

70th Annual Navajo Nation Fair highlighted visit from Jude Schimmel

Written by Staff Reports

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - The 70th Annual Navajo Nation Fair launched into full swing Sept. 7, with an opening ceremony at the fairground entrance, followed by the annual barbecue.

This year, along with hosting N7 Ambassador Jude Schimmel at Kid's Day, the Navajo Nation fair welcomed back the Miss Navajo Nation Pageant.

Schimmel gave a motivational presentation and book signing at the Navajo Nation Museum on opening day, along with an appearance at the Fair Pow Wow that same night. She also attended Ashkii Happy Kid's Day on Sep. 8.

"We've changed the schedule a bit by having both the opening ceremony and the barbecue on the same day," said Director of the Division of Natural Resources Bidtah Becker. "It's definitely better than last year. We have improved the carnival grounds to make it easier for walkers, strollers and wheelchairs to come through."

President Russell Begaye encouraged all fair attendees to be patient and practice safety during this year's fair.

The president said the fair's theme — "Let us come together as one - Through K'e we are strong" — reinforced the traditional Navajo philosophy of kinship.

"We encourage everyone to look out for each other. Parents please watch your children and

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don't let them wander off as there will be a lot of people in attendance," he said. "We want everyone to have a fun time. The Navajo Nation Fair is family time when relatives and friends return to the Nation to gather with their families."

Vice President Jonathan Nez said that K'e is the "foundation of who we are as Navajo people."

The Navajo Nation fair is a time when everybody comes together, according to the vice president.

"We want everyone to be safe this week. Many friends and family will come together during this time and that is what fair time is about," he said. "It's at this time that we reach out to share our harvest and bring our families together."

Beyond the carnival rides and midway lights, the core of the Navajo Nation Fair is rooted in harvest season for the Navajo people. OPVP Executive Staff Assistant Yvonne Kee Billison said the Navajo Nation Fair signifies a transition from summer into fall and winter.

"It signifies core teachings that are associated with planting and harvest time," Kee Billison said. "It also signifies our Navajo New Year which takes place in October."

Kee Billison, who organized this year's Ashkii Happy Kid's Day on behalf of OPVP, said the fair is a good place to network and provide useful information to attendees.

"For Kid's Day," she said, "we will have approximately 2,000 to 4,000 kids come through. I recommend that our programs take advantage of this to meet with parents and talk about safety and prevention issues."

The Navajo Nation Fair is a drug- and alcohol-free event. The Navajo Nation Police Department was onhand to enforce the no drugs and alcohol policy.

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“We ask that you don’t come intoxicated and ask that you refrain from drinking while at the fair. It will cause disruption and can cause bad times at the fair,” President Begaye said.