



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 2, 2016

Navajo Code Talker Home for Good

***Description:** On Saturday, February 6, 2016, Dan Akee a 94-year-old Navajo Code Talker will go home for good. The house Dan Akee built 60 years ago had fallen into disrepair 6 years ago forcing him and his wife Margaret to move into a trailer next to the house he built and loved. Dan's only wish has been to "Go Home" and that somehow, someday his house would be restored enough for him to live there again. Red Feather Development Group, a non-profit serving housing on the Hopi and Navajo reservations and the Western Agency of the Navajo Department of Veteran Affairs has made the WWII hero's dream come true. Dan Akee and his family will see the newly renovated home for the first time on Saturday, February 6, 2016 at 10 AM in Tuba City. Over 3,200 volunteer hours were donated, \$30,000 raised through generosity.com and over \$50,000 in materials were donated for the project. Dan Akee is one of 10 remaining Navajo Code Talkers from WWII.*

NOTE TO THE PRESS: If you would like to attend the House Blessing and Ribbon Cutting event on February 6th at 10AM, please contact Red Feather at 928-440-5119 to RSVP and for directions to the Akee residence in Tuba City, AZ.

Tuba City, AZ, February 2, 2016 – Retired Sergeant Major Dan Akee is a patient man. Three months ago as hundreds of volunteers began to work on the house he built 60 years before, he vowed to not go into the house until it was completely renovated. On Saturday, February 6th at 10AM, Dan Akee will see his renovated house for the first time. Dan Akee is one of the last few remaining Navajo Code Talkers from WWII and is 94 years old. Three months ago, Red Feather Development Group, the Western Agency of Navajo Veterans Affairs and hundreds of volunteers began renovating his 4-bedroom house. For the last 6 years, the house had become uninhabitable as Mr. Akee aged and couldn't maintain his home.

“We just want to see the look on his face,” said Eunice Begay, Veteran Service Officer for the Western Agency for the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs. “We have all put so much time and love into this project. We are so proud to have done this for one of our true heroes of WWII and the Navajo nation.” Begay and her construction crew were instrumental in bringing the project to life and seeing its completion. The Department of Veterans Affairs construction crew completed a new roof, the replacement of all the windows and updated the structural frame in record time. “Dan’s house is simply beautiful now,” Ms. Begay smiles widely as she anticipates what Dan Akee will say when he sees the new ADA accessible floor plan, the new bathroom to accommodate his wheelchair and the kitchen with new appliances. Crews of volunteers fully insulated the house, dry walled and painted the inside. Two bathrooms were completely remodeled, a new kitchen designed and installed with new floors throughout the house.

“Saturday is the day we have all been waiting to share with Dan and Margaret Akee. We know how much this means to them to finally come home to the house they love,” commented Mark Hall, Executive Director of Red Feather Development Group. Red Feather has been creating solutions to reservation housing for over 20 years. “Dan and Margaret raised 12 children and over 100 grandchildren in this house. Just thinking about how much this means to Dan Akee makes my eyes tear up,” commented Mr. Hall. The house will be blessed by Dan’s pastor on Saturday morning, followed by a ribbon cutting, and some heart-felt thank you’s to sponsors APS, Home Depot, Operation Enduring Gratitude and over 15 other large donors. “Everyone who worked on my Dad’s house made his dream come true for him to go home for the last days of his life,” said Danny Akee, the eldest son and caretaker of his parents’ health and day to day needs. “He is so happy and so ready to go home.”

Red Feather has raised over \$30,000 on generosity.com from individual donors throughout the United States and abroad. Another \$50,000 of In-Kind services and goods were donated by local businesses and national corporations. The secret to the success of the project was over 3,200 hours in volunteer labor donated by over 120 high school students, veterans and community members of Tuba City, Phoenix and Flagstaff.

The Western Agency of the Navajo Department of Veterans Affairs first became aware of the situation in October 2015. Mr. Akee was living in an unsafe situation and wanted nothing more than to return to the home he was forced to abandon when the roof started leaking over 6 years ago. With funding only for new houses, Eunice Begay, Veterans Service Officer reached out to Red Feather Development Group, a 20-year-old non-profit that partners with tribes on their housing needs. Together the two organizations developed a renovation plan that was estimated to be about \$70,000 within an 8-week timeline. A crowd funding campaign on generosity.com was started and requests for in kind and corporate donations made. The original move in date for Christmas had to be extended as material orders and donations for appliances were delayed.

Dan Akee is one of 10 Navajo Code Talkers left in the United States. He was one of the 44,000 Native Americans who served in the US Military during WWII and one of the 450 Navajo code talkers trained to code and decode secret messages. Retired Sergeant Major Akee is one of three code talkers still alive from his regiment. Dan Akee currently lives on the Navajo reservation with his wife, Margaret. They raised their 12 children in the house that has now been renovated. At last count, he has 112 grandchildren now, and he hopes they all will come home to visit. Dan Akee has difficulty with mobility and hearing, and was hospitalized for pneumonia last Fall. Akee took part in some of the worst fighting in WWII including tours at Marshall Islands, Saipan, Tinian and two campaigns at Iwo Jima. During the war, the Navajo code was never broken by the Japanese.

Red Feather will host a Community Celebration on February 13 from 1PM to 3PM at the First Baptist Church in Tuba City to honor and thank over 120 volunteers for their time and efforts. All volunteers who contributed to the Dan Akee “Going Home” Project are encouraged to attend the luncheon celebration. For more information, please call the Red Feather office in Flagstaff.

Red Feather would like to thank the following for their contributions: Arizona Public Service (APS), Home Depot, Western Agency of Navajo Veterans Affairs, Nizhoni Ranch Gallery, Pueblo Electric of Las Vegas, NV, Bleekers Boxes, Western

Technologies Inc., Jeremy Stinek, Video Editor, Terry Lewis, Electrician, Thomas Deil Jr. - Welding & Carpentry, Martin Hurlson - Drywall, Rickey Butler - Carpentry, Allen Preston – Carpentry, Focal Point Eyewear, Inc – Samantha Max, Saraphina Adson - Navajo Hopi Honor Riders, Nolan Dempsey - Backhoe Operator, Frederick Aspey - Attorney at Law, Glenn & Renee Wright, BARIndustries, Inc., Stacey Wittig - Writer and Photographer, Steve Roberts – General Contractor, David Behrens - Artist of “Vision and Valor”, Operation Enduring Gratitude, KFC – Tuba City, Chef Basil Kimbrew of California.

If you would like to make a donation:

1. Go to Generosity.com and make a donation of any size
2. Go to the Red Feather website at www.redfeather.org and mark your donation for the Dan Akee “Going Home” Project
3. Call the Red Feather office in Flagstaff, AZ, at 928-440-5119

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Editor’s Note: We are able to provide interviews with the Dan Akee, the Akee Family or any of the professionals or volunteers who worked on the Project. Please call Norena Gutierrez at 928-440-5119 for further information.



*Dan Akee, Navajo Code Talker's Home in Tuba City is renovated by hundreds of volunteers as part of Red Feather Development Group work.
Photo Courtesy: Red Feather Development Group*



*Dan and Margaret Akee, waiting for their home in Tuba City to be renovated.
Photo Courtesy: Red Feather Development Group*