PUSD Page Unified School District



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3 PHS Grads Honored as Chief Manuelito Scholars





Three students from the Page High School Class of 2026 – Ozlynn Begay, Desmond Goldtooth and Symond Martin – were honored as 2026 Chief Manuelito Scholars. They were honored during an awards ceremony at the Twin Arrows Casino last July.

The Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship and Financial Assistance hosted the awards ceremony honoring 186 graduating high school students. The Chief Manuelito Scholarship is considered one of the most prestigious academic awards for graduating seniors.

The ceremony opened with a Navajo Blessing Way prayer, followed by a message from Shiyazh Pete, a 2021 Chief Manuelito Scholar, who told this year's scholarship recipients that it was a great distinction.

"It's a big honor," he said. "Be proud of yourselves. We are all very proud of you. Make your lives great. Enjoy the moment. Enjoy the day. You've done a lot of hard work. I wish you the best of luck in the future."

Pete's remarks were followed by a message from former Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez who emphasized the importance of education, cultural preservation, and community service.

Nez told the students that they would encounter difficult times and trials as they progressed in their education and careers, but advised them to persevere to the end.

"There will be times when you think, I can't do it or I am tired," said Nez. "But you also have to remind yourself that we come from tough, tough, and strong Navajo blood. You're overcomers. Remember our ancestors. Find the strength to finish those projects."

Ozlynn Begaye will attend Northern Arizona University; Desmond Goldtooth will attend Arizona State University and Symond Martin will Northern Arizona University.

Congratulations Ozlynn, Desmond and Symond!

Capri Sun and Pizza

PUSD Students Take Educational Trip to Italy.





Deming Keisling walked around a corner and bam!, there it was: impossibly large. The immense structure dominated everything around it. It kind of took him a minute to wrap his head around the scope of what he was seeing. His sense of scale and perspective kind of wobbled around for a few seconds while his brain adjusted to the immense scale of the Roman Colosseum.

"I knew it was going to be big but I didn't expect it to be as big as it was," he said. "And there were so many people too."

As impressive as the Colosseum was, it was not Deming's favorite part of the trip. His favorite part was visiting Capris, an island off the Italian coast, and swimming in the Mediterranean Sea.

"It was really fun," he said. "It was really clear and salty."

Deming was one of nine students from Page Unified School District who traveled through Italy last summer as part of an eleven-day education-centered tour. He was joined by Scarlotte John, Tanan Keisling, Harper Keisling, Eli Lewandowski, Ella Lewandowski, Emberly Regis, Mila Tew and Malia Walker. They were accompanied by eight adults: Kristen Keisling, Stacey Shropshire, Christine Lewandowski, Lorraine Lewandowski, Katherine John, Stanley and Michelle Kane and Teniya Smith. The group was led by Kendra Tarket, who teaches gifted students at Page Elementary and Page Early Childhood Development Center.

The trip was part of Education First, an international tour company specializing learning-based travel for school-aged students. This was Tarket's fourth time leading trips with Education First. In previous years she has traveled to Panama, London and Paris, and Japan.

The advantage of traveling with Education First is that they take care of every aspect of the trip, including air travel, in-country transportation, lodging, meals and guides. A full-time tour director traveled with the group 24/7 and answered questions along the way.

The group arrived in Milan, Italy on June 1. From Milan they took a four-hour bus ride to Venice, where they checked into their hotel.

The group was able to participate in many activities, including seeing how Murano Glass was made in Murano, taking a Gondola ride in Venice, and visiting the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi. In Florence, they participated in a Fresco Art lesson led by a master of the craft, then took a tour of the entire city.

While in Rome, they visited the Vatican, viewed the Sistine Chapel, learned how to be a Gladiator, and visited the Colosseum. They visited the Forum and saw where Julius Caesar lived his last moments, they journeyed to Pompeii and joined a tour of the ruins, and spent the evening in Sorrento. On their final day of the tour, they visited the Island of Capri, where we rode a funicular and enjoyed some beach time.





Tarket loves traveling and visiting new cities, trying new cuisine and adventures. But her favorite part of every trip is the reactions and experiences of the people she's traveling with; especially kids and first-time travelers. Her favorite part of the visit to Italy was watching Deming's reaction when he first saw the Colosseum.

"He turned to me and said, `Ms. Tarket: I was so ready to be disappointed and that it would be smaller than it looks in photos. But it's way bigger than I thought it would be.' I could tell he was thrilled.

"The kids grow so much on these tours. I've had kids who have never ordered their own food suddenly order their own food at a restaurant, figure out how to do currency exchanges, and have those special little moments in a museum."

For Ella Lewandowski and Harper Keisling, the food was the favorite part of their trip.

"It was really delicious," she said. "We had a lot of pizza, which was really good. There was a lot of pasta. My favorite was the pizza and the sandwiches. It wasn't as greasy, or stale like it is in America. It just tasted fresher and lighter."

Ella's favorite cities were Pisa and Assisi.

Harper Keisling ate a sandwich in Rome "that changed my life," she said. It was a simple Capri sandwich, but all the ingredients tasted superior to American ingredients. "It had really good bread, really good tomatoes, and I almost cried when I ate it. With the bread you could taste the grain. Everything tasted fresher and better. It just tasted right."

Harper's favorite cities were Capri and Assisi.

Ella said the trip to Italy made her want to travel more. She wants to go to London next.

"I've never been to Europe before and it was cool to explore a whole different country," she said. "I want to go to other places and try them out too."

The trip lit the travel bug in Harper too. She wants to go to Berlin or Amsterdam next.

"I loved visiting Italy so much," she said. "It was so cool to see different cultures and how other people live their lives."



Exposure to other cultures, different ways to doing things helps students have a less-biased, broader view of the world and its people.

"This is the first time a lot of our Page kids have ventured so far from home and try out some of life's big life experiences," said Tarket. "I've seen their confidence grow right in front of my eyes and I've seen that carry over when they come home. Kids who are maybe on the line of whether or not they're going to be great achievers or just float along in life, they come back and they make goals and they accomplish them, and they start to self-advocate. I love seeing their growth during these trips."

Next year PUSD's Middle School Education First trip will be going to Costa Rica.

Laurel Moore Attends Harvard Crimson Coaching Academy

It was rigorous, it was demanding, it was challenging. And she loved every minute of it.

"It was so cool and so much fun," said Page High School junior Laurel Moore.

Moore is referring to the week she spent at Harvard this past summer attending the Harvard Crimson Coaching Academy. Its mission is to help high school students achieve their highest potential as they prepare for college. It's designed for students who want to attend America's top tier universities – such as Harvard, Yale, MIT or Princeton – and educate and prepare them for what that will involve. The first step in attending the prestigious academy is being recommended by a teacher or school official.

Ermenia Tenpenny, PUSD's EL & Gifted Coordinator, nominated Moore for the weeklong course.

"I recommended her because she's been a high-achiever, really enjoys being involved in school and has expressed interest in attending college or university after high school," said Tenpenny.

"The Academy is a booster to get them set into college, such as how to do applications, what to expect when you get there. This helps pave the path to get her there."

Moore is a junior at Page High School. As you might expect from someone reaching for an Ivy League university, Moore is ambitious, driven and well-organized. She is junior class secretary. She is also on the girls soccer team. In previous years she was also on the cheer team, choir and acted in the fall musical.

She was a student council Representative last year. She was part of a committee in charge of the school spirit around campus, promoting spirit week, dances, sport game themes, and more. Outside of school, she is also involved in Girl Scouts and 4H, soccer, and cheer. This year she will drop choir and theater and will fill her free time taking a systematic theology class. After graduating from Page High School, Moore wants to attend Princeton University and major in Theology. Following college, she'd like to be a pastor or traveling minister.

The Academy began Sunday, July 19 with an on-campus orientation. Classes started the next day and ran through Friday, July, 24. The classes took place on the Harvard campus and Moore and the other students stayed in student dorms.



The Harvard Crimson Coaching Academy is a very challenging program. The day begins early. After breakfast, Moore attended classes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with an hour lunch. There was another break for dinner. Dinner was followed by homework 6:30 p.m. until lights out at 11.

But some fun activities were added between the classes and homework. Monday night they did a group scavenger hunt, which was designed to help them learn their way around campus. Another night was movie night, another night they painted tote bags and another night they decorated cookies.

The main goals of the Crimson Coaching Academy was teaching high school students how to fill out college applications, complete interviews, write personal statements, supplemental essays and things to be aware of financially when considering schools. One of classes Moore found very helpful was having mock interviews with the admissions counselors at Harvard and receiving feedback from them.

"I got a lot of great advice from the counselors," Moore said.

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Page High School Adds Junior ROTC Program



Cadet Raine Bennett is excited for this.

"I can't think of the last time I was so excited for something," she said.

Cadet Bennett is talking about joining the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), which Page High School implemented at the beginning of the 2026-27 school year. Cadet Bennett is one of 48 PHS students enrolled in the JROTC program. The program will fall under the umbrella of Page High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program.

The program is open to students grades 8 to 12. It takes two years to complete the program, but students can be enrolled in JROTC for up to five years. Students enrolled in the program will attend JROTC class every day.

Cadet Bennett has a lot of family members – going back to World War II – who have served in the military. Being able to be a part of that tradition gives her a lot of pride.

"I think it's going to change my life," Bennett added. "I was already contemplating going into the Marines or Air Force and this only reinforces that.

"I really like flying," she said. "I've had a tick for it since fifth grade. I just love the Air Force. When I saw the program coming that was it. I went off edge."

Cadet Bennett is looking forward to the added discipline, fitness and citizenship the JROTC will add to her life.

Page High School is still searching for a full time JROTC Instructor. One of the requirements for the position is that the instructor must be retired Air Force. In the meantime, the course is being ran by Chuck Sharp, PHS CTE Director, and Sylvester Begay, who teaches Auto Collision at Page High School. Sharp is a retired Army Captain, with 21 years. Begay is a former Marine. Until a full-time instructor is found, Begay and Sharp will serve as the JROTC Instructors.

The core goals of the program are designed to instill key values and life skills in high school students with an emphasis on Citizenship and Service, Personal Responsibility and Leadership Development.

When teaching Citizenship and Service, the teaching will focus on the importance of civic duty, community service, and loyalty to the United States. When teaching Personal Responsibility, the teaching will focus on fostering a sense of accomplishment, self-discipline, and personal









accountability. When teaching Leadership Development, the teaching will focus on providing practical leadership training through coursework, drills, and team activities. The curriculum centers on character education, communication, wellness, and emotional intelligence.

The cadets will be doing a lot of community engagement and volunteer work, says Chuck Sharp.

The JROTC is not a recruitment tool, and participation in the program does not obligate a student to join the military or enlist after graduation.

Some of the practical skills the JROTC students will develop are: orienteering, marksmanship, drone operations, robotics, color guard, drill team and physical fitness. During the second week of school, the JROTC held a fitness test for the cadets. Meeting at the Page High School football field, the cadets demonstrated how many push-ups and sit-ups they could do in a given amount of time, as well as how far they could run in a set amount of time. As cadets progress through the course, they are expected to improve on that number. Because of the amount of physical fitness involved, students can use the JROTC class as P.E. or fitness credit.

In the coming weeks the cadets will be receiving their PT uniforms. They will wear them to school on various days throughout the week. In the coming weeks, the JROTC cadets will start performing flag ceremonies at football and basketball games.

Chuck Sharp is looking forward to showing the community what a great addition the cadets will have on the community.

"The community and parents have wanted this for years," Sharp said, "because they know what it brings: the citizenship, the respect, the manners and community involvement. Every time I've been to a city meeting and ask what they would like to see, they always say ROTC. I think our cadets our really going to impress them."

Cadet Blackhorse Awarded JROTC Challenge Coin





Congratulations to Ashineh Blackhorse who became the first student to be awarded a Challenge Coin in Page High School's newly-established JROTC program.

Cadet Blackhorse is a ninth grader. She was given the Challenge Coin by Chuck Sharp during a ceremony last week. Cadet Blackhorse joined the JROTC because her father, Chris Benally, is in the military.

A military challenge coin is a small, custom-designed medallion bearing a unit's emblem, insignia, or motto. Leaders hand them out to reward hard work, mark special achievements, or welcome visitors. Carrying one builds team spirit and shows pride in a specific branch or mission.

Receiving a Challenge Coin is a high honor. Typically, only two or three Challenge Coins are given out per year. Sharp presented the Challenge Coin to Cadet Blackhorse for her exemplary demonstration of military customs and courtesies, and showing leadership skills.

Page High School started the JROTC program at the beginning of 2026-27 school year.

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Moore is very glad she went.

"It was very helpful," she said. "We spent an entire day just on scholarships. The people teaching the class were university admissions officers. They told the students what they as admissions officers looked for, what made an application stand out, what red flags to avoid.

"The best advice I received about that was to keep it relatable to myself," said Moore.

The classes and exercises were all very practical, but the experience was also very inspirational. Moore feels like her week on campus gave her a good taste of what college will be like. Her favorite part of the week was making new friends with the other people in her program.

"I got really close to all the people there," she said. Since returning home, she has stayed in touch with them through group chats and texting.

Moore is the daughter of Kyle and Caitlyn Moore.