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# Cancer awareness conference to focus on Native American needs

Phoenix Business Journal

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The **Arizona Myeloma Network** is planning its first cancer awareness conference Oct. 11 in Window Rock for Arizona's Native American communities.

Barbara Kavanagh, founder and CEO of the Myeloma Network, said she hopes the conference will spur grants to bring more services to the area so Navajos won't have to drive hundreds of miles to the Phoenix Indian Medical Center in Phoenix for a check-up.

"We have a responsibility," she said. "They have a high morbidity rate."

Kavanagh gives credit to Mechelle Morgan-Flowers, a nurse and supervisor who works at the Fort Defiance Indian Hospital in northeastern Arizona. She educated Kavanagh about the need for cancer services for Native Americans.

"It's so not fair," Morgan-Flowers told Kavanagh. "We have so many cancer patients on the Navajo reservation. They need to know about these programs and our staff needs to know how to help our people better. You have to help us do a conference."

So for the past four months, Kavanagh has been organizing meetings with Valley hospitals, the **Translational Genomics Research Institute** (TGen) and others. The **John Wayne Cancer Foundation** is sponsoring the conference.

Kavanagh, who in August was named a *Phoenix Business Journal* Health Care Hero for her efforts in education, said it's time that she live up to the award.

"It's a responsibility to be a Health Care hero," she said. "It's not just about my getting this beautiful glass award. It almost becomes more of a responsibility. Now everybody knows I'm a hero so I better keep behaving like a hero."

She said she even felt ashamed when she met Morgan-Flowers, who was brimming with passion for helping the Navajos.

"Mechelle hooked my heart," Kavanagh said.

**About the conference**

**Where:** Navajo Nation Museum, Arizona 264 and Postal Loop Road, Window Rock, Arizona.

**When:** 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 11.

**Who:** Open to the public.

**Cost:** Free.

**Why:** To help provide Arizona's Native Americans with a higher awareness of cancer and greater access to medical care.

**Primary sponsors:** Arizona Myeloma Network, Black Bear Diners and the John Wayne Cancer Foundation.

**Participating organizations:** Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, Navajo Nation, Intertribal Council of Arizona, Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care, Southwest American Indian Collaborative Network, Dine' College, Mayo Clinic, Translational Genomics Research Institute, Scottsdale Healthcare, Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center, St. Joseph's

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**Details, or to provide sponsorships or donations:** [www.azmyelomanetwork.org](http://www.azmyelomanetwork.org), or Barbara Kavanagh at 623-388-6837; or Mechelle Morgan-Flowers at 928-729-8024 or -8476.

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