

The Navajo Nation Council — Office of the Speaker

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April 1, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Navajo Nation receives \$479,000 grant from Citizens Energy Corp. to assist with low-cost heating for low income families

"It is a struggle every winter to help families stay warm. We know that single moms, elderly and even the average Navajo homeowner are struggling, especially with the rising fuel costs."

— Cora Maxx-Phillips, executive director for the Navajo Division of Social Services

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Joseph P. Kennedy II, president of Citizens Energy Corp., traveled from Boston, Mass. to present a check in the amount of \$479,000 as a grant to the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services on April 1 to assist with providing low-cost heating to low income families.

Members of the Health and Social Services Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. and staff from the Navajo Division of Social Services were on hand to receive the check from Kennedy.

Kennedy, the oldest son of the late U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and nephew to former U.S. President John F. Kennedy, founded the non-profit corporation in 1979 and served as its president since 1998 with a mission to provide low-cost heating to low income families.

Last year, the company provided \$40 million to 65 Native American tribes through partnerships with CITGO Petroleum Corp. — a Venezuela-owned refiner and marketer of gasoline, lubricants, petrochemicals and other petroleum products.

Kennedy knows and has heard about the great need on the Navajo Nation and has responded with financial assistance.

"I want to make sure that the money is distributed to the people that need it most," said Kennedy after presenting the check to President Shirley. "I could never understand what it must be like to grow up on a reservation, all I can do is let you know that this gift comes from our heart and that we care deeply."

Cora Maxx-Phillips, executive director for the Navajo Division of Social Services, said the division was awarded \$429,000 last year and she is pleased to report that the grant amount was increased by \$50,000.

A large number of Navajo families living in the remote areas of the sprawling 17.5-million-acre reservation still use wood and coal to heat their homes, while many others use gas and propane that is far more expensive.

"It is a struggle every winter to help families stay warm," said Maxx-Phillips. "We know that single moms, elderly and even the average Navajo homeowner are struggling, especially with the rising fuel costs."

Maxx-Phillips thanked Kennedy and the Council delegates in attendance at the event, particularly Chairman Thomas Walker (Birdsprings/Leupp/Tolani Lake) and Harry Claw (Chinle), for their hard work and diligent service to the Navajo people.

Walker and Claw commended their standing committee, which provides legislative oversight to the Navajo Division of Health and the Division of Social Services.

Walker reported that the grant helped 3,800 families and 19 healthcare facilities with financial assistance last year. He also mentioned that money will be distributed to the six regional offices and disseminated from there; office staff will then conduct screenings and determine qualifications of applicants to determine eligibility.

Members of the standing committee thanked everyone for their teamwork in securing the grant.

"We want to extend our appreciation to President Shirley, the Division of Social Services and certainly to Mr. Kennedy," Walker said. "We understand that the Navajo Nation, being recipients of this grant, have to account for all monies received and that will definitely be done."

Claw also expressed his gratitude.

"This money is going to good use," Claw said. "The people out in the remote areas are the ones that are in most need of this assistance and I am glad that some of them will be helped."

Claw thanked Citizens Energy Corp. for their donation and hopes that they continue with such generous contributions in the future.