

Head banging for a cause at Navajo Technical University

Written by By Dee Velasco
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Heavy metal festival raises funds for MMIW

Music can be fun, but it can also provide a purpose and help spread a message.

That's exactly what it did during the "United Through Metal" mini-festival that was held May 19 at the Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint. The festival aims to spread awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women by showcasing heavy metal bands.

The bands who participated in the festival were "Wicked Meadows," "War Motor," "Testify," "Hell Throne" and "Mutilated Tyrant."

It cost \$10 to get into the show, and the proceeds were split between MMIW and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women USA.

The festival's organizer Delvena Kirk and her husband Dave Kirk, who is in the band "Hell Throne," wanted to do something different to get the message about MMIW out to the public.

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In an interview with the *Sun*, Delvena said she wanted to bring more attention to the Crownpoint community.

“The idea was discussed and with the help of a family member who works here at NTU everything just fell into place,” Delvena said. “NTU was so supportive of the idea that they let us use the Wellness Center, helped with the tickets, and even with the T-shirts.”

Delvena holds the mission of speaking about murdered Indigenous people close to her heart. Her uncle was murdered about 10 years ago, and her family still don’t know who killed him.

“I feel that this is a way to somehow connect with the loss of him,” Delvena said.

She said she hopes the festival also creates some sort of healing for those who have also lost loved ones through murder.

Delvena praised the bands for coming out and showing their support for the MMIW cause. Some traveled from as far as Phoenix, Ariz., and “Testify” even donated their equipment.

“We were so thankful at the support of all the bands, I mean they paid their own way out here and it was so awesome for them to come out and play for such a great cause,” Delvena said.

MMIW sent a representative — Meskee Yatsayte — to speak on behalf of the organization.

Donned in her Levi’s jacket with heavy metal band patches, Yatsayte addressed the crowd and handed out brochures about MMIW. She said she was excited that the event was a heavy metal music festival.

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“Everyone has their own genre of music and I’m glad it was the metal scene to help with the event,” Yatsayte said. “With this type of music, it draws everyone together and it just went hand-in-hand to talk about this emotional subject.”

While getting ready to hit the stage, Dave expressed his thoughts on the mini-festival his wife put together.

“If we could help one family or two families or more, it’s all worth the cause to come out and play,” Dave said, “Metal music is so powerful and it has a message behind it.”

Dave explained that heavy metal is so profound on the reservation and mainly so underground, but by performing for such a great cause it would hopefully change the minds of those who think otherwise.

“When people see heavy metal followers, they often think of nothing but a bunch of delinquents, when in reality we [heavy metal followers] are just simply chill people listening to heavy metal music,” Dave said.

Before the event started, he said he hoped it draws in the heavy metal fans who “just want to head bang together for a worthwhile cause.”

The event drew in heavy metal fans of all ages. In total, the event raised close to \$500. Delvena and everyone who was involved were surprised at such a great turnout and hope to do this again in the near future.

“Music is healing and this is a great way for all of us to come together with no alcohol or drugs and to concentrate on our family and the good times,” Yatsayte said.

For more information about the MMIW Task Force, visit www.mmiwusa.org .

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