County commissioners hear updates on community center programs

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The Thoreau Community Center took the spotlight at the McKinley County Board of Commissioners Jan. 14 meeting with its semi-annual report.

Jasmine Desiderio, project director for *The Healing Project*, and Priscilla Manuelito executive director and community specialist for the center, presented the highlights of the report spanning the period from July 2019 to December 2019.

Some of the programs held by the community center included active shooter response training, and classes to raise awareness on suicide prevention and substance abuse prevention within the community.

“We want to spread positive messages and outreach about these issues and we’re trying to get the community involved,” Desiderio said.

The outreach programs include information on the danger prevention resources, such as local law enforcement and hospitals. Desiderio said the community center distributed information cards on these programs throughout local facilities.

“What we’ve also done is a continued partnership with the summer youth camps,” Desiderio said. “We average about 63 youth who participate in these programs, which are offered from June to July.”

Other milestones from the past six months include hiring additional staff so the community center can stay open longer, with their open days increasing from a four to a five-day week.

Desiderio mentioned another program of networking and partnerships with local stakeholders, which includes working with the State of New Mexico to develop a statewide strategic action plan for suicide prevention across the state.

Manuelito spoke about other program work.

“What we’ve had in the past, that we’re now bringing back, is our youth board,” she said. “They were a vital part of our community center, [because it’s] where we got their input.”

The two youth boards are comprised of middle school and high school students.

“It’s been overwhelming and helpful to see our youth collaborating with the adults and making their voices heard,” Manuelito said.

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