NEWS RELEASE:

Crownpoint Service Area of Navajo Special Diabetes Project holds Half Marathon from Crownpoint to Mariano Lake.

CROWNPOINT, N.M. Running in the Third Annual Co-ed Half-Marathon on Saturday, July 27, 2013 brought runners from all over the Navajo Nation for more than just the love of running or the need to run; it was the competition with oneself, it was the challenge of the course, it was the awakening of one’s spirit, for spirituality and for health, and to fight against diabetes.

Runners drove for hours to get to Crownpoint, and then to the start of the race, about three-miles west of the community. Some arrived there before 5:00 A.M. for registration; they mingled, they jogged up and down the road; they stretched and loosened the weary muscles, but they were ready to participate as solo runners for the complete half marathon, partnering with another and both doing half, or having a team of four members and each running a three-mile leg with the fourth running four miles to the finish line.

“I would like to welcome all of you and thank you for participating in our relay,” said Sylvia Billie, Fitness Specialist, Crownpoint Service Area, Navajo Special Diabetes Project. “It’s great to see so many of you come out today. We think the course will be challenging, but it is also a good course. We hope you all have a good race and enjoy the run.”

It was windy, the cool breeze coming off the ridge that lay between Crownpoint and Mariano Lake where the finish was set. The runners took off at 6:20 A.M. with flashing lights from escort vehicles penetrating the morning air as the sun was beginning to rise with rain clouds looming in the distance.

The first leg of the relay was three miles where team members waited. Some said they were nervous, others said they were excited, and others said they thought it was “fun” or “awesome.”

They all ran for different reasons: Some for the competition; some for the challenge; some for lifestyle changes; some for the scenery, the cool air, and some for their fitness. For some, it was personal because family members had diabetes, and they don’t want to end up with diabetes and all the hardship that it can bring into one’s life.

For whatever reason, young and old, experienced or novice, repeating from last year or new to the course, they all ran with heart, they wiped away the sweat, they smiled for cameras and support from family members and others along the way.

There were also tears for those with diabetes; there were tears of accomplishment and the feeling of exhilaration for overcoming challenges. Some of the runners said that is what the half marathon relay is all about in Crownpoint.

“I am running because I changed my lifestyle,” said Quenteena Jodie in a video interview. “I’ve lost 38 pounds since February when I joined Native Lifestyle Balance with Sylvia Billie of Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Project in Crownpoint. I still see her every week and she continues to encourage me with my lifestyle. I challenge everyone to change their lifestyle. It is hard, but it is good for you.”

There were families who ran as a team. One family had four of their children run; another mother ran with three of her children; and one father ran with his children and nephew.
At the end of the relay, there were oranges, bananas, peanut butter and jam sandwiches, juice, and water for the runners. When all the runners finished, incentives were given to all the participants and everyone went their way expressing gratitude for the event. They said they look forward to coming back again next year.

“Last year for 2012 we had 47 runners participate in the half-marathon. This year for 2013 we had 77 runners so we are very happy with the increase,” said Billie. “We had 13 runners as singles that ran the whole course of 13.2 miles on their own; we had six teams with two runners; and we had 13 teams that were composed of 4 members.”

Billie said that the runners enjoyed the course which was challenging with limited traffic and the coolness of the morning made it especially ideal. She said that all the runners she spoke with said they would come back again next year and let their friends and community members know about the run.

Billie thanked all those who assisted her in the run from the NNSDP staff of Crownpoint including Bernice Sage, Bernice Jones, Margilene Barney, Chavez Shay, and Verna Begay.

Staff from Crownpoint Fleet Management, Health Education Program, HIV Program, Crownpoint Police Department, New Dawn Program, Mariano Lake Fire and Rescue, Crownpoint Probation Office, Thoreau Department of Behavioral Services, and Community volunteers from Casamero Lake, Crownpoint, and Mariano Lake.

From Central Office in Window Rock NNSDP were Eddie Scott Yazzie, Media Specialist, and Ray Baldwin Louis, Public Information Officer.