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Nationwide 'Wash Station Challenge' to Provide New Hand-Washing Facilities to Navajo Nation Communities

Washington, D.C. (May 27, 2021) — The International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation (IWSH) is excited to launch the Wash Station Challenge 2021, a new collaboration with the DigDeep Navajo Water Project, the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing, Pipefitting and Sprinkler Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA), and Ferguson.

The Wash Station Challenge will be launched online Tuesday, June 1, and will run through the remainder of the month. Assembly projects will be hosted at 10 participating UA locals nationwide, where a series of mobile wash station facilities will be built that have been designed to provide a month's worth of non-potable water for daily hand-washing and general hygiene for a family of six. Once completed, the wash stations will be shipped to designated DigDeep staging points on the Navajo Nation. DigDeep teams will then deliver, install and maintain the wash stations at sites that will initially include community health service facilities, chapter houses, and farms.

"A popular saying among IWSH volunteers is "It's not WHAT we do, but WHY we do it," said IWSH Managing Director Seán Kearney. "This thinking remains front and center as we launch this new project: these new hand-washing stations are going to provide further hygiene capacity for Navajo people and community sites that are currently without, and help further protect general public health and safety in the face of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. So, that is the ultimate 'why' behind this Wash Station Challenge effort."

COVID-19 has hit the Navajo Nation particularly hard, registering some of the highest infection rates in the United States. Lack of running water has been a major factor, limiting residents' ability to wash their hands regularly to prevent the virus from spreading. Against this backdrop, IWSH and DigDeep teams have worked together to design a wash station facility that will now become the focus of this innovative new project, being produced by skilled volunteers simultaneously at multiple locations across the United States.



“The Wash Station Challenge 2021 with IWSH felt like a natural evolution in our longstanding partnership to provide emergency solutions in response to the pandemic,” said George McGraw, DigDeep founder and CEO. “The addition of these outdoor hand-washing stations in densely populated community centers is timely and necessary. Hand-washing is still a critical step in sanitation and stopping the spread of the virus. These hand-washing stations are a stop-gap solution as we continue our work to install running water inside people's homes.”

Two wash station models have been developed — a grid-powered version that uses a 120-volt trough-type heater that sits inside a 210-gallon water tank, and an off-grid version that incorporates a 12-volt circulating pump and a timer. The pump is set on a timer to circulate the water and keep it from freezing, which is vital for wash stations that must perform through winter conditions in the most remote and exposed parts of the reservation. IWSH partner and sponsor Ferguson is generously donating materials for the assembly project, making them available for the 10 participating UA locals at Ferguson branches across the country.

Volunteers working on the units will bring skills including plumbing, welding, basic carpentry and/or electrical, mechanical assembly of various components, and the ability to read, comprehend and build to design drawings and specifications. In particular, the program aims to involve up-and-coming apprentices. The 10 participating UA locals and training centers across the country are:

- Plumbers & Gasfitters UA Local 12 (Boston)
- Pittsburgh Plumbers 27 (Pittsburgh)
- Plumbers Local Union 68 (Houston)
- Plumbers Local 78 (Los Angeles)
- Plumbers Local 130 (Chicago)
- Plumbers Local 230 (San Diego)
- Plumbers & Steamfitters UA Local 400 (Kaukauna, Wisconsin)
- UA Local Union 412 (Albuquerque)
- Local 469 Plumbers and Pipefitters (Phoenix)
- Plumbers Local 690 (Philadelphia)

“This IWSH project offers the United Association the opportunity to stand on the motto, ‘The Plumber Protects the Health of the Nation,’ ” said UA Assistant Director of Education and Training Raymond Boyd. “Our UA locals are proud to utilize our trained men and women to assist the Navajo Nation with this critical need. We really must start paying attention to our surroundings, as many of our fellow citizens are struggling and could use our help. These wash stations are going to have an immediate impact, providing non-potable water for hygiene, which will ultimately cut down on the spread of disease and virus. The 10 United Association locals that are participating are so proud to be a part of this amazing IWSH project.”

The launch webinar at 4 p.m. EDT Tuesday, June 1, is free and open to all and will provide further insight and information on this pilot Wash Station Challenge collaboration. To register for the online launch, visit <https://bit.ly/2QYuo2r>.

Updates from the project will be shared via IWSH social media channels using the hashtag #WashStationChallenge.

Visit www.iws.org for more information on The International Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Foundation.