



RED FEATHER



Newsletter Spring 2025

Dear Red Feather Friends and Families,
You're part of something meaningful. Your generosity creates real change for Native families—making homes safer, healthier, and more resilient.

From all of us at Red Feather, thank you for standing beside us and embodying the power of a compassionate, committed community.



A House Made into a Home



This spring, as the land awakens and blossoms anew, we're reminded of the powerful transformations that happen when communities come together. One such transformation took place in Shiprock, New Mexico — where a determined mother, a weathered trailer, and a deep love for family met the support of Red Feather's HHESI (Healthy Homes Energy and Safety Improvements) program.

After the loss of her father, this mother returned to her family's land, bringing with her a single-wide trailer she hoped to turn into a home for her children. But the challenges were daunting: no running water, no electricity, and no heat. Harsh winter conditions caused pipes to burst, and the trailer became unlivable.

Still, she held onto her father's lesson: "Never give up." With faith and perseverance, she reached out to Red Feather — and found not just assistance, but a community of support. Thanks to our HHESI program, and in partnership with Housing New Mexico MFA, Hooghan Honeezlii LLC, and the leadership of Roy Hosteen, our Program Coordinator, and Natasha Begay, Program Manager, her story took a beautiful turn.

Together, we delivered more than repairs — we delivered a renewal of hope:

- A new furnace to bring warmth
- Insulated water lines and a water heater for safe, reliable access to water
- Skirting and insulation to protect the home from the elements
- New windows and doors to keep the cold out and security in
- Even a brand new refrigerator, symbolizing a fresh start

“They didn’t just fix a house,” she wrote to us. “They gave us a future.”

his family’s story reflects what spring is all about — resilience, growth, and the possibility of new beginnings. Through the HHESI program, we’re honored to help families reclaim safe, healthy homes and carry on the legacy of their ancestors with pride.

To everyone who makes this work possible — our partners, donors, contractors, and volunteers — thank you. Your support helps turn hardship into hope, and houses into homes.

To learn more about HHESI or how to support these vital efforts, visit:

www.redfeather.org

housingnm.org

Here’s to a season full of warmth, healing, and homecomings.



Staff Spotlight: Alex Torgler



Hands-On Impact Through Education, Tools, and Heart

At Red Feather, our work is driven by people committed to community empowerment and sustainable home health. One standout is Alex Torgler, a dynamic Program Coordinator who uplifts Native communities across Hopi and Navajo lands.

Alex coordinates core initiatives like the Tribal Heating Assistance Program, Healthy Home Kit Program, Educational Workshops, and the Solutions for Business Program. "Honestly, I love it all," he says. "It gives me variety, and I really feel the impact."

From coordinating firewood deliveries to planning hands-on workshops, Alex brings energy and heart to every project. "Some days I get hyped up about all the families who get buckets full of tools. Other days I'm working with local wood vendors who share stories of gratitude."

Alex joined Red Feather's workshop program in summer 2024 and embraced its tradition of hands-on education. "It was intimidating at first," he recalls, "looking at old photos of smiling folks holding caulking guns learning home repair. I wanted to make sure that experience lived on."



Since then, he's helped develop and host community favorites like the Women's Toolbox Workshop and the Wood Stove Chimney Cleaning Workshop—both blending practical skills with lessons in maintenance and safety.

"The Women's Toolbox Workshop is one of my favorite projects," Alex shares. "It was created to help Native women feel more confident with power tools and repairs. A little maintenance can prevent big problems."

These workshops do more than teach—they build confidence and self-reliance. From senior center crews attending pro workshops to families applying new skills, Alex sees how knowledge spreads. He points to Nick Morgan, a Trades Scholarship recipient whose team now installs EPA-certified stoves across Hopi and Navajo homes. "It's been amazing watching their work grow," says Alex.

As spring begins, Alex is excited about new workshops on DIY weatherization, air quality monitors, mini-split maintenance, and even home organization—an idea close to his heart.

One of Alex's favorite memories? At the end of a Women's Toolbox Workshop, three women laughed as they carried toolboxes to their cars—one joking she'd put holes in her wall just to fix them. "That's the kind of impact that sticks with you."

“Organization is about systems and reducing stress,” he says. “If we can help people create more intentional spaces, our tools and resources will go even further.”

Alex encourages everyone to stay connected via Red Feather's social media or local community boards. Whether you want to volunteer, attend a workshop, or support the mission, there's a way to join in.

“Workshops are more than just teaching—they're about transformation,” Alex says. “They're a proactive step toward healthier homes and lives.”

[🔗](http://www.redfeather.org) Learn more or support Red Feather's programs at www.redfeather.org

Building a Sustainable Future



Jarrett's Journey with Hempcrete

In the heart of the Southwest, a new wave of sustainable construction is taking root, and Jarrett, a Red Feather scholarship awardee, is at the forefront of this movement. His journey into innovative, eco-friendly building materials is not just a career choice; it's a mission to revolutionize housing in his community.

Jarrett has been pioneering the use of hempcrete, a breathable, mold-resistant, and highly insulative material, in home construction. His first major project in Pinon demonstrated just how effective hempcrete can be. Even on a scorching 95-degree day, the interior of a hempcrete house remained a full 25 degrees cooler—without any artificial heating or cooling. This natural climate control is one of many benefits that make hempcrete a game-changer for sustainable housing.

Despite hempcrete's long history in European construction, it was only recently legalized for building use in the United States in 2022. This shift has allowed Jarrett and his peers to push forward, building homes that are not only energy-efficient but also fire, pest, and rot-resistant. With the increased acceptance of hemp-based materials, Jarod envisions a future where these homes are more accessible to communities in need.

Jarrett's passion for sustainable construction began early. After an internship with the Black Mesa Water Coalition in 2016, he became fascinated with alternative building techniques. His journey led him to collaborations with established companies like Miramonte Homes and Capstone, and eventually, to launching his own projects using hempcrete.

With support from Red Feather and its scholarship program, Jarrett recently completed his contractor's license and is now authorized to take on large-scale commercial and residential projects up to \$2 million. He has already built six one-bedroom homes, three two-bedroom homes, and one three-bedroom home. His vision extends beyond construction—he hopes to establish a hemp block manufacturing facility on the reservation to create jobs and lower material costs for future projects.

Funding remains a significant barrier, with rising material costs and bureaucratic hurdles slowing down progress. While grants from the Department of Energy may offer potential support, securing funding has become increasingly competitive. Jarod and his team continue to navigate these challenges, seeking alternative financing options and partnerships to expand their reach and build more homes with hempcrete.

His efforts are already drawing attention, not just from potential funders but from the next generation of builders. He has worked with students from Chinle High School, mentoring them in design and construction. Through educational initiatives like Native Skills, where students compete in hands-on trades, he is ensuring that sustainable building knowledge is passed on.

For those interested in following Jarret Barton's work, he shares updates on social media across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

📱 Follow Jarrett's journey:

🔗 [HempTech Designs LLC on Facebook](#)

🔗 [HempTech Designs LLC on Instagram](#)

🔗 [HempTech Designs on TikTok](#)

His work is proof that innovation and tradition can go hand in hand to create healthier, more sustainable homes for the future.

Red Feather is proud to support scholars like Jarrett, who are making a tangible difference in their communities. We look forward to seeing his projects continue to grow and inspire others to rethink the way we build.

☀️ Intern Spotlight: Melvita



Just for Fun...

🌿 Favorite Spring Activity: Hiking, playing pickleball, and grabbing frybread at the flea market with her family.

🦅 Red Feather Mascot?: "A falcon—it just fits the vibe!"

☕ Go-To Office Drink: Navajo tea... or, let's be honest, a Red Bull for those extra-busy days.

📢 Advice for Future Interns: "Get to know the team, say yes to everything, and step out of your comfort zone. It goes by fast—so enjoy every moment."

Passion, Purpose, and Public Health in Action

When Melvita joined Red Feather as an intern, she brought with her a passion deeply rooted in her upbringing and a determination to uplift Indigenous communities through environmental health. A proud student of Northern Arizona University, where she's pursuing a degree in Public Health, Melvita is on a mission to make real, lasting change—and her time at Red Feather is a powerful step on that journey.

"I applied to Red Feather because I've seen how our surroundings affect mental and physical well-being," she says. "My grandparents lived without water, electricity, or even proper windows and doors. I wanted to be part of something that changes that reality for others."

Finding Community, Finding Confidence

What surprised Melvita most during her internship? The overwhelming community support and the way Red Feather shows up—fully and intentionally—for the families it serves.

From shadowing staff in the field to helping coordinate projects like woodstove installations and home repairs, Melvita has seen firsthand the impact that thoughtful, hands-on assistance can have. And she's not just watching—she's contributing in a big way.

"I'm really proud of updating the KOBO house assessment survey to include more health factors," she shares. "And revising the Healthy Home Booklet to make it easier to understand felt meaningful—it's something families can actually use."

Growth from the Ground Up

Through this internship, Melvita has gained more than technical skills—she's found her voice.

"I used to be nervous about speaking up," she admits. "But as I got to know the team, I felt safe sharing my ideas and challenges. That helped me grow so much—especially in how I communicate and contribute." She's applied that growth in everything from client interactions to creative design work—revamping flyers, infographics, and educational materials with an eye for accessibility and visual impact. And she discovered something new about herself in the process: "I love using my creativity! I didn't expect to enjoy the design side so much, but it's fun and impactful at the same time."

A Future Full of Purpose

Melvita has her sights set on graduate school, with plans to focus on Health Promotion in Indigenous Communities, Epidemiology, or Environmental Health. She's actively building experience, refining her resume, and preparing for what's next—with a dream of returning home to implement solutions for sustainable, safe housing.

"This internship really opened my eyes to how much work still needs to be done," she says. "But it also showed me that change is possible—and that I want to be a part of it."

Her time at Red Feather also strengthened her belief in the power of relationships and mentorship. She fondly recalls conversations with staff like Joe, Natasha, Alex, and Georlinda, who not only encouraged her goals but also offered life advice, support, and even letters of recommendation.

"It meant the world to feel that kind of support," she says. "It reminded me that I'm not alone on this path."

What's Next?


Melvita plans to keep learning, keep growing, and keep giving back—whether through more internships, volunteer opportunities, or one day returning to Red Feather in a professional role.

"Of course I'll stay involved! I want to keep supporting the amazing work Red Feather is doing."



Get Involved

You can make a difference. Whether you volunteer, attend a workshop, or donate, you help build healthier homes and brighter futures.

 Visit www.redfeather.org to learn how. Follow us on social media and stay connected with Red Feather's mission.

Connect with Us

Follow Red Feather for updates, stories, and upcoming programs:



Facebook:

<https://facebook.com/@redfeatherdevelopment>



Instagram: https://instagram.com/rfdg_tribe

Red Feather Development Group

2717 N. Steves Blvd, Ste 8

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

928-440-5119

www.redfeather.org