

Gallup Summer Nightly Indian Dances return for 33rd year

Written by By Dee "JC" Velasco Sun Correspondent
Friday, 03 June 2016 06:40



Memorial Day officially kicked off the 33rd annual Gallup Summer Nightly Indian Dances, sponsored by the City of Gallup. A growing tradition, the dances are held each year at the Gallup McKinley County Court House Plaza with various Native American tribes performing dances and songs.

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Running everyday until Labor Day, beginning at 7 pm, for one hour, audiences get a close up view of various Native American traditional dances. Aside from the returning locals from the Gallup surrounding area, tourists from abroad are entranced as well by the performers and the significance of the dances.

Each year, more songs are added to the program according to Director Teri Frazier.

"This year, we're going to have four Gourd Dances take place throughout the summer to help celebrate Gallup as the Most Patriotic Small Town in America," Frazier said. "We're doing more advertising this year with a billboard and table tents in motels and restaurants throughout Gallup. We're featured in the New Mexico Magazine August issue, the Native American issue this year. So we kind of beefed up on advertising this year, that's the biggest thing."

The nightly dances enhance the rich Native American culture, and as Gallup is considered the Indian Capital of the world, the nightly dances are an anticipated event.

"We just keep growing, we haven't gone down in numbers anytime, but the incentive is there to try to keep bringing more and more people. And with the Mayors' help we were able to," Frazier said.

Each night, a different Native American performance group dances and sings for the public. Along with each performance, a brief description of the dance is given by the emcee.

Frazier said this season will feature the Cellicion Traditional Zuni Dancers; Pollen Trail Dancers; Shelley Morningsong; Roach Family Pow-Wow Dancers; Zuni Olla Maidens; Apache Dancers; and the Kallestewa Dance group from the Pueblo of Zuni, which is a children's group.

"We're incorporating the children's group in order to build capacity so that they can always be part of our program as they grow up. The performances are pretty much the format of the performers themselves," Frazier said. "We should see a little bit involving the audience, we're just trying to do the best we can with what we have. I don't tell the dancers what to dance, they choose that themselves."

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Local emcees also entertain the crowd with the history of Gallup about the tribes of New Mexico, types of dances, and all information pertaining to the Nightly Indian Dances.

"My staff consists of two emcees, two ambassadors, two city workers on sound, and of course, the dance groups," Frazier said. "We also have 13 Native American vendors for the public, displaying their arts and crafts."

Ambassadors also display free information to the public on Gallup and the surrounding area. Along with the performances, the Veterans Memorial Walkway is also a must-see.

"It's a great way to spend your evening, it's a safe place to be, and we've enhanced our security this year. It's just a great place to hang out, and if you have people visiting you here in Gallup, it's a great place to bring them," said Frazier, who added that people come from all over the world.

"It's amazing how many people come here to Gallup, to see what Gallup is all about."

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