly shared her Navajo clans: Tábaahá (Water's Edge Clan), born for Honágháahnii (One-Walks-Around Clan), with Tsin Sikaadnii (Clamp Tree Clan) and Nakai Diné'é (Mexican People Clan) as her grandparents' clans. These teachings continue to shape her commitment to service, leadership, and healing.

During difficult days, McIntosh relies on her faith and purpose, reminding herself that every patient encounter is an opportunity to serve and make a meaningful difference. Her advice to aspiring healthcare providers is simple yet powerful: "Serve God. Always do your best. Never give up."

Congratulations again to McIntosh on this well-deserved recognition. Her compassion, leadership, and dedication continue to inspire patients, colleagues, and the entire community at Sage Memorial Hospital.

Meet our New Podiatrist: Dr. Jaskern Dhani, DPM



Dr. Jaskern Dhani, DPM
Sage Memorial
Hospital
Podiatrist

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital is proud to welcome Dr. Jaskern Dhani, DPM, to our Medical Staff as our newest podiatrist. Since joining the team on June 1, Dr. Dhani has been dedicated to providing high-quality foot and ankle care to our relatives throughout the Navajo Nation.

Originally from Dallas, Texas, Dr. Dhani earned his undergraduate degree in Neurobiology from the University of Texas at Austin before attending podiatry school in New York.

He then completed a three-year surgical residency in Houston, where he received advanced training in foot and ankle surgery, sports medicine, trauma care, diabetic limb salvage, and reconstructive procedures.

Before coming to Sage Memorial Hospital, Dr. Dhani served Native communities through tribal

healthcare and quickly developed a passion for caring for underserved populations. His experience caring for Native communities ultimately brought him to the Navajo Nation, where he hopes to make a lasting impact by expanding access to specialized podiatric care.

"I wanted to work somewhere that truly needed these services," Dr. Dhani said. "Many people have had to travel long distances for podiatry care, and I'm excited to help provide those services closer to home."

Dr. Dhani provides comprehensive care for a wide variety of foot and ankle conditions, including diabetic foot care, wound management, sports injuries, fractures, bunions, heel pain, ingrown toenails, tendon injuries, and reconstructive surgery. One of his greatest passions is diabetic limb preservation—helping prevent amputations through early detection, education, and timely treatment.

As Sage Memorial Hospital continues to strengthen its diabetic care services, Dr. Dhani looks forward to collaborating with the hospital's diabetes program to provide annual diabetic foot screenings, diabetic shoes and inserts, patient education, and preventive care. He

also hopes to expand podiatry outreach through Sage's Mobile Health Program, bringing specialized foot care directly into communities across the reservation.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Dhani enjoys hiking, backpacking, traveling, and playing basketball. An avid adventurer, he has explored more than 30 countries and enjoys experiencing new cultures and the outdoors.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Jaskern Dhani to Sage Memorial Hospital. We are excited to have his expertise, compassion, and commitment to improving the health and well-being of our relatives.





| Ernasha McIntosh, MSN, APRN, FNP

“At its heart, the Patient-Centered Medical Home is more than a model of care. It is about connections. It is about listening, understanding, and building relationships that last.”



| Patient relationship is at the core of PCMH.

Building a Stronger Future in Healthcare

The Patient-Centered Medical Home at Sage Memorial

By Ernasha McIntosh, MSN, APRN, FNP

GANADO, ARIZ. - At Sage Memorial Hospital, healthcare is becoming more than visits, diagnoses, and treatments. It is evolving into a partnership grounded in trust, respect, culture, and community. This transformation is being guided by the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), a model of care that is reshaping how healthcare is delivered across the Navajo Nation.

The Patient-Centered Medical Home is a nationally recognized approach that focuses on comprehensive, coordinated, and relationship-based care. Rather than addressing health concerns only when they arise, this model emphasizes prevention, long-term wellness, and collaboration between patients and their care teams. At Sage Memorial, the program represents not just a method of care, but a commitment to walking alongside each patient throughout their health journey.

What makes this approach especially meaningful is how closely it reflects Diné values. The principles of family, community, respect, and shared responsibility

have long been part of Navajo life. Caring for one another, supporting relatives in times of need, and working together for the well-being of the community are traditions that have been passed down through generations. The PCMH model builds on these teachings, blending them with evidence-based medicine to create a system of care that is both culturally grounded and clinically strong.

In this model, every patient is seen as a whole person, not just a condition or diagnosis. Everyone brings their own experiences, beliefs, priorities, and goals. Care begins with listening—understanding what matters most to each person—and using that understanding to shape a care plan that respects both medical needs and personal values. This approach strengthens trust and allows for a deeper, more meaningful connection between patients and their healthcare teams.

At the center of the program is a team-based structure designed to provide consistent and coordinated care.

Sage Memorial’s Outpatient Department is organized into three primary care teams: Golden Eagles, White Shell, and Arrowhead. Each team includes primary care providers such as physicians or family nurse practitioners, medical assistants, a registered nurse care coordinator, and a unit clerk. Together, they support patients through preventive care, chronic disease management, follow-ups, referrals, and ongoing communication.

Beyond the core team, patients are supported by a wide network of services that work in close collaboration. These include behavioral health, pharmacy, public health nursing, dental care, optometry, rehabilitation services, laboratory and imaging, emergency services, inpatient care, and specialty clinics. Rather than functioning separately, these services coordinate closely with primary care teams to create a seamless experience. Patients have access to a full healthcare network that works together with one shared goal: providing the right care, at the right

time, in the right way.

Patients choose their primary care provider and become part of that provider's team over time. This continuity allows relationships to grow and trust to develop. Providers and staff come to understand not only a patient's medical history, but also their family circumstances, cultural values, and personal health goals. In turn, patients feel more comfortable asking questions, sharing concerns, and actively participating in their care.

Healthcare in this model becomes more proactive than reactive. Instead of waiting for illness, care teams monitor preventive screenings, manage chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension, follow up after hospital visits, and help patients stay on track with medications and appointments. This approach leads to earlier identification of health concerns, better management of ongoing conditions, and improved overall health outcomes. It also enhances communication across departments and reduces gaps or duplication in care.

Just as importantly, the PCMH model recognizes that health is influenced by more than medical conditions. Many patients face challenges that affect their ability to stay healthy, including limited access to food, transportation, or safe housing. Care teams work to address these needs by connecting patients with community resources, outreach programs, and supportive services. Mobile health units, public health nursing, and community partnerships help extend care beyond the walls of the hospital and into the communities where patients live.

This holistic approach ensures that care is practical, compassionate, and responsive to real-life needs. It recognizes that meeting patients where they are physically, emotionally, and culturally is essential to improving health and well-being.

Since implementing the Patient-Centered Medical Home, Sage Memorial has seen meaningful improvements across the healthcare system. Care coordination has strengthened; preventive services have increased, and patients are more engaged in their care. At the same time, teamwork among staff has grown, with



| PCMH model helps Providers see patients as relatives

providers, nurses, and support staff working more closely together and contributing their unique strengths to better serve the community.

One of the clearest signs of success can be seen in the relationships that have developed. Patients are beginning to recognize and ask for their care teams by name, showing a level of trust and familiarity that goes beyond a single visit. These relationships reflect the true purpose of the PCMH model to create a healthcare experience where patients feel known, respected, and supported.

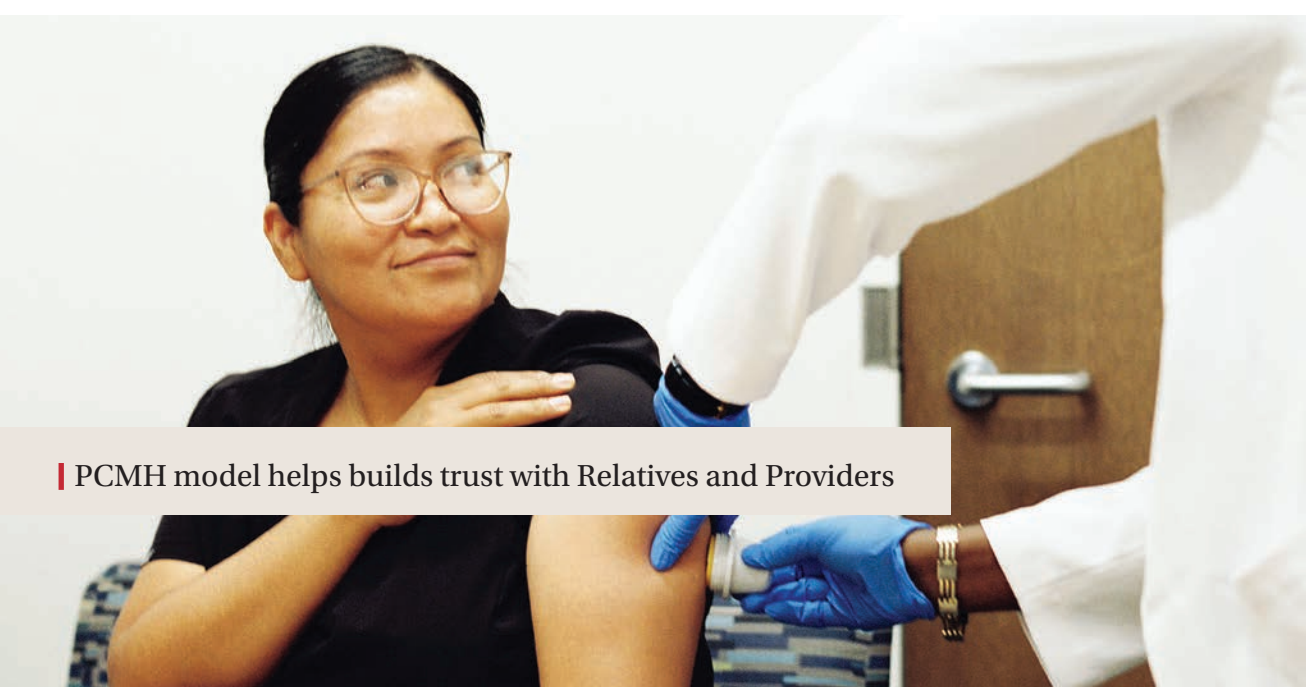
Cultural respect remains central to this work. Sage Memorial's care teams honor traditional beliefs and practices while providing modern medical care. Patients are encouraged to involve family members in their care if they choose, and their decisions are always respected. This balance of cultural understanding and clinical care helps create a system that is both effective and deeply meaningful.

While achieving Patient-Centered Medical Home certification through The Joint Commission marked

an important milestone, Sage Memorial sees it as only the beginning. The hospital continues to look ahead, with goals of expanding services, strengthening care coordination, increasing access through telehealth and outreach, and addressing barriers that impact health across the region.

The long-term vision is to become a nationally recognized American Indian Medical Home, setting an example of what culturally responsive, relationship-centered healthcare can look like in tribal and rural communities.

At its heart, the Patient-Centered Medical Home is more than a model of care. It is about connections. It is about listening, understanding, and building relationships that last. It is ensuring that—every relative—knows they are supported by a team that truly cares. At Sage Memorial Hospital, healthcare is not a journey anyone takes alone.



| PCMH model helps builds trust with Relatives and Providers

“The principles of family, community, respect, and shared responsibility have long been part of Navajo life... The PCMH model builds on these teachings...”

Sage Memorial Hospital Expands Traditional Healing Through Behavioral Health Program



Photo - Sage Memorial Hospital's newly constructed hogan located on the hospital's legacy campus. The teepee set up area is located next to the hogan. .

GANADO, ARIZ. - At Sage Memorial Hospital, healing is more than medicine — it is connection, culture, and community. Through the Behavioral Health Program, the hospital continues to strengthen its commitment to culturally grounded care by creating spaces where traditional teachings and wellness practices can work alongside modern healthcare.

Led through the vision of Harrison Jim Sr. and community cultural leaders from the Gallup area, the program began expanding in June 2024 with the goal of developing a stronger traditional healing program for patients, families, and the community. Since then, several important projects have taken shape to support emotional, spiritual, and behavioral wellness.

One of the first projects included the development of separate male and female sweat lodges, providing safe and respectful spaces for traditional purification and healing ceremonies. Behavioral Health also established a dedicated area for a teepee, creating another environment where cultural teachings, ceremonies, and healing practices can take place.

In October 2024, support from hospital administration helped move forward construction plans for a traditional hogan on the hospital grounds. Construction continued into 2025, and the project reached nearly complete status this spring. The hogan now stands as a symbol of healing, balance, and cultural identity at Sage Memorial Hospital.

As the traditional healing grounds continue to develop, plans include proposed future additions such as a powwow area and equine-assisted therapy programs. Using horses as part of the healing process helps address mental health challenges by encouraging trust, emotional awareness, and connection to traditional Navajo teachings.

Program leaders emphasize that true healing comes from reconnecting with traditional stories, teachings, and the sacred relationship between people, land, and family. Navajo teachings remind us that the home, the mountains, the fire, and the circle all hold meaning in the healing journey. Ceremonial fires represent spiritual guidance and the presence of grandparents and ancestors, while the sacred circle reflects unity, balance,

and restoration.

The hogan will serve as a place for morning ceremonies, guided imagery sessions, and traditional songs, including mountain songs used for reflection and healing. The teepee will provide space for introductions, teachings, and community gatherings, while additional ceremonies such as cedar blessings and Native American Church traditions will also be incorporated into programming.

The hospital's Office of Indigenous Medicine and local elders continue to guide the development of these spaces and ceremonies to ensure cultural respect and authenticity remain at the center of the program.

By blending traditional Navajo healing practices with behavioral health services, Sage Memorial Hospital is creating a model of care rooted in k'é — the Navajo value of kinship, connection, and respect. The program reflects the hospital's ongoing mission to support healing of the mind, body, and spirit for future generations.



Photo - Traditional Practitioner Harrison Jim leading a workshop on traditional living.



Photo - Teepee burning blessing for employees during Patient Experience Week.



Photo - Harrison Jim discussing Sage Memorial Hospital's traditional healing program with Miss Navajo.

Keeping Care Close to Home: Dr. Timothy Domer Returns to Share His Vision for Elder Care

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital welcomed back retired physician Timothy Domer MD for a special presentation focused on compassionate elder care and the importance of keeping patients close to home if possible. Domer, who previously served communities throughout the Navajo Nation and worked closely with Sage Memorial Hospital, returned to share a program and philosophy of care he originally developed in 2009. His presentation centered on helping prevent unnecessary nursing home placements for elders by providing support, communication, and culturally centered care within their own communities whenever possible. During the presentation, Dr. Domer emphasized that elders often receive the best care when they remain surrounded by family, culture, language, and familiar traditions. One of the most powerful moments of the presentation came when Dr. Domer shared a personal story from his years of practice. He recalled caring for an elderly Navajo grandmother who spoke only Navajo and knew very little English. When she needed advanced medical care, she was transferred to a larger healthcare facility outside the community. Before the transfer, Dr. Domer informed the receiving physician that the patient would need a Navajo translator because she did not speak English fluently. Later, the physician contacted him and stated that the patient was speaking

“perfect English.” Dr. Domer quickly realized there had been a misunderstanding. The grandmother only knew one English word “yes.” Out of respect and trust, she answered “yes” to every question, even when she did not fully understand what was being asked. The experience became a lasting lesson about the importance of communication in healthcare. Dr. Domer explained that simply asking patients if they understand is not enough. Instead, he encourages providers to ask patients to explain back what they understand in their own words to ensure clear communication and safe, compassionate care. Through stories, experience, and cultural understanding, Dr. Domer reminded attendees that healthcare is not just about medicine it is about dignity, understanding, and keeping elders connected to the people and places they call home.



Photo - Elder care is essential to Sage Memorial Hospital's mission

Honoring Ancestral Foods and Wellness at Sage Memorial Hospital

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital was honored to host an inspiring and educational presentation on ancestral Native foods and wellness led by Chef Walter Whitewater (Diné/Navajo) and Chef Lois Ellen Frank, PhD, co-owners of Red Mesa Cuisine in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The event brought together hospital staff, patients, and community members for an engaging experience centered on food, culture, and health.

Chef Walter Whitewater, who began his professional culinary career in 1992, shared his deep connection to traditional Native foods and his commitment to teaching communities how ancestral diets can support health and healing. As a Diné chef from Pinon, Arizona, Chef Whitewater spoke about how processed foods have dramatically changed Native diets over time and contributed to many health challenges seen today. He emphasized the importance of returning to plant-based ancestral foods that sustained Native peoples for generations.

Chef Whitewater's experience and leadership in Native cuisine is widely recognized. He is a chef with Red Mesa Cuisine, a Native American catering company specializing in ancestral foods prepared with a modern approach. He has appeared on numerous Food Network cooking shows and has been featured in national and international media for his work promoting Indigenous foods of the Southwest. He is also the first Native American chef to cook at the James Beard House in New York City and the recipient of the James Lewis Award for his contributions as a Native chef. His passion for food sovereignty and community wellness was clearly felt throughout the presentation.

Joining him was Chef Lois Ellen Frank, PhD, a James Beard Award-winning cookbook author, Native foods historian, culinary anthropologist, and educator. Dr. Frank shared her decades-long work documenting the



Photo - Chef Frank, PhD and Chef Whitewater preparing healthy and affordable dishes to guests.

extensive tribal trade routes long before modern borders existed, connecting Indigenous communities throughout the Americas. She also spoke about her work with Native communities through education programs that promote health and wellness by revitalizing ancestral diets. Her message focused on how preparing and sharing traditional foods nurtures both the body and the soul while honoring ancestors.

foods and lifeways of Native American communities throughout the Southwest. She spoke about food as medicine and described how ancestral ingredients such as corn, beans, squash—known as the Three Sisters—along with chiles, tomatoes, potatoes, cacao, and vanilla, have nourished Indigenous peoples for millennia. She referred to these foundational foods as the “Magic Eight,” emphasizing their cultural, nutritional, and spiritual importance.

Dr. Frank discussed how Native foods traveled across

During the event, Chef Whitewater and Dr. Frank conducted live cooking demonstrations, preparing simple, plant-based dishes using Native ingredients. They showed attendees that healthy meals can be easy to prepare, affordable, and delicious. As they cooked, the chefs explained the nutritional benefits of each ingredient and offered practical tips for incorporating ancestral foods into everyday meals.

Guests were invited to taste the dishes, and many expressed appreciation for the flavors and the knowledge shared. The chefs also distributed recipes so participants could recreate the dishes at home and share them with family and friends, helping extend the impact of the presentation beyond the hospital walls.

Hospital staff and community members alike enjoyed the opportunity to learn from two leaders in Native cuisine who are deeply committed to cultural preservation, education, and wellness. The presentation sparked meaningful conversations about nutrition, prevention, and the role of traditional foods in supporting healthier Native communities.

Sage Memorial Hospital is grateful to Chef Walter Whitewater and Chef Lois Ellen Frank for sharing their time, knowledge, and passion. Their visit served as a powerful reminder that returning to ancestral foods is not only a way to improve physical health, but also a way to strengthen cultural identity, community connections, and overall well-being.



Photo - Acacia Williams of Sage Memorial hospital attends presentation and enjoyed her plate.

Sage Memorial Hospital Promotes Mental Wellness Through QPR Training and Cultural Activities

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital continues to strengthen its commitment to mental health awareness and prevention through the work of dedicated staff members Marissa M. Kee and Rebekah Johnson.

Marissa Kee, Community Outreach Prevention Education Specialist from Steamboat, Ariz., focuses on outreach efforts centered around suicide prevention, mental health awareness training, and substance use education. Her work is focused on educating the community, breaking stigmas, and helping people better understand mental health and available resources.

Rebekah Johnson, a COPE Specialist in Behavioral Health from Burnside, Ariz., plays an important role in managing a mental health grant. Through this program, she helps organize and lead workshops and trainings that teach individuals how to recognize warning signs of mental health struggles.



Photo - Marissa Kee demonstrating calming breathing technique.

These trainings often include interactive activities, videos, and individual reflection, allowing participants to better understand how to respond in real-life situations.

In early May, the team hosted a Mental Health Awareness Week (May 4–8) for employees. The week included activities such as Writing to Heal, a mental



Photo - Rebekah Johnson helping employees during the dream catcher making session.

health walk, and a dream catcher making session. These events encouraged employees to step away from their desks, focus on their well-being, and become more aware of mental health.

They also provide Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training for suicide prevention. This training is designed for the public and teaches people how to recognize signs of suicide risk and respond in a supportive and helpful way. It serves as an important mental health intervention that empowers individuals to help others in crisis.

One of the main goals of their program is to increase awareness and understanding of mental health in the community. Their trainings are evidence-based and focus on practical ways people can improve their well-being. In one example, a participant shared they did not know what self-care was and had to look up its definition.



Photo - Employees take part in the mental health walk event during their lunch break.

Since then, they have started incorporating self-care into their daily routine, showing the real impact of these trainings.

In the upcoming school year, the team plans to partner with Ganado High School, TMC, and NAIHS to provide Teen Mental Health First Aid training. They aim to train over 30 students to recognize when a friend may be struggling, respond appropriately, and connect them with resources such as counselors. This program will help students feel more confident talking about mental health and supporting one another.

Through their continued efforts, Marissa Kee and Rebekah Johnson are making a meaningful difference by raising awareness, providing education, and helping build a stronger, healthier community.

Sage Memorial Hospital Celebrate Hospital Week with Community and Care

GANADO, ARIZ. - Sage Memorial Hospital proudly celebrated National Hospital Week from May 11–15, bringing staff together for a week filled with appreciation, engagement, and community spirit. Centered around the theme, “Healing Happens Here – Hospitals Save Lives, Communities Thrive,” the week highlighted the dedication and hard work of hospital employees across all departments.

The celebration kicked off on Monday with a “Mental Health Monday” theme, encouraging awareness and support for mental wellness. Employees participated in activities such as a breakfast kickoff, a teepee smudging hosted by Behavioral Health, and team-building games, setting a positive and reflective tone for the week.

Tuesday brought a fun and creative “Disney Day,” where staff showcased their favorite Disney-themed attire while participating in activities including a morning walk, crossword challenges, and the much-anticipated SMH Chili Cookoff. The cookoff was a standout event, drawing participation from multiple departments and fostering friendly competition alongside delicious food.

On Wednesday, staff wore red in recognition of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Awareness Day, honoring an important cause while



Photo - Employees take part in Hospital Week activities throughout the week of May 11-15.

continuing to build unity within the organization. Activities such as a watermelon eating contest and water balloon toss kept the energy high and encouraged

connection across teams.

Thursday introduced a relaxed “Hawaiian Day,” complete with bright attire and lively activities like a cookout, bingo, and a relay race. These moments allowed staff to unwind while strengthening relationships beyond their daily responsibilities.

Throughout the week, each department hosted its own fun games and activities, creating a sense of friendly competition and teamwork across the hospital. As a token of appreciation, employees were also given Sage Memorial Hospital T-shirts, helping to build unity and pride among staff.

The week concluded on Friday with “Cultural Day,” where employees proudly wore traditional attire representing their backgrounds. The day featured social gatherings such as a donut social, hot dog lunch, and a cake walk, bringing the celebration to a meaningful close.

Hospital Week at Sage Memorial Hospital served as a reminder that behind every patient success story is a dedicated team working together. The week not only recognized the hard work of staff but also strengthened the sense of community that defines Sage Memorial Hospital.

Sage Memorial Hospital Hosts Career Day for Ganado High School CTE Nursing Students

GANADO, ARIZ. – Sage Memorial Hospital welcomed eight students from the Ganado High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) Nursing Class for an inspiring Career Day on April 30. The visit gave students a firsthand look at various healthcare and support careers while encouraging them to pursue their interests in the field.

From 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., the students participated in interactive presentations, a guided walk-through tour of the hospital, and even enjoyed sack lunches provided by the hospital. Presentations featured staff from Human Resources, Nursing, Security and Information Technology, Miss Navajo, and Quality Management. Each department shared insights into their daily responsibilities and the skills needed to succeed in healthcare and hospital operations.

Sage Memorial Hospital CEO Melinda White addressed the group personally, stressing the heart of the profession.

“Compassion is at the core of everything we do in nursing and healthcare,” said White. “I encouraged these students to pursue their goals with a compassionate heart while building strong skills.”

“Our community has a great need for dedicated healthcare professionals, and it was wonderful to see these young people exploring the possibilities here at Sage,” White added.

“Sage Memorial Hospital is proud to partner with local schools and invest in the future healthcare workforce,” said Chief Patient Experience Officer Christian Bigwater. “Events like this help students gain knowledge and inspiration as they consider meaningful career paths.”



Photo – Sage Memorial Hospital staff members take part in providing encouraging insights for students to accomplish their education and goals.



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If there are few patients, the dental team will return to Ganado to see walk-in patients. Please call in advance to confirm walk-in availability.

Main: (928) 755 - 4500

www.sagememorial.com

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES



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- ER • ICU • OR • PHN
- MTU • OB • L&D/OB

Nursing Supervisors needed in:

- ICU • PHN

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Dental Director
Staff Dentist
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Lead Hematology Technologist
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
SDPI Coordinator
Physical Therapist
CH Nurse Practitioner

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- Wellness Center with Membership
- Child Care Services
- Onsite Housing



**VOLUNTEERS
ARE WELCOME
TO APPLY.
STAY SAFE &
THANK YOU!**

Sage Memorial Hospital gives preference to eligible and qualified applicants pursuant to the Navajo Preference in Employment Act.

www.sagememorial.com/careers

HR DEPARTMENT
(928) 755 - 4821

NON-CLINICAL POSITIONS

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Certified Plumber
Compliance Officer



Sage Memorial Hospital
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