

# Navajo News



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*Bringing the Gospel of Jesus to the Navajo*

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## Until then, Ms. Vicky!

February of this year was extremely sad and hard for La Vida Mission students and staff.



Another mighty warrior of God and a strong leader of our school bid us her temporary good bye—to rest from the cares and pains of this world. Illness has defeated her physical body but she maintained a victorious and faithful life of service to the Lord and His children until her frail body drifted off to sleep. Even in her last moments, her thoughts and contemplations were of La Vida Mission and the children.

Ms. Vicky Tressler Pioche started working at the Mission around 1988 or 1989, according to our verbal source, as an elementary teacher. After about 10 years at the mission, her teaching ministry was extended to the Navajo children and students of Lake Valley Navajo School where she served and taught for almost 30 years. In 2018, she was diagnosed with the dreaded BIG C and from thence started her brave fight. In the fall of 2019, she returned to La Vida Mission to teach in the Middle School and later on served as elementary head teacher, a position she held till she passed away on the evening of February 4, 2024 leaving behind her husband Gilbert Pioche, her children Amanda (Chris), Jake, Nate (Shernestine), and Caleb and her grandchildren whom she would always refer to as her "medicine". (Kolter, Bexlei, and Ezra) plus her community family and the La Vida Mission students and constituency.

We miss Ms. Vicky and I'm sure she will continually be sorely missed by everyone at the Mission who have known her and enjoyed her friendship, her love and her bright smiles and joyful laughs. We all cherish in our hearts the lovely memories of her beautiful life and we'll continue to carry them in our hearts and minds to inspire us as we continue to serve the Lord in this mission field that Ms. Vicky truly loved and served till her last breath.

While the whole mission community miss her terribly, I feel I will miss her more because we worked and pulled the Mission together during its trying times of leadership crises — having served together in the Admin team. I miss the many texts and message exchanges we had, the phone calls and meetings either in my office, her office or in the board room, praying earnestly together and trying to brainstorm together for possible solutions to the many challenges and situations that come and happen at the Mission every now and then. The pain and grief would be truly deep if not for the Blessed Hope we hold so dear.

Until then Ms. Vicky, I pray that we will remain faithful as you've been and when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and times shall be no more, and when the roll is called up yonder, we will meet each other by heaven's gate, never to part forevermore. To the family of Ms. Vicky, may the truth that this separation from her is but temporary because a glorious resurrection is coming continue to comfort you. Thank you for sharing Ms. Vicky with all of us here at the Mission.

- Dorie Panganiban



## A word from the treasurer:

As I sit here at my computer, I am inspired by how you, our readers, are so caring and compassionate. I thank you for your prayers, your donations, and your encouraging notes. I know the Lord is with us and cares about our mission to the Navajo. Thank you!

I have been thinking about how donations are usually down in February and March and wondering how we are going to meet all of our expenses for the next couple of months. We are encountering some unexpected expenses from NM Environmental Department concerning our water samples and we just received a large quote for some work on the new water tank site excavation that we had not expected (almost \$100,000).

However, I need not be discouraged! As I opened the donation envelopes, my spirits were lifted and I was amazed by what I saw. There were a few unusually high amounts and many of the regular donors had increased their donations by double and more!

Thank you for listening to that small voice from the Lord to increase your help to us. It almost brought tears to my eyes. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for that encouragement. God bless you for sacrificing and sharing with us. The Lord will provide.

I hope you find this month's newsletter encouraging and uplifting!

- Carol Gillham, Treasurer



From the Director's Desk:

Hello and warm greetings to everyone reading this message!

I can hardly believe I am finally at La Vida Mission after many delays with my exodus from Maryland. At times I could not see the end in sight to leave. But God is so good. He made a way and handled every set-back and concern every step of the way, and I am so grateful. I arrived late Friday night, February 23, and was greeted at the entrance to the La Vida Mission campus by Ms. Dorie, her son VJ, and daughter-in-law Beth, who kindly stayed up late to wait for me and then guided me to my new home and a freshly made bed (thank you so much!).

The next day I received a very warm welcome from everyone at Church and was very happy to join the assembly and to start meeting everyone. At pot-luck, Ms. Reva and her girls had prepared and hung a beautiful, hand-crafted Welcome sign for me which I took home to beautify my new home. I attended the Crownpoint church later that Sabbath and was so glad to meet the local people and to join in the church service. Over the course of my first few days I found welcome signs in my new office, food in my fridge, fruit on the dining room table, and a lovely group of people so willing to make me feel at home. I learned to build a fire in my wood stove (thank you Mr. Bob!), was serenaded by a coyote in my back yard, and experienced the March winds (wow – I lived in Adak, Alaska, and never heard winds like these!). My family and friends back home were so eager to see pictures and hear of my experiences, so many nights I stayed up to send texts and pictures.

Huge thanks to Mr. Wayne, Mr. Bob, Mr. Junior and Demetrius of the Maintenance team for all of the work they did on my house, and for carting my household goods from the U-pack trailer in Farmington down to the house! Special thanks, also, to the La Vida students who helped with the off-loading of my things from the U-pack trailer which arrived before I did.

I am also very grateful to the La Vida team for their many prayers and patience throughout the delays. I am especially grateful to Ms. Dorie who has been handling my job along with her normal duties until I could get here. Her heart for the Mission shines through in all that she does, and I am so blessed to have such a wonderful example of Kingdom Service ever before me in her. Heartfelt and Huge Thanks to you, Ms. Dorie.

In addition to handling the normal challenges that are a part of any operation, the La Vida family was hit with two devastating losses at the passing of two beloved staff members in February: Vickie Pioche (Head Teacher) and Jshoke Wright (Former Staff Member). Although I did not know them personally, it was sore news to my heart on receiving each report. I was already very grieved to learn of Ms. Vicky's accident on the ice in January, and was so blessed to speak with her over the phone during her hospitalization thanks to Ms. Dorie. It was a complete shock and grievous news to my heart to learn that she had passed away just a few weeks after that call. Then, only three weeks after Ms. Vicky was laid to rest, I learned on my very first day at La Vida during the Sabbath Church Service that a former staff member, Jshoke Wright, had lost his life in a logging accident in Cortez, Colorado, where he and his wife, April, and daughter Jynaya had moved some time after their tenure with La Vida. The Wright family left an indelible and spirit-filled impression on the hearts of those who knew them during their time at La Vida, and key members of the La Vida family drove to Cortez on February 27 th to attend Mr. Jshoke's funeral and grieve with Ms. April and Jynaya and their family. I can only imagine the level of grief being felt by the La Vida family and Ms. Vicky and Mr. Jshoke's loved ones. My heart goes out to the Pioche and Wright families and to the entire La Vida Mission family. Ms. Vicky and Mr. Jshoke will be sorely missed. They have left in their wake many memories of kindness, service and generosity of spirit that will be cherished until we see them again in the new heaven and new earth. May the Lord send His comforts to refresh as we march on in Kingdom service looking forward to that day.

In closing, I want to thank everyone here at La Vida for their kindness to me and their efforts in anticipation of my arrival. And very special thanks to the Executive Committee and the Board for their time and effort in screening me for the director position. It is my heart's desire to serve this mission and the Navajo people well for the Lord. Much prayer is needed for the beautiful Navajo people who have not yet come to know the Love of Jesus. It is so obvious to me how the Lord has worked through La Vida thus far and has His eye on this mission and the Navajo nation. It is a privilege to be called to join in the work, and I look forward to seeing more souls brought to the healing stream of Jesus' matchless love.

Much Love to Each of You,  
Ms. Kim, Director

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Water Project Fundraising  
Goal Progress





## Finally! Praise the Lord!

Since Pastor Steve Gillham vacated the Mission directorship position when he passed away in March of 2021, La Vida Mission has not had a permanent, full-time, onsite director. We had a couple of interim directors after him plus the Admin team to direct the affairs of the Mission in the last 10 months. And so, for more than two years, almost three years actually, we advertised extensively and prayed earnestly that our God will send us a permanent, full-time onsite leader of His work at La Vida.

Finally, yes finally, the Lord sent someone who answered His call to serve as director for La Vida Mission in the person of Ms. Kimberly Ellis who hailed from Baltimore, Maryland. She arrived in our mission campus at about 10 o'clock in the evening of Friday, February 23rd and hit the ground running. The following day, she preached for the week-end school Sabbath in La Vida during the morning church service and in Crownpoint church for the evening service. Her few days at the Mission I believe was full of exciting events, it being a week-end school.

Ms. Kim worked at John Hopkins for Medicine as Operations Assistant doing standard secretarial/ administrative duties, project coordination as needed, and website development and maintenance among others for twenty years and was the accounting coordinator at Broadway Services, Inc. before moving to La Vida Mission. She was deeply involved in the Children Ministry department of the different churches where she's been a member. She got some great experiences in mission service from joining mission trips in Guyana and other places. She takes great delight and interest also in health, natural healing and gardening. Among her special skills and qualifications acquired from employment or other experiences are "a passion to be 100% reliant on the Word and Power of God above the wisdom of men and worldly solutions"; "understanding and compassion towards people who struggle in life, especially children"; and being "hard worker, administratively and in physical labor" to mention a few.

Please join us pray for God's leading, wisdom, and blessing upon Ms. Ellis and she leads God's work at La Vida Mission.

– Dorie Panganiban, Office Manager and VP of La Vida Mission



## Water Project Update

Hello Brothers and Sisters!

D & R Tank from Albuquerque provided us with a new quote that encompasses the preliminary site work, the new foundation and the setting of the new tank. The quote is for \$96,949, more than I anticipated. D & R Tank is asking for 50% down. Once the tank is in place, we will need to connect the piping from the pump to the tank and piping from the tank to distribution lines, a cost figure I do not have. We are getting close to having all plans in place. We still need to pay for the remainder of the tank itself, \$44,173, as well.

At this point, we will need at least \$32,000 for the tank and another \$10,000 (estimated) for the pipe connections.

Funds are as follows: Total Donations:\$172,453.06, Expenses: \$62,951.35, Balance: \$109,501.71.

La Vida Mission is very grateful to those who have donated to and have prayed for this project.

God Bless you ALL!  
Lee McIntosh

### *In Memory of*

George & Margaret Armstrong  
Lita Castillo  
Arloe Goley  
Wayne Hyatt  
Bob & Mary Lee  
Albert Lind  
Art & Barry Lizer  
Jose A. Lopez  
Larry McCoy  
Brenda McDonald  
Fleta Oliver  
Nobert Sammer  
Kenneth Smith  
Emily Smith  
Lydia Wood

by Lanny & Barbara Davis  
by Emilio & Sal Fariaz  
by Pastor John Goley  
by Lynette Hyatt  
by Lynette Hyatt  
by Margaret Lind  
by Oradelle Lizer  
by Diane Lopez  
by Nancy McCoy-Wearner  
by Pat & Rhonda McDonald  
by Jack Wood  
by David & Maxine Smith  
by Lola Smith  
by Patrick J & Marilyn Hickey  
by Jack Wood

### *In Honor of*

Jack & Doris Carver  
Mary Wood's birthday  
Herbie Kunau's birthday

by Ruth Wright  
by Jackie Small  
by Jackie Small

*Thank you to all of the donors who make a difference at La Vida!*

## Bulletin Board

### Special Thanks to:

•**Our Heavenly Father** for providing our needs.

•**Faithful donors** who support LVM with prayers, financial and other donations (including Box Tops for Education).

•**Student sponsors** for their many contributions, prayers, letters and Christmas gifts.

•**Echo Food bank, Farmington, NM** for produce and other food items.

•**Neal Kelley & Sharing Ministry** for cleaning supplies, donations of food and vegetables.

•**Partnership with Native Americans** for food for the community food pantry.

•**Dr. Robert Gardner & Ms. Kimone** for assorted clothes, footwear & kitchen items.



### Slide, Splash ,Scale

For the second year in a row, my Facebook friends contributed toward a field trip to Durango to skate, swim, and climb the rock wall. My class and I charted the donations daily as part of math class. The smallest donation was \$5 and the largest was \$150. The total amount came to \$1,500.

Those funds paid for transportation, lunch and supper lovingly prepared by our cafeteria, entrance fees to Chapman Hill Skating Rink, and a day pass to Durango Parks and Recreation Center.

The staff and students were incredibly patient and flexible about this trip. We had to cancel the trip that was scheduled for November 4th. That was not easy for the students, but the day finally came. Then, on the evening before the event on February 21st, we were told that we should try to get there by 10:30, so that everyone could be fitted with skates. That meant getting everyone up earlier, so we could leave at 8:00 instead of 8:30. No easy task. But we got there with time to spare.



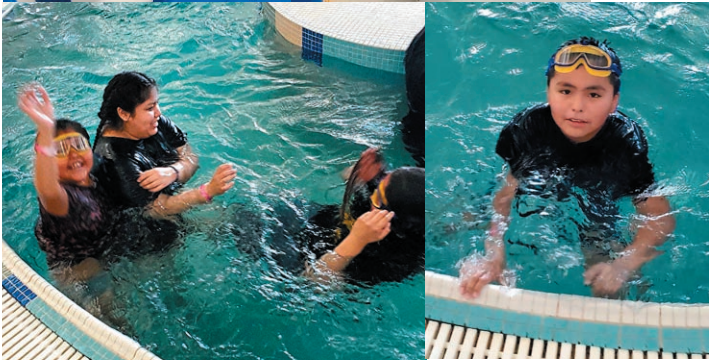
As in past trips, there were a number of people who had never skated before. Some who said they definitely would not skate, did! And they seemed to have a blast with the children. Incidentally, the Chapman Hill management waived the cost of renting the skates which was appreciable.

Open skate ended at 12:00. We then ate our yummy lunch in the lobby which looks like a ski lodge. As we ate, I got a chance to talk with some skaters not with our group. One lady told me that she learned to skate with coaches who played games and made it so the kids were not dependent on the frames you see in the pictures which are formally called skater aides, but most people call bumper cars. I'm already planning to hire a coach to teach the kids in groups of five next year so they will have a lot more fun. Perhaps we can earn an ice skating honor for Pathfinders and Adventurers.



At the pool, about 16 got in the water. Those that did enjoyed the current pool sometimes called a lazy river. It had powerful jets that pushed swimmers along in a large contained circular pathway. The spa which got up to 103° was frequently visited by the kids and staff. But the main attraction was the water slide. Children and staff thrilled at seeing each other go down the 150 ft long, 50 ft high structure. The author of this article got to go down five times. (Hint: DO NOT go down head first!)

The center has a rock wall for bouldering . Divided three sections, it is 30 ft high and 23 ft wide. Students and staff put on harnesses and ropes to climb. Two of the sections have automatic belaying devices. One is always controlled by human guides. There were usually two or three proficient climbers hired by the rec center watching and encouraging and teaching.



It was amazing to watch one senior girl climb to the top six times. One of our volunteer staff who is finishing the GED course, made 8 attempts using the most difficult possible route and completed it seven times. Staff members also attempted and achieved the very difficult climb.

Some of the younger children made it to the top and it was amazing to see the determination and perseverance.

At 2:30, we staff members couldn't imagine that the kids would want to stay all the way till 6:00 as we had planned, but we didn't leave until 6:00, tired, exhilarated, and happy. And ready for next year!

- Ms. Claire

