

Construction company partners with Chapter House

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Brings jobs to local youth

A nonprofit construction company in Farmington partnered with Shiprock Chapter House to employ young people during the pandemic.

The New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps awarded Capacity Builders, Inc. of Farmington \$105,000 to provide jobs for young people in public projects that conserve the state's natural resources and yield community benefits of lasting value.

The project gave on-the-job experience in construction to 16 young adults and three of those were hired in permanent positions with local companies.

As COVID-19 swept the nation this year, Nizhoni Park, Shiprock's community park, was already selected as a workforce site by CBI to operate a YCC workforce development grant. With so many youth employment programs being canceled due to the pandemic, CBI was determined to move forward with the project and bring employment to local youth because the Shiprock community needed a recreation site for families.

The project began with safety training to ensure compliance with NMDOH and NMYCC COVID-19 guidelines. From day one, masks were required to be worn at all times, and crew members were tested for COVID-19 before initially reporting to work and are tested every two weeks continually. The crew members also received equipment safety training before beginning their initial work of clearing out the overgrowth, trash, and debris that had littered the park since its last cleaning in the fall of 2019. In early July, the initial two-week clearing effort uncovered steel park benches by the banks of the San Juan River.

“Before, the park didn’t look as good as how we’re making it look now,” YCC crew leader Brandie Lee explained.

In a project meeting with CBI and the YCC crew, Shiprock Chapter House Manager Michelle Peterson also expressed the need for vandalism prevention by requesting steel gates to block street access for vehicles after park hours.

CBI hired CLT Welding to provide basic welding, which included designing, fabricating, and installing numerous gates and park signs. This gave the crew members real-world, on-site construction experience in welding technology over the three days of training. The training was highly successful, and several crew members expressed interest in entering the welding program at San Juan College.

. “What excites me the most is knowing that these young adults are growing,” Trini King, Capacity Builders’ YCC Field Foreman, said. King manages the crew and coordinates the on-site construction efforts with the Shiprock Chapter House and contractors. “Every young person deserves that chance to have a platform.”

Once the gates were up, it was time to lay the concrete in the skate park area. Mesa Sand and Gravel provided the concrete and offered guidance on-site. Leonard Canuto spent two full days training with the YCC crew on the ins and outs of working with concrete, including setting the forms.

“The crew learned how to properly calculate the volume for the amount of concrete that needed to be purchased by the Shiprock Chapter House,” Capacity Builders Inc.’s Progress Director, Corine Florez, explained . “They’re not just doing, they’re learning on the job,” she said.

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This is the fourteenth community project CBI has funded through the NMYCC program in San Juan County.

YCC crew member Kristen Deel noted that CBI helped with job training while she was seeking a permanent job.

Deel was offered a job with GeoMat Inc. during the three-day concrete pour.

In addition to their work at Nizhoni Park this summer, the YCC crew trained with Johns Hopkins University to set up COVID-19 testing sites numerous times. Several crew members also assisted Soul Dog, a mobile veterinarian, with a spay and neuter clinic. This training resulted in two YCC members expressing interest in enrolling in San Juan College's Veterinarian Assistant program.