

NAVAJO TIMES

EDUCATION

Mexican Springs/Gallup youth honored for community service

ALBUQUERQUE - Fionna Walters of Mexican Springs, N.M., was named winner for her age group (19- to 26-year-olds) in the 16th Annual Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Awards ceremony Oct. 23.

Walters, Diné, received a \$1,000 cash prize from New Mexico Voices for Children and a \$250 U.S. savings bond from the New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, as well as an awards sculpture.

In all, 19 youths from across the state were recognized for their vision, initiative, and dedication to community service.

In addition, two youths from each of the two age groups (13-18 and 19-26) were named Winners and two from each age group were named honorees. All four received monetary awards. The annual Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Awards ceremony was part of New Mexico Voices' Spirit of Hope Celebration on Friday, Oct. 23, 2009 in Albuquerque.

Walters, 19, has volunteered in her community of Mexican Springs to help organize recreation activities for youth. She recognized the need to build a playground for

hazard.

Walters attended the Summer Policy Academy at Santa Fe Indian School where she learned about the legislative process. In 2007, using the skills she had learned at the academy, she presented her proposal for a new playground in Mexican Springs and secured a legislative sponsor in John Pinto.

Senate Bill 471, containing the appropriation of \$75,000 for a new playground in Mexican Springs, was passed and signed into law. On Oct. 5 the playground was officially opened.

Walters attended the Junior Policy Institute at Princeton University, and is attending the University of New Mexico Gallup branch.

The Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Award celebrates New Mexico youth, ages 13 through 26, who have worked to make the world a better place. Amy Biehl, a graduate of Santa Fe High School, was killed while working to end apartheid in South Africa in 1993. She was 26. NM Voices has given the award in Amy's honor since 1993.



Fionna Walters, center, receives an Amy Biehl Youth Spirit Award from New Mexico Voices for Children for outstanding