

Manuelito Children's Home gears up for fundraiser

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Organization continues decades of supporting Wild Thing

Each July, Wild Thing Championship Bullriding rocks Gallup with a bevy of entertainment for the whole family. This year marks its 30th anniversary of bringing the number one open bull riding to the southwest.

Wild Thing couldn't happen without its partners and sponsors. And there's one local organization that always helps out and receives funding in return.

Manuelito Navajo Children's Home has been synonymous with Wild Thing for the last 25 years and counting. Its long tradition began when MNCH first took shape on the west end of Gallup in Mentmore.

MNCH takes in children who come from all sorts of family situations. Some may come from a single-parent home, where their parent is struggling to care for all the children at home. Others are taken in due to neglect or abuse. The home feeds and clothes these kids, who also attend the onsite school, in hopes of giving them a better life and chance to succeed later as adults.

Executive Director Jim Christian said Wild Thing is always a fun time for the kids.

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"The kids are always excited in wanting to do their part and we also get a little help from friends that come from Arkansas," Christian said.

Those friends are members of the Church of Christ from Arkansas, who have been doing this for many years, planning their vacation around this time of the year.

GOOD SHOW FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Each year the children, whose ages range from 6 to 16 years old, help at Wild Thing by handling the parking fees at the gate and serving customers at the concession stand. Greeting the hungry crowds is just a small fun part; the kids also get to enjoy the bull riding and other festivities as well.

Even better is that all proceeds from concessions and parking go to MNCH, making it the largest fundraiser of the year for them.

Christian said the kids love being involved and feel valuable in doing this yearly tradition. Even alumni from the school come back and lend a hand.

"We have about a dozen kids that will help out," Christian said.

The funds help the school get through the slow times. This means paying the electric bill, providing food, and helping the kids go to camp.

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"We don't receive any government funding at all," Christian said. "Just private donations. It's an essential key component, it helps create some awareness that we are here and [it] lets people know that we offer those services."

GETTIN' WILD

Wild Thing Championship Bullriding is the number one open Bull-riding event in the southwest and is held at Red Rock State Park. This year it takes place July 7 to July 8, kicking off nightly at 7 pm and ending at 11 pm.

Wild Thing is primarily run by Larry Peterson, whose dad, Joel Peterson, started the relationship with MNCH. Joel Peterson built MNCH and was very involved with the organization and essential to starting it.

Having a special place in his heart for the children, Joel came up with the fundraiser to help the kids. Years later, that relationship has continued to grow, all the while providing for the kids.

Christian said he's very appreciative of the Peterson family.

MNCH is also involved in other fundraising events such as a Memorial 5K and has started building another relationship with the Hubbell Trading Post with their rug auction. MNCH is always accepting donations (monetarily, non-perishable foods, good used clothing).

For more information on Manuelito Navajo Children's Home, visit website mnch.org, their Facebook page, or call (505) 863-5530.

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