



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## “Operation First of the Month” helps many Navajo elders



**PHOTO:** Crownpoint Bashas’ Diné Market during the Navajo Nation Elderly Shopping Day on April 1, 2020, in Crownpoint, N.M.

**WINDOW ROCK** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Division Directors, and staff members under the Nez-Lizer Administration were out in full force at Bashas’ Diné Market locations on Wednesday, for “Operation First of the Month” to help Navajo elders and to help provide a safer shopping experience to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Navajo Nation worked with Bashas’ to provide Navajo elders the chance to purchase essential items from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, when a large majority of elders received monthly benefits.

Under the coordination of Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development Executive Director JT Willie, the Nez-Lizer team helped wipe down shopping carts, facilitated traffic flow, carried purchased items to vehicles for elders, distributed safety messages and information about shopping safely, social distancing, and the importance of disinfecting products.

"The Elderly Shopping Day helped to keep our elders safe and close to home while they shopped for their essential needs, such as groceries, household items, and livestock supplies. Having our elders shop locally reduced travel to border towns and decreased their risk of COVID-19 exposure. We thank Bashas' for working together with us," said President Jonathan Nez.

Informational booths were also hosted outside of the stores by the Navajo Department of Health, Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, and the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development. Navajo Police Department, Navajo Nation Park Rangers, and the Navajo Division of Transportation also assisted with regulating the flow of traffic and crowds.

"We commend the Bashas' corporation and all the Navajo Executive divisions and departments for working collaboratively to create this opportunity to protect our elders. The opportunity allowed elders time to shop for essentials in a comfortable and safe setting, and they received important guidelines on how to shop safely and information on preventative measures that they can take home or use in public places," said Vice President Lizer.

When shopping consider the following guidelines to shop safely:

- Prepare in advance. Create a list of the food and household items you will need for approximately 14 days. Include fruits and vegetables that support your health and immune system. Bring sanitizing wipes and sanitizer with you to the store.
- Only one person in the household should travel for grocery shopping. Do not take the whole family. People who are sick should stay home.
- Sanitize shopping cart and basket handles. Use hand sanitizer or wash your hands immediately after checking out, especially if you touched a screen for payment. Also, sanitize your debit cards or cash that was exchanged.
- Limit your time in the store as much as possible. Start on one end of the store and make your way to the other end. Remember to stay 6 to 8 feet away from other shoppers. Avoid aisles with more than ten people.
- Shop with your eyes, not your fingers. Avoid moving anything and use your eyes to make the best judgment. Do not hoard. Unless you're shopping for dozens of people, buying a year's worth of food may not only lead to waste, but it will also make it harder for others to feed their families.
- When you get home, scrub hard-skinned produce with a little bit of soap and warm water. Fruits and leafy veggies can be soaked for about 15 minutes in soapy water. Rinse all produce. Wipe all other plastic and boxed foods carefully with sanitizer wipes or soap and warm water.

"During this COVID-19 pandemic, we strongly encourage our Navajo citizens to stay home and stay safe. One household member should be allowed to shop and finish essential errands. All children and high-risk individuals should stay home. This is for the safety and well-being of all Navajo citizens, and together we can combat the spread of the coronavirus if we comply with the Public Health Orders and preventative recommendations," added President Nez.

On Sunday, The Navajo Nation issued a new Public Health Order extending the current "Stay at Home Order" and implementing a curfew for the entire Navajo Nation that requires everyone to stay home from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., seven days a week. All individuals shall be at home during curfew hours except in the event of an emergency. This curfew does not apply to essential employees reporting to or from duty, with official identification and/or a letter of designation from their necessary business employer on official letterhead, which includes a contact for verification.

The Nez-Lizer Administration commends the elders' participation and cooperation during the Navajo Nation Elder Shopping Day, and the Administration will continue to provide opportunities for Navajo elders to shop safely and locally.

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