

INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING



August 2018 | NEWSLETTER

Project Quintana Congressional Delegation Visits Puerto Rico IRT



Seven congressional staffers attended a site visit to Project Quintana, a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on July 19.

The visit began with an information session attended by the Adjutant General of Puerto Rico, Secretary of the Department of Health (Puerto Rico), and other local dignitaries to

learn about the IRT program and missions on the island.

Additionally, the staffers visited the site in the Quintana neighborhood of San Juan, where military members are assisting in the construction of a triplex that will be presented to three families selected by Habitat for Humanity.

The IRT mission in Puerto Rico made a strong impact on the congressional staffers, many considering the program for projects in their congressional districts. "I was born in San Juan and still have family in the area," says Denise Dunning, from Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.'s office, "I am grateful to the IRT team for the housing and medical projects taking place around the island and the work IRT is doing to assist in restoring Puerto Rico to its former glory."

Staffers also visited the sites selected for a medical mission on the island, "Ola de Esperanza Sanadora" (Healing Wave of Hope), to assist Puerto Rico's long-term recovery efforts after Hurricane Maria. IRT will partner with Mental Service Administration Health & Addiction (ASSMCA) to provide medical, dental and optometry services at no cost to patients from August 31 to September 7.

The congressional staffers in attendance represented the offices of Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-02), Congressman Robert Brady (PA-01), Congressman Keith Rothfus (PA-12), Congressman Keith Ellison (MN-05), Congressman Erik Paulsen (MN-03), Congressman Richard Neal (MA-01), and Congressman Dave Trott (MI-11).

Operation Footprint Building Homes for the Navajo Nation

More than 250 service members from the Navy, Army Reserve and Air National Guard participated in Operation Footprint, a partnership with the Southwest Indian Foundation (SWIF) and the Navajo Housing Authority in Gallup, New Mexico, to build eight homes for Navajo families living within the Navajo Indian Reservation.



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CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER SPOTLIGHT



Denise Dunning
Congressional Fellow

Office of Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

"Because of my passion to help and my enthusiasm for the IRT program, I was encouraged to sponsor a StaffDel to Puerto Rico in July 2018 where we visited the many project sites and the municipal partners."

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This partnership, dating back to 2000, provided hands-on construction training and unique opportunities for Service Members to immerse in the area’s rich heritage. In addition to training across multiple occupational specialties, this mission bred a special connection between the mission participants and Navajo people. “The Navajo concept of ‘home’ captures not only the physicality of a structure, but the spirituality of a culture,” said Senior Chief William Woolf, the officer in charge of Operation Footprint, “At the SWIF IRT, as we build houses for the Navajo people, we are tapping into the cultural and spiritual needs of the people as well as the basic human need for shelter.”

Gallup, New Mexico, the self-proclaimed “most patriotic small town in America,” is proud to share its native traditions and long history of military service. Exposure to the Navajo Nation began during reception with SWIF and continued through community events and outdoor excursions. Troops met Navajo Code Talkers and learned about their role in World War Two. Participating Service Members honored their service during a wreath laying ceremony on National Navajo Code Talkers Day.

Mission participants value the hands-on training experience, and are equally grateful for the exposure to the Navajo Nation. “When we provide a house for a family, we provide a tie to the native land,” says Woolf, “even as the recipient of each home benefits from our efforts, each contributing member of the military benefits from seeing their skills and training come to fruition in a finished product that vastly improves the life of one of our nation’s native sons and a former brother in arms.”



2018 IRT PROGRAM MANAGERS

Captain Zachary West, *Army National Guard*

Major Cletis Derek Butler, *Army Reserve*

Major Lisbeth Andriessen, *Marine Corps Reserve*

LCDR Joshua Strubeck, *Navy Reserve*

Captain Jennifer Fagan, *Air National Guard*

Major Michael McDonald, *Air Force Reserve*



IRT CALENDAR

June 4 – September 8 Project Quintana, Puerto Rico

August 8-22 Tropic Care Kahului, Hawaii

August 28 – September 11 Ola de Esperanza, Puerto Rico

Sept. 18-20 Annual Training Workshop, Virginia

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