

Tohono O'odham teenager communicates with astronaut circling 220 miles above the earth



Dayanara Sixkiller, 15, attempts to contact an astronaut aboard the International Space Station with the help of Astronomy Camp Director Dr. Don McCarthy. Photo by Crystal Manuel.

Tucson- On June 9, traveling at a speed of 17,239 miles-per-hour, and 220 miles above the continent of Australia, an astronaut aboard the International Space Station tried to respond to a young Tohono O'odham girl's question.

Fifteen-year-old Dayanara Sixkiller over a two-way radio at the Steward Observatory located on the University of Arizona campus asked, what is your favorite space station experiment? Though the astronaut's reply was garbled in static and lost in space, Sixkiller remained enthusiastic about her role as the Tohono O'odham Nation's representative at the Astronomy Camp.

Sixkiller, a student at Baboquivari High School, couldn't attend this year's camp because of her Tohono O'odham Community College summer classes, however, astronomer Dr. Don McCarthy invited her back to be the Nation's representative and ask the first question during the event.

Astronomy, a subject favored by Sixkiller, has been a part of her life for many years. In June, 2009, at 11-years-of-age, she attended the astronomy camp and had the time of her life along with other students from around the United States. It was the first time she had been away from home, she said, and the first time she had ever stayed in a dormitory with other students.

More road improvement planned for AZ Hwy 86 in area of Kitt Peak

Tucson- Motorists traveling between Sells and Tucson can expect more heavy roadwork with the announcement by the Arizona Department of Transportation that highway improvement work will pick up on Arizona State Highway 86 in the Kitt Peak area.

Preliminary work and delivery of equipment started in June for the \$17 million road improvement project scheduled from milepost 129 to milepost 137. The work starts just east of the turnoff to Crowhang and ends near the Kitt Peak rest area.

According to ADOT the work will include construction of eight-foot shoulders on both sides of the highway along with drainage improvements. New left and right turn lanes will be added at the turn off to Pan Tak Village and the turn off to Santa Rosa Ranch. There will also be construction of wildlife crossings for Sonoran Desert Tortoises at two locations.

The road improvements will be similar to work done from Coyote Store to the eastern reservation boundary. This project will take about 20 months.

Four years have passed since then, but Sixkiller remains enthusiastic about astronomy and hopes to return to the camp next year.

For more information about the Astronomy Camp, email Dr. Don McCarthy, dmccarthy@as.arizona.edu

Tohono O'odham Nursing Care Authority

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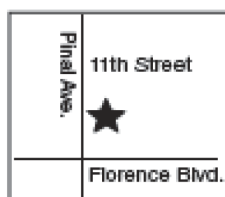
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