



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops

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HFOT Home Recipient Jason Gibson meets with VA Secretary Robert McDonald in D.C. before visiting with the President and First Lady. (page 1)

HFOT's Noah Galloway
debuts on TV's *Dancing with the Stars!* (page 3)



A SPECIAL GUEST:
SSG JASON GIBSON
ATTENDS STATE OF THE UNION

Retired Staff Sergeant Jason Gibson might look familiar to those who tuned into the President's State of the Union Address in January. The HFOT Home Recipient was a special guest of the First Lady at the event.

Gibson's journey to the White House began in 2012. At that time, Gibson was recovering at Walter Reed Medical Center after losing both legs in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Afghanistan. Still heavily medicated, Gibson didn't recognize President Barack Obama when he walked into the room. Last October, Gibson wrote a letter to the President thanking him for the visit, telling him, "There is life after a traumatic event and good can come of all things."

Gibson was asked to attend the Address shortly after receiving his HFOT home in Marysville, Ohio on Dec. 20, 2014. Overall, he says he was surprised to receive the invite and a tad embarrassed.

The trip was really busy, but memorable, Gibson says. During his two-day stay in Washington D.C. he did interviews with CNN and CBS, met with Secretary of Veteran Affairs Robert McDonald, attended a reception at the White House and, of course, attended the State of the Union. He and his wife Kara and their infant daughter, Quinn, were also able to do some sightseeing around D.C. After the speech, he had the chance to meet the President for a second time and First Lady Michelle Obama.

Spending time with the Obamas and being in the public spotlight hasn't enticed Gibson to think about pursuing a political career or making a bid for the Oval Office, though. "I hope to be out of the news for a long time," he says.

For now, he's content to be back at his new home with Kara and adjust to his role as a dad.

Read more about Jason Gibson at www.hfotusa.org/gibson

CertainTeed

Boosts Support for HFOT



Members of CertainTeed Corporation and HFOT at the 2015 International Builders Show in Las Vegas.

CertainTeed Corporation has increased its commitment to assisting Homes for Our Troops with more products to build specially adapted homes for severely injured Veterans across the nation. The company's contribution now includes roofing, insulation and gypsum wallboard for all HFOT homes, ensuring that homeowners will enjoy a lifetime of indoor comfort.

"Having corporate partners like CertainTeed is essential to our mission of helping severely injured Veterans regain their

freedom and independence through the gift of a new home," says Bill Ivey, Executive Director at Homes for Our Troops. "It is an honor to help these heroes rebuild their lives, and CertainTeed's involvement ensures our homes are built with the best materials and finest craftsmanship available, and they will stand the test of time."

For more information on HFOT's Corporate Partners visit: www.hfotusa.org/corporate_partners



Looking for a way to make a **BIG DIFFERENCE**, but can only give a little at a time?

Consider joining Operation Lasting Support (OLS), HFOT's monthly recurring donation program. As an OLS Member, you can elect to have \$10 or more automatically deducted from your credit card or checking account each month, making it easy, convenient and affordable to help us build specially adapted homes nationwide to enable our Veterans to rebuild their lives. **Sign up at hfotusa.org/ols.**

Every month, Sheldon Novack has the satisfaction of knowing he is helping Homes for Our Troops. Novack, a grandfather of nine children, served as an Infantry company commandor with the 101st Airborne Division and later with the Pennsylvania National Guard. He first learned about Homes for Our Troops while striking up a conversation with HFOT's Executive Director, Bill Ivey. The two talked about their service backgrounds and then Ivey brought up HFOT's mission. Novack has been an OLS member ever since.

"We have a responsibility to these young men and women who are protecting our liberties," says Novack, adding he is proud to support an organization like HFOT that is taking care of Veterans, something that didn't always happen back when he served.

There are many reasons for wanting to help HFOT serve our nation's most severely injured Veterans. What's yours? Tell us at myreason@hfotusa.org.

Fighting Spirit Helps Army Veteran

NOAH GALLOWAY

from the Battlefield to the Ballroom

On December 19, 2005, while accompanying his platoon leader on a routine mission near Yusufiyah in what was referred to as the "Triangle of Death" south of Baghdad, Army SGT Noah Galloway's vehicle drove into a trip wire that initiated a roadside bomb. As a result, Noah lost his left leg and his left arm. Almost ten years later, he speaks candidly about his less than smooth journey of recovery, and how he looks forward to rebuilding his life.

It's difficult to think that Noah Galloway ever looked bad a day in his life after seeing him grace the cover of *Men's Health* Magazine as its "Ultimate Guy" last November. But on Christmas Day 2005, that was indeed the case. Galloway was just coming to on a hospital bed at Walter Reed Medical Center with no recollection of the blast he was in the week before.

"Waking up to the loss of an arm and leg plus severe injuries to my 'good' leg and arm with my mouth wired shut was one of the worst days of my life," he says. The injuries went beyond the physical. An avid fitness guru most of his life, Galloway says he spent the subsequent years digging himself out of depression and living unhealthy, trying to accept his "new body."

Then he suffered another blow – one to his pride – he lost his home.

The divorced father of three had been familiar with Homes for Our Troops and its mission of building specially adapted homes, but at the time dismissed the idea of needing help, let alone taking it. After all, he was competing in extreme fitness challenges and obstacle course races.

Two years later, Galloway finally accepted Homes for Our Troops' offer to build him a new specially adapted, mortgage-free home.

"While many Veterans, myself included, are pretty active and fit, we know that it's not always going to be the case as we age," says Galloway. He considers the adaptive features of the home an insurance policy in the event he ever injures himself. "Something as small as a broken ankle or broken arm would put me in a world of hurt due to the lack of support from a remaining limb," he says. Safety features, including hold bars in the shower, carpet-less floors, and accessible kitchen cabinets, will assure that he stays independent, healthy, and strong now, and in his later years.

But more important, adds Galloway, the home will help him as a dad. "Instead of three children sharing a room at their dad's house, they will have their own rooms," he says.

And now Galloway might have to plan a new dance studio for his master bedroom.

He'll be joining the cast of ABC's 20th season of *Dancing with the Stars* premiering on March 16, partnered with professional dancer, Sharna Burgess. The big announcement came just a few months after he debuted on TV's *Ellen*, where he performed a series of one-armed pushups.

In between nonstop promotional tapings and his grueling dance rehearsal schedule, Galloway has been taking to social media to help pay it forward and advance HFOT's mission. He also supports several other organizations that focus on the importance of fitness, which he says saved his life.

Winning it all in the show's finale in June would of course be ideal for Galloway, the ultimate competitor, but either way he'll have a specially adapted home in Alabama from HFOT to help him in the future. "I can't thank Homes for Our Troops enough for this amazing opportunity," he says.

To donate to Noah's project, visit hfotusa.org/galloway



dancing with the stars

Season Premiere
Live! March 16
Mondays 8/7c



Future HFOT Home Recipient Noah Galloway debuts on TV's *Dancing with the Stars* on March 16.

MEET HFOT'S *IT* DEPARTMENT



HFOT's IT Department: (L) Lisa Tacker, Isabel Pais and Bob Samonte.

Whether you're watching one of the videos about our Veterans at hfotusa.org, or reading an email from us on your mobile phone, those bytes of information have all been packaged and delivered by HFOT's Information Technology Services (IT) Team. Three members make up that team: Isabel Pais, Robert Samonte and Lisa Tacker.

Led by Isabel Pais, the group is tasked with ensuring HFOT's technical infrastructure is up and running, and that all information is safe and accessible. This includes everything from the organization's website, office network, computers, copiers and phones, to employees' laptops, tablets, and mobile phone devices.

As gatekeepers of the information that flows out of HFOT, Pais says the IT staff needs to have a solid understanding of each department they support. "The key is to keep an open line of communication at all times and to pose the question 'Who else needs to know?' at every phase of the organization," says Pais.

Bob Samonte, HFOT's Webmaster & Digital Media Administrator, previously worked as a website developer in the financial industry. That expertise now serves HFOT and thousands of online supporters every day who navigate the website and learn about the mission through photos and videos. Bob has another background that helps him on the job too. "In my previous life, I was in the Marine Corps, and there's a common bond that you develop with other Veterans because you have shared the

same experiences," he says.

Lisa Tacker, an Applications Support Specialist, enjoys that she wears a few hats to support HFOT's mission. "I'm responsible for maintaining the integrity of our donor database, but I also provide HFOT staff with IT support, evaluate technology needs for the organization, and help with community outreach events and ceremonies when needed," she says.



Although their efforts have little to do with the physical structure of homes that HFOT builds for injured Veterans, the IT team is proud nonetheless that their behind-the-scenes contributions impact HFOT's Veterans and families. "Whether we are fixing an employee's laptop or looking into a new software for a department, we're helping our coworkers do their job effectively," says Pais. "And that service then allows the HFOT staff to focus on the Veterans and families who are in our homes, and those who will move into one, which is a tremendously rewarding feeling."

Despite all they have been through, our Veterans still find many reasons to be grateful. In the spirit of St. Patrick's Day, we asked some of our HFOT Veterans to share what makes them feel ...

Lucky



"I'm lucky to have served with some of the greatest guys I know. I'm lucky they knew what to do when I was injured. Without them I wouldn't have had the opportunity to work with an amazing organization like Homes for Our Troops and I never would have met my fiancée Autumn."

- Army Sergeant Doug Harris



"What makes me lucky is my beautiful wife. Having her by my side through all the highs and lows makes me the luckiest guy in the world."

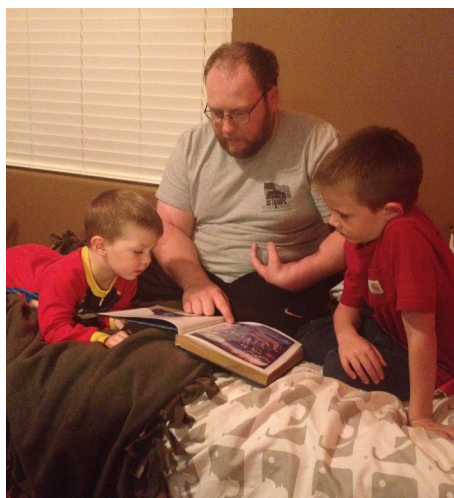
- Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson



"Watching the wives with their wounded husbands in the rehab facility at Walter Reed is an awesome sight. Especially the ones with little ones clinging to them. Those wives are a special breed, and I'm blessed to have a wife like that of my own. I'm very lucky to have her and to have her as the mother of my son. They both give me a reason to strive to be a great man."

- Marine Corporal Garrett Carnes

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SIMPLE THINGS



For many parents, reading their children a bedtime story is just part of the usual routine. But retired Marine Corporal Jon Schumacher and his two sons, Easton and Ethan, waited three years for that simple, but special moment.

Jon lost both legs in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast during his second deployment in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on

Oct. 30, 2011. He and his wife Courtney received a new specially adapted home in Murrieta, Calif. in November 2014. The open floorplan now allows Jon to easily access his sons' rooms while in his wheelchair, and tuck them in at night and be there if they need him. He was not able to do so in their previous home because of the tight doorways.

Reading together was something Jon had enjoyed with his oldest son before his injury; now he can finally share the love of reading again with both sons. "With our new home this is something I can do every night with ease. No more stairs, no more skinny doorways that block my freedom of movement," he says.

Jon says he and Courtney could not be more thankful to everyone who supported HFOT to help their family. "This little moment I can now share with my family is a huge part of our healing," he says.

Read more on Cpl Schumacher at hfortusa.org/schumacher.

Coming soon...

Homes for Our Troops presents the first episode in its series of *The Rebuilding Lives Video Collection*:

THE SGT BRIAN JERGENS STORY!



PREMIERES on hfotusa.org on

Thursday, March 19 at 2:00 p.m. EST

Or tune in on our **Facebook** page to watch.

Learn how your support has helped Brian recover from his injuries and the impact his specially adapted home has had on him and his family.



**This video has been rated "A" for Amazing and is appropriate for all audiences.*