



Healers of Tomorrow Zia Youth Project

Eliana Garcia, MS3; Emelia Pino; Lorenzo Silva; Dr. Anthony Fleg; Daisy Belmares-Ortega, Kevin Dileanis; Talya Torres

MISSION

Healers of Tomorrow (HOT) is a mentorship program geared towards improving health disparities in indigenous and underserved populations around New Mexico. Our mission is to generate interest in health careers and community outreach amongst motivated high school students in the hope they will one day serve their communities.

HOT Model:

- Program Leaders (coordinators): volunteers dedicated to serving underrepresented youth in New Mexico
- Mentors: Students pursuing higher level degrees (e.g. med school, pharmacy, nursing students, etc..)
- Mentees: High school students interested in health careers and community service

Our students are assigned a mentor with similar aspirations to guide them through our program and provide support through future education and career goals. Over the course of eight months, students attend monthly meetings where they learn from health professionals of various backgrounds. Additionally, students will choose a public health issue to address in their communities.



ZIA PUEBLO and COVID-19

Zia Pueblo has been faced with disproportionately high numbers of COVID cases and infection rates. Factors that shape the community and social determinants of health during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- High prevalence of comorbidities most likely due to health inequities: diabetes, heart disease, and asthma
- Multigenerational household size of 8-10 people is common
- Limited access to integral living resources: Nearest grocery store or sanitation facility is 22 miles away
- Lack of built environment such as sidewalks and parks
- Roadblocks and curfew restrictions implemented
- Lack of healthcare access: Nearest hospital 14 miles away
- Lower median household income (\$41,136) compared to NM (48,059)
- Lower level of higher education attainment
- Indigenous populations are estimated to have 3 to 8 times higher rates of hospitalization and deaths associated with infectious pandemics throughout history. (CDC, 2009)

Zia Pueblo COVID -19 Demographics (as of June 2020)		
Total Population	# COVID Cases	# Deaths
994	116 (11.7%)	7 (0.6%)

YOUTH ADVOCACY and LEADERSHIP

The Zia Youth Project began with a brave and emotional account from one of our HOT youth. In response to Emelia's story, HOT Leaders took the initiative, going the extra mile to collaborate with the Zia community. Excited to help, they connected Emelia with Protect NM to help address PPE shortages in Zia.

Emelia expressed a desire to help the youth in her Pueblo. She wanted to inspire children to stay physically and mentally active in the difficult times of this pandemic. HOT mentors served as allies and guided Emelia to resources which helped make her dreams a reality. It was important to resist taking charge of Emelia's project and instead empowering her to lead, understanding that youth possess the creativity and other skills needed to create healing for themselves and their communities.

With guidance from her mentors, Emelia applied for and received the NHI Youth Leading the Way Grant and was featured in the Albuquerque Journal. Quickly, word began to spread of the project she created. With hard work, dedication, and community support, Emelia impacted her pueblo in ways she never thought she could.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community support is an integral part of advocacy efforts. HOT Program leaders connected Emelia and the Zia Pueblo community with the following resources:

- Protect New Mexico: a collaborative organization of students, and programs which include the Independent Supporters' Group of New Mexico's United, The Curse, and community groups who donated the following:
 - 400 cloth/homemade masks
 - 1000 surgical masks
 - 5 gallons of hand sanitizer
 - 2 5-gallon buckets of disinfectant (bleach)
- NHI Grants and Loving Service community donations amounting to: \$3300
- Individual donations amounting to: \$1445
- Zia Tribal Administration and Education Department support
- United World College: Action figures and board game donations
- Supplies donated from Scholastic and Lakeshore Learning Store
- \$700 of total funds donated to Footsteps for Families



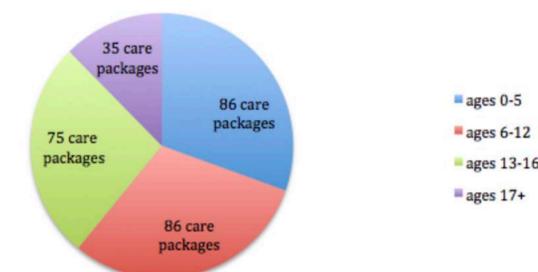
IMPACT ON ZIA YOUTH

A total of 282 care packages were hand delivered by Emelia and her family consisting of puzzles and arts and crafts for younger children. School supplies and gift cards were donated to high schoolers and graduates.

Emelia recognized a need and utilized resources facilitated to her by her mentors, setting an example for other youth in her community. "This promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths." (Youth.gov)

- "Thank you Emelia for the care packages for my kids. It is nice to know that there are many good people that care for the children here in Zia."
- "Lily was so happy, she came inside with her care package bag and said: look mom someone loves me." Zia Pueblo Community members

Care Package Distribution



OUTCOMES: FUTURE LEADERS

Words from Emelia: "Working on Zia project has brought me closer to my Pueblo. I hope to continue to find ways to serve my community and help others in need. I want to inspire other youth to step forward and lead the way."

- Now that Emelia has graduated from the HOT Program, she will step into the role of a HOT Leader, applying and sharing her leadership skills.
- She is interested in continuing to give back to her community by cleaning up litter in her Pueblo, welcoming others to help.
- Emelia was featured as a Guest Speaker for the NHI Healing Through Justice Camp and the UNM Health Careers Academy.

Zia Strengths Shine: Zia Pueblo is a beautiful model of love, community, and resiliency. The pueblo is a family where tradition continues to thrive, even their Keres language. There have been no new COVID-19 cases as of July 18, 2020.

REFERENCES

1. "Deaths Related to 2009 Pandemic Influenza A (H1N1) Among American Indian/Alaska Natives --- 12 States, 2009." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5848a1.htm.
2. "ProtectNM, 2020, www.protectnm.com/. Accessed July 29, 2020
3. *Youth.gov*, www.youth.gov/. Accessed July 30, 2020
4. "Zia Pueblo, NM." *Data USA*, 2017, datausa.io/profile/geo/zia-pueblo-nm#covid.