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Gunfire at Kabul airport kills 1, Page 8



THE TRUTH WELL TOLD Independent

Monday
August 23, 2021
Number 189 Volume 134
7 24695 11111 6
Mostly Sunny
Winds Variable/SW 5-12
Hi 88 Lo 54
Feels Like: 85

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Group continues long history of battling uranium mining 'Additional observations' being accepted in human rights petition

By Kathy Helms
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CROWNPOINT — Jonathan Perry had been with the Navajo grassroots organization Eastern Navajo Diné Against Uranium Mining about four months prior to the group filing a petition with an international human rights body alleging the United States violated members' human rights by licensing uranium mining activities in their communities.



Jonathan Perry

The first case involved environmental racism in Louisiana's "Cancer Alley,"

A decade later, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights accepted ENDAUM's petition. It is only the second time the commission has found admissible a case of environmental justice against the United States.

Aquifer restoration

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission granted a source and byprod-

uct materials license in 1988 to Hydro Resources, Inc. — now owned by Canadian mining company Laramide Resources, Inc. — to conduct in-situ leach uranium mining at four sites in the communities of Churchrock and Crownpoint. Two sites are within Navajo Indian Country. Others are surrounded by federal land held in trust for the Navajo Nation.

Perry, now executive director of ENDAUM, is following in the foot-

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Independent file photo

In this June 18, 2018, file photo, community members march to the McKinley County Courthouse for the Poor Peoples Campaign while carrying signs against uranium mining.

NMPED updates response protocols

By Dana Martinez
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SANTA FE — The New Mexico Public Education Department announced Thursday that it will not be requiring schools to close upon reaching four COVID-19 rapid responses within 14 days, but will instead work with schools to implement enhanced COVID-safe practices that will maintain in-person learning as much as possible.

The department is evaluating updated guidance and processes with the state's medical advisory team with the goal of ensuring students and school staff are safe and that schools can remain open.

"Our medical advisors have noted that schools currently are not hotbeds of COVID-19 infection,"

See Rapid response, Page 5

A family tradition



Cable Hoover/For The Independent

Newly crowned Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial Queen Amber Ballenger hugs friends and family after her coronation at El Morro Theatre in Gallup Saturday.

Amber Ballenger named 2021 Ceremonial Queen

By Elizabeth Hardin-Burrola
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GALLUP — When Amber Ballenger was named the 2021 Ceremonial Queen at El Morro Theatre Saturday evening, she was following a family tradition.

Ballenger, who grew up in Gallup, is the daughter of Navajo fashion designer Virginia Yazzie Ballenger, who held the 1980 Miss Ceremonial title. She's also the sibling of older sister, Anna, who won the Ceremonial Queen title in 2006.

"I feel very blessed to be the third in the family to hold the title," Ballenger wrote in a text message to the Independent Sunday.

Ballenger's parents and siblings, however, weren't able to see Ballenger win the title because they were running Yazzie Ballenger's Native fashion booth at the Santa Fe Indian Market.

In a telephone interview Sunday, Ballenger admitted it was "kind of a heartbreak" to not have her family in the



Cable Hoover/For The Independent

Outgoing Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial Queen Autumn Pilcher, right, crowns Amber Ballenger as the 2021-2022 Ceremonial Queen during the coronation Saturday at El Morro Theatre in Gallup.

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Arizona, Navajo partner on broadband

By Marley Shebala
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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Council is partnering with Arizona Commerce Authority, Arizona Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Transportation, and KPMG on buildout plans for broadband on the Navajo Nation, according to a news release.

"Through the analysis within the State of Arizona, unserved and underserved populations are not getting access because they are not highly populated, and we want to serve as many people as possible through this infrastructure plan," Arizona State Broadband Director Jeff Sobotka said in Tuesday news release.

The news release states the buildout plan proposes to expand long-haul and middle mile connectivity to unserved and underserved rural areas throughout Arizona.

The proposed infrastructure will provide a robust governance structure to be competitive for available federal broadband programs, which is in line with local and state strategic planning, according to the news release.

The Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, which was also in attendance, emphasized the need to provide capacity for the buildout of broadband for education and telehealth purposes in line with statewide infrastructure plans.

The telecommunications regulatory commission reported that rural addressing will be more crucial than ever to complete for Navajo Arizona populations, the news release states. Rural addressing will assist in the implementation of E-911 services, which were assigned for completion by the Navajo Divisions of Community Development and Public Safety.

The news release further states the telecommunications commission emphasized the need for the Navajo government to partner with its local service providers, such as T-Mobile and the Navajo

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COVID-19 Updates Aug. 23, 2021

New Mexico*

Positive cases: 223,796.
Deaths: 4,472.
Total Tests: 4,003,325.
Cibola County
Total cases: 3,012.
Deaths: 128.
McKinley County
Total cases: 12,935.
Deaths: 484.
San Juan County
Total cases: 16,607.
Deaths: 505.

Arizona

Positive cases: 986,082.
Deaths: 18,600.
Total tests: 11,426,984.
Apache County
Total cases: 12,203.
Deaths: 445.
Cocoonino County
Total cases: 19,493.
Deaths: 339.
Navajo County
Total cases: 18,105.
Deaths: 568.

Utah*

Positive cases: 451,655.
Deaths: 2,572.
Total tests: 3,051,197.
San Juan County
Total cases: 2,035.

Bernalillo rolls over Gallup Bengals 50-0 in football season opener

By Santiago Ramos Jr.
Staff sports writer

fumble recovery and an interception to crack the Bernalillo

The 0-1 Bengals had no answer to slow down T

erra's time to shine.

"He really stood out to

starters including starting quarterback Kody Touchin

a bit," Rodriguez said of the new quarterback and new

