

## **Cochiti Dam Field Trip Mentoring Diverse Abilities (MDA) Project April 7, 2006**

The Mentoring Diverse Abilities (MDA) Project of Program Development and Support (PDS) sponsored a field trip for students with disabilities from Bernalillo High School and Tohajiilee Community School. The trip was initiated by the Business Advisory Council (BAC) of MDA. Ed Paulsgrove of the US Army Corps of Engineers and Leah Rhule, Director of the New Mexico Business Leadership Network were the driving force behind the trip. Hats off to the two schools who arranged transportation, release from regularly scheduled classes and sack lunches for the students. We would also like to thank Patricia Carisella and Adolfo Vasquez, Transition Counselors from Tohajiilee and Bernalillo respectively. Our wonderful Gold Mentor, Yvonne Jackson traveled on the school bus from Bernalillo and our own Rita Lujan of MDA did all the behind the scenes coordination of speakers.

The day started with a history of the Cochiti Dam and Pueblo as well as a blessing from Donald Suina of Cochiti Pueblo. During the day the students heard from Park Ranger Greg Carpenter of the US Army Corps of Engineers who spoke about his own struggles in high school. He encouraged the students to stay in school and consider an internship in their chosen occupation. Internship became the theme of the day as Fred Norwood, coordinator of the Pre-Engineering department at SIPI told his story of starting his career as an Intern. He also told the group how Engineering is a part of our everyday life and a lucrative career choice. Michele Radice, American Indian liaison from the US Department of Agriculture gave the students a pop quiz about agriculture and the environment. Staff and students both joined in on the fun of answering the questions.

Finally, David Vanderpool from the US Forest Service showed the students how a wheelchair user can overcome societal barriers to become successfully employed and live independently in the community.

Lunch was taken in the picnic area and a number of students walked down to the Lake to enjoy their lunch in the warmth and sunshine. As an Eagle flew overhead the group walked back to the buses to end the day with a tour of the Cochiti Dam Project Office and work site. Several students were excited about the possibility of a summer Internship with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

