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BNSF RAILWAY PRESENTS NNVA WITH CHECK FOR \$10,000

GALLUP, N.M.-On Saturday, Dec. 3, BNSF Railway's Assistant Vice President of Community Affairs Andrew Johnsen presented a check in the amount of \$10,000 dollars to representatives from the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration (NNVA) along with President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez.

"Along with President Begaye, BNSF would like to make sure that veterans on the Navajo Nation are taken care of," Johnsen said. "The \$10,000 dollars is a small token of our appreciation and we hope it will help assist the NNVA."

The check presentation took place after BNSF's annual Holiday Express train tour that honors military members, first responders and their families. Eastern Agency Commander Hubert Smith, Northern Agency Commander Paul George, Navajo Nation Council Delegate Edmund E. Yazzie (Church Rock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) and several Navajo Veterans took the Holiday Express ride from Gallup, N.M., to Lupton, Ariz., and back.

President Begaye noted that earlier this year he visited the BNSF headquarters in Ft. Worth, Texas, where he met with the company's President and CEO Carl R. Rice. He thanked BNSF for their donation to the NNVA and said he looks forward to continuing a productive business relationship with the company.

"To all our veterans, we appreciate your service to our nation. We know that freedom is not free and that you make it happen," President Begaye said. "The Navajo Nation is working to provide a better support system



Left to Right: Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Northern Agency Commander Paul George, Eastern Agency Commander Hubert Smith, President Russell Begaye and BNSF Assistant Vice President of Community Affairs Andrew Johnsen.

to our veterans through the NNVA."

Through the Navajo Veterans Act and the NNVA, the Nation has been able to administer an MOU with the Arizona Department of Veterans Services to accredit Navajo Veterans Service officers. This MOU allows Navajo Veteran Service officers access to all Veteran's Affairs infrastructure to file claims on behalf of Navajo Veterans.

President Begaye said the NNVA is addressing housing for Navajo Veterans through HUD-VASH and the Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance program for homeless veterans.

"We want to get rid of the term 'homeless veteran'," he said. "We have the Voucher program in place that provides rent and partial utilities to homeless veterans. The

NNVA Housing Programs also aims to build homes for veterans beyond the 200 homes the Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP) has committed to building."

By the end of this month, he said OPVP will turn over 14 homes to veterans.

Vice President Nez also thanked all the veterans and their families for their service. He also acknowledged BNSF for the Holiday Express and their donation.

"We want to say thank you to each and every one of you. This event is for all of you Navajo Veterans and we appreciate BNSF for doing this," he said. "OPVP is committed to serving and empowering our Veterans and their families who have gone through so much for our freedom. Thank you."

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