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On Aug. 3, Vice President Jonathan Nez attended the Special Appreciation Day for Distinguished Visitors where he expressed gratitude to the champions of a project to build 50 housing units for members of the Navajo Nation.

“A home is where the family is,” Nez said. “I think we all agree upon that and so, on behalf of the Navajo Nation, I want to say thank you to the many partners helping us to build these homes,”

The appreciation day was hosted by Southwest Indian Foundation, and marks the near completion of this project. The foundation services Navajo, Zuni, Hopi and other Pueblo tribes in the area through a number of programs, including the one on housing.

Together Navajo Housing Authority and the foundation have worked for years to develop another 20 housing units, and to hook up an additional 75 homes with electricity and water lines. For the 50 housing unit project funding for materials came from NHA. In addition, a large share of the labor support came from volunteers in the military who participate in a program called Innovative Readiness Training.

President Russell Begaye said, “We are honored to have the military and our veterans demonstrate leadership and uphold our values through this project. Thank you.”

The readiness training is a volunteer training opportunity for Active, Guard, and Reserve support personnel and units in the military. It enables men and women in uniform to work with communities on projects while simultaneously training soldiers.

In a speech at the appreciation day, Vice President Nez made note of one of the stated goals of IRT, which is to kindle the spirit of service and volunteerism among service and community members.

“Thank you to the men and women in uniform, our military personnel, for showing and modeling volunteerism back into our people,” Nez said. “That is who we are as Native Americans, as Navajo, as people in general. We help each other. We want to bring that type of thinking back into the forefront of who we are.”

Speaking directly to the veterans in the crowd, which included Navajo Code Talker Roy Hawthorne and Medal of Honor recipient Hiroshi Miyamura, Vice President Nez dedicated special attention to the toughness instilled by the military.

“As I go throughout the Navajo Nation, I hear veterans saying, ‘I can help. Give me a hammer. I can still carry a two-by-four. Put me to work.’ The Navajo Nation can learn from your resilience.”