

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Michele J. Crank,
Executive Director Communications
and Public Relations
Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise
mcrank@nngc.org
(505) 870-2684 (cell)



Left: Bubba Ganter, Flagstaff local, Hollywood actor and suicide attempt survivor, shares his inspirational message at the event Thursday evening.

Right: Bryce Warren, General Manager of Twin Arrows Resort joins Clay McCauslin, Founder of the We Care Northern Arizona Foundation to raise awareness and more than \$55,000 for suicide prevention.

Actor Bubba Ganter Joins Navajo Gaming, Native Americans for Community Action and We Care Northern Arizona Foundation to Raise \$55,000 For Suicide Prevention

Live 2 Play FUNraiser Combats Growing Mental Health Epidemic in Northern Arizona

Twin Arrow, Ariz. – On Sept. 19 and 20 Navajo Gaming partnered with Native Americans for Community Action (NACA) and We Care Northern Arizona Foundation (NAZ) on their first Live 2 Play FUNraiser to raise more than \$55,000 and increase awareness that suicide rates have doubled in Northern Arizona. The fundraising events included a golf tournament, silent and live auctions, dinner and guest speaker Bubba Ganter, a Hollywood actor, Flagstaff local and survivor of attempted suicide.

“Suicide has become an epidemic in Northern Arizona,” shared Clay McCauslin, We Care Foundation NAZ Founder. “Navajo Gaming, NACA and our team at We Care NAZ know that suicide prevention takes a community and are eager to continue connecting teams of partners throughout Northern Arizona so that training and awareness about the growing epidemic will be enhanced.”

The Coconino County Sheriff's Office reported a 140 percent increase in calls for mental health and suicide related issues from 2009 to 2017. They also reported that completed suicides of Coconino County residents has nearly doubled from 23 in 2016, to 45 in 2018.

"Suicide is a difficult tragedy to discuss, yet it is important to remind others struggling that they have support. An entire community is working together seeking solutions," shared Brian Parrish, Interim CEO of Navajo Gaming.

The events began with a special evening at Twin Arrows Resort in Flagstaff. Northern Arizona University cheerleaders greeted guests and tables filled with silent auction items lined the entry. Silent auction items ranged from sterling silver bracelets created by world renowned Navajo artist Cody Sanderson and Navajo artist JJ Otero's Stamped Corn Earrings, to an autographed guitar from country singer Tracy Lawrence, a custom wood table from Aspen Fireplace, Grand Canyon Railways train rides and many more items. Additionally, guests enjoyed fine dining and a live auction with items such as a Chef's Table for 10, plus five hotels rooms at Twin Arrows and a vacation in Chile.

The highlight of the evening was guest speaker and actor Bubba Ganter, a native of Flagstaff and survivor of attempted suicide. An outstanding Coconino High football player, Ganter was awarded a full ride college scholarship when injuries cut his football career short. Later he entered the entertainment business as a bodyguard, first for Dolly Parton, then Milli Vanilli and later for New Kids On the Block's Jordan Knight. From there he made appearances in music videos and later acted in films such as "A Texas Payback," "Unsolved Mysteries," and "Soldier's Story." More recently Ganter has been a regular on Nickelodeon programs such as "Game Shakers" and BET's "The Family Business."

Ganter became involved with We Care NAZ through his personal struggles and attempted suicide, and now volunteers time to share his story with local schools.

"Fame and money do not make you happy," Ganter shared. "Every day I strive to help someone else through depression or suicide attempts. As I talk with these kids, I break down. No kid should have to go through the thought of taking their life."

Ganter encouraged the audience, "It takes people like you, to attend events like this, to bring awareness to depression and suicide prevention."

The evening continued with Jeff Axtell, CEO for Native Americans for Community Action (NACA), challenging the audience to take a two-day training "Safe Talk and Assist." This training is offered by NACA and Axtell stated, "Every NACA staff member has taken this suicide prevention training course and they are certified to speak to individuals contemplating suicide."

The next day's golf tournament was described as, "One of the best golf tournaments I have ever attended," by Herb Clah Jr., Navajo Nation Gaming Board of Directors member.

The tournament included four hole-in-one opportunities to win a Toyota Tundra from Findlay Toyota, a boat from AZ Marine, a Ford SUV from Babbitt Ford, and a trip sponsored by Adventure of the World. Sponsors at every tee box also provided opportunities to give back. Finally, a Golf Ball Drop allowed players a chance to win \$1,000. Purchased golf balls were dropped from a crane and the numbered ball closest to the hole was the winner.

“This is an inaugural event, and we hope to continue to support these types of events each year as we partner with others to give back to our local community,” Parrish stated.

“Unfortunately, suicide affects all communities, but with Navajo Gaming’s support we hope to increase awareness, education, training and resources as we focus on making a positive difference in suicide prevention.”

Sponsors for the event included Twin Arrows Casino Resort, Swire Coca-Cola USA, Legacy Beverage, Labatt Food, NAU Athletics, Peddler's Son Produce, Sign Vision and Coconino County.

Navajo Gaming Board of Directors Chair Quincy Natay added, “Let’s work to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health awareness and become a voice of hope to people of all walks of life so they know as a community, we care.”

All proceeds from the event benefit We Care NAZ and NACA as they work to prevent the growing epidemic of suicide in Northern Arizona. One hundred percent of contributions from the event will expand services to those in need. Additionally, We Care NAZ is working with Coconino County, NACA and surrounding communities to place over 150 reflective signs in highly visible locations (benches, parks, businesses) that include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-237-8255) and Crisis Text Line (741741). These “Buddy Benches” throughout the community offer immediate support for those struggling.

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About We Care Northern Arizona Foundation (NAZ)

We Care’s mission is to reduce suicidal behaviors across Northern Arizona, through a collaboration with key stakeholders to reduce stigma by promoting suicide pre-vention, inter-vention, post-vention and providing resource information. The celebration of life is the guiding force in all that we do. Visit to learn more.

<http://www.wecarenaz.org>

About Native Americans for Community Action (NACA)

Native Americans for Community Action Inc., is a Flagstaff Community 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organization dedicated to providing preventive wellness strategies while empowering and advocating for Native Americans and others in need across Northern Arizona. Visit to learn more <http://www.nacainc.org/>

About Navajo Gaming

Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, in less than 10 years with the completion of four successful casinos, created over 7,425 direct, indirect and induced jobs with an overall economic output of over a billion dollars. The award-winning AAA's coveted Four Diamond Twin Arrows Casino Resort shares Navajo Culture through architectural nuances and local artists. Each of the property dining eatery establishments feature "Navajo Beef," and traditional cuisine of the Navajo people. An invitation to stay, play and relax at one of our properties is an open welcome to the Navajo Nation's beautiful scenic transformation.

For the latest news and information visit Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprises' website: www.navajogaming.com and [Facebook](#) page.



Enhance the Quality of Life of the Navajo People by Growing a Successful Gaming Economy