Navajo Nation and IHS recognize World Diabetes Day with “War on Diabetes” proclamation

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, and Indian Health Service Principle Deputy Director RADM Michael D. Weahkee issued a “War on Diabetes” proclamation on Thursday, coinciding with the World Health Organization and International Diabetes Foundation’s observation of “World Diabetes Day” on Nov. 14.

President Nez, RADM Weahkee, and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council gathered at the Navajo Nation Washington Office in Washington D.C. to finalize the proclamation.

“With this proclamation we are not only declaring a war on diabetes, but we are declaring a war to save the health and lives of our Navajo people. Every Navajo person has a family member,
friend, or colleague that is living with diabetes and we have many who are also pre-diabetic and
don’t know it. We cannot sit back and let this health problem continue to grow. We are a strong
and resilient people and we can defeat diabetes by raising awareness and changing our lifestyles
to become healthier and stronger,” said President Nez.

The proclamation states that nearly 27,000 people on the Navajo Nation are affected by diabetes.
Overall, statistics indicate that as many as one-in-four members of the Navajo Nation are diabetic
or pre-diabetic. The goal of the "War on Diabetes" is to promote healthy lifestyle choices through
eating healthy and daily exercise and to bring awareness to pre-diabetes and diabetes symptoms.

“We lose far too many of our Navajo people due to the complications and direct impacts of
diabetes – a health problem that is completely preventable, but it’s incumbent upon all of us to
educate one another and support one another about healthy living,” said Vice President Lizer. “In
addition to the impact on our loved ones, the costs of treating diabetes is very high for our
healthcare providers and for our families.”

The Nez-Lizer Administration will soon host a “Rock to Rock” relay event to support and
encourage community members to participate by walking or running. Details of the relay event
are forthcoming.

“Diabetes is one of the ‘modern day monsters’ that our people are battling on a daily basis, but
through the teachings of our elders and through the practice of T’áá hwó’ ajít’éego, or self-
reliance and self-determination, we can overcome diabetes and live better lives for ourselves and
our families,” added President Nez.

They were also joined by Council Delegates Raymond Smith, Jr. and Pernell Halona, Division
Directors Santee Lewis, Dr. Pearl Yellowman, Dr. Rudy Shebala, and RADM Weahkee’s Chief of
Staff Rear Adm. Brandon Taylor.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer thank RADM Weahkee and the members of the 24th
Navajo Nation Council for supporting the “War on Diabetes” with the signing of the proclamation.

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