



NPC Friends
& Family

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

NOVEMBER 2024



www.npc.edu/npcfriendingfamily

TRUE GRIT

If you have known me for very long, you have heard this story. A few years back, I was visiting with a colleague who works at an urban community college. She was very proud of a young student who had just earned her associate degree. The student had to get on three different buses to take her toddler to child care, get to her job at McDonald's, and get to her classes, then home again. I shared my friend's joy and enthusiasm at the young mom's accomplishment – and I assure you I meant it, for it truly was worthy of celebration - but at the same time, I was thinking about three things students at Northland Pioneer College do not have access to: child care, public transportation, and gainful employment. The drive to strive for a goal despite significant challenges is known as grit. I am deeply inspired and humbled by people with grit, and in my job, I am blessed to be abundantly surrounded by them!

Pedaling against the elements and all odds, Jim Goodding is a long-time participant of our annual Pedal the Petrified fund-raising event. He is battling stage-four cancer and completed the 50-kilometer ride on September 21 of this year. It was his first cycling tour after being intentionally run over by a vehicle, from which

he suffered several broken ribs and a shattered collarbone. Many of you will recall our amazing friend and benefactor, Dr. Jon Graff, whose story – and grit – are remarkably similar.

At Pedal the Petrified 2019, Mark Vest, past president of Northland Pioneer College (NPC) gave a welcome address to riders in which he asked them to think of the NPC students they were supporting as they rode. He likened riding the distance, grinding up the steep grades, staying with the long hills, to the journeys of our students. He recounted the challenges they face on the path to a college education: geographic and social isolation, distance from campuses and centers, lack of community support services that are available to students in more populous areas, lack of home internet, and in some cases, lack of electricity and running water, unemployment...poverty. And yet these students succeed, because they know this is the way up for themselves and for those they love. Grit.

In the pages that follow, please take in the stories of three Northland Pioneer College students. I know that these students will prevail, and a huge part of that is the support you provide through your gifts, donations, and participation in events like Pedal the Petrified and Arizona Gives Day. It isn't just about the

money, but the demonstration of belief in them that bestowing a scholarship gives, that helps them persevere. But I also know that they expected nothing when they charted their courses for post-secondary education, with their eyes on the goal of a degree, their minds on their studies, and their hearts full of grit. I hope they inspire you as much as they inspire me. Thank you for all you have done to help them uphold their dreams. Wishing you and yours all the very best of the season.



Betsyann Wilson Executive Director

STUDENT STORIES

- Program Pioneer - Kris Herder
- Jean Elizabeth Awardee
- Doing What it Takes - Lisa Benally
- Realizing the Possibilities - Jana-Ray Nielipinsky

PROGRAM PIONEER – KRISTOPHER HERDER

Kristopher Herder is a very valuable kind of person in his chosen career path. He earned his Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Development from Northland Pioneer College in 2023 and became a member of the inaugural cohort of candidates for NPC's first Bachelor of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education (BAS-ECE) in 2024. Aside from being a man in a field that is predominantly female, Kristopher is a member of the Navajo Nation who speaks his native language fluently and practices traditional customs with his own children and with the children he teaches as a working paraprofessional and student.

Like most people who live on tribal lands in the NPC service area, particularly those on the Navajo and Hopi reservations, Kristopher has always had to travel. Many Navajo people live outside of population centers, in small communities

organized around chapters, the most basic form of tribal government. Most chapter communities are small, scattered, and lacking in basic services. It is a significant distance, not only to attend school, but also to buy groceries and other necessities, keep health care appointments, and take part in family and cultural events.

This year, Kristopher's life took a turn. His job as a teacher's aide in the small school in his home community was downsized. Without employment, he and his family moved in with his mother. Her traditional home is almost twenty miles from her chapter house. It has no electricity or running water. Much of Kristopher's course load can be taken online, supplemented by practicum sessions in primary-grade classrooms, supervised by a faculty member in NPC's Early Childhood Education program. Still, no electricity means no internet, so Kristopher now drives almost 100 miles, twice weekly, to take his online classes at the nearest NPC campus in Winslow. He drives 80 miles weekly to the school where he does his practicum work.

Kristopher's travel expenses are supplemented by the AndyVon Transportation grant, funded each year by an anonymous couple who learned of the challenge of distance on tribal lands. Recognizing that students will not be eligible for federal financial aid until the new program receives full accreditation this year, another anonymous angel established a \$1,000-per-semester BAS-ECE scholarship, which Kris received this fall. But the long hours behind the wheel, balancing the responsibility of family and school, hauling water and wood – these are still Kris' challenges. He continues to rise to meet them. He will begin his student teaching next semester, and his bachelor's degree and a career as a professional, certified early childhood educator are in sight. Thanks to his tenacity and flexibility – his grit - Kris will not only provide a future for himself and his family, but also, as a teacher, he will keep his language, customs, and the traditions of his people alive, sharing them with the next generation.



A MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AND A DREAM COMING TRUE

Jennifer and Scott learned about Northland Pioneer College and NPC Friends and Family when Jennifer registered for this year's Pedal the Petrified. Like so many, they were inspired by the stories of NPC students and all they overcame to achieve a college education. To honor the memory of their mothers, both of whom were nurses, Scott and Jennifer sought to establish a scholarship for students in the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program. They felt strongly about helping a student who demonstrated a true passion for the profession, and who also had a significant need for financial help. Through their generosity, the \$2,500 Jean Elizabeth Nursing Scholarship came to be.

The winning essay from the inaugural awardee began, "I had begun my pre-nursing experience in the Spring of 2009, when I decided to take the Certified Nursing Assistant class at Chinle Nursing Home. That invigorating experience was well over 15 years ago, and I've retained my licensure since then. I'll admit that what started as an impulse has slowly turned to love and compassion for the nursing field. Working and living on the Navajo reservation, I want to become an emergency room registered nurse, because it's a rural area and is beneficial to my people. My first experience of performing CPR was on a dirt road, forty-five miles from the nearest emergency room. I was an 18-year-old girl who had no clue or experience, no prior professional training, just the voices telling me "don't stop" compressions. It takes an average of 1 hour to reach any medical facility if one is traveling through the Navajo reservation, and most areas do not hold cell service, which prolongs medical intervention. As an emergency room RN, I will be able to provide life-saving measures inside and outside the ER."

Cherilyn Bahe is a first-year nursing student who attends classes at our Little Colorado Campus in Winslow. She comes from the community of Lukachukai in the eastern part of Arizona's

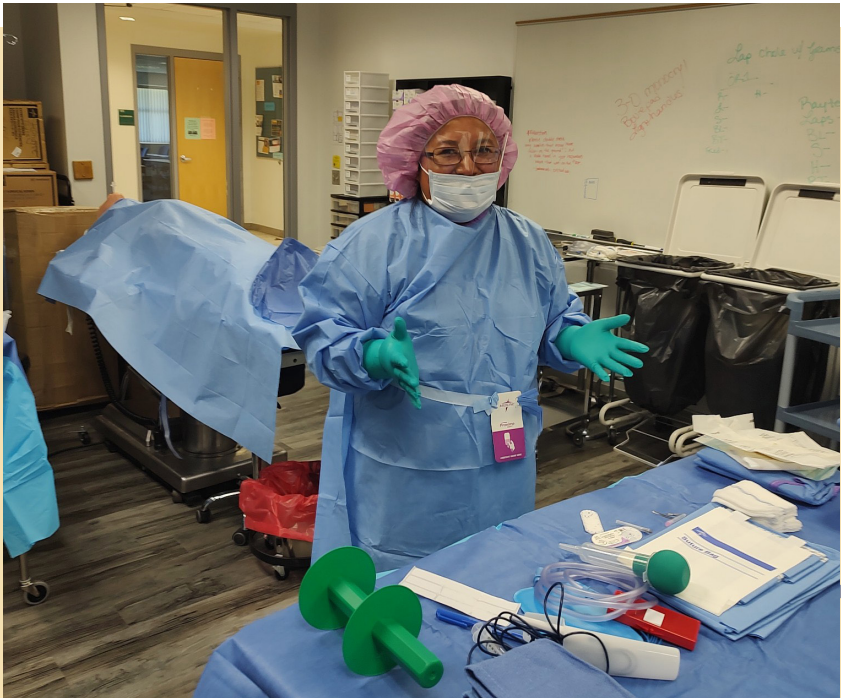


Navajo Nation, which is about 160 miles from Winslow. She was accepted into the nursing program a year ago but had to withdraw because of the difficulty of traveling for classes while caring for her little boy. This year, she relocated to the Winslow area and found employment that provides her with lodging for herself and her son, plus a modest income.

Along with the news that we had been awarded the inaugural scholarship winner, I shared Cherilyn's essay with Scott and Jennifer. Scott replied almost immediately: "I cannot begin to thank you enough for this news! Having read Cherilyn's letter, I am overwhelmed that we are connected to her; I don't think we could have even dreamed of finding someone like her for this. Wow, just wow. Her dream is our dream if you will.... Jennifer and I spoke today, and we laughed and cried while reading Cherilyn's letter. Our Moms would be so happy! This is just an amazing thing; we don't even know how to express how grateful we are to have found all of this."

After fifteen years of completing prerequisites and working and maintaining licensure as a Certified Nursing Assistant, Cherilyn's dream of becoming a registered nurse is less than two years away. With the help of a couple who wanted to do something meaningful to honor their mothers, she will earn her ADN from Northland Pioneer College in May 2026. Jennifer and Scott have created a legacy for their mothers, Jean and Elizabeth, and that legacy lives on in Cherilyn Bahe.

DOING WHAT IT TAKES



Lisa Benally is enrolled in the Northland Pioneer College Surgical Technology program, which is only offered at our White Mountain Campus in Show Low. This program was launched in 2019, in response to the tremendous need for licensed surgical technicians – “Surg Techs” – not only across the NPC service area but in rural hospitals across the country. As the name implies, Surg Techs assist the surgical team in the operating theatre. A career as a Surg Tech provides great opportunities for employment and financial security, a life-changer for so many of our students.

Lisa lives north of Holbrook on the Navajo Nation. She describes herself as a middle-aged woman, who has dedicated her life to raising her children, the youngest of whom is now in college. Lisa has long dreamed of returning to college herself and preparing to work in the medical field. Over the past year, she completed the prerequisites for the NPC Surg Tech program and applied for admission this fall. She was completely undaunted that the program was located over ninety miles, one way, from her home.

In her essay for the NPC Classified and Administrative Staff Organization (CASO) scholarship, Lisa wrote, “I am not conventionally employed, but ranching is

the full-time job that helps support my family. Water hauling, immunizing cattle, taking our animals to the veterinarian, and keeping them healthy is a lot of work. Selling our livestock at the auction helps me and my children financially. There are many challenges, but I look forward to walking in a cap and gown after almost 30 years. It’s a struggle to stay awake, feed all the animals, and submit homework on time. Just daily living is a struggle, and I am now a full time college student.” In explaining her need for the scholarship, Lisa went on to say, “I commute two hours to get to Show Low every Tuesday and Wednesday. I have slept in my truck four times to save on fuel...With financial assistance, I could get a room on days I need to stay in town to study or am too exhausted to make the drive home.”

Happily, Lisa was awarded the CASO Student Scholarship and the AndyVon Transportation Grant! Still, since Lisa applied for this scholarship at mid-semester, she fully intended to complete the term, with or without help. It will be a great thing to see this Navajo woman, rancher, mother, and full-time college student walk across the stage in her cap and gown as a Surgical Technician and a living example of tenacity, dedication, and perseverance in the face of the odds – ***True Grit.***

Realizing the Possibilities

A year and a half ago, Jana-Ray Nielipinski would have found it hard to believe she would be where she is today! In her scholarship essay, Jana-Ray described a beautiful warm day in May 2023 when her life was changed forever. She was involved in an accident where ‘a windmill broke free, crushing my back, cracking my skull, and taking my future.’

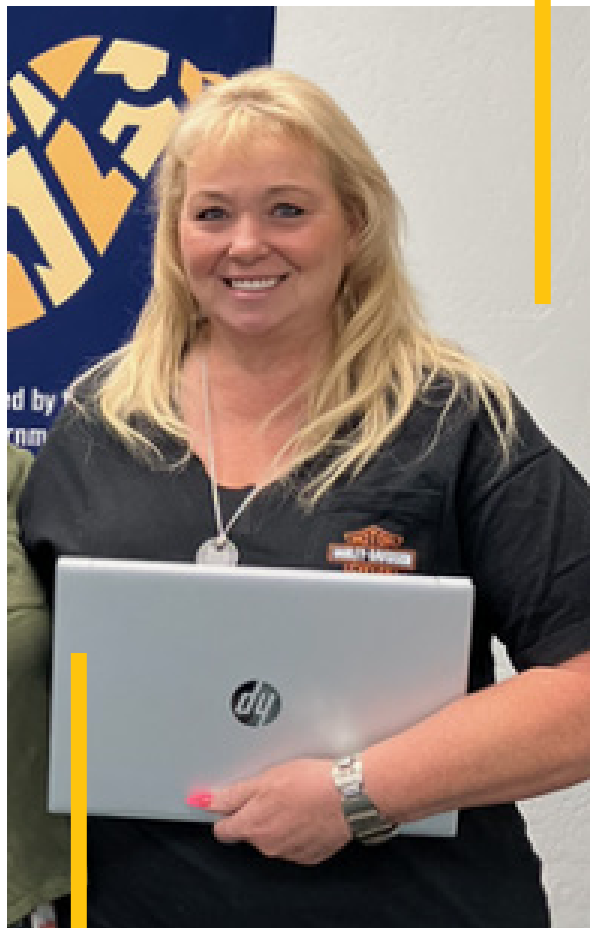
Jana-Ray spent months in the hospital and at home ‘sitting in a chair, unable to move without help, (with) pain beyond any I had ever experienced.’ It was during this time that Jana-Ray hit bottom. She realized, as did her family, that they were losing her. In these countless hours, Jana-Ray recognized the need for a distraction, the need for something to do that felt productive, hopeful, and meaningful. Jana-Ray picked up her pencil and began to journal. Instead of words, she drew her thoughts and prayers. Jana-Ray drew and drew, starting the process of healing not only her body but also her mind and spirit.

With the help of her family, Jana-Ray has established a vision for her future. She is working toward an Associate of Art degree at NPC (with an emphasis in studio art), and plans to transfer to a university in the future to earn a bachelor degree. ‘I enrolled and started to enjoy my forgotten love of art and with it, my joy in life

returned.’ Her plans are to one day work in the hospital/rehab setting, teaching and facilitating art for patients who face extensive recoveries like she did.

Jana-Ray is finishing her second semester at NPC, and is looking forward to all that lies ahead. She has joined the NPC Art Club and is anxious for an upcoming trip

to Cochise College where the group will experience the Native American art of pit firing. As part of the NPC Art Club, she recently helped with the Empty Bowls project, which raised money and awareness to help fight hunger in our community. This volunteer experience gave her confirmation in her educational journey and helped her to feel ‘like a productive addition to society once more’. This semester, Jana-Ray was awarded the CASO Student Scholarship, in the amount of \$500. About this award, she said ‘I cried when I was notified from the bank there was a deposit’. The funds were used to help with travel expenses and other costs associated with her classes and volunteer experiences.



‘I feel it is a person’s responsibility to use the gifts given to us for our community improvement and to enrich others’ lives within our abilities. I found a new path, a new dream.’ Jana-Ray reminds us ‘We all think and hope, when a tragedy happens to us, we will meet it heroically and head-on.’ **Jana-Ray is doing just that!**

Make a Difference – Donate Today!

NPC students are succeeding in spite of all the odds. Many are the first generation in their families to attend college. Lots of adults are coming back to school while coping with the responsibilities of caring for children or elderly parents. Most have incredible financial need and they succeed because of the scholarships made possible, and sustained, by generous people like you!

YES! I want to donate to NPC Friends and Family and help support NPC student scholarships.

Donations can be made online via credit/debit card at to www.npc.edu/npcfriendsfamily by clicking the “donate” button.

Donations can also be made by using this form. Make your check or money order payable to NPC Friends and Family. **THANK YOU!**

Please add my gift of \$_____ to the following:

- Bachelor’s in Early Childhood Education Scholarship** – For students in NPC’s first bachelor’s degree program
- Eagle Fund** – Unrestricted scholarships for students in greatest financial need
- AndyVon Scholarship Fund** – For Native American students
- Arvin Palmer, Ph.D., Memorial Scholarship** – For graduates of Snowflake High School
- Charles E. Lisitzky Memorial Scholarship** – For Native American students
- Claude Millet Endfield Early Childhood Development Scholarship** – For degree-seeking students in the ECD program
- Doris Reed Nursing Scholarship** – For nursing and allied health
- Jeanne Swarthout, Ph.D., Presidential Excellence Scholarship** – For degree-seeking students with a GPA of 3.5
- Jennifer Lee Witt Memorial Scholarship** – For degree seeking students
- Jon Graff, Ph.D., Fund** – For NPC students who are university bound, career bound or college-bound
- Martia A. Smith Memorial Art Scholarship** – For all full-time, degree-seeking students
- Mary Kay Smith Lindy Scholarship for Native American Nursing Students**
- Pres Winslow Memorial Scholarship** – For high school graduates enrolled at NPC
- Taking Flight Scholarship in memory of Dr. Eric B. Henderson** – For NPC graduates going on to a university
- U.S. Military Veterans Scholarship** – For veterans, their spouses and their dependents
- VAL 153 Memorial Scholarship** – For students in Fire Science and Paramedicine (EMT) programs
- Newman Family Memorial Scholarship** – For degree-seeking students on the I-40 corridor
- Therapeutic Massage Program Scholarship** – For enrolled therapeutic massage students

What your donation looks like as tuition:

- \$73** – Provides one credit of tuition for residents of Navajo County
- \$219** – Provides tuition for one three-credit class
- \$438** – Provides tuition for one student to attend half-time
- \$876** – Provides tuition for one student to attend full-time (12 credits)



**Begin a legacy –
Help students in need by starting
your own scholarship**

**Please contact betsy.wilson@npc.edu
to discuss how to create an NPCFF
scholarship fund.**

Thank you, for your continued support and donation.

You can learn more about and also give to NPC Friends and Family at www.npc.edu/npcfriendsfamily

NPC Friends and Family is a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations may be used for tax purposes.