

Veterans moving into Ford Canyon Senior Center building

Written by By Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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Gallup Mayor Jackie McKinney made it official on June 30 at the general meeting for Veterans Helping Veterans by presenting the key to the now vacant Ford Canyon Senior Center to Dave Cuellar, the head of the largest and most active veterans' group in Gallup.

"The city removed the office furniture and the dining tables and chairs," McKinney said. "We left the pool tables, and kitchen equipment and utensils." McKinney also mentioned that he had discussed with the Department of Veterans Services in Albuquerque the probability of installing a permanent Veterans Service Officer in this building. The permanent office will be able to better assist the large number of vets in applying for property tax exemptions and waivers, and license plates while providing services for homeless and at-risk veterans, and many other programs.

There are many such programs to assist veterans and all vets are encouraged to check with the VSO to determine eligibility.

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In other news about veterans, Stephan Tobey, announced that the local job fair for veterans held at the Rio West Mall had produced 47 jobs to date. Totals will not be available for another week or two. One hundred and thirteen jobs were provided last year during Tobey's Fourth Annual veterans' job fair. To supplement those numbers, UNM-G announced that the local school had presented seven Associate degrees to veterans in May, the highest number ever to date.

Several fundraising drives are currently underway for the group to be able to purchase a 20 foot by 30 foot American Flag to be placed on an 80-foot pole just off Hasler Valley Road. According to Cuellar, this flag when placed will be quite noticeable for travelers on I-40 and for most residents of Gallup. The hilltop where it will be situated is approximately 100 feet high and the all weather flag will be enhanced by solar lights at night.

The veterans group has currently raised over \$9,000 through raffles and donations, with one individual, Donald Kline, bringing in about \$4,000 he collected from businesses in Thoreau and Gallup. The need is around \$14,000, according to Cuellar. Thunderbird Supply, with locations in Gallup, Flagstaff and Albuquerque, was holding raffles for jewelry-making equipment but totals had not been tabulated fully. A son of one local veteran, Leo Torrez Jr., was spearheading the local drive which had collected around \$1,400 for the flag and several hundred dollars for operational expenses for the group. It is hoped the flagpole will be installed by the end of the summer.

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