

Thoreau Elementary School holds grand opening, building dedication

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 02 October 2020 04:41



The sky was clear on the morning of Sept. 15, which fit the mood at the new Thoreau Elementary School.

Members from the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education and staff from Thoreau Elementary were present for a grand opening ceremony and blessing of the new building. Numerous guests, students, and community members also attended the ceremony, following the proper safety protocols.

Thoreau Elementary Principal Daryl Antone welcomed the crowd to what he called a wonderful, momentous event.

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“Our students, staff, and community members have been looking forward to this day for quite some time,” Antone said.

Antone expressed his gratitude to the district superintendent; associate superintendents Tim Bond, Jvanna Hanks, and Dr. Pauletta White; and the five Board of Education members.

“They have worked very hard to make this building a reality for our students, staff, and community members,” he said.

Antone also thanked a number of school dignitaries including Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and several state senators, all of whom he said were instrumental in making the new building a reality.

“We have not only looked forward to this new elementary school building, but for it to instill a new desire in our students to continue to strive forward towards excellence,” Antone said. “We encourage our students to be successful and become good community members and instill a desire for them to become educators in our Thoreau community.”

Dist. 3 Board Member Priscilla Manuelito was present for the ceremony. She spoke about the importance of the community’s roots and relationships.

“My mom [has been here] for 45, 50 years. I see a lot of our colleagues here for our children. You know after that many years, the teachers and community are not just doing this for a paycheck. They’re doing it because they love our children,” she said.

Manuelito attended Thoreau Elementary School and she said she formed many longtime friendships at the school, and the same could happen to current students.

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“The coaches, staff, cooks, and everyone else at the school, you touch the lives of these students. You guys are making a difference in their lives, and what more can we say but ‘thank you’,” Manuelito said.

Superintendent Mike Hyatt said it was a happy day for the community, but also a bittersweet one.

“I have a lot of fond memories of the old school. It was actually the building that brought me to New Mexico when my wife started teaching there in 1994,” Hyatt said. “It brings back a lot of memories being here.”

Hyatt said the new building is long overdue, recalling how he felt the old building felt outdated even 26 years ago.

“The exciting thing is this is a new building, a new opportunity for this community, for the staff, and for generations of students,” he continued. “Some of the students who are with us today, some of their children, grandchildren, and even their great grandchildren can attend this school. That’s pretty important, and pretty exciting.”

The path from planning to the finished building is one that took years to unfold, Hyatt said.

“It took effort through the state agencies, the district, and others just to get to the point where we start thinking about a school,” Hyatt said.

The cost of the building is about \$18 million, which Hyatt said came from taxpayer dollars from McKinley County and across New Mexico.

“We appreciate people who are willing to support our students and their education. We want the best for them and this building will help with that,” he said.

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