



For Media Release

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NTUA ANNOUNCES LIGHT UP NAVAJO II

FORT DEFIANCE, AZ—The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) will host another year of “Light Up Navajo” – based on the outcome of the pilot project that successfully extended electricity to 233 families throughout the Navajo Nation.

During April and May 2019, a total of 138 volunteers from 28 communities and 13 states traveled to the Navajo Nation to work alongside NTUA linemen to bring electricity to families who have been waiting for many years.

“The volunteers who helped us imagined life without electricity for television, computers or cell phones. Or, thought about a life where refrigerators don’t exist because there is no electric power,” said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. “Realizing these real-life situations in this present day in America – they decided they were going to make a difference. With the financial support of their communities, they did. Because they did, the burden of having no electricity was erased for 233 families.”

“We want to provide that same opportunity for many other families who are still waiting,” Haase said. “The pilot project set the foundation and provided us with a blueprint of how we can extend electricity at an accelerated pace with the help of our sister utilities.”

Light Up Navajo was created from conversations Haase had with members of the American Public Power Association (APPA). In 2017, he was Chairman of APPA. He spoke at various events and during his speeches – he shared the NTUA story and challenges of extending electricity to homes without. Utility representatives and electric linemen were astonished to hear that thousands of families in the United States are living without electricity.

“APPA has a mutual aid program that sends electric crews to areas hit by natural disasters like hurricanes and tornados,” Haase said. “It was suggested that the same model could be used to deploy crews to the Navajo Nation under the banner Light Up Navajo. I’ve heard it called Mutual Aid without the Storm.”

(MORE)

Since the Spring of 2019, Light Up Navajo families have been plugging in basic appliances—making coffee or toast at home for the first time ever. They are enjoying the basic modern conveniences like refrigerated food, heating, air conditioning, and televisions. As another school year begins, their children or grandchildren will study without kerosene lamps, candles, or flashlights.

“We prayed for electricity for so many years because Navajo life can be hard,” said Phyllis Littlefoot, of Tonalea, Ariz., who waited 13 years for electricity. “Now that we have power, we can go shopping for a week at a time. We don’t have to drive to town so often.”

Haase said the pilot project created a model to energize Navajo homes at an expedited pace. NTUA districts will be meeting with families who do not have electricity because the primary challenge will be to obtain Rights of Way and land clearance approval for powerline construction next Spring.

“Light Up Navajo was built on teamwork and partnership,” Haase said. “Our goal with the pilot project was to inspire. That inspiration led to nationwide participation. We want to build on that momentum and we hope people will again step forward and want to be a part of this meaningful, life changing project.”

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About NTUA: NTUA has continuously served the Navajo people for 58 years. The NTUA was established on January 22, 1959, to address the absence of utilities on the Navajo Nation. NTUA has grown into a thriving tribally-owned enterprise delivering a portfolio of services. The NTUA is organized for the operation, maintenance and expansion of electric, communications, natural gas, water, wastewater and generation, including photovoltaic (solar) services for the Navajo people at a low and reasonable cost. The fundamental goals of NTUA are to create employment opportunities, improve the health and welfare of regional residents, and raise the standard of life on the Navajo Nation.