

# Community Connections



Newsletter of the Chinle Chapter Steering Committee—May 2017



For over 100 years, Thunderbird Lodge has been one of the main social and economic centers of the Chinle Community. Samuel Day started trading out of a tent before he built the log trading post in 1902 just as Chinle started to see more travelers coming to view the ancient villages tucked in the canyon. Local Navajo people began to share their own stories with these curious visitors as they led them to these sites. Tourism at Canyon de Chelly was born.

The post would serve as the site for the first custodian's residence when Canyon de Chelly National Monument was established in 1931 by President Herbert Hoover. The trading post has had several names over the years including Thunderbird Ranch, The Lodge, Thunderbird Guest Ranch, and Sacred Canyon Lodge before the site was renamed Thunderbird Lodge.

After its modest beginnings with only two buildings, the site saw some major changes in the 70's and 80's with the conversion of the original trading post into the cafeteria as well as the additions of the gift shop, truck tours and motel units. The site also changed hands multiple

times after Sam Day with the business being operated by Charles Cousins, George Kennedy, Cozy McSparron, J. Nelson, Justin LaFont, Mary Jones, Armanda Ortega-Gordon and currently the Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise (NNHE).

The NNHE took over management of the business on January 1, 2016 and has been working hard to bring the site back to its former glory under the name everyone knows, Thunderbird Lodge. Many improvements have been made to the buildings and grounds including renovated guest rooms. Rooms have new carpet, mattresses, flat screen televisions, Keurig coffee makers and guest wi-fi.





Even with the new updates, the cafeteria style dining that everyone loves is still available with some new menu items. Weekly specials and an array of homestyle dishes continue to be offered to diners. Authentic Native American arts and crafts such as jewelry, pottery and baskets along with souvenirs can be found in the gift shop. A rug room with woven Navajo rugs and a small exhibit is a must-see in the gift shop.

Once famous for tours in

World War II trucks, canyon tours are once again an added feature of the lodge and are available to all visitors. Guests can now enjoy four hour or all-day tours in a 6-wheel Pinzgauer army troop carrier which can carry 10 passengers at a time. Highlights of the tours in-



clude seeing Antelope House, White House and Navajo Fortress. All day tours include stops at Mummy Cave and Spider Rock. Tours are generally available all

year, but can be restricted due to resource protection, flood conditions or safety hazards.

With its long standing history, services, and features, there's something for everyone at Thunderbird Lodge. Please stop by to visit, stay, eat or shop. For more information about Thunderbird Lodge, please contact 928-674-5841 or visit the website at [www.thunderbirdlodge.com](http://www.thunderbirdlodge.com).



## Message from CCSC

This newsletter was brought to you by the Chinle Chapter Steering Committee (CCSC). CCSC wants to inform residents of available services and identify our neighborhood partners.

The CCSC was established in March 2013 under the guidance of the Chinle Chapter Government and with a grant from Apache County. This advisory group is made up of volunteers who work and live in the Chinle Community to support community wellness and economic development.

Members serve a two year term and operate with a Plan of Operations to develop an annual Priority List. Members initiate projects to improve the community with help from residents

and partners. The CCSC encourages residents to get involved and welcomes your participation and ideas.

### CCSC Priorities for 2017:

- Establish CCSC as a 501C3 nonprofit organization
- Host an annual community conference
- Assist with cleanup of illegal dumpsites
- Assist with the establishment of recreational trails
- Establish an official Welcome Center at Canyon de Chelly NM
- Create a Visitor's Guide to highlight businesses and services
- Provide support for the Vendor Village concept
- Promote educational initiatives and workshops
- Establish an Adopt-A-Roadway Program on Route 7
- Establish Welcome signs on Highway 191
- Develop a newsletter to highlight local businesses

## Reminders

- ➔ Chinle Chapter Planning Meeting: 9AM, First Monday of each month
- ➔ Regular Chapter Meeting: 1PM, Following Sunday after planning meeting
- ➔ CCSC Meeting: 9AM, Second Thursday of each month
- ➔ CLUPC Meeting: 9AM, Fourth Thursday of each month
- ➔ For important dates and public notices, visit [www.chinle.navajochapters.org](http://www.chinle.navajochapters.org)

For more information, contact:

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