

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Contact: Dain Hansen**
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Thoreau, N.M. (Nov. 5, 2018) — Prewitt resident Marie Jones has never had running water in the house her father built, despite repeated pleas for help. Thanks to the International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (IWSH) Foundation's recently completed 2018 Community Plumbing Challenge (CPC), clean, running water is now only a turn of the faucet away.

"I'm so happy and excited with the water," said Jones, who frequently takes care of her grandchildren. "I'm just so thankful, because I don't know how I would have done this. Now I won't be depending on somebody to get water for me, and water in a bucket doesn't last long."

The CPC's focus was the Navajo Water Project, an initiative of the U.S.-based nonprofit organization DigDeep that was among the 2018 recipients of the U.S. Water Prize. The initiative's goal is to help ensure that every American has clean, running water forever. The St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School in Thoreau, a small town in Northwestern New Mexico, hosted the event.

Jones' home was one of 10 nominated by DigDeep for the Navajo Nation CPC. None of the homes had adequate sanitation systems, running water or safe electrical systems. By the end of the week, they all had new sanitation and leeching systems and safe electrical systems, and nine of the 10 had running water. A multi-disciplined team of skilled tradespeople traveled from throughout the United States and as far as away as Australia and South Africa to perform the work.

Randy Lorge, Instructor of Plumbing Apprenticeship at UA Local 400 Plumbers & Steamfitters in Kaukauna, Wisconsin, also participated in the three previous Community Plumbing Challenges. He said the Navajo Nation CPC was unlike anything he had ever experienced before.

"In all my travels to developing countries helping deliver safe water and sanitation systems, I have never seen as horrible of conditions as I have this week on the Navajo Indian reservation," he said. "It was one of the most exhausting and rewarding weeks of my life. I am so proud I was able to be a part of the Community Plumbing Challenge and had the opportunity to work with other like-minded plumbers from not only the United States but around the world."

The week began with a welcome ceremony and the "Water and Sanitation Crisis in America Roundtable: Government & Industry Working Together for Solutions" at the Thoreau Chapter House. U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., and representatives from the offices of U.S. Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, D-Santa Fe, and U.S. Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-Albuquerque, attended the welcome ceremony and roundtable. In addition to focusing on issues concerning tribal lands, the roundtable looked at issues facing the more than 1.6 million people across the U.S. without access to clean water and safe sanitation.

Residents had the opportunity to show their appreciation during a community forum at the Baca-Prewitt Chapter House on Oct. 24, during which Prewitt resident Regina Vandever, another of the recipients, prepared dinner for all of the volunteers. A number of the CPC's beneficiaries thanked the volunteers during the event.

The Navajo Nation CPC was sponsored by LIXIL/American Standard; the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO); Plumbers Local Union 412 (New Mexico and El Paso, Texas); the Piping Industry Progress & Education (P.I.P.E.) Trust Fund/NITC; United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States, Canada

(UA); World Plumbing Council; Reliance Worldwide Corporation/Sharkbite Plumbing Solutions; Plumbing Contractors of America/Mechanical Contractors Association of America (PCA/MCAA); Plumbers Local Union No. 400 (Kaukauna, Wisconsin); Plumbers Local Union No. 12 (Dorchester, Massachusetts); Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre (PICAC); Plumbers Local Union No. 68 (Houston); Plumbers Local Union No. 78 (Los Angeles); American Society of Plumbing Engineers (ASPE); Milwaukee Tool; G.E. Appliances, the PHCC Educational Foundation; Plumbers Local Union No. 798 (Tulsa, Oklahoma); and Thrivent Financial.

For more information about the Navajo Nation CPC, visit the project website at www.commplumbing.org or email info@iwsh.org.

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