



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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MOU establishes scholarships in recognition of First Lady Phefelia Nez's animal humane efforts



PHOTO: (left to right) Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Bidtah Becker, Vice President Myron Lizer, President Jonathan Nez, First Lady Phefelia Nez, Best Friends Animal Society Senior Legislative Attorney Ledy VanKavage, and Senior Manager of Learning Advancement for Best Friends Animal Society Aimee Charlton following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz. on Dec. 20, 2022.

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tawny Hammond, Director of Learning Advancement for Best Friends Animal Society, to promote higher education and professional development in the field of animal services with the establishment of several scholarships named after the First Lady of the Navajo Nation, Phefelia Nez, who has devoted much of her time over

the last four years creating partnerships with various animal humane organizations to support animal welfare and services on the Navajo Nation.

The scholarships will be awarded to students enrolled at Southern Utah University, who work or volunteer for an animal welfare non-profit organization that supports the Navajo Nation's animal and veterinary needs, or employed with the Division of Natural Resources. Preference will be given to enrolled members of the Navajo Nation.

"During our time in office, First Lady Nez remained committed to working together with animal rescue and caregivers who offer services and support for pets and animals in our Navajo communities. Pets and animals are a key part of many lives and as Navajo people, we have a unique responsibility to care for them. I congratulate my wife, Phefelia, and thank Best Friends Animal Society and Southern Utah University for recognizing her work and compassion," said President Nez.

In June, the First Lady co-hosted the first ever comprehensive animal summit entitled, "Nihik'is: A Collaborative Animal Summit" with the Division of Natural Resources and Best Friends Animal Society, which brought together various animal humane organizations to develop a coordinated response plan focused on Navajo culture, animal control programs, veterinary care, animal shelters, pet adoptions, and spay and neuter efforts.

"I am honored and very grateful to receive this special recognition for the collective work of our communities and animal caregivers. From the start, this has been a collaborative effort to create a shared vision to make our communities safer through animal stewardship. Taking care of our animals and pets is a part of our Navajo way of life, and we will continue to strive to produce more caregivers and professionals that will provide the critical services for our communities," said First Lady Nez.

"We are honored to be working closely with the Navajo Nation and Southern Utah University in making these learning and development opportunities available. Animal Services has evolved into a profession that's connected to community wellbeing and celebrating companion animals in our lives." said Julie Castle, CEO for Best Friends Animal Society. "Because these certificates and degree are online and have a focus in animal services, the goal is that the recipients of the scholarships will bring this knowledge back to their respective communities to lead the way in the creation of programs and services to help the community members and the animals."

"The Navajo Nation's partnership to saving the lives of our four-legged animals displays the importance of protecting and loving our fur babies. Second Lady Dottie Lizer and I are thrilled that the Nation is taking animal care seriously as these animals have been helpers and protectors at family homes and businesses. Today's signing is a great achievement for the Nez-Lizer Administration and demonstrates our commitment to supporting the platform of Best Friends Animal Society," stated Vice President Lizer.

The Animal Services Professional Development Coursework Scholarships include:

Four scholarships each year for Principles of Contemporary Animal Services Certificate - offered twice a year and upon completion award 3 CEU credits applicable to SUU degrees.

Four scholarships each year to the following micro-credential animal services courses – offered twice a year and upon completion, the trio of courses award to 3 CEU credits applicable to SUU degrees including Dog Lifesaving Course, Cat Lifesaving Course and Studies in Contemporary Animal Services.

A total of five scholarships for Southern Utah University Animal Services Focused Online General Studies bachelor's degree with a focus in Animal Services, offered annually.

At the time of the award of the scholarship, the recipient must either work for Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture, or work/volunteer for an animal welfare nonprofit that works on Navajo Nation. The scholarships total approximately \$78,000. The application deadline is Jan. 4, 2023 and the scholarship recipient will be announced on Jan. 9, 2023. To apply, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3G5Qjv8>

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