

Diné College welcomes former AZ legislator

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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Jackson Sr. was Diné College liaison to lawmakers

Staff Reports

TSAILE, Ariz. — Diné College is crawling with young college students seeking knowledge and life lessons to add nice lines on their resumés. It was that way years ago and that fact remains evident today.

That was part of the near 90-minute message given by former Diné College administrator and Arizona State Senator Jack Johnson Sr., during a lecture Feb. 15.

Jackson, 84, gave a talk entitled, “Diné Way of Life.” The lecture was part of Diné College’s 2018 speaker series, which correlates with events and activities commemorating the college’s 50th anniversary.

“I’m still here,” Jackson, the brother of the late former Diné College president Dean Jackson, told the 50-plus members of the audience attending the affair. “I have a lot of relatives in this area. I am very proud of the school.”

Jackson is from Teesto, Ariz., and currently lives in Navajo, N.M. A life-long Democrat, he spent practically two decades serving the Arizona State Legislature, both as a member of the House of Representatives and Senate. In 1998, he successfully lobbied the legislature for \$17.5 million — funds that were used for construction purposes at Diné College’s Tsaile, Tuba City, Chinle and Window Rock campuses. Another \$17.5 million was subsequently secured from the

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Arizona legislature in 2008 for facility maintenance.

“He lobbied and secured funding from the Chinle Agency Roads Committee to pave the [Diné College] Circle Drive,” Miranda Haskie, Ed.D, a sociology professor at Diné College and organizer of the speaker series, said. “This included parking lots on campus and both the east and west entrances to the college. What some of you may not know is that when it snowed or rained, our parking lots were muddy. And some of us had to wear our snow boots from the parking lot to the building and later change into our work shoes.”

Jackson retired from Diné College after working several years as its Director of Cultural and Legislative Affairs. He was a past organizer of the All-Indian Rodeo Association.

The list of speakers solicited by Haskie reads like a who's-who of Diné education. Tommy Lewis, Ed.D., was the first speaker in January and kicked off the series.

Lewis is from Dilkon, Ariz., and served as President of Diné College back in the 1990s. The College underwent a name change under Lewis, who is currently a member of the Diné College Board of Regents.