

## Arizona cancer conference targets Navajos

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John Wayne the movie star may have done his best work using Monument Valley on the Navajo Reservation as a backdrop. Stagecoach, The Searchers and Red River were made there.

Wayne died of cancer in 1979. Now a group involved in his legacy is helping stage a cancer conference at Window Rock, the Navajo capital, in northeastern Arizona.

The John Wayne Cancer Foundation is a primary sponsor of the Fort Defiance Cancer Awareness and Advocacy Conference on Saturday.

Speakers from Arizona cancer groups and hospitals will provide information about services, resources and advances in treatments, organizers said. It is hoped that a permanent cancer program will emerge from the meeting.

Mechelle Morgan-Flowers, a nurse supervisor at Fort Defiance Indian Hospital near Window Rock, conceived the event after she attended a cancer-awareness program in Scottsdale, sponsored by the Arizona Myeloma Network, in March.

"There is a need for this in the communities we serve," said Morgan-Flowers, who teamed with Barbara Kavanagh, of the myeloma group, and Dr. Bodour Salhia, a cancer researcher at the Translational Genomics Research Institute in Phoenix.

"Next we interested tribal elders, Navajo cancer patients and members of the Indian Health Service," Kavanagh said. The need for cancer services is urgent among the more than 250,000 Navajo, who often travel to Flagstaff, Phoenix or Albuquerque for cancer care.

The program will include discussions with tribal medicine men about traditional views of cancer, talks on medical treatments and lifestyle factors, and workshops on what programs are needed and how to provide them.

Once the program was decided, planners sent out appeals to fund the event.

"The John Wayne Cancer Foundation came riding to the rescue," Kavanagh said. The group had donated to Navajo projects before, but not for cancer.

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