

New mural reflects organization's mission

Written by Story and photos by Shepherd Waldenberger Sun Correspondent
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A new contribution to a Gallup tradition

Artist Nani Chacon of Albuquerque was commissioned by COPE to paint a mural beside their office at 210 E. Aztec Ave., and she completed the project on Feb. 23. Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment, is a nonprofit organization which focuses on increasing health across Navajo Nation through clinical and preventative care. The mural is an illustration of their logo, featuring a hogan, birds, mountains, and corn. "I worked with COPE on coming up with the design. It's a reflection of what they do," Chacon said.

Chacon has been drawing since age 15 and painting murals for five years, including one at the

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Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, several in Albuquerque, and even one in Russia. Though she paints on canvas as well, murals are her medium of choice when weather allows. "It suits my personality; I like being outside," Chacon said.

The COPE mural is her first in Gallup, but she mentioned that she would "love to do a bigger piece in Gallup at some point," and that "Gallup has a really neat mural tradition."

COPE was glad to have Chacon in town, and Sarayl Shunkamolah, operations manager, enjoyed working with her throughout the process.

"Seeing people stopping to get out and acknowledge her is really amazing," she said.

Casey Smith, cancer care project coordinator, said the mural "very much represents our work in a symbolic and powerful way."

He noted that "the hogan shows our connection with the Navajo community and that the community is truly central to all our work. The corn represents our food work and also represents the sacredness of the land and food to the community. I think the birds very much symbolize our growth as a team, our constant evolution, how our work is developed and shared with the community, the introduction and growth of new projects, and the progression towards a healthier Navajo Nation."

The completed mural is 40 feet long and can be seen on the east-facing wall at the corner of east Aztec and Strong. Stop by and check it out.

To see more of Chacon's work, follow her on Facebook (www.facebook.com/nani.chacon1) and Twitter (@Nanibah).[□]

To learn more about COPE visit their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/COPEProject/) or call (505)722-2185.

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