

BWE GIVES BACK

We work to change our communities and our world

LELAND HARTY

URNS LOVE FOR FISHING INTO FUNDS FOR NAVAJO CHILDREN'S HOME

If you've ever met Leland Harty, Chief Strategy Office at Bellwether Enterprise, there's a good chance you've learned of his love and passion for fly fishing.

Just stepping into his Cleveland office feels like you've walked into the trout fishing section at Bass Pro Shops. There you'll find tournament trophies, photos and paintings of the numerous species of trout, a wide variety of flies used as lures, and mounted trout replicas.

Also hanging on the wall is a map of the San Juan River in New Mexico. This river is where Leland cast his first fly more than 20 years ago, all in preparation to participate in a tournament fundraiser for the Four Corners Home for Children (FCHC) foster care program dedicated to helping Native American children.

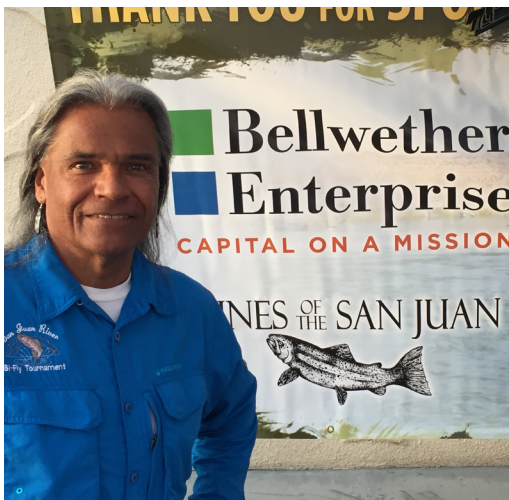


Leland Harty shows off a rainbow trout he caught while fishing in the FCHC Bi-Fly tournament on the San Juan River in New Mexico.

“It all comes back to helping raise money for the kids.”

The FCHC is a foster care program that operates under its parent organization Navajo Ministries, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides services to Navajo - Native American children who need temporary safety, food, and shelter.

The first year of the annual Bi-Fly Fishing Tournament on the San Juan River was in 1993, and over the last 25 years the tournament has raised more than \$1.2 million for the FCHC. Leland – paired with his fishing teammates over the years – has personally raised more than \$400,000 for the cause.



Navajo Ministries President Raymond Dunton, who has been involved in the organization since the 1990s and became president in 2017, is the first Native American to lead the organization since its establishment in 1953.

Fly fishing has turned into a passion for Leland – whose number one bucket list goal is to catch a trout on a fly rod in all 50 states – but “it all comes back to helping raise money for the kids,” he said.

The Four Corners Home for Children is located in Farmington, New Mexico near the Navajo Nation reservation. The Navajo Nation is the largest Native American reservation expanding more than 17 million acres – 27,000-square-miles – with a population estimated at more than 300,000. The FCHC has two homes on a 16-acre property in Farmington where it can house up to 20 children at once.

Bob Fitz, operations director of Navajo Ministries, has worked with the children's home for decades and established and organized the Bi-Fly fundraising tournament 25 years ago. He explained that widespread poverty, alcoholism and drug abuse within the Navajo population have created a significant need for the FCHC and the services it provides.

BWE GIVES BACK

We work to change our communities and our world

Many sources, including the Navajo Nation government, estimate the unemployment rate of the Navajo Nation community to be above 50 percent.

Mr. Fitz said the well-documented issue of alcoholism within the Native American community is certainly the most predominant scenario that leads children to be placed with the FCHC, but drug use, particularly methamphetamine abuse, is “rapidly overtaking it.”

He said last year the organization took in three newborns from the hospital because their mothers were unfit to care for them due to meth use. It is also not uncommon for children to arrive in the middle of the night with no possessions other than the pajamas they are wearing.

The FCHC takes in children of all ages, from infants to teens, but Mr. Fitz said the average age of children in their care is 11 or 12 years old. The average stay at the FCHC, he added, is about two years, but some stay much longer. Ultimately, the goal is to reunify the children with family when possible.

“We and the social workers endeavor to place the children back with the families or extended families as much as possible,” Mr. Fitz said. “But we have children who have been here even eight years because they have no extended family.”

The FCHC works to provide housing, clothing, food, and all other of life’s necessities. They also have social workers, counselors and nurses on staff to provide the children additional services, in addition to partnering with the local school district to operate an elementary school.

With employing staff, paying for upkeep of the homes and 16-acre campus, and other additional expenses, the FCHC budget operates at about \$1 million annually.

“We rely strictly on donations, and people like Leland become very important to the whole program,” Mr. Fitz said. “Like most nonprofits, the summer is a time when giving is down considerably. And the Bi-Fly has become the source of funding to get us through those dry months and into the fall and year-end giving. So it’s become very important to us.”

The Bi-Fly Tournament, the organizations’ biggest fundraiser each year, raises roughly 10 percent of the FCHC’s annual budget and in 2018 set records raising more than \$120,000. The FCHC receives various monetary donations as well as proceeds from an auction and reception event.

The bulk of fundraising from the tournament comes in the form of pledges received by the anglers. Participants solicit donations from supporters who pledge a dollar amount per inch of the angler’s biggest fish landed in the tournament.

Leland’s largest catch turned out to be a 26-inch brown trout. In total, Leland and his longtime friend and fishing partner Brad Preber



Leland has been a regular participant in the tournament for two decades and has helped raise more than \$400,000 for the FCHC organization.

BWE GIVES BACK

We work to change our communities and our world

had \$1,400 pledged per inch between the two of them. With their pledges and the additional donations they received, including \$5,000 each from Bellwether Enterprise and Brad's employer, Grant Thornton, they raised more than \$40,000 for the 2018 event.

Prior to fishing the Bi-Fly for the first time 20 years ago, Leland had never even cast a fly. He was recruited by Brad to fish in the tournament after another teammate dropped out last minute. From that point on, Leland was hooked and has been an avid fly fisherman ever since. And the incentives for performing well in the Bi-Fly was motivation to improve his skills.

"The reason I began working so hard those first few years, to get better at it and to catch bigger fish, was because I wanted to help the impact on the fundraising side."

The bigger the fish you can catch, he explained, the more money you're able to raise and contribute through pledges.

That ability to help the children is what keeps Leland coming back year after year.

"It's such a good cause," he said. "There are a handful of kids who have graduated college completely supported by (FCHC). It's great to see the success of the kids and how the home has changed their lives and put them onto a path that probably would have been unlikely otherwise."

And the impact Leland has had on the FCHC goes beyond just the dollars he has helped raise, Mr. Fitz said.

"That's truly significant," he said of the funding Leland has raised, "but he's also getting other people involved. He's on the executive committee for the tournament, so he's helping outline changes to the tournament and was also one of the emcees at the fundraising banquet.

"I've always headed this and it's always been something I've been able to do when I have the time, so people like Leland really help me fill in the gaps and keep it fresh and keep the enthusiasm up. He's really been supportive of the program as a whole."

Individuals interested in donating or learning more about the FCHC and Bi-Fly tournament can visit

www.fourcornershomeforchildren.org.