

By Jasmine Blackwater

Veterinary Science Students, Center Changing a Reservation

“THE MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL (MVHS) AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AT THE STATE, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL LEVELS BECAUSE OF ITS HIGH-QUALITY AND INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING STUDENTS.”



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KAYENTA IS A RURAL COMMUNITY LOCATED

in northeastern Arizona on a Navajo reservation. On the reservation, many families rely on their livestock for income, and as a result, many reservation high school students show a great interest in agricultural education. Having livestock on the reservation is not just a source of income, but also part of a traditional Navajo way of life. Most Navajo families own sheep, horses and cattle. According to the Navajos, owning livestock is an expression of wealth and an important way to keep mentally and physically healthy.

To Navajos, one of the best animals to have is sheep. Sheep can be used for wool, which is often used for yarn to make Navajo rugs. The animal itself is often butchered for meat, a tradition Navajos have had for generations. Having livestock for hundreds of years, Navajos have figured a way to keep their animals healthy. However, they do not have the veterinary skills to address all injuries and illnesses in their livestock. Before an agriculture program was implemented at Monument Valley High School (MVHS) in Kayenta, Navajo families had to either butcher or kill the animal to put it out of its misery. Navajos did not have the option of going to a veterinarian, because the nearest veterinarian is a two-hour drive away.

Then eight years ago, the MVHS Agricultural Education Program added veterinary science to the animal science program, and it helped bring about great change in the way animals are cared for in this Navajo community.

How the Program Began

The program started up almost accidentally. It started when a MVHS student informed agriculture instructor Clyde McBride about a horse that was not feeling well. McBride told the student to bring the horse in. A few days later, more students came in with their animals, and soon McBride was instructing them on how to care for the animals. Then community members, as well as surrounding residents, started to bring in animals all the time.

To accommodate the flow of animals coming in, McBride and his wife, both agriculture instructors, fit giving vaccinations and suturing into their curriculum. During non-school hours, the McBrides were also taking calls to go around their community and surrounding ones to give vaccinations and help residents with injured animals. But thanks to this new program, students now have established veterinary skills to help community members with their livestock. For instance, students can now treat livestock that have been attacked by stray dogs and coyotes—something common in the area.

Up until mid-November last year, veterinary science students worked in a former wood shop that was converted into a small veterinary clinic. Fortunately, after much hard work done by McBride, a new agri-science building has been constructed.

The New Agri-Science Center

With budget cuts and the harsh economy, finding the money to fund the \$2.4 million top-of-the-line facility was not easy. However, District Superintendent

Harry Martin and Business Manager Elsie Benally were able to put other capital projects aside to fund the project. The new facility will allow the career and technical education (CTE) program to expand.

The building process started last June and was expected to be done by November of last year. However, the construction crew faced many difficulties and did not finish construction until mid-December. But after the long wait, students can now observe the finished product. (The grand opening was in March.) The building has features many agricultural education instructors only dream about. Some of those features include: three classrooms; a reception area; a small animal surgical prep-room; a small animal surgical room; a large animal surgical prep and recovery room; a large animal surgical room; and eager, willing students.

Three classrooms are located throughout the agri-science center. The main classroom, where class is normally held, is on the first floor. The other two classrooms are on the second floor, overlooking the surgical rooms. These classrooms are used when surgeries are going on in the surgical rooms below. An intercom system has also been installed, so that when the speak button is pressed downstairs, students hear the message upstairs as well. This system is ideal for large classes that cannot fit everyone in the surgical room and will allow the students to listen to the veterinarian while on the second floor above the surgical room.

The surgical prep-room for small animals is as equipped as any real veterinarian prep-surgical room would be, if not better. It has nine kennels that are used to hold animals recovering from surgery. A surgical prep-sink is also found in the room, and is used to prepare the small animal for surgeries, such as spays and neuters. In the surgical prep-sink, the animal can be washed, shaved and groomed appropriately for the expected surgery.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

▲ Two Monument Valley Animal Science students are preparing this dog for surgery. Stellane John (left) is restraining the dog's head, while Jasmine Blackwater is clipping the hair away from the surgical site.

The center also has a surgical prep room for large animals. Unlike all the other rooms in the building, this room is fully padded with an inch and a half of foam. This padded room allows a large animal, such as a horse, to recover from surgery. In this room, the horse can get off the surgical tranquilizers without hurting itself by running into walls. Another unique feature about the room is the floor. The padded floor rotates, so a horse can be easily transferred to the surgical room next door.

In the large-animal surgical room, there are many pieces of equipment that facilitate movement and any kind of work on large animals. For example, there is a hoist that allows an animal to be lifted up into the air and transported to another location. When a horse goes in for an operation, it is moved into the large-animal surgical room. Then the horse is lifted by

the hoist and can be put directly onto the surgical table with the push of a button.

Many area veterinarians have expressed their interest in coming to train students at the new facility. With training from volunteer veterinarians, MVHS veterinarian science program students should be able to fulfill the requirements needed to take the National Veterinary Technician Certification Exam within four years. The main goal is to graduate students with this certification so that they may find immediate employment after high school.

Being Recognized for Excellence

The MVHS Agricultural Education program has been recognized at the state, regional, and national levels because of its high-quality and innovative approach to teaching students. Some awards the program has won include:



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONUMENT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

▲ Jeremy Benally is showing the proper technique in dog restraining, while Dr. Ruby prepares to draw blood.

- 2007 Region V Innovative Program of the Year by the Association for Career and Technical Education
- 2008 Outstanding Agricultural Program of the Year by the Arizona Agricultural Teachers Association (AATA)
- 2009 Career and Technical Education Program of the Year by the Association for Career and Technical Education Arizona
- 2010 Ideas Unlimited Region I Winner won by Clyde McBride (This award was given by AATA to McBride for training students how to suture using bananas. It was awarded at the National Association of Agriculture Educators (NAAE) Region I conference.)
- In December 2010, McBride presented his idea to the National NAAE Convention in Las Vegas and was

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COST

\$2,100 per person (includes conference registration at three Institute events)

\$1,800 per person for teams of 4 or more from the same institution

Travel costs not included.

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Partnerships Add to Success

Contributing to the success of the program are its partnerships with Northeastern Arizona Technological Institute of Vocational Education (N.A.T.I.V.E.) and Second Chance Center for Animals, and \$2.4 million in funding from the Kayenta Unified School. These entities have diligently supported the program since the beginning.

N.A.T.I.V.E. is Kayenta's joint Technological Education District and has provided funding for the facility's equipment. (The N.A.T.I.V.E. technological district works with eight other schools in Northeastern Arizona.) Although McBride located funding for the construction of the building, N.A.T.I.V.E. has supplied the facility with most of its equipment.

N.A.T.I.V.E. has also installed district learning capabilities so that students from other sites can observe surgeries or other activities at the center.

Another partnership is with Second Chance Center for Animals. Staff from the center have travelled in a mobile lab to Kayenta to provide numerous workshops on veterinary technical skills. Through the training from Second Chance Center for Animals, students are learning the aseptic technique (the sterility process used before and after a surgery) to prepare animals for surgery. Students also travel to the Second Chance facility, a three-hour bus ride, to gain more skills in surgical areas.

For the large-animal area, the program has partnered with Dr. Joe Bahe, a Navajo veterinarian who resides in Crownpoint, New Mexico. Dr. Bahe comes out every month to work with students and the

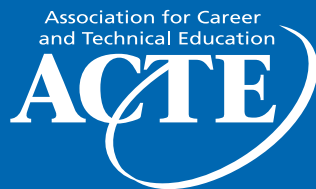
community on how to keep horses healthy through vaccinations (done by the students) and equine surgeries (conducted by Dr. Bahe).

Providing Care for Animals—Preparing Students for Careers

Many colleges and universities, as well as businesses in the field, have expressed interest in becoming a part of this innovative approach to educating students in rural areas. Due to the opportunities that the center and McBride are offering, students now have a head start for college and the workplace. **T**

Jasmine Blackwater

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