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NTUA Partners With Choice NTUA Wireless To Provide Access To Free Wi-Fi Hotspots Throughout The Navajo Nation

IN RESPONSE TO THE SHELTER IN PLACE ORDERS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, RESIDENTS OF THE NAVAJO NATION CAN MAKE USE OF WI-FI HOTSPOTS FOR WORK, SCHOOL, AND EMERGENCY USE

CHINLE, Ariz., May 27, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, a tribally-owned entity which provides electricity and other utilities to the Navajo Nation, and Choice NTUA Wireless, the largest rural 4G Network in the West and Navajo Nation's fastest, most reliable cell phone and internet service provider, have partnered with the help of Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) to open up and install Wi-Fi Hotspots across the Nation. These hotspots are available to students and the general public. The project has resulted in 20 active sites with an additional 10 possible locations across the Nation. Installation of these hotspots began on May 4, 2020.

As part of the on-going FCC "Keeping Americans Connected Pledge" signed by both NTUA and Choice NTUA Wireless in order to keep Navajo residents connected during the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic through June 30, the utilities and wireless service have joined forces to install complimentary hotspots. On March 24, 2020, Choice NTUA Wireless created the Student/Teacher Discount Plan and Offer at a discounted rate of \$29.99 per month. However, NTUA and Choice NTUA Wireless recognized that many families would not be able to afford the Student/Teacher Discount plan and the decision was made to put Wi-Fi Hotspots into place across the Nation and to make these readily available to residents.

"When we heard that our schools were closing, NTUA felt obligated to find solutions to provide broadband access for our students to continue their education on-line," said Walter Haase, NTUA General Manager. "We did an extensive search for and purchased 30 of the most powerful Wi-Fi devices we could find that would create hotspots for students to access the internet."

After three initial Wi-Fi Hotspots were installed at NTUA's New Headquarters, and the NTUA District Offices in Chinle and Dilkon, NTUA/NTUAW collaborated with NNTRC, NN DODE, NTU and Sacred Wind Communications to determine the appropriate locations for the other hotspots. Also supporting the partnership is PNM helping to make the hotspots possible. These entities have come together to strategically locate new hotspots around the Nation streamlining the process while not duplicating their efforts.

"We then worked with Choice NTUA Wireless to determine the best strategic locations for these devices that could take advantage of the extensive fiber NTUA has deployed on the Nation," says Haase. "We also coordinated with Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, the NN Department of Dine' Education, Navajo Technical University and Sacred Winds to make these hotspots available so that students/families would not have to drive more than 30 minutes to access the internet and can go online within the safety of their vehicles."

Each unit is capable of providing 300Mb and has a coverage circumference of 600 feet. Most hotspots are available in 12 hour windows.

"Because of our remote location here on the Navajo Nation finding quality broadband can be a challenge," said Betsy Dobias, Acting Superintendent, Ganado Unified School District. "Due to the fact that our schools have been closed we have transitioned to online learning. That's why these hotspots will be so helpful. Choice NTUA Wireless hotspots will help facilitate a safe means for students and teachers to accomplish online education."

Choice NTUA Wireless has also pledged to not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to disruptions caused by the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. PNM has also donated PPE to healthcare providers for COVID19 efforts, and, additionally, Choice NTUA Wireless will waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the pandemic.

"Many of our employees, students and community members do not have adequate access to Wi-Fi at their homes or in their communities." said Dr. Risha VanderWey, TCUSD Superintendent. "NTUA/NTUA Wireless has provided our district with two locations that people can access Wi-Fi at our high school in Tuba City and our elementary school in Cameron. This generous support from NTUA/NTUA Wireless during the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic, enables our students to complete online-learning, continue their education and support parent engagement in their learning."

For more information please visit www.ntua.com, www.choice-wireless.com and www.choice-wireless.com/press-contact.html to contact.

About the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA)

The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) was established on January 22, 1959, to address the absence of utilities on the 27,000 square-mile Navajo Nation. Since then, NTUA has grown into a self-sustaining, not-for-profit, successful tribally-owned enterprise. 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. In addition to providing multi-utility services, other objectives of NTUA are to promote employment opportunities on the Navajo Nation, and to improve the health and welfare of the residents of the Navajo Nation while raising the standard of life.

About Choice NTUA Wireless

Choice NTUA Wireless is a facilities based carrier that is majority Navajo-owned through NTUA (Navajo Tribal Utility Authority). Choice NTUA Wireless formally launched in 2014 and provides 4G LTE fixed/mobile broadband and voice across the Navajo Nation. 98% of its network is 4G and its customers enjoy the ability to access their voice and data from anywhere in the continental U.S.

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