



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | September 2018



You Provide A Better Future

YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Today we reflect on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks, a day that will forever be imprinted in America's history. This date holds a particular significance for many of the brave men and women we serve here at Homes For Our Troops. Witnessing the horrific events unfold that day is the reason many of our home recipients made the selfless decision to join or reenlist, forever changing the course of their future.



Seventeen years later these brave patriots are still dealing with the injuries they sustained while serving the country they deeply love. You can only imagine the discouragement they feel when they are unable to feel comfortable in their own homes. This is why our mission is so important. These Americans sacrificed so much for us and it is our duty to properly take care of them by providing specially adapted custom homes. And we could not do any of it without continued support from folks like yourself.

In this issue, you will see how you are helping us rebuild lives. You will hear from Cindy Sampang and how she is relieved her husband, recent HFOT home recipient Army SGT Lyndon Sampang, can now play in the yard with their children. We will also give you an update on Army SGT Doug Harris, who received his home in West Virginia in 2015. Since he no longer has to deal with the frustrations of a non-adaptive home, he is able to pour more energy into giving back and helping other injured Veterans through his own nonprofit, Operation Heroes Support. You will also meet Army SGT Patrick Wickens and his growing family, and hear how much they are looking forward to receiving their home next year. These success stories would not be possible without you.

Dedicated and loyal supporters like you are what keeps our organization running. As we close out our fiscal year, we anticipate completing between 22-24 homes and purchasing 33 parcels of land for the year. We are confident with your continued devotion to our mission we can build on this momentum.

Thank you again for giving these courageous men and women the ability to pursue their dreams and live comfortable lives with their families.

Sincerely,

Bill

William D. Ivey
Executive Director
Homes For Our Troops

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Find and Follow Us On Our Social Media



Upcoming Events

- 9/15/18** – Marine Cpl Josh Langston-White's **Volunteer Day** – Crystal River, FL
- 9/15/18** – Marine SSgt Omar Milan's **Volunteer Day** – Mansfield, TX
- 9/21/18** – Marine Sgt Hubert Gonzales' **Key Ceremony** – Spring Branch, TX
- 9/22/18** – Army SPC Steven Baskis' **Key Ceremony** – Montrose, CO
- 9/22/18** – Army SGT Robert "Finn" Visbal & PFC Heather Kready's **Volunteer Day** – Cartersville, GA
- 9/22/18** – Army SGT Ricardo PerezRamos' **Volunteer Day** – New Braunfels, TX
- 9/29/18** – Marine SSgt Omar Milan's **Key Ceremony** – Mansfield, TX
- 9/29/18** – Army SSG Carl Moore's **Key Ceremony** – Land O' Lakes, FL
- 9/29/18** – Army SPC Ryan Wilcox's **Key Ceremony** – Mexico, NY
- 9/29/18** – Army SSG Jose "Freddy" Ruiz's **Volunteer Day** – Saint Hedwig, TX
- 10/05/18** – Army SGT Ricardo PerezRamos' **Key Ceremony** – New Braunfels, TX
- 10/06/18** – Army SGT Robert "Finn" Visbal & PFC Heather Kready's **Key Ceremonies** – Cartersville, GA
- 10/13/18** – Army SSG Jose "Freddy" Ruiz's **Key Ceremony** – Saint Hedwig, TX



Homes For Our Troops

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www.hfotusa.org



A History of Excellence

HFOT has been evaluated as one of America's Top Rated Veterans and Military Charities.

RETURNING TO THE OUTDOORS

Army Sergeant Charles “Doug” Harris was immediately discouraged when he woke up at Walter Reed after losing both legs while serving in Afghanistan in 2012. The thought of never being able to do the activities he loved again sent him into an emotional downward spiral. *“Hunting and fishing has always been a major passion of mine. Continuing to pursue that passion seemed impossible,”* he says.

Gradually throughout his recovery process, Doug encountered many nonprofit organizations that encouraged him to return to the great outdoors. They showed him it is possible to do everything he did before injury – just a little differently. It was exactly what Doug needed to get motivated. *“It lit a fire in me to get up on prosthetics and get back into the outdoors,”* he says.

Doug credits these organizations with bringing him out of a dark place, and ultimately saving his life. He was so appreciative of their help, he wanted to repay the favor. In 2016, Doug launched Operation Heroes Support, a nonprofit that takes injured Veterans and first responders on all-expense paid hunting trips. The organization hosts 10 events a year and has done hunts in 14 states. *“It was a program like this that helped me get on the right track and proved to me my life and passions didn’t end when I was injured,”* Doug says. *“Operation Heroes Support has given me an opportunity to give back to other Veterans, law enforcement, EMTs, and firefighters that have been injured and may have the same mindset as I did when I was first injured.”*

Doug says his HFOT home, which he received in West Virginia in 2015, has been instrumental in helping him launch the organization. Not having to worry about a mortgage and having a fully accessible base of operations, opens up more time for Doug to channel his energy into his nonprofit. The home also comes in handy when he hosts other injured Veterans attending his events. *“Our previous home did not allow for any guests, nor was I able to move around and accomplish daily tasks. You can’t help others if you can’t help yourself,”* he says.



HFOT home recipient Doug Harris started a nonprofit to take injured Veterans and first responders on all-expenses paid hunting trips.

Operation Heroes Support is not the only way Doug is paying it forward. He and his wife Autumn feel so fortunate for all they have received, they wanted to open their home to those in need of a warm and welcoming home. They decided to become foster parents last year and have cared for eight children so far. Doug says it is also nice to see the kids connect with Veterans and first responders in his organization.

Doug wants HFOT’s donors to know their support is truly making a difference. *“Your help has directly improved my quality of life and enabled me to provide opportunities for others to enjoy the outdoors.”*

Read more inspiring stories about our Veterans at www.hfotusa.org/rebuilding-lives

AFTER RECEIVING THEIR HFOT HOMES, A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF VETERANS ARE ABLE TO GIVE BACK.



By The Numbers

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

BEFORE
RECEIVING HFOT HOME

12%

VETERANS PAYING IT FORWARD



AFTER
RECEIVING HFOT HOME

67%

VETERANS PAYING IT FORWARD

KOHLER®

PROVIDING YEARS OF QUALITY PRODUCTS AND COMFORT

For over seven years, Kohler has enhanced the safety and style of HFOT homes nationwide by providing their high quality and innovative products. Special products, like the digital showering system, have allowed our Veterans and their families to recover in their homes, free of worry from temperatures too high for those with nerve damage. The master bath tub is a favorite among our Veterans as a sanctuary after a long day.

We are grateful to Kohler's consistent devoted support of HFOT's mission and the Veterans we serve. With Kohler's help, these homes are an incredible place of recovery for our home recipients and their families.



HFOT home recipient Kevin Blanchard really enjoys his KOHLER tub. The therapy tubs are therapeutic after a long run or busy day.



HFOT Director for Construction Operations Richard Pratt (right) signs the contract to extend MI and Windows and Doors' partnership.



MI WINDOWS & DOORS EXTENDS ITS PARTNERSHIP

Homes For Our Troops is thrilled to announce MI Windows and Doors has extended its partnership with the organization to remain the Official Supplier of Windows for most of the country. Army CPL Kevin McCloskey and HFOT staff attended the 20th MI Foundation golf outing in Hershey, Penn., to sign the new contract. MIWD donates sliding windows to help HFOT Veterans with the ease of operation.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Homes For Our Troops would like to thank everyone who attended our 8th Annual Golf Classic on Monday, Aug. 20, at the Walpole Country Club in Massachusetts. The event was a success raising a total of \$84,000. HFOT Veterans Marine LCpl Hector Luna-Rodriguez, Marine Cpl Steven Bultje, Army SGT Patrick Wickens, Army SPC Ryan Wilcox and Marine Sgt Dustin Johns joined 128 golfers on the green for the day. Attendees also included Chairman of The Board, General (Ret.) Richard Cody, and Corporate Partners M.I. Windows & Doors, Harvey Building Products, CertainTeed, OakCraft, and Whirlpool. Special thanks to Golf Classic Co-Chair Paul Keane who has been with the tournament all eight years!



Marine Sgt Dustin Johns

Is your company interested in becoming a Corporate Partner? Learn more at: www.hfotusa.org/partner

LOOKING TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

Cindy Sampang was overcome with gratitude and appreciation for HFOT's donors and supporters on the day she and her husband, Army Sergeant Lyndon Sampang, received their home. She shared what she is most looking forward to in the speech she gave at their Key Ceremony in Gettysburg, Penn., on Aug. 11, 2018.



If there's one question right now, about what part of this home will be our favorite, I would say we love every piece of this house, every corner of it. We love our amazing kitchen, our beautiful rooms, and our awesome bathrooms. But the one thing we wanted to have is a yard like this, so we don't have to go to the park or somewhere else every time the kids want to play with my husband. The yard in our home right now is very steep, it's the main reason why my husband is not able to play with the kids in our own backyard. There's lots of times the kids ask him to play and run around with them and, he always tells them, "I can't, but mommy can play with you guys." Hearing those words breaks my heart every time, because I know he wants to play with them without struggling in our own yard.

We can't thank Homes For Our Troops enough for all they do, for helping Veterans re-build their lives again, and we are one of them. So, at this time I would like HFOT to know, we will be forever grateful in this forever home, not only for providing what my husband needed, but for giving us a comfortable home, a yard our family can definitely enjoy, and a home that fits him and makes him feel more secure.

For me as a mom of these two kids in front of you right now, I would like to thank Homes For Our Troops' supporters for giving our kids, Aniyah and Gabriel, a better future. To all the sponsors for their nonstop support for this amazing organization, thank you so much; to all the people who came out despite the rain and landscaped our yard, we will forever see all your hard work in this yard. And we will be keeping in our hearts all the smiles we've seen.

THE FINAL PIECE TO THE AMERICAN DREAM

Patrick Wickens loves swimming and playing video games with his nine-year-old son Gavin. Back in 2004, having the joy of raising a family was something Patrick never thought he would be able to do. At 21, he had lost his right leg while serving in Iraq and his life was a blur of surgeries and rigorous rehab. *"I had never really known anyone severely injured that had raised a family before, so I had no idea it was even possible,"* he says.

A couple years after he was injured, Patrick met his wife Jenna and he finally envisioned marriage and a family. They were elated when their first son Gavin was born in 2009. But when the couple returned home with their new baby boy in tow, Patrick became disheartened when he realized how difficult it was taking care of a child with his injuries. It was hard for Patrick to hold Gavin while maneuvering his wheelchair, and bathing his newborn son was a frightening task with safety risks around every corner. Even with the perseverance Patrick gained in the Army, dealing with these challenges day after day took a toll on his mental and physical health. *"I will admit that raising a kid is a challenge in itself, but doing it from a wheelchair or crutches adds a whole new level of craziness,"* he says.

It is hard for Jenna to watch her husband struggle every day and she lives in fear he will harm himself further. *"Our home is like an obstacle course for him, except less fun. I see him get frustrated and it makes me sad,"* she says.

Patrick and Jenna hoped to expand their family, but they were unsure how to handle raising more children in a non-adapted home. Once they were accepted into the Homes For Our Troops Family, their entire outlook changed. The home could not come at a better time – Patrick and Jenna welcomed their second son, Carter, in 2017. They are experiencing the same challenges as before, but this time they are relieved since they can see their forever home is on the horizon. *"Knowing we will have an HFOT home is literally the weight of the world off my shoulders,"* Patrick says. *"I think of it as a blessing for me, but mostly my family because I will be completely independent."*

Having the foundation of a specially adapted custom home will open up more opportunities for Patrick and his family. Once settled in the home, Patrick plans to create a home gym to help his children build fitness goals and a healthy lifestyle. Wanting others to be fortunate enough to receive an HFOT home, Patrick plans to hand cycle in as many marathons as he can with Team HFOT.

Patrick and Jenna know their HFOT home would not be possible without the generosity of HFOT's donors and supporters. *"My entire family will benefit from this amazing, once in a lifetime opportunity,"* Patrick says.



Army Sergeant Patrick Wickens, son Gavin, and his wife Jenna, holding son Carter.

Homes For Our Troops will be featuring Patrick's story in its *Before the Build* video series. Learn more about Patrick's story and how to get involved with his project at:

www.hfotusa.org/wickens

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH MATCHING GIFTS

If you're an employee wanting to ramp up your own fundraising efforts or an employer wanting to motivate your staff, HFOT's Employer Matching Gifts Program is a great way for employees and workplaces to work toward a common goal of raising funds for worthwhile causes.

The Johnson & Johnson Employee Resource Group, located in Raynham, Mass., known as the Raynham Veterans Leadership Council, along with their Live For Life staff, did just that this past May with an employee fun run/walk. Their team of 80 focused their efforts in recognition of Memorial Day when they donated back to HFOT's mission.

Whether it was an individual goal to successfully complete a quick 5K around their campus or a little friendly competition between departments for bragging rights, those who participated had a great time. Either way, it was a nice way to break up a typical lunch break and a reminder to honor those who have served right before the long weekend.



Johnson & Johnson's Raynham Veterans Leadership Council, along with their Live for Life staff, generously donated over \$7,500 to HFOT.

By donating a flat registration fee and securing their company's matching gifts, employees were honored to contribute and personally help the initiatives of HFOT to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.

Do you have a great idea for a fundraiser at your office to utilize your company's matching gift program? We would love to hear it! Learn more by contacting ifundraising@hfotusa.org

VETERAN'S GOLF TURNS 10!

This past July, the annual Veteran's Golf tournament spearheaded by longtime supporters Dan Curry and Paul Kenny celebrated their 10-year milestone. The tournament was created by a group of guys who were looking to bring people together to enjoy a day of golf while also giving back to a charity that is important to their attendees.

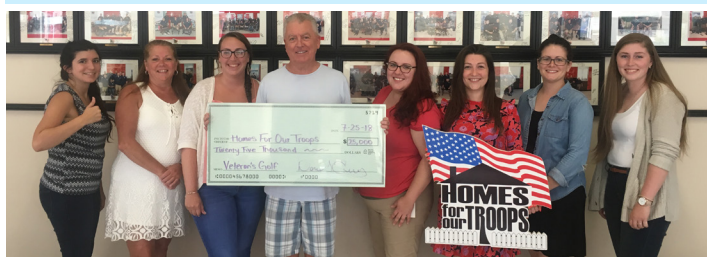
After hearing about Homes For Our Troops from a number of friends who donated to the first HFOT home build, Dan did some research and was impressed with what he found out. Fast forward to 2018, and Dan, with his team of Veteran's Golf supporters, have raised over \$150,000 for the organization. A Veteran himself, HFOT's mission is close to Dan's heart, having served as an Infantryman in the Marines in Vietnam. The tournament is his way of recognizing and assisting other Veterans who have sacrificed so much while defending our freedom and independence.

The event, which sells out every year, has retained most of the original golfers, supporters, and helpers from when it started. Many attended high school and/or served in Vietnam with Dan, which goes to show that community and consistency are key to putting on a great event every year.



From left: Chris Mitchell, Dan Curry, Courtney Schumacher and Monica Sweeney

DAN'S TIP: Dan says he follows a do and learn model, and every year they learn something new as the tournament evolves. His secret is to keep it simple and to limit the number of asks you have out on the course to avoid attendees feeling like they are being nicked and dimed. The most successful golf tournaments, in Dan's eyes, have been ones that set the right price up front so golfers can enjoy the day.



fundraise with
facebook

For HFOT



If you're on Facebook, you probably have heard of Facebook Fundraisers. People often start a fundraiser on their birthday, but you don't have to wait until then to get started. You can start a Fundraiser through your Facebook account at any time!

By fundraising for Homes For Our Troops, you are helping us build and donate more specially adapted custom homes for our nation's

severely injured Veterans, and spread awareness to your Facebook friends about our mission.

Facebook fundraisers are proving to be successful – they have been generating \$15,000 monthly on average since the beginning of the year. Starting one is simple! Click here for a step-by-step guide on how to create a Facebook fundraiser.

A SPECIAL MISSION MOMENT

Every HFOT employee has the opportunity to follow a Veteran's HFOT journey with our Mission Moment Partner program. Through the program, employees meet their partnered Veteran at the initial Veterans Conference and keep in touch with them throughout the build process, with the opportunity to attend one of the Veteran's build events. Construction Manager Patrick Erban was paired with Army SPC Steven Baskis as a Mission Moment Partner in 2015, and he also manages Steven's build project.

Being a Mission Moment Partner has definitely left an impression on Patrick. *"Being Steven's Mission Moment Partner has been a great experience both professionally and personally,"* says Patrick. *"I have a connection to his project, and a better understanding of the importance of HFOT's mission. As an added bonus, I have gained a good friend."*



At Steven's Volunteer Day in August, Patrick guided Steven, who lost his sight while serving in Iraq, around his lot, stopping frequently to describe the home and the special adaptations. Steven smiled the entire time, clearly excited about his future home.

Homes For Our Troops will honor Steven with his home in Colorado at his Key Ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 22, 2018.

Read more about Steven's story at
www.hfotusa.org/baskis

More than **2,000** service members from Iraq and Afghanistan have returned home with severe injuries.

As of August 2018, HFOT has built and donated over **260** specially adapted custom homes nationwide. *Help us build more.*



Building Homes, Rebuilding Lives

Find Us On Social Media - Keep up-to-date on all things HFOT by following us!



Thank You To Our Corporate Partners



A History of Excellence

HFOT has been evaluated as one of America's Top Rated Veterans and Military Charities.