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# AIR News

## focus

“OUR MISSION IS THE PROMOTION AND SUCCESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS WITHIN EDUCATION.”

*Created in 1993 the AIR Program has set out to create a greater future for our American Indian Community through education.*

## AIR Sr. Complete

(SAN DIEGO) We have officially completed our Spring Semester that included the participation of three universities (San Diego State University/ University of San Diego/University of California, San Diego) and mentors from San Diego State University, the University of San Diego, University of California, San Diego and Cal State University San Marcos.

We are also sending off all of our seniors who will be pursuing higher education through either a junior college or a 4 year university (that's 100% will graduate from high school and pursue higher education).

Each year and semester we give absolute credit to our staff and mentors but truly, we can never thank them enough as they are our program's foundation. No one in our program is paid so when they volunteer their time, you can understand the great commitment, dedication, and care they have towards improving our Native Community.

Our student participants are what our program is all about and each year they show us something new. In all they are all great young adults, whose hopes and dreams are being realized through education. We thank them for choosing our program for their academic needs.

This semester we took a look at healthy diets and how our Native Diets were not too different than those recommended by general nutritionists.



Many traditional native diets incorporated the daily amount of nutrition through diets based on fruits and vegetables. Within our examination of healthy diets we started off by planning and planting a garden. After eight weeks we were able to eat strawberries and lettuce. Additionally, we incorporated healthy living activities with the SDSU Crew giving us a historical base in rowing, from a native perspective, to their current use, boating for the San Diego Crew Regatta. Overall, we all learned more about health and ourselves. Our program introduced many concepts to help our students become motivated about pursuing higher education while learning and understanding about Native culture and thought, including;

- Academic workshops on higher education and

- related educational issues
- Research methodology based on our topical Native subject matter
- Mentoring; and
- Fun activities

With this, our students, seem more confident about the prospects of pursuing higher education and even gaining more interests in their own academics. Looking at our pictures, you can truly see the bond among all participants. It takes alot for anyone to give up each Monday to come to an after-school program to talk and learn about more education. Therefore on behalf of the AIR Program to all our students, mentors and community partners we thank you for your participation in our 17th year of operation serving our Native youth to aspire to a greater future.



## Kate's Program

*From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Katherine Gordon (USD Graduating Senior) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.*

In the past two years, our tutorial program has seen a trend that without being addressed will have unfortunate effects on many of our school age students. Our students are not receiving sufficient academic support and there is a serious need to provide these students with tutorial services. Students that join our tutorial program are generally behind in grade expectations in math, reading, and writing. This is expected as tutorial programs are given to those who are having trouble in these various subject areas.

However, our program has seen a more drastic educational need from some of our students. Aspects of this trend see students far behind in academic standards by two or three grade levels. These students, unless given the opportunity for academic assistance, in a timely fashion, will eventually fail. It seems like depressing downward spiral, as these students will eventually feel overwhelmed, discouraged and would want to check out of the whole educational world in general.

However, we feel that this is preventable if American Indian youth get the help that they need. It takes one on one attention as well as communication between the teachers and tutors. As a tutorial program we are assisting our students academically, but we are also becoming advocates for our students contacting their school and establish a relationship with their teachers so that we know exactly what our students needs are and to focus on specified subject matter in order to succeed. As a result, the teacher becomes more aware of the student's needs and appreciates the extra effort, which increases the student's performance in class.

We started this process several months ago, as more students joined our program, we would send letters to their teachers to start our contact approach. Soon we started getting weekly emails updating our program on assignments and specific struggles that the students needed to address in order to pass their classes. Speaking extensively with teachers we developed plans to make sure our students would improve. Within specific cases, teachers have told parents that some students seemed completely different, they were more engaged in class, getting A's and B's and happier at school. I am amazed to see what our students are capable of. To me, it is proof that the potential is there in these students, but when denied of a support system, they are set up for failure. When the parents, teachers and tutors are in a continuous dialogue there is a decreased chance of students falling through the cracks. It's really incredible what just a bit of communication and awareness can achieve!

**Special Note:** Congratulations to Kate on graduation from USD!!!!

## AIR Program: Spring Stats

*Statistics are provided to our community partners to show how their investment in our program has had great results. Statistics are pulled from sign in sheets and our applications.*

AIR Sr. Student Participants:	21	Meeting Ave: 13
AIR Sr. Mentors:	46	Meeting Ave: 28
Overall Number of Participants:	67	

Furthest Drive: Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians 55 miles

Number of Tribal Nations: Represented: 13

*Hopi/Navajo/Cahuilla/Kumeyaay/Lakota/Mono/Cherokee/Luiseno/Oneida/Yakama/Tohono Odom/Tongva/Native Hawaiian*

Number of Seniors to Pursue higher Education: 6 Percentage: 100%

Amount of Volunteer hours:	828
Volunteer Contribution (Fed. Standard):	\$13,662
Amount of Student Hours:	260 hrs



Community Partners: 9 SDSU, Department of AIS/SDSU Dept. of Psychology/Mesa Grande Tribal Youth Program/USD Dept. of Ethnic Studies/USD CASA Programs/USD Office of Outreach/SDUSD American Indian Programs/CA Indian Legal Services/All Tribes Charter School

## Tutorial Program

Tutorial Participants: 10 Mentor/Tutor Participants: 12

Amount of Tutorial hrs for Mentor/Tutors: 306 hrs Volunteer Contribution (Fed. Standard): \$5,049

Number of Tribal Nations: Represented: 13

*Pomo Wailaki, Navajo, Wailaki Concow, Yavapai Apache, Kumeyaay, Lakota, Washoe, Paiute*





## A Letter from Lizz

*From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Lizz Mejia (ATCS) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.*

Many people want to go to college, but are afraid that they can't make it, and the end result is decide not to pursue higher education. So many Native American students feel this way and let others tell them that they are not that perfect college material, so they don't go to college. Native Americans need to realize that college can be for anyone, and that there are programs such as AIR to help influence them to move towards higher education.

AIR helps young Native American students that are still in high school, to have a better understanding of what the college life is all about. AIR introduced these students to different local colleges in the San Diego area, and to show them the academic setting. Within the AIR program, students ask questions and hear the stories and experiences of students that attend these colleges. AIR helps students apply for college by assisting with the personal statements, applications and financial aid forms. AIR also provides students with workshops, which show daily life, research methodology for projects, and various athletic activities besides. AIR has personally helped me have a better understanding of college.

Native Americans can break that invisible barrier that holds them back from attending college. I wish to follow the footsteps of those Native Americans that inspired me to attend college and in return to help inform the younger generations to come, that college is for everyone and that anyone can make it to college.

**Special Note:** Liz will enter a TAG program (via a Junior College) to the University of San Diego. Congratulations Lizz!!!

## A Note from James Speer

*From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, James Speer (SDSU Student) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.*

This semester I had the opportunity to work in an organization as part of a requirement for graduation. I was referred to the AIR Program by my friend, and frequent volunteer of the AIR Program, Tobin Ortega. I intend on dedicating my career to non-profit work and other social works, and mentoring for the AIR Program was a great way for me to start.

My experience this spring with the AIR Program was enriching. Being able to work with the students and develop friendly relationships with them was awesome. One memory that stands out most is when I had the privilege to lead the physical activity workshop along with Tobin. Tobin and I share a passion for competitive rowing and our connections with the San Diego State Men's Crew team gave us the opportunity to share this with the students at the San Diego State campus. The students had a lot of fun that day racing each other and learning the sport of rowing and how its history linked to American Indian culture. This however was only one of many of the successful workshops that were organized by other mentors.

This semester I witnessed how much of an impact the AIR Program makes on the American Indian community as well as the surrounding communities. I believe that those who volunteered their time this spring grew as individuals just as much as the students; I can attest to this. I look forward to keeping myself involved with the program as best I can after I graduate but I especially look forward to seeing the students continue on their pursuit of higher education.

**Special Note:** Congratulations to James Speer on his graduation from SDSU!!!!



We thank the University of San Diego, Dept. of Ethnic Studies and CASA Programs for all their support through these last few years.





## Reflections from Norma Rojas

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Norma Rojas (USD Student) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter. Norma is pictured here, in the grey with our student participant Monique Vasquez.

This semester in AIR, our theme was health and nutrition. We worked with the students on many different projects such as planting a garden, rowing, and presentation. The activity that I enjoyed the most was planting the garden. This activity was very rewarding not only because

we had the chance to cultivate our own lettuce and strawberries but also because it connected us with the land. It showed us that the relationship with the land is essential for a healthy lifestyle. It taught us that we do not have to buy our food from the store all the time but that we can produce it ourselves. Gardening also helped us learn more about the culture/traditions of different groups. Gardening and planting are in themselves universal practices that can connect to all cultures. Gardening and planting are healing processes because consuming from our garden will take us to a healthier life style and we will avoid diseases such as diabetes.



## Rose's Corner

From time to time we have our students and mentors, from our program, contribute to our newsletter giving their thoughts on various parts of our program, Native issues and events. Here, Rose Vasquez (Valley Center High School Student) has agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

Being accepted to Cal State San Marcos is a great accomplishment to me. It's not Harvard or Yale, but it's a four year university in which I can continue my education. I expect that going to Cal State San Marcos I will be out of my comfort zone. There will be few Native students in which I hope to relate with. I have many fears for my upcoming college life, one is that I will become overwhelmed in my studies and be tempted to give up. Here, my goal is to network with the faculty creating a support system which will help me through these next few years. Another fear is being the financial crisis as higher education as education does not come cheap. In

regards to this I hope to use scholarships, grants, and loans to help me along. If there is a will there is a way. I know I can do it!

**Special Note:** Congratulations to Rose on her graduation and acceptance to CSUSM!!!

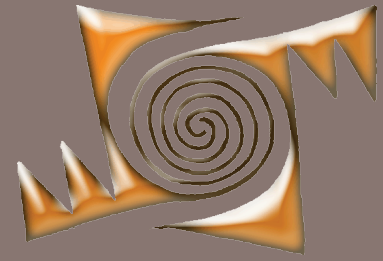


## Congratulations

To all our seniors who are graduating this year and who will all pursue higher education (Lizz, Monique, Rose, Sergio, Cathy, and Chandler)

Special thanks to Dr. Michelle Jacob and Dr. Sara Unsworth who have given us great vision in our approach in serving our Native American Community.

Finally, a very, very special thank you to Kate Gordon who has inspired us all with her great care and commitment through her community service.



**AIR  
PROGRAMS**  
PO Box 880471  
San Diego CA 92168  
[info@airprograms.org](mailto:info@airprograms.org)



## AIR Programs Board

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Thanking all our Community Partners for their support of our program, Native Children and bringing hope and future for all our American Indian Community.



**SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

