

Strengthening Nations hosts first telethon

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 13 November 2020 06:54



Fundraising for new shelter

Domestic violence can occur anywhere, and victims may not be willing to speak publicly about the abuse they face. However, there are groups that are willing to give victims the support and resources they need to recover.

Strengthening Nations is one of those groups. Founded in 2019 by Pat Nelson and Christian Vasques, it is a non-profit organization that advocates and provides support for victims of domestic violence. They also offer domestic violence education, awareness and resources to the community.

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Being just over a year old, Nelson said the group is looking to expand its reach and provide more assistance to victims. To achieve the goal, Strengthening Nations hosted its first virtual telethon at Quintana's Music on Oct. 24.

"The telethon was a fundraiser for an emergency transitional shelter we want [to acquire] for domestic violence survivors," Nelson told the *Sun* Oct. 3.

Strengthening Nations has partnerships with local hotels to house families and victims. But the goal of the telethon is to create a dedicated shelter,

"We want to build or buy a location to house families in a more stable environment," Nelson said. "We'll be able to provide support services to them under one roof without risking exposure to people who could identify them and [we think the reasons] why they're at the shelter when seeking out support should be done in confidentiality."

The list of performers for the telethon included Thoreau-based metal band, Testify, along with Keeley Johns, JP Van Derdys Vidal and Irv Wauneka. While the performances were closed to the public for safety concerns, the recorded telethon and performances can be viewed in full on Strengthening Nation's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/sninc505>.

Nelson said the live music made up most of the telethon, though she also spoke about her experience of overcoming abuse as a child.

"All of the things I've gone through in my life, I want everybody to know that the challenges they face, you can overcome them, and you can use them to help other people," Nelson said.

Strengthening Nations raised nearly \$5,700 through the telethon, with more donations continuing to come in through their website, Facebook, and Paypal, along with donations from Gallup businesses,

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The goal right now is \$20,000, which is slated to be used as a down payment on a building that will house the transitional shelter.

Nelson said they have one building in mind on the west side of Gallup that will cost about \$300,000.

“That price is up there, but with the grants we’re writing and the other support we can dig into, we think [we can make it],” she said.

Regarding other funding avenues, Nelson said some opportunities have changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the CARES Act. What the organization may have done and who they would have approached in the past may not be available at present.

Nelson said they will continue to ask for assistance from the public and hope more people realize support services for abuse survivors are a necessity for Gallup.

“Any kind of support financially from anybody and everybody would benefit us,” she said.

In the meantime, Strengthening Nations will continue serving Gallup.

“We want to thank everybody for their support [in the telethon], getting the word out about the organization,” Nelson said. “Besides fundraising for the shelter, another part of the telethon was getting out the word about the services we provide. Our doors are open still during the pandemic. We’re here, and if anyone needs abuse-victim services, that’s what we’re here for.”

Nelson said they are partnering with the Gallup Police Department to host a coat drive Nov. 21 at their office in the First United Methodist Church, 1800 Red Rock Dr. The event will be both drive-up and drive-thru, so the community can safely participate.

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For more information on Strengthening Nations, including to donate, visit <https://www.strengtheningnations.org/>

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