



# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) | SUMMER 2013

## INSPIRATION- WE DIG IT!



DAY ONE OF EXCAVATION BEGINS ON THE SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOME IN TALLAHASSEE FLA. FOR HFOT VETERAN ARMY SSGT LUKE MURPHY (CENTER).

**HFOT VETERANS AND VOLUNTEERS GIVING BACK**



## LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

"...If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them. .."

The words of 17th Century philosopher Francis Bacon, Sr., still ring true to this day. And it's the kindness of strangers we have the privilege of experiencing every day. But that kindness isn't limited to any one person, it spans among generations, living in communities across this country; neighbors sharing their time and talent to ensure the gift of freedom and independence will endure.

And it expands beyond just the mission of this organization.

In the pages of this publication, you will read stories about our veterans giving back, not only to Homes for Our Troops and future generations of home recipients, but to humanity. Marine Cpl Gabriel Martinez will soon receive the keys to his specially adapted home in Colorado. I have had the privilege of knowing this kind-hearted young man during the past year. Like so many of our other veterans, Gabriel lost his legs, succumbing to the dangers of combat, but that hasn't kept him from caring for others. Gabriel, along with some of his fellow Marines, sprung to action following the devastating bombing that occurred at the finish line of Boston Marathon on Monday, April 15. Hundreds of spectators and athletes were injured as a result of the improvised explosive devices (IED) detonated on Boylston Street; dozens sustained life-altering injuries, losing limbs and suffering the scars of shrapnel and burns. Days later, Gabriel and his brothers-in-arms could be found visiting the Boston-area hospitals delivering a simple – but powerful – message: There is life after amputation.

The Boston Marathon bombings have also provided an opportunity for this organization to give back as well. We have been called upon to provide guidance and serve as mentors to an advisory group established in the state of Massachusetts designed to help the victims of this senseless tragedy. And with nearly a decade of experience helping this nation's most severely injured veterans regain the freedom and independence lost to combat, we are honored and privileged to have the opportunity to provide our expertise.

Our volunteers are the backbone of this organization. Without the giving spirit of these dedicated individuals, many of whom have no direct links to the military, they simply have the need and desire to help as we advance our mission. We invite you to read about some of these amazing people who, in addition to working, attending school, and raising their families, still find the time to give back to our veterans as key event volunteers and members of Team HFOT runners.

Homes for Our Troops is a national organization – through the first half of this year, we have delivered keys to more than 130 home build projects with more on the way before the year comes to a close. Certainly the financial support of our generous sponsors and donors enables us to continue providing the gift of a specially adapted home, it really is each community in which we build that makes this such a special and meaningful experience for our veterans.

This year so far has been nothing short of a success and it's with the help of our sponsors, donors, and supporters like you that continue to help our veterans reclaim their freedom and independence by providing the gift of a specially adapted home. With your support, we not only continue Building Homes, but Rebuilding Lives. Here's looking ahead to the next 10 years – and beyond.



Dawn Teixeira  
Executive Director, Homes for Our Troops



Dawn Teixeira  
Executive Director,  
Homes for Our Troops

*A portion of the production costs for Foundations were generously underwritten by Universal Wilde Printing Corporation. This publication is also available online. As stewards of the funds donated to advance the Homes for Our Troops mission – and in our continuing effort to keep administrative costs as minimal as possible – if you would prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, please contact us at [info@homesfourtroops.org](mailto:info@homesfourtroops.org) stock photos of notepads*



Charity Navigator, one of the premiere charity rating agencies in the country, has awarded Homes for Our Troops with its highest rating of 4 stars.



Homes for Our Troops is a Top-Rated Military & Veteran Charity by the American Institute of Philanthropy.



#12525

## INTRODUCING...OUR NEW LOOK AND A BIG CHANGE!

If you've visited the Homes for Our Troops website, formerly ([homesfourtroops.org](http://homesfourtroops.org))  
You've undoubtedly noticed some changes. [www.homesfourtroops.org](http://www.homesfourtroops.org) will now be known as

# WWW.HFOTUSA.ORG

### What's changed:

We've changed our website. For the better.

### Why the change:

The clean look, feel and functionality of our new website design is based on the feedback and recommendations we've received from our donors, constituents and stakeholders as to how we could communicate more effectively with our audience in print and online to advance the Homes for Our Troops mission. Our abbreviated name HFOT - coupled with the addition of USA - conveys our commitment to restore freedom and independence to the most severely injured veterans of post 9/11 throughout the country.

### See the change:

We invite you to visit our new website - [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) - spend some time getting acquainted with our veterans - and find out how you can help advance our mission.

What you can expect in the weeks ahead at [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org): More interactive content and inspiring stories about our HFOT veterans and their families, with videos, news items, and links to share with others that showcase the great work being done by HFOT all over the country.

**PAY IT FORWARD.  
HELP ANOTHER VETERAN**

Every gift - even just \$20 - helps make the dreams of an adapted home a reality for a wounded veteran.

**DONATE NOW TO HELP REBUILD LIVES**

**CHECK OUT OUR VETERAN PROJECTS BY STATE**



Get Social!

**132** HOMES

built for severely injured veterans

**40** HOMES

in-progress for our veterans

**\$0** COST

to each veteran who receives a home

**9.6%**

only 9.6% of revenue spent on overhead since inception



# ONE SPECIAL CAUSE, MANY SPECIAL ROLES

*Every day, HFOT volunteers throughout the country are busy helping to build and strengthen the HFOT cause, and finding it incredibly rewarding.*

*Here are a few of their stories.*

**Alyssa Shashaty, Massachusetts**  
HFOT volunteer role: Team HFOT Race Participant



She might be young, but chances are Alyssa Shashaty will be ahead of you at your next race. At 13, Alyssa has a goal to run a 5K race in every state for a different charity-all before she turns 16. (That's not including the race she ran in Washington D.C. or the one she will run in San Juan in November.)

Recently, she ran the Semper Fred 5K for Team HFOT in Virginia at the Historic Half Marathon. Even though she started a few minutes late (bus trouble), she finished first in her age division, first out of all females, and placed 18th overall (male and female runners).

"I chose Homes for Our Troops because when I was reading through the charities, I thought they did great things for the military," she said.

In between playing lacrosse and running track for her school, as well as playing soccer for a club team and piano and drums-when- she still finds time to give back.

"The Military does so much for us and they are always so grateful at these races for just taking a little bit of time for them," she said.

Sometimes race organizers aren't prepared for Alyssa's speed.

"When I ran in Texas I was first place in the 13-19, but couldn't have the prize because I was only 12 and they didn't have a division for 12 year olds," she reports.

**Gidget Ternet, Colorado**  
HFOT volunteer role: HFOT Volunteer ambassador/  
fundraiser/donation collector

The principal at Dakota Valley Elementary School in Aurora, Colo., challenged the kids to raise funds in support of the HFOT build project taking place in Elizabeth, Colo. for SGT Matt Parker. She said she would kiss a pig if they made their goal. The students ended up exceeding their goal and raised \$1,025 which they presented to Gidget last May in the form of a check for HFOT. At the school assembly that day, "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" was played on the loud speaker. The principal-and the assistant principal-(both women wearing dresses) entered a pig pen, caught the pigs and kissed them. Gidget was let into the pig pen and took a moment to pose with one of the pigs. Says Gidget, "I support HFOT and no job is too small or dirty for me!"



**Marily Considine, Texas**  
HFOT Volunteer Role: Key Volunteer for Home Build  
Project for SSgt Jack Pierce

Marily is married to Army Major John Considine and has two children. She also teaches Pre-K and is an active volunteer with the USO at Fort Hood. A few years ago she underwent various chemotherapy and radiation treatments for stage-three advanced breast cancer, and as of 2012, is in remission. Last Mothers Day, NBC's TODAY show surprised her on national TV with a backyard makeover, which was broadcasted live from her Texas home.

As an Army wife, she understands and appreciates all of the efforts undertaken by volunteers to help military families and injured veterans. "You don't have to wear a uniform to serve your country," she said. "There are other ways to help out, like offering your help to organizations like Homes for Our Troops."

Marily said she feels blessed to have the opportunity to meet SSgt Jack Pierce, whom she calls a real celebrity.

"It was a star-struck moment for me to meet someone like him who served and sacrificed for his country so selflessly," she confessed. "When you see what troops like SSgt Peirce have been through, you just can't complain."

The experience was even more rewarding when Marily witnessed the impact of a new specially adapted home for SSgt Pierce and his family. "Just taking the tour and seeing how every feature of the home, like the kitchen cabinets, will make his life easier and make him more independent... it's just amazing," she said.





# *A heartfelt Thank You from a future home recipient*

Dear Homes for Our Troops,

This past Saturday was the Ground Breaking for my new home, and I wanted you to know how it went. First of all I must admit it was much more fun, exciting, and humbling than I could have ever imagined. The ride in with the Patriot Guard and fire truck was so cool, my adrenaline was pumping and continued to pump hours after the ceremony was over. I felt like I drank an entire pot of coffee. Once we arrived there were tons of people there cheering and smiling from ear to ear. Some of my very best friends were there and they were just as excited as I was which in turn made us smile even more. The entire process was as smooth as silk, and I feel the command and control your staff provided could not have been more professional. In fact people are still raving about it today and still sending emails asking how to help, donate, or contribute. One of my friends who sits on our local Bank's board of directors is trying to get donations as we speak. He said that Larry's (HFOT's Veterans Liaison) speech made a huge impact on him and his wife. He told me that Larry did a good job of pointing out the fact that HFOT had the money to build my home, but if they were to build any more, or take any other guys like Neil and I off the list, this community would need to step up. Others told me it was Neil's or my speech that made them cry, but I can tell you all the speakers and the general flow of the Ground Breaking was PERFECT. Please thank Leigh, Larry, Ashley and anyone else who helped make this day so monumental for me and my community.

Respectfully,  
Luke Murphy



*"My favorite part of this job is finally getting to meet the people I've talked to for months on the phone and by email, and then finally seeing everything all come together. We all work so hard to make these days happen and to see the look on the veterans' faces when the day actually comes...it's just awesome."*

*HFOT Community Outreach Coordinator Ashley Twigg*

Ashley Twigg (left) readies a crowd of 250+ for the arrival of Justin Gaertner by motorcade at his Groundbreaking Ceremony on April 6, 2013.





# HFOT VETERANS PROVE VICTORIOUS AT 2013

When describing the injuries of many post-9/11 war veterans, a host of labels are often used: Severe. Debilitating. Devastating. Life-altering. Catastrophic. And as onlookers, it's easy to assume that a life navigated by wheelchairs and prosthetics, is nothing short of challenging.

But if you asked any of the 200 wounded, ill, and injured service members, including six HFOT veterans participating at May's 2013 Warrior Games, to elaborate on their hardships? They would likely have told you something along the lines of "...ain't nobody got time for that." Consuming these veterans' thoughts instead were aspirations of victory in archery, cycling, shooting, sitting-volleyball, swimming, track and field, and wheelchair basketball. And the only descriptive labels for these champions on the mind of spectators watching them compete: inspiring and amazing.

The Warrior Games were first played in 2010. They are designed to introduce injured service members and veterans to Paralympic sport competition and encourage them to stay physically active when they return to their local communities following the event. The branches of the military compete as "teams," replicating the concept of countries competing in the Olympics.



Luis Puertas on his way to winning the Men's 100 Meter Single and Double Above The Knee final during the Warrior Games last May in Colorado.

## WARRIOR GAMES

The Marines took home the Chairman's Cup for the fourth year in a row, and an impressive 93 medals overall: 34 gold, 33 silver and 26 bronze. The Army placed second with 81 medals. Congratulations to the following HFOT veteran athletes who, together with their respective teams, pushed through pain while getting it done at the Olympic Training Center and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs last May:



Justin Gaertner competes in the seated shot put for the Special Forces team. (Above)



Charles Armstead before the start of the hand cycling event. (Above)

**Chuck Armstead** - Army: Cycling, Wheelchair Basketball, and Sitting Volleyball.

**Justin Gaertner** - Marines: Special Operations Command: Bronze Medal 10K Men's Cycling, Bronze Medal Men's 200M Wheelchair and Bronze Medal Men's 1500M Wheelchair.

**Travis Greene** - Marines: Sitting Volleyball, Swimming and Track and Field

**Anthony McDaniel** - Marines: Gold Medal in both the 100M and 200M Wheelchair races in Track and Field. Silver Medal in the 1,500M, Wheelchair Basketball. (team won Silver)

**Luis Puertas** - Army: Swimming and Gold Medal in 100M, 200M and 1500M above -the-knee single-and-double-amputations events.

**Joey Smith** - Marines: Archery and Swimming, Gold Medal in Shooting (Standing).

# Corporate Sponsor *Beefs up Support* for Homes for Our Troops

Cargill Beef, headquartered in Wichita, Kan., and one of North America's largest beef processors, has joined forces with Homes for Our Troops. The company is sponsoring "Help a Hero Come Home" to raise money in support of Homes for Our Troops' mission to provide specially adapted homes-at no cost-to severely injured veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. In various supermarkets across the country where the merchants allow, Cargill will put signs in the store, have check-out lane donation forms, and hold burger grilling events over the next 12 months. There will also be a dedicated website - HelpAHero.com - that will provide more information on how to support the initiative.



HFOT home recipient Travis Wood (L) and HFOT future home recipient Brett Bondurant (R) with NASCAR #6 Roush Fenway Car Driver, Trevor Bayne.

Additionally, as part of the campaign, a special paint scheme appeared on the No.6 Cargill Beef Ford Mustang driven by Fenway Racing's Trevor Bayne on June 28, 2013, in the NASCAR Nationwide Series race at the Kentucky Speedway.



## Donation presented at HFOT Headquarters



Members of Charles River Country Club in Newton, Ma., (left) visited the HFOT office to present a check donation in the amount of 180,000 from a fundraiser held last May. Event organizers cited Homes for Our Troops' excellent charity rating (currently 4-Star, the highest possible) and focus on serving injured veterans as compelling factors in their support.



# HFOT'S GABRIEL MARTINEZ VISITS, INSPIRES

Few were able to comprehend the savagery and violence committed on April 15, 2013 when two terrorists each detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) near throngs of spectators at the Boston Marathon finish line. In the hours following the blast, the nation would hear of unimaginable loss, including three deaths and nearly 300 others, many with catastrophic injuries including loss of limbs, burns and traumatic brain injury from the lethal shrapnel.

While the nation was shaken into helplessness and shock by the warzone-like images of blood and destruction on Boston's iconic Boylston Street, former Marine Sergeant Gabriel Martinez was jolted into duty. For Martinez, who lost both of his legs after stepping on an IED in the Helmand Province in Afghanistan on Thanksgiving Day, 2010, the loss was a little too close to home.

"I saw it on TV and I was torn watching the live coverage as it unfolded," says Martinez. At the time, his wife Kayla reminded him of how visits from other amputees had helped during his recovery; surely, Martinez reflected, he could do the same for these victims.

That prompted him to contact Semper Fi, a nonprofit that provides financial support to injured members of the military. Within days, the organization had arranged to fly Martinez and a team of injured veterans-on two occasions- to visit the victims recovering in Boston.

As he and the team set out to the area hospitals including Boston Medical Center, Brigham and Women, Beth Israel, Massachusetts General (MGH) and both old and new facilities of Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (SRHA), Martinez found most patients were doing surprisingly well, alert and out of their beds. Recalls Martinez of his own recovery at Walter Reed, "We wounded vets weren't up that quick." Room by room, Martinez candidly answered patients' questions about residual limb pain and its duration, and expected recovery time. Sure, a doctor might have already told them those answers, but getting the word from a double amputee felt more, well, credible.

For most if not all patients, prosthetics were a novelty. "Everyone wanted to see my legs-the hardware," jokes Martinez.



*Gabriel Martinez (left) and Semper Fi teammates pose with Celeste*

Martinez and his team checked in on Jeff Bauman, whose photograph was taken just moments after the traumatic amputation of both of his legs. If there is one image that will be forever etched in the legacy of the 2013 Boston Marathon, it will likely be the gripping-and graphic image of Jeff being wheeled away from the blast site by the cowboy hat-wearing hero, Carlos Arredondo.

Another poignant encounter Martinez had was meeting Sydney Corcoran and her mom, Celeste, who lost both legs in the blast. The hospital room visit, captured on video by one of the veterans traveling with Martinez, had multiple airings on national TV and appeared on countless websites.



*Gabriel Martinez (right) on one of his Boston hospital stops to visit victims of the Marathon bombings last April. (Check out the video of Gabriel's visit with Celeste and Sydney Corcoran at [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org).)*



# S VICTIMS OF BOSTON MARATHON TRAGEDY



and Sydney Corcoran.

*Double amputee Gabriel Martinez (R) delivers pep talk to bombing victims Celeste Corcoran (L) and her daughter Sydney.*



"I knew she was feeling helpless and dependent," says Martinez about seeing Celeste in her hospital bed. "When she saw that I had the exact same amputations, she knew I could relate to her on a whole different level." Fighting back tears through much of the conversation, Celeste asked Martinez if losing her legs would render her dependent versus independent. The answer to that question of course was already staring her in the face. Standing on prosthetics.

And how can you not be moved, inspired, or otherwise flabbergasted when you're visited by a guy with no legs, who's a Paralympics athlete studying to become a prosthetist, who hand-cycles, marathons and triathlons his way through life?

Within minutes of their recorded chat, it's Celeste who's preaching the positives of being legless, sharing some amputee humor about running: "Hey I don't have shins anymore. I'm not gonna be having shin splints. I can do this!"

Martinez says he and Celeste talk regularly and that he spoke to her by phone recently about her progress. "I told her it's normal to be so anxious, but don't be too eager. I was telling her the first time up on prosthetics you'll feel that first step toward independence." He also shared his mantra for living every day—a message he both carries to all and proudly wears via tattoo: Tough times don't last. Tough Marines do. Lastly, says Martinez, "Take it one step at a time—literally and figuratively. Just know independence is within reach."

The swift action and courage of Boston's first responders and doctors at the 2013 Boston Marathon undoubtedly saved the lives of many victims. And with the encouragement and motivation from veterans like Gabriel Martinez, their journey of healing as able-bodied amputees begins.

*Gabriel Martinez is slated to receive his specially adapted home from Homes for Our Troops in early 2014.*



## BUILDING HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES

### GROUNDBREAKINGS

<u>Army SSG Alex Dillmann</u> Tampa, FL	Jan. 5, 2013
<u>Army SSG Wallace Fanene</u> Temecula, CA	Jan. 12, 2013
<u>Army SGT Anthony Verra</u> Stella, NC	Feb. 23, 2013
<u>Army SGT Odin Ayala</u> San Diego, CA	Feb. 23, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Travis Greene</u> San Diego, CA	Feb 23, 2013
<u>Marine Sgt James Amos</u> Mount Hope, KS	March 30, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Justin Gaertner</u> Lutz, FL	April 6, 2013
<u>Marine LCpl Ben Maenza</u> Brentwood, TN	April 13, 2013
<u>Army SPC Anderw Wilson</u> Brentwood, TN	April 14, 2013
<u>Army SGT Matt Parker</u> Elizabeth, CO	April 20, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Ammon Lang</u> Port Angeles, WA	April 27, 2013
<u>Army SGT Brian Jergens</u> Hollister, CA	April 27, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Kevin Dubois</u> Burrillville, RI	May 18, 2013
<u>Army SSG Luke Murphy</u> Tallahassee, FL	May 18, 2013
<u>Army SPC Justin Perez-Gorda</u> Dripping Springs, TX	June 1, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Brandon Rumbaugh</u> Uniontown, PA	June 1, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Michael Boucher</u> Hawkinsville, GA	June 15, 2013
<u>Marine Sgt Jordan Maynard</u> Cottonwood, AZ	June 22, 2013
<u>Marine Sgt Zachary Stinson</u> Chambersburg, PA	June 22, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Jeffrey Kessler</u> Rising Sun, MD	June 23, 2013



Marine Cpl Zachary Stinson (left) shakes hands with 1stSgt Autie Bradshaw, USMC (R) father of Kristen Lang (above-right) an Armstrong Employee. Armstrong is National Sponsor of Homes for Our Troops and supplies the flooring in each specially adapted home.

### COMPLETED VOLUNTEER DAYS

<u>Marine Cpl Tony Mullis</u> Hawkinsville, GA	April 13, 2013
<u>Marine Sgt Christopher Santiago</u> Queen Anne's County, MD	April 20, 2013
<u>Marine SSgt Jeremy Austin</u> Pulaski, VA	April 27, 2013
<u>Marine Sgt Marshall Kennedy</u> Fayetteville, AR	May 18, 2013



Army SGT Timothy Hall cuts the ribbon during the Key Ceremony of his new specially adapted home in Hawthorne, Nevada. HFOT would like to thank SGT Halls Mission Partner for his project was the Nevada Military Support Alliance for their support in the completion of his new specially adapted home.

### KEY CEREMONIES

<u>Marine Sgt Joshua Bouchard</u> Granby, MA	January 12, 2013
<u>Marine SSgt Jack Pierce</u> Temple, TX	February 9, 2013
<u>Marine MSgt John Hayes</u> St. Augustine, FL	March 2, 2013
<u>Army CPL Jeffrey Argrave</u> Prairieville, LA	March 23, 2013
<u>Army SSG Kelly Keck</u> Havre de Grace, MD	March 23, 2013
<u>Army SGT Timothy Hall</u> Hawthorne, NV	March 30, 2013
<u>Marine SSgt Bradley Lang</u> Stella, NC	April 6, 2013
<u>Army SSG Joe Beimfohr</u> Tampa, FL	May 11, 2013
<u>Army SGT David Mayer</u> Corona, CA	May 18, 2013
<u>Marine Cpl Tony Mullis</u> Hawkinsville, GA	June 15, 2013

PLEASE VISIT US AT

[www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org)



Homes for Our Troops  
6 Main Street  
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866-7-TROOPS

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**09/10/13**  
**Save the Date**

*Making a difference in the lives of severely injured veterans begins with you. At the heart of what we do is a call to action and the support you give now is life-changing.*

Homes for Our Troops is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that builds specially adapted homes for service members who have been severely injured in combat operations since September 11, 2001, at NO COST to the veterans we serve.

### 3RD ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC



**DATE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2013**  
**LOCATION: Spring Valley Country Club**  
25 Trot Street, Sharon, Massachusetts 02067

**REGISTER online at [www.hfotusa.org/golfclassic](http://www.hfotusa.org/golfclassic)**

or print the registration form and *mail* to HFOT Golf Classic, 6 Main Street, Taunton, MA 02780 or *fax* to (508)823-5411.

**866-7-TROOPS • Email: [cyanosidc@hfotusa.org](mailto:cyanosidc@hfotusa.org)**

**38th Marine Corps Marathon • OCTOBER 27, 2013**

# TEAM HFOT



**There's still time to join **TEAM HFOT** and make a difference in the life of a veteran!**  
**Go to [www.hfotusa.org/mcm13](http://www.hfotusa.org/mcm13)**

A portion of the production costs for Foundations were generously underwritten by Universal Wilde Printing Corporation. This publication is also available online. As stewards of the funds donated to advance the Homes for Our Troops mission – and in our continuing effort to keep administrative costs as minimal as possible – if you would prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, please contact us at [info@homesfourtroops.org](mailto:info@homesfourtroops.org)