



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

*The right system for bright futures*

**Date of Submission:** March 19, 2010  
**Submitting Agency:** First Things First, White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council  
**Contact Person:** Rochelle Lacapa, MPH, Regional Coordinator  
**Contact Number:** (928) 532-5041

### *One Mom's Mission to Put Her Children First*



Ernestine Bancroft is a single mother of six living on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. At first glance, Ernestine appears to be a mom just like every other mom. However, there is something very special about this mom. Not only is she the mother of six, two of her children have endured serious medical illness and Ernestine has made a conscious effort to put her children first.

In an effort to learn more about how to best support her children, Ernestine enrolled in the Apache Families First Project, a program funded by First Things First and aimed at providing information to parents and guardians of children birth through age five. Ernestine, along with five other classmates, took three weeks of courses in order to complete the Early Childhood Development 185 course through Northland Pioneer College (NPC). At the completion of the course, all graduates received a bin of supplies to use with the young children they care for totaling over \$100.00!

Ernestine felt all of the information in the course was very helpful but especially enjoyed the module relating to children with disabilities. One of Ernestine's first experiences surrounding children with disabilities came when one of her children was hospitalized at the Phoenix Children's Hospital. Ernestine spent countless hours in the hospital taking care of her child but also volunteering to help with the other children if the nurses were too busy. As a result of her relentless commitment to her child, Ernestine was named the 2007 Phoenix Children's Hospital Mother of the Year.

Ernestine strongly believes that her completion in the Apache Families First project is merely the first step in a series of many to come. She knows this project has allowed her to make a "fresh

start” and will lead her to a career working with children with disabilities. She is most thankful for Mona’s (Eleando) encouragement and support during the program. Ernestine said that, “without this experience I wouldn’t have thought I could go to college and here I am a college student.” Not only has Ernestine found a renewed sense of pride in herself, her children have also said how proud they are of their mother!

Ernestine plans to continue the early childhood course work at NPC in the hopes of returning to the workforce, when her children are a little older. For now, she is one mother who has sacrificed a tremendous amount in order to ensure her children are healthy and set for success.

If you would like more information about the Apache Families First Project, please contact Mona Eleando at (928) 338-5185. If you would like more information about First Things First early childhood development and health or would like to be added to our email list, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa, Regional Coordinator at (928) 532-5041 or via email at [rlacapa@azftf.gov](mailto:rlacapa@azftf.gov).