

Diné U.S. Army veteran receives new home through the Veterans Housing Program

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TEECNOSPOS, ARIZ. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez had the honor of presenting the key to a new hogan-style home to 89-year-old Diné U.S. Army veteran, Kee C. Nez, in Teecnospos, Ariz on Aug. 6. The veteran lost his previous home to a fire a few years ago and has lived with family members since. The home was funded and constructed through the Navajo Veterans Housing Program.

The 1,300 square-foot home was built on a solid concrete foundation that includes two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and new appliances with electricity, plumbing, and a sewage system installed. The home is ADA accessible with widened doorways, safety handrails, a walk-in shower, doorway ramp, and other features to accommodate the elderly veteran and his wife.

“The completion of this new home is a blessing for our Diné warrior, Kee, and his family. What he, and many of our warriors, endured while serving and protecting our country will never be forgotten. Today, we are honored to present him with a new home on behalf of the Navajo people,” Jonathan said.

Jonathan went on to praise the Navajo Veterans Housing program.

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“We thank [Kee] and his family for all they have sacrificed for our country. This is also a big step forward for the Navajo Veterans Housing Program and we thank Director Zwierlein and his staff for their hard work and commitment. As we move forward together, we will continue to see many more homes for our veterans constructed with the additional funding that was approved through [the American Rescue Plan Act],” Jonathan said.

The Navajo Veterans Administration, under Executive Director James Zwierlein, worked diligently to pass legislation to update policies under the Veterans Housing Program that allowed the program to proceed with the construction of new homes for Navajo veterans. In July, Jonathan and the 24th Navajo Nation Council also approved \$50 million through ARPA to fund the construction of more homes for veterans.

“Because I have always supported our Northern Agency veterans wholeheartedly, I applaud the work of Director Jim Zweirlein in his endeavor to bring aid to rectify our housing issues for our Nation’s veterans. The Navajo Nation has one of the most rural regions with a large veteran’s population that is in dire need of homes. Many of our veterans paid a heavy price in service and defense of our country,” Vice President Myron Lizer said.

Lizer went on to speak about the roles the Navajo Nation’s leaders play in helping veterans.

“It behooves us as leaders to work hard for our veterans, helping to look for more ways to enhance services to our warriors. We’ve been working collaboratively with Director Zweirlein on the design of the Navajo-style hogans as well as advocating to our state and federal partners to develop policies that will ensure continued housing access, quality healthcare, and financial assistance for all of our Navajo Veterans. The Nez-Lizer Administration makes certain that our Navajo veterans have the right resources at the right time to achieve success,” Lizer said.

In addition to constructing new homes, the Navajo Veterans Administration is also overseeing repairs and improvements to homes that were constructed for Navajo veterans between 2014 and 2017.

In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General conducted an audit of the Veterans Housing Program. The findings indicated that several veteran homes were not in livable and safe conditions. An inspection of randomly completed homes concluded that the homes did not meet safety and

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quality standards. The homes were not constructed by the current contractors.

In June, Jonathan and the Navajo Veterans Administration also presented a new 1,300 square-foot home to 73-year-old Vietnam War veteran, Andrew Kelly, in Tuba City, Ariz. Under the Nez-Lizer Administration, the Navajo Veterans Administration will continue constructing more homes for Navajo veterans based on the list of housing applications that have been submitted over the course of many years.

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