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LETTER OF THE WEEK: *Dismayed at Ceremonial wine tasting, Page A-6*

The lucky ones

A few star-crossed rez mutts made it to paradise

In last week's edition, the problem of stray dogs on the reservation and the lack of resources to deal with the issue was presented in Part I of "Rez dogs." This week the fortunes of canines lucky enough to be adopted is presented as well as the efforts of a small but determined program.

By CINDY YURTH
NAVAJO TIMES

CHINLE - When "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" came to film a segment in Piñon Chapter this spring, the crew did more than provide a new home for a Navajo family.

Crewmembers also provided homes for seven stray dogs that had been hanging around their camp.

Paul DiMeo, one of the show's lead designers, and his wife Kelly couldn't resist Nizhóní, a mottled sheepdog mix with a bum leg.

"There was this little limping puppy hanging around the camp, covered with ticks," DiMeo recalled in a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles. "She had a beautiful, beautiful face."

The DiMeos had just lost two dogs they'd had for nearly 20 years, so Nizhóní - Navajo for "pretty" - couldn't have timed her entrance better.

When they took the pup home and got her to the vet, he confirmed what the DiMeos had suspected: Nizhóní had broken



Kirk Sullivan of IQ Air, one of the companies that contributed to the "Extreme Home Makeover" in April in Pinon, Ariz., enjoys his new pet, Atay, whom he encountered at the building site in Pinon. Sullivan has nicknamed Atay "The Kissing Bandit" for her odd habit of jumping on his bed at 3 a.m. and kissing both him and his wife. (Courtesy photo)

her leg at some point and it had healed on its own.

"It's about two inches shorter than the others, but it doesn't seem to bother her at all," DiMeo said. "It's just amazing she could have survived in a place like that with a broken leg."

DiMeo described Nizhóní's personality as "willful but loving."

"She's the favorite dog of the neighborhood," he said. "She doesn't have a bad thing to say about anybody."

Unbeknownst to the DiMeos,



"Extreme Home Makeover" designer Paul DiMeo and his wife Kelly with their rez mutt, Nizhoni. The sheepdog mix was a tick-infested, limping puppy when the DiMeos found her at the "Makeover" building site in Pinon, Ariz., in April. (Courtesy photo)

fellow crewmember Kirk Sullivan company IQ Air, first saw Atay was also falling in love that chilly "sleeping on the ground, with a week in Piñon.

Sullivan, of air filtration

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