

Diné College hosts veteran meet-and-greet on two campuses

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TSAILE, Ariz. — Close to two dozen people turned out Feb. 27 and 28 for hours-long meet-and-greet sessions with Diné College veterans and representatives from area veterans organizations, officials said.

Ed Curtis, an academic and veterans advisor at Diné College, said the Tsaile gathering went well. That gathering featured three veteran representatives who fielded questions on everything from how to get VA loans, homeless and mental health concerns and health care questions.

“It went well,” Curtis said. “There was some written information handed out on a variety of topics and the reps were able to answer all kinds of questions.”

Curtis noted that on hand at the Tsaile event were Robertson Yazzie of Farmington and Shawndin Tracy of Prescott, Ariz. Yazzie is a U.S. Army veteran and Tracy is an outreach coordinator in Prescott, Ariz., who works specifically with veterans.

Diné College also hosted a veterans event on their Shiprock campus Feb. 28. There, Diné College disability and veterans coordinator Rosalind Russell said upwards of a dozen people engaged in conversation with the veteran reps.

“There were a little more than a dozen people who came out,” Russell, the parent of a U.S. Navy enlistee, said. “It was a very informative event.”

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Russell said there are about 18 student and staff vets who take classes or work at the Diné College Shiprock site. She said Commander Lloyd Begay informed about Shiprock chapter meetings and Everett Howe of E Security of Shiprock was on hand to talk about the firm and screen potential new hires.

Ester Paul, a recruiter at Diné College who works out of the Shiprock site, said she gave an introduction about the College and handed out complimentary pins and coin purses. Paul said the age range of people at the event was between 18 and 65.

Diné College was founded as the Vietnam War was being fought in 1968. One of the reasons why the College was created was to help Navaho veterans who were returning home who wanted to attend college without having to leave the Navajo Reservation.

An organization called the Diné College Student Veterans Association is starting back up after several years of inactivity. The organization is working toward becoming an officially recognized chapter for the Student Veterans of America.

“We’re making progress,” Jeremiah Holiday, a transfer and career specialist at the College and a U.S. Army veteran, said. “We provide services to extend to our veterans to help them succeed academically. We also extend those services to the families and peers of veterans.”

Holiday estimated that there are some 50-plus veterans at Diné College. He said the number fluctuates, based on enrollment.