



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | NOVEMBER 2023



Live Long
and Swim,
Bike, Run!

Army Captain Bobby Withers
on the course of the Ironman
70.3 Oceanside triathlon

YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

A Letter from the Chairman of the Board



Dear HFOT Supporters,

As we approach 2024 and our 20th anniversary, Homes For Our Troops continues to work tirelessly to build and donate homes to our nation's most severely injured post-9/11 Veterans. There are now over 365 Veterans and their families living in barrier-free environments and rebuilding their lives, with another 70 home-build projects in various stages of construction nationwide. We have achieved this accomplishment only because of the continued generosity of supporters like you.

While we celebrate these successes, there are still nearly 1,000 more severely injured Veterans who could qualify for our program. They are service members re-learning how to navigate the world around them on prosthetics, in wheelchairs, or without their sight. A specially adapted custom home provides these severely injured post-9/11 Veterans with the safety and accessibility they need and deserve, and will restore the freedom and independence they sacrificed for us. Homes For Our Troops remains steadfast in our goal of providing a home for every Veteran who qualifies for one, and because of the support of great Patriots like you, I know we will fulfill this mission.

This newsletter highlights how your commitment to our mission is life-changing. In this issue, we share the story of Navy Hospital Corpsmen Max Rohn and Redmond Ramos, future home recipients, soon-to-be neighbors, and amputees who continue to find opportunities to thrive and inspire others. We also catch up with home recipient Army Captain Bobby Withers, an accomplished triathlete, marathon runner, dedicated teacher, and devoted father.

In addition to our many individual donors and fundraisers, our corporate partners are key to assisting these great Americans. On page 6, we spotlight corporate partner Bubba's 33, that raised over \$140,000 for HFOT in their Burgers For The Brave Campaign during June of this year. We also feature Luke Walker and Mike Boucher, two supporters spreading awareness of HFOT's mission nationally on two wheels.

As we observe Veterans Day this month, I want to thank you for honoring the service and sacrifice of our brave men and women with your commitment to our mission. It is your generosity that fuels our organization and keeps our momentum going. I look forward to what we can accomplish together as we *Build Homes and Rebuild Lives*.

Sincerely,

Dick Cody

General Richard A. Cody, USA (Ret.)
Chairman, Homes For Our Troops

November 2023

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ON THE COVER:

Army CPT Bobby Withers. Read his story on page 4.



A History of Excellence

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

SOLE-MATES: The Journey of Two Navy Corpsmen

To tell the story of Max Rohn and Redmond Ramos, we need to go back in time. Back before they became sole-mates, connected by a pair of size twelve shoes. Before they each lost a leg in combat. Before they sat next to each other on a flight from Boston to Denver talking about their new homes and bright futures, the country they served framed neatly in the airplane window, a silent witness to two Veterans rebuilding their lives.

To tell the story of Max and Red, we need to go back to when they were strangers; Brothers in Arms connected by a shared desire to serve, whose paths had not yet crossed.



Navy HM3 Max Rohn with
Navy HM3 Red Ramos



For Max, a job as a lifeguard administering first aid sparked his interest in the medical field. He enlisted as a corpsman in the Navy, deploying to Iraq in 2009. On a routine patrol in Fallujah, Max's vehicle was struck by an RKG-3 grenade, ultimately leading to the amputation of his right leg.

For Red, enlisting in the Navy was a family affair as one of four brothers who served as Navy combat medics. On his first deployment in Sangin, Afghanistan, he was on a patrol in 2011 when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated. Red lost his left leg below the knee.

The recovery journey as amputees for Max and Red was uniquely personal, yet strikingly similar. Two Veterans who refused to give up or give in—whose resolve to become adapted athletes placed them in one remarkable destination at the exact same moment: the 2012 Warrior Games in Colorado Springs, where they met and discovered they were missing the opposite size twelve foot—the beginning of their journey to becoming "sole-mates".

In addition to sharing a pair of track shoes, they also discovered the many things they had in common. Namely, a dogged determination to build the best possible futures they could imagine. This determination led Max and Red to the Homes For Our Troops family, where they are now future recipients of specially adapted custom homes. Both Max and Red's current houses are not wheelchair accessible, and the daily challenges they encounter pose safety issues, as well as barriers to recovery. Adaptations such as automatic doors, accessible walkways around the home, and pull-down shelving will allow Max and Red to rest and recover when not wearing their prosthetics.

The location of their future HFOT homes is another page in the story of Max Rohn and Red Ramos—one that is best encapsulated in an email Max sent to Homes For Our Troops.

"Good morning, HFOT," Max wrote. "I was flying back to Denver from Boston on Friday. I messaged Red to say congratulations on being accepted to the HFOT family. He didn't know that we were both heading to the same airport at the exact same moment. Then, I see my best friend standing at my gate—how is that possible? I was the reason Red applied to HFOT, and now we are on the same flight after he was accepted. He then had a simple but difficult request: 'Please move back to California with me to raise our families together?' We sat next to each other for the next four hours, planning our lives together. We respectfully request to have adjacent lots in California. Thank you again for everything—we love you."

This next chapter for Red is all about family. "My wife and two children are my world. An accessible home will allow me to still be an active dad to my kids even when times are physically challenging. I feel truly blessed knowing that my future home will allow me to always be there for those that I love. We truly cannot thank everyone enough for this life-changing gift."

For Max, receiving an HFOT home means he can focus on the future with his wife Victoria. "During my darkest times in the hospital, I could never let myself focus on my future...now that I'm receiving a home—or better yet a future—I plan to spend the rest of my life dedicated to my family, friends, and community. Thank you, to the moon and back."

Homes For Our Troops will begin construction on homes for Max and Red this spring.

Read more about the impact of our homes at www.hfotusa.org/impact



Top to bottom: Newlyweds Max and Victoria Rohn with Red and wife, Krista Cona. Red with his mother, Maria "Momma Ramos". Red and Krista with daughter, Aspen and son, Redmond

Army CPT Bobby Withers
at the starting line of a 5K
in Lake County, FL



A Springboard to Success



Army Captain Bobby Withers understands the importance of a home that provides a safe place to rest and recover. As an accomplished multi-sport endurance athlete, he routinely challenges his mind and body to perform at extraordinary levels.

Yet there was a time in Bobby's life when he was on a different path, living in a house that was neither safe nor allowed the option to recover—a house he refers to as a "prison of limited possibilities".

A recipient of the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Army Commendation Medal with 'V Device' for Valor for his service as a Platoon Leader in Afghanistan, Bobby was injured on May 19, 2010, when suicide bombers attempted to infiltrate Bagram Air Base. While leading the counterattack and securing the perimeter, he stepped on an anti-personnel mine, resulting in the amputation of his right leg below the knee, and more than one hundred wounds from shrapnel—pieces of which are still currently embedded in his body.

After a complex and difficult recovery at Walter Reed Medical Center, Bobby returned to his home state of Florida to find his living arrangements posed a new set of challenges. "Living in a typical rental home was extremely restrictive and downright dangerous," he says. "I didn't feel like I could do much without risking an injury that would put me in my wheelchair—in a home not designed for one." Restricted in his non-adapted, inaccessible home, Bobby's sedentary lifestyle had a negative impact on his mental health and body.

Fortunately, Bobby's lifestyle took a positive turn when he joined the Homes For Our Troops family. A recipient of a specially adapted custom home in 2015, he chose to build his home in Florida on a local running trail. "The adapted features of my new home—everything accessible while in my wheelchair—gave me the safety and independence I needed to pull myself out of a downward spiral and choose a new trajectory."

This trajectory translated into Bobby swapping his sedentary life for a running blade—one that would carry him through 36 multi-sport events, two marathons, several local triathlons, and to the starting line of his second 70.3-mile Half Ironman triathlon that he recently participated in this past October.

A proud father to 18-year-old Madison and 11-year-old Keziah, Bobby credits the mortgage-free home with allowing him to give his daughters the best possible life while providing the opportunity to pay it forward in numerous ways. Since moving into his home, Bobby has coordinated hundreds of volunteers in over thirty separate events and service projects for The Mission Continues, a nonprofit organization helping Veterans adjust to civilian life. He also works as a substitute teacher, volunteers in multiple capacities, and recently received a "Getting Results" award for his work after Hurricane Maria.

Bobby would like HFOT's donors and supporters to know their support is life-saving. "Volunteering and physical fitness saved my life and gave me a post-service legacy that my family can be proud of. Homes For Our Troops built me a safety net that I could use as a hammock or a springboard—I'm proud to have chosen the latter. Everything our enemies abroad took away from me, HFOT gave back to me, and then some. I am deeply grateful for donors like you who support and care about this mission."



HFOT home recipient
Army CPT Bobby Withers



**BOARD MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT:**
Fred Grein
General Counsel



Fred Grein (center) at the 2023 HFOT Golf Classic

Fred Grein has served as Homes For Our Troops' outside general counsel since 2010, coordinating the pro bono legal services provided by him and his colleagues at Nixon Peabody LLP, where Fred is Senior Counsel and a member of the firm's M&A and Corporate Transactions group. In his role as General Counsel, Fred is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Homes For Our Troops Board of Directors and also serves on the organization's Finance Committee.

Fred has been a practicing attorney for over forty years, advising clients on a broad range of business issues, including in the areas of business strategy and planning, corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures, debt and equity financing, executive compensation and other business matters.

Fred is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross (A.B., 1968), the Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College (M.B.A., 1973), and the Boston University School of Law (J.D., 1976).

Fred and his wife, Cathy, live in West Newton, Massachusetts. They will celebrate their 50th anniversary next June.

How did you find out about the organization?

My involvement with HFOT began in the fall of 2010. I was contacted by a woman whose business involved advising non-profit organizations on various matters. I knew her from previously helping her husband sell his business. She was aware of my history of service on non-profit boards and dealing with governance issues. She asked if I would be available to help HFOT. When I learned more about the organization, I volunteered not only to advise the organization, but to become actively involved.

What motivated you to become a member of the organization's Board?

I have long felt that our country does not treat its Veterans well, especially those who need additional assistance in entering civilian life. The HFOT mission, especially as it has grown to more fully include the "Rebuilding Lives" aspect, begins to address this need. The importance of the mission, and HFOT's success in fulfilling it, is why I got involved and remain involved.

What is the biggest challenge for HFOT?

Looking forward, it will be important for HFOT to expand its outreach to potential supporters, because, unfortunately, there is a long list of potential participants in the HFOT program and, with active military engagements winding down, it gets harder to keep the country's attention. Getting greater visibility is the challenge. As we get more opportunities to share our message, we have the best spokespersons for the cause – our Veterans – whose individual stories give credence to why the HFOT mission is important and what it has meant to them.





CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: *Experience the Bubba's 33 Difference!*



The tagline of Bubba's 33, one of our corporate partners, is "It's more than a restaurant, it's an experience." They live by these words through their fundraising efforts, and they make a transformational difference in the lives of our nation's most deserving Veterans through their continued generosity.

Bubba's 33, born in 2013 and created by Texas Roadhouse founder Kent Taylor, is part of the heart and soul of Homes For Our Troops. Their commitment and dedication to HFOT are evident in everything they do, from spreading the word about our mission and raising money with their national campaigns, to donating food at our build events across the country.

Bubba's 33 holds an annual Burgers For The Brave Campaign every year from the beginning of June through the Fourth of July. This yearly event consists of various fundraising opportunities, such as purchasing a burger icon, choosing to donate, or ordering one of their delicious Patriot Burgers. For every Patriot Burger sold, Bubba's 33 donated \$1 to HFOT. This year, they raised \$140,000, surpassing their goal by \$40,000!

Throughout the campaign, we heard and witnessed countless stories about Bubba's 33 teammates going above and beyond, speaking to local organizations and companies about our Veterans and mission, which helped raise additional money. Their enthusiasm for our nation and military is contagious, and Bubba's 33's tireless support is a gift that continues to impact our Veterans.

We are grateful and humbled to continue working with everyone at Bubba's 33. HFOT Board Ambassador and Bubba's 33 Field Marketing Director, Kirsten Smith, recently spoke about our relationship:

"Our partnership with Homes For Our Troops is more about being family than being "corporate partners". We share the same ideals and value system, and the same big heart. When asked if we can help, we say yes no matter what. As family, that is what we do. Over 19 years of partnership with an organization will ultimately make it part of the DNA of your company and thus your people. At Texas Roadhouse and Bubba's 33, supporting Homes For Our Troops is as much of who we are as serving Hand-cut Steaks and Stone-baked Pizzas. This relationship makes us a company that at our core supports our military every day who also happens to deliver Legendary Food and Legendary Service to our guests."

Please show some love to our friends at Bubba's 33 by visiting any one of their 40 + locations nationwide—you will be blown away by their made-from-scratch food and friendly service. And don't forget to tell them that HFOT sent you!

Companies, businesses, and corporations, like Bubba's 33, are helping us make a difference in the lives of our Veterans and their families. And you can too!

*For more information on how to become a Corporate Partner,
please contact our Corporate Philanthropy Team at: partnership@hfotusa.org.*

Help us reach our goal of \$1 Million to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.



Save the Date!
**GIVING
TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 28**





HFOT fundraiser, Luke Walker, traveled from Florida to Michigan

Fundraising Spotlight: **Two Wheels, One Mission**

At Homes For Our Troops, we support the motto: Anything can become a fundraiser - a phrase Luke Walker and Mike Boucher fully embraced when they independently decided to bike across the country on personal journeys, while also supporting HFOT's mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.

Introduced to a group of people completing a cross-country bike ride, Luke was immediately drawn to the idea of pushing his own mental and physical limits while also fundraising for HFOT. A 20-year-old native of Louisville, KY, he began his bike ride on February 1, 2023, in Key West, FL. A deep love for his country and our military's Veterans and Servicemembers inspired Luke to set a course to Washington State, where he planned to finish on September 11, 2023.

Luke stopped at various places along the way, talking to anyone he could about HFOT's mission, while also raising money on his online fundraising page. During his trip, life threw a few twists and turns, which led Luke to wrap up his trip in Michigan, with an impressive 4,500 miles traveled.

In total, Luke was able to raise over \$5,000 for HFOT Veteran Army Sergeant Marcus Hayward, who is choosing to build his future home in Lake Worth, Florida. To learn more about Sgt Hayward, visit <https://www.hfotusa.org/building-homes/veterans/hayward/>.

Last fall, 66-year-old Mike Boucher from Minneapolis, MN decided to ride his bike from San Diego, CA to St. Augustine, FL. After dreaming of completing this trip for years with a desire to do some good along the way, he officially set off on March 25, 2023, for his cross-country trip.

An Army Veteran who also comes from a military family, Mike was inspired to give back to the men and women who fought for our nation. He traveled over 3,030 miles on his trip, with his online fundraising page bringing in \$23,522 for HFOT Veteran Army Staff Sergeant Conrad Calderon, who is building his future home in San Antonio, Texas. To learn more about SSG Calderon's story, visit <https://www.hfotusa.org/building-homes/veterans/calderon/>.

Luke and Mike's decision to bring Homes For Our Troops along on their cross-country journeys helps provide more severely injured Veterans with the specially adapted custom homes they need and deserve—and Mike has committed to another 3,000-mile trip before the end of the year!



Mike Boucher on his cross-country journey

Thank you to our Corporate Partners that continue to help restore freedom and independence to our nation's most severely injured post-9/11 Veterans.

PLATINUM NATIONAL PARTNER



GOLD NATIONAL PARTNERS



SILVER NATIONAL PARTNERS



NATIONAL PARTNERS



MISSION PARTNERS



Learn more about our Corporate Partners at: www.hfotusa.org/partner

Help further our mission with an IRA Charitable Distribution



Charitable Giving through an IRA

Consider donating to Homes For Our Troops through your IRA. The process is easy! This is a great way to support our severely injured Veterans by Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.

- You must be 70½ years or older and, if required to take a required minimum distribution (RMD), the Qualified Charitable Distribution counts against the RMD.
- Distributions can only be made from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).
- The maximum donation that can be excluded from taxable income in any year is \$100k.
- Distribution must be made directly to Homes For Our Troops. That keeps it out of your taxable income.
- Instruct your IRA Administrator to distribute a designated amount up to \$100k as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to HFOT. By directing your IRA distribution to HFOT, you don't have to report the QCD as taxable income, and won't owe any taxes on the QCD.
- Contact your Plan Administrator directly to begin the process.

For more information, contact Suzanne Shaheen, *Planned Giving Officer* at 508-967-9041 or sshaheen@hfotusa.org

HFOT recommends you seek the guidance of a professional advisor to assist you on making an informed decision. Any information provided by Homes For Our Troops is not meant as a substitute for legal or financial advice



GIVING STOCK

Did you know that you can donate stocks or other securities?

This is a great way to support Homes For Our Troops and the Veterans we serve, with the added bonus of potential tax savings!*

For more information about donating stock, please contact Suzanne Shaheen at: 508-967-9041 or sshaheen@hfotusa.org

HFOT recommends you seek the guidance of a professional advisor, to assist you on making an informed decision. Any information provided by Homes For Our Troops is not meant as a substitute for financial advice.