



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EXCEPTIONAL RODEO AT NAVAJO NATION FAIR AN EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

The Division for Children and Family Services welcomed relatives with physical and developmental disabilities to their own special event at the 77th Annual Navajo Nation Fair on Friday, September 5, 2025.

The Division hosted the annual Exceptional Rodeo at the Navajo Square with volunteers including cowboys and cowgirls assisting with hands-on activities designed for individuals who need a little extra assistance.

The participants enjoyed stick horse barrel racing, dummy roping, corn hole toss, badminton and line dancing. They also had the chance to win prizes with their participation.

Bull fighters Jacob Welker from Abbyville, Kansas, and Brendall Dunn, from Teague, Texas, joined in the fun.

“It’s so special to come and donate our time to the kids. When I was a kid, I looked up to the bullfighters,” Welker said. “It’s also fun to come out and see different cultures and it’s nice to take a break from the rodeo.”

Welker said about the kids he was helping, “We’re appreciative of them and they appreciate us.”

Dunn said, “It’s a huge payoff and reward to be able to come and do this for the kids. It’s the whole reason we do this.”

Rodeo entertainer Preston Broxson of Louisiana also helped out with the bean bag toss. “To me it’s a big eye-opener. We realize life is more of a struggle for some people. We realize what the caregivers go through,” he said. “I love it here!”



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Miss Indian Rodeo Autumn Sells helped with the barrel racing. She emphasized the role of the caregivers in remarks. “I’d just like to thank you for your commitment to our future rodeo champions who are here with us today,” she said.



Central Navajo Rodeo Queen Holly Klade also attended the event.

The Office of the Executive Director and the Navajo Developmental Disabilities Program under the Division for Children and Family Services partnered with other organizations to give more than 70 guests a memorable time at the fair.

Amber Morgan, Administrative Assistant, said she loves rodeo and that is why she took the chance to organize the event.

“It was great being creative for our members with disabilities to get the experience of being on the saddle or being on a horse and just actually having fun,” Morgan said.

She said that the Exceptional Rodeo fulfills the Division’s mission. “We believe that nobody should feel left out, especially our members with disabilities. They’re the same as any of our Navajo children and families that we provide services to,” she said.

Morgan thanked the volunteers and partners who assisted. “It really goes back to just how the sport of rodeo is. Everyone’s willing to help and show sportsmanship in the sport of rodeo. It doesn’t matter if you have challenges, a beginner, a rookie, in the sport of rodeo people are always willing to lend a helping hand to teach you or to help you be better. In rodeo, we’re all family. We all look out for each other. We all help one another,” Morgan said.

Participants from RISE, St. Michaels Association for Special Education, and others came out. Partners included Willie’s Cattle Company, Bar-T Leather, Sells and Sells Production, Kyle Tom, Miss Indian Rodeo, Miss CNRA, Cervi Rodeo Company, and Zion Enterprises.



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The Division's Preserving Navajo Families Initiative and Cody Jesus also hosted the Connecting Diné Youth Through Sport: Bull Riding – Youth Resilience Camp at the Navajo Nation fairgrounds on Monday, September 1, 2025. The clinic-style session focused on introduction to bull riding basics and fundamentals, motivational speaking, cultural presentations and resource booths. The Division is guided by the belief that “Culture is Healing,” and promotes Navajo traditions and resilience for children and families.



Thomas Cody, Executive Director of the Division for Children and Family Services, thanked all the participants, caregivers, volunteers and staff during the Division's events.



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“I hope you enjoyed it. The bigger picture is the rodeo bringing children and families together from throughout the Navajo Nation. There’s families out there that don’t often come to the rodeo. We bring them,” Cody said.



The Division further participated in the Navajo Nation’s Fair Elder Fest on Thursday, September 4, 2025, by giving out 50 goodie bags for the elders at the Annie D. Wauneka Arena. Cody also shared words of support and appreciation for the senior citizens of the Navajo Nation. Elder Fest gave them a chance to remain active among their peers and exercise through dancing and participating in various games.

In addition to participating in events, the Division has on-call social workers available during the fair to ensure the health and safety of attendees.

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