



# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) | November 2019



*Celebrating*

15

— YEARS —

Marine LCpl John Curtin  
HFOT Home Recipient, June 2019  
Photo by: Nicole Hill Gerulat  
Courtesy of Wayfair

Dear Friends,

Though the media spotlight on the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan has dimmed, many severely injured Veterans are still waging their own battles right here at home.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, over 2,000 Service Members have returned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with catastrophic injuries including multiple limb amputations, spinal cord injuries involving partial or full paralysis, and severe traumatic brain injury (TBI). Navigating hallways and doorways too narrow for wheelchair access, these Veterans must resort to wearing their prosthetics for longer intervals of time, which results in pressure ulcers and skin infections, with chronic and debilitating pain. Keep in mind many of these Veterans have been coping with the challenges and hazards of living in traditional, non-adapted homes for over a decade.

Now in their 30's and 40's, this population of Veterans is finding it increasingly difficult to adapt and overcome while living in their barrier-filled homes. Inevitably we all must get older, but the aging process and the medical problems that develop with age are accelerated for combat amputees and those who survived severe burns or TBI. Mobility is rapidly declining, and so too is the quality of life for these Veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

This explains why, 15 years after HFOT first opened its doors, hundreds of severely injured Veterans are applying to our program – still. And we remain as steadfast in our resolve to fulfill our obligation to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives for these deserving men and women in need of adapted homes today, and for those Veterans in the future. But we will need your continued support.

HFOT builds more than just homes...we build a foundation of lifelong success for these warriors and their caregivers. Not only have our adapted homes been proven to enhance quality of life for these Veterans and their families, but our society benefits too when these men and women can continue to recover in a safe environment, stay healthy, and continue their work of serving others and their community. Our impact data shows the causal effect and the collective good that happens when Veterans receive a fully accessible and mortgage-free home... what's even more compelling is when you read about each of the stories behind this data.

I'm pleased and honored to share this newsletter with you in time for Veterans Day 2019, and provide just a glimpse of the impact and outcomes you have helped us accomplish for hundreds of Veterans. You should be extraordinarily proud of the work we are doing together to honor America's Veterans and their families, and advance our mission of Building Homes... Rebuilding Lives.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Cody  
General, USA Retired  
Chairman of the Board



NOVEMBER 2019

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Stories that Inspire

- 3 Strokes of Freedom: Future HFOT home recipient Army SGT Mario Lopez
- 4-5 Fundraising to the 10's
- 6-7 15th Anniversary Highlights
- 8 Donor Spotlight: Eric and Sharon Warner
- 8 Stock Giving & IRA
- 9 A New Chapter
- 10 Longstanding Corporate Partners
- 11 Upcoming HFOT Build Events
- 11 Ways to Support Our Mission
- 12 Save the Date! - December 3rd is  
GIVING TUESDAY








FIND & FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



A History of Excellence

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





# STROKES OF FREEDOM



As a child, Mario Lopez loved exploring his creativity through all kinds of art mediums including woodworking, drawing, and painting. One of his earliest memories is of his mother drawing Miss Piggy and Kermit the Frog, and watching in awe as she made the characters come to life as puppets.

Art was a large part of Mario's life until August 2005 when he was severely injured while serving in Iraq. Following an improvised explosive device (IED) blast, Army Sergeant Lopez sustained burns to 50 percent of his body; lost his sight in his right eye; and, most devastatingly, lost his right arm (his dominant one), and four fingers on his left hand. Mario was discouraged at the prospect of never painting again, but he did not have the time to dwell on it during his recovery. *"I could not even think about art anymore. I was just trying to survive and live one day at a time – art was not a big part of my life,"* he says.

A few years later, Mario moved into a new home and was excited to decorate it with original artwork, but quickly learned paintings were expensive. He decided to follow the lead of one of his friends who displayed his own artwork in his home. *"I was amazed at his radical idea – that he didn't even have to ask anybody to make an image. He went to the local craft store and bought the supplies, created it, and then hung it on his wall,"* Mario says.

Getting back into painting, Mario immediately remembered why he loved making art and realized how beneficial it was to his recovery. He taught himself how to paint using his left arm, and started making pieces for himself and friends and family. Now his work is displayed all across the country and he is creating a Veteran art show. *"Painting helps me get my mind off my injuries. To have an idea, no matter the challenge, and bring it into an image and into existence is very rewarding,"* he says.

Mario's inspiration for his work mainly comes from his faith and his surroundings. *"I paint anything that I see that I feel the rest of the world should know about. Every artist has to have that creative courage."*

Art has not only given Mario professional recognition, it also led him to his wife Danielle. The two started talking partly because of Danielle's interest in Mario's artwork. Mario and Danielle now have four children and wrote a book together called *How I Know: A Story to Strengthen Your Faith*.

Though Mario is making a name for himself as an artist, the challenges he faces in his current home prevent him from going even further in his career. He has trouble using the cabinets in his kitchen, and often loses his balance stepping into the shower.

Mario often becomes disheartened when these obstacles limit the time he can spend with his family and hinder his creative process. *"Having an HFOT home will help me and my wife do things around the home more efficiently, and give me more time in the day to focus on my art career with a family of six souls,"* he says. *"Receiving a donated home will give my family a secure footing for the future no matter what life's circumstances may have in store for us. Having a forever home will help me and my family feel like we have a place in this world where we truly belong."*

Mario is grateful to HFOT's donors and supporters for giving him the opportunity to achieve the American Dream. *"Your goodwill toward your fellow man will echo and reinstate into future generations, and shift the perspective to undoubtedly honor the Service Men and Women of this great country."*

*We will be building a home for Mario and his family in New Braunfels, Texas in 2020. Mario created this year's holiday card for Homes For Our Troops.*



Army Sergeant Mario Lopez with his wife Danielle.



# Fundraising 10 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

Nearly \$2 Million!

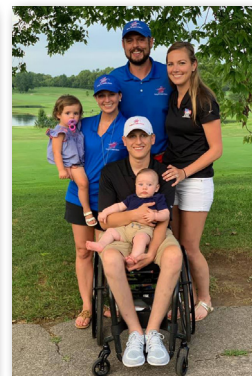
Behind every great organization you will find loyal supporters who make the mission possible. At Home For Our Troops, there are incredible individuals, companies, and groups that have turned their love and support of our mission and our Veterans, into fundraising success. Our supporters engage and inspire their communities each year to come out and support Homes For Our Troops at their various fundraising events. This year we were privileged to have four of our longtime supporters celebrating their tenth year fundraising milestones. Between them, they have raised nearly \$2 million to support our Veterans!



**DFW Clay Shoot**  
Dallas/Ft Worth, TX



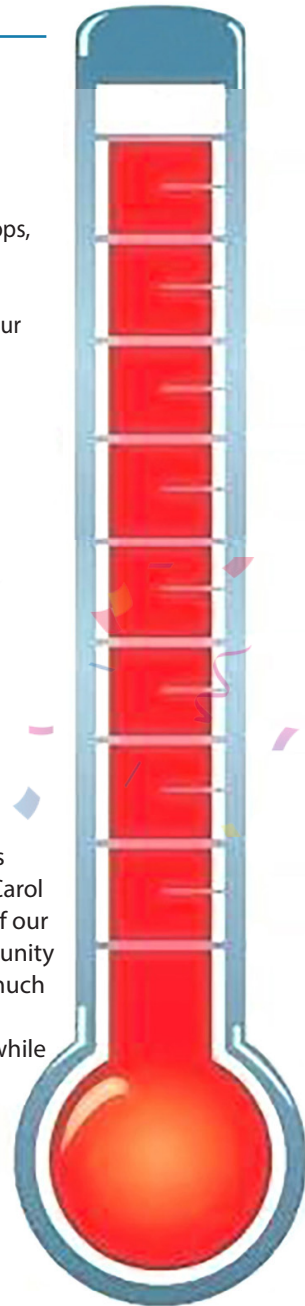
Carol Self leads a committee of volunteers each spring who host a sporting clays event. When she began this adventure 10 years ago as a way to connect with our Texas home recipients through their love of shooting, Carol was not prepared for the camaraderie that grew. This fun filled event serves as an annual "excuse" for some of our Texas-based Veterans to get together, shoot, and spend quality time with their buddies. The shooting community has been supportive of our Veterans, and they enjoy being out on the same course. Carol had no idea how much she would embrace the joy of sharing HFOT Veterans' stories and growing the community of the clay shoot. Carol's supporters come through her personal and business connections, and by engaging the community while she is out and about sporting her favorite HFOT gear.



**Swings for Soldiers Classic**  
Lexington, KY

Former NFL player Jacob Tamme and his wife Allison host an annual golf tournament with help from their family and friends, combining their passion for HFOT's mission with local community engagement. Both Jacob and Allison consider the Veterans and families who have benefitted from their event to be a part of the family they have created over the years. They feel blessed to have an incredible team of coordinators, volunteers, and donors behind their event. What they find powerful about their event is that every single stakeholder truly believes and cares about the mission, which sets the Swings for Soldiers Classic apart from other charitable golf tournaments.

When asked what he would tell himself 10 years ago Jacob says: "It's fine to work hard on your event to make it different and show people how much you care and appreciate their support, but at the same time, you can't always sweat the small stuff. Things will always happen on event day that are out of your control, so focus on the things that you can control."



**Fassett Family Hog Roast**  
Mendon, MI

Peggy and Jim Fassett open up their yard every summer to family, friends, and community members for their annual hog roast. This year they celebrated their 11th hog roast. What began as a way to help a neighbor sell HFOT t-shirts, grew into a community of strangers coming together each summer as a family to support HFOT's mission. Peggy says that what she learned from her experience and involvement with HFOT is that people by nature love to give, and we should all live to give. She also says HFOT Veterans amaze her with their strength and determination, and she is thankful that there is support from organizations like HFOT to help them move forward with their dreams and spend more time with their families.



**Lippert Charitable Golf Outing**  
Menomonee Falls, WI

The Lippert Flooring & Tile team, led by brothers Jeff and Les Lippert, has really fallen head over heels in love with the HFOT mission and the impact that they are having in the lives of our Veterans. This company has found the most unique ways to fully submerge their company culture in all things HFOT. From the employees planning and executing their fundraising events, to the folks who participate, everyone has the opportunity to learn about the HFOT mission. With very unique twists to keep the golf day interesting, they have developed a group of folks who always have their calendars clear for the Lippert Flooring & Tile fundraising events.



*"These efforts to raise funds for HFOT are the least I can do to attempt to pay our Veterans back for volunteering to do both their part and mine to protect and defend our country. I am humbled by their service and sacrifice, and honored to know them personally. These are great Americans and I aspire to be like them."* – Les Lippert, President

*"It has been a wonderful privilege to become increasingly aware of the incredibly important work Homes For Our Troops does. I am very proud of our staff who organize and plan our golf outing each year and volunteer to work the event. The zeal and enthusiasm that drive their efforts is a testimony to the HFOT staff and the amazing people they help."* – Jeff Lippert, Executive Vice President



# 2004 Homes For Our Troops Anniversary Highlights - 15 Years of Building Homes & Rebuilding Lives 2019

Because of your support, Homes For Our Troops has advanced our mission of building and donating specially adapted custom homes nationwide for severely injured post-9/11 Veterans for the past 15 years. Here are some highlights of HFOT's life-changing work over the years.

**Homes For Our Troops** is started by a Massachusetts general contractor who offered to build a specially adapted custom home for Army Sergeant Peter Damon. SGT Damon, who had been injured in Iraq, agreed to have him build the home on the condition he do the same for other injured Veterans.

*"For me, the best part of the home is the spiritual and mental lift it gives a Veteran. It takes financial and physical burdens out of the way, so the Veteran can focus on being well and building a life with their family."*  
 – SGT Peter Damon




HFOT earns **4-star rating** from Charity Navigator.



HFOT donates its **150th home** to Marine Cpl Justin Gaertner in Florida.



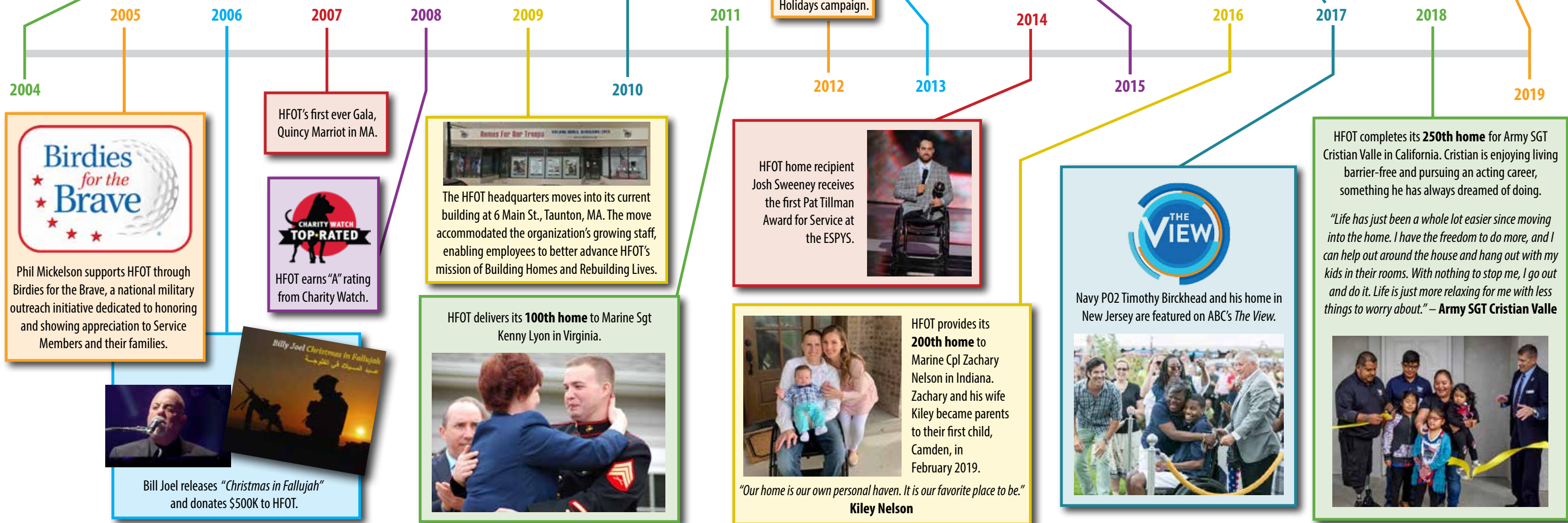
PBS' *This Old House* features Army Staff Sergeant Matthew DeWitt's home build in New Hampshire.




HFOT hosts its first Celebrity Auction with CNN's Jake Tapper, eBay for Charity, and several notable celebrities. HFOT is holding its third annual Celebrity Auction this year, Nov. 7-17.




HFOT celebrates **15 years** of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives with 285 homes built in 42 states.





15 Year Donors:

## ERIC & SHARON WARNER

Homes For Our Troops is fortunate to have many loyal and dedicated supporters in its 15 years of existence. Eric Warner and his wife Sharon have been faithful supporters of HFOT's mission since our inception.

Eric first learned about HFOT while reading the newspaper during a flight. He knew immediately it was a cause he wanted to support. *"At that time in 2004, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were constantly on my mind. Especially the impact the wars were having on our American men and women and their families,"* he says. *"I felt that Homes For Our Troops was offering something specific and vital to our wounded Veterans."*

Eric says he and his wife have continued supporting HFOT because the organization, as they say, *"walks the walk"*. He has been able to see firsthand the impact of the mission by meeting some HFOT Veteran home recipients and hearing their stories. The couple plans to continue supporting HFOT's cause,



Eric and Sharon Warner with HFOT President Tom Landwermeyer.

emphasizing that the need for adapted housing for injured Veterans is still critical. *"The news cycle has moved on, and it is important that we do not forget about injured Veterans as time goes by,"* Eric says.

Learn about how you can support HFOT's mission at [www.hfotusa.org/ways](http://www.hfotusa.org/ways)

## STOCK GIVING

As we near the end of 2019, it is a good time to begin thinking about supporting your favorite charities. Did you know that you can donate stocks, bonds or other securities?

This is a great way to support Homes For Our Troops and the Veterans we serve, with an added bonus of potential income-tax savings! \* For more information about donating stock, please contact **Suzanne Shaheen at 508-823-3300 Ext 241.**

*\* HFOT recommends you consult a tax professional about your personal giving strategy.*



Double the impact of your gift! Many employers offer matching gift programs to assist their employees, spouses, and retirees in supporting organizations and missions that mean the most to them. Start your match today!

See if your gift is eligible to be matched by your employer by visiting [www.doublethedonation.com/hfotusa](http://www.doublethedonation.com/hfotusa)

## Benefits of giving through your IRA – Tax Wise Option for Donors 70 ½ and Older

### Your Qualified Charitable Deduction Benefit (QCD)

- QCDs allow the donor to transfer up to \$100,000 annually
- QCD counts toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year
- QCD gifts are transferred from an account directly to HFOT
- QCDs are excluded from gross income for federal income tax purpose on your IRS Form 1040

### To be eligible for your Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD)

- You must be 70 ½ or older at the time of the gift
- Transfers must be made directly from a traditional IRA by your IRA administrator. Ensure that your information is on the check, in order to properly acknowledge the IRA gift
- The distributions cannot go to a donor-advised fund or life-income gifts, such as charitable remainder trusts or gift annuities
- Gifts must be outright and the donor cannot receive any goods or services in exchange for their contribution

### Interested

Contact Suzanne Shaheen, *Planned Giving Officer* to learn more:  
508-823-3300 ext. 241 • [sshaheen@hfotusa.org](mailto:sshaheen@hfotusa.org)  
[www.hfotusa.plannedgiving.org/ira-charitable-rollover](http://www.hfotusa.plannedgiving.org/ira-charitable-rollover)

\*Please consult your tax advisor to confirm how you would benefit from this opportunity

See IRS Publication 590-B for more in depth information



# A NEW CHAPTER

*Jennie Hendrickson was filled with gratitude and emotion on the day she and her husband, Navy PO3 Justin Hendrickson, received the keys to their new specially adapted custom home in Pennsylvania, Aug. 3, 2019. In her speech below, she shares her deep appreciation for Justin and how much their new home means for their future.*

"I am so proud to be married to someone who is so patient, so kind and so loving. Justin and I have been married for 12 years. Some days have been good, and some days haven't. But we carry every day with us because this makes us how we are today; honestly, I wouldn't want it to be any different. God blessed both of us with second chances at a new life.

Today, I want to speak not as a home recipient and not as Justin's wife, but as a person who has watched this man grow; who has succeeded, who has taken his very hard past and turned it into his future to teach others. Justin has endured things that I could never imagine. Yes, I survived brain cancer and am now in remission, but he had to take care of me and everything in our house. In a marriage, this is probably the worst-case scenario for your spouse. And it hurt me to know that here he is, fighting again for something, and for someone, just like I had to.

While he was in the Navy serving with Marines as a corpsman, I can't relate to the thought of having friends that are a part of a close knit bond, a brotherhood, and they would fight and die for each other if that time had to come. That is foreign to us civilians unless you have seen war. Being in the military was the freedom Justin needed to see the world, and to see the world differently now than the rest of us do.

In the midst of having so much to go through when Justin was injured, is something that many Veterans still have to go through today. Can you imagine, let alone understand, what that must have been like, and then to try to put all of that to rest? Many Veterans never leave the destruction, never leave the death of their friends, and are forced to save all the PTSD that comes with it for when they get out. Justin lost one of his friends that day and he was not able to help him because of his wounds. He directed everyone to hold their ground, with everyone injured and they made it out - I cannot imagine what it takes to find any sort of strength in the face of danger and possible death. Justin has seen and been through so much. Justin – you have honor.

Justin graduated with a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in education and leadership. He works two jobs. Three times a year he is asked to teach second year military students at the Wounded Warrior Panel at Walter Reed. I hear his story from Iraq every time he is in the classroom. He teaches others about what happened to him physically, mentally, and medically, and what these students from every branch of the military should be thinking about now as they learn and grow. You can see that he makes a big impact to them and you know that they won't forget what he taught them.



*The Hendricksons at their Key Ceremony.*

He has been and will always be successful because he is so driven and appreciates the life he has. He is a very positive person. He always wants to make things better, and easier. He is definitely someone to look up to. He has an old soul and is very wise beyond his years. I have learned so much from Justin. Sometimes, I wonder why he chose me to be his wife. I am a simple woman, and Justin likes to stir things up a bit.

Justin, thank you for being someone that we all can look up to...to teach us, to understand, to love and for the endless possibilities that you show and share with others. That, anyone's life isn't just for settling. There is way more out there in the world than people can think of and showing people not to be scared and go for it! Thank you for thinking outside the box, always – even though I give you the side eye with a smile when you come up with your crazy ideas. Thank you for sharing and for challenging me and others. Thank you for, being honest, true to yourself and making people laugh. The world needs more people like you! And most of all, thank you for loving me. Because even though I tried to keep this letter 'unbiased,' you need to know that so many people here love you, and I most of all. I thank our Heavenly Father for you every night when I pray. You are my life, my love, my strength and my everything. We've helped each other through our worst times and have celebrated during the best times. HFOT is giving us a new chapter, and I am gladly taking this next step with open arms and new possibilities with you. I love you always and forever. Thank you for being you."



*Jennie Hendrickson speaking at her husband's Homes For Our Troops' Key Ceremony event in Harrisville, PA.*



# LONGSTANDING CORPORATE PARTNERS



At Homes For Our Troops, we are fortunate to have the support of many Corporate Partners that provide products and monetary donations. In honor of our 15th Anniversary, we are highlighting some of our longest standing corporate partners.

**Texas Roadhouse** - Texas Roadhouse has been a loyal supporter of the HFOT mission ever since the organization's inception in 2004. The national restaurant chain first got involved with the organization by holding motorcycle rides to benefit HFOT builds early on, and signed on as a National Partner in 2015. In addition to fundraising annually to support the organization, they also frequently cater HFOT build events around the country. The company CEO and founder, W. Kent Taylor, is a member of HFOT's Board of Directors.

**Veterans United** - HFOT is fortunate to have Veterans United Foundation's support since 2012. The organization is dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the lives of Veterans and Service Members, for employees and their families, and in local communities served by Veterans United.

**CertainTeed** - CertainTeed is another longstanding supporter of the HFOT mission. The company partnered with HFOT in 2013 as the Official Supplier of roofing for every specially adapted home, and now also provides gypsum, insulation, solar and siding. Their high quality building products have significantly reduced costs in 125 homes. This outstanding support begins at the top with their CEO, Mark Rayfield leading the way.

**Whirlpool** - Whirlpool has been HFOT's loyal Official Supplier of ADA compliant appliances since 2013. The company involves other brands under Whirlpool Corp., including KitchenAid and Gladiator, by providing housewarming gifts such as small kitchen appliances; a rack system; and storage cabinet for the garage. The Whirlpool Veterans Association has been key to this outstanding support.

**Harvey Building Products** - Since 2009, Harvey Building Products has been a devoted Regional Partner for the Northeast providing windows for HFOT homes in their region. Additionally, the company raises money for the HFOT mission during their annual Harvey co-branded winter hat campaign in November.

# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS





# UPCOMING HFOT BUILD EVENTS



11/16/19 – **Army SGT Mario Lopez**  
COMMUNITY KICKOFF • New Braunfels, TX • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

11/16/19 – **Army SGT Nathan Shumaker**  
COMMUNITY KICKOFF • Hillsboro, MO • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

11/23/19 – **Army SSG Cody Rice**  
COMMUNITY KICKOFF • Penn Valley, CA • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

11/23/19 – **Army SGT David Guzman**  
COMMUNITY KICKOFF • Wimberley, TX • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

11/23/19 – **Army SSG Frank Wasson III**  
COMMUNITY KICKOFF • Salem, OR • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

12/7/19 – **Army SGT Aaron Boyle**  
KEY CEREMONY • Yelm, WA • Saturday at 1:00 p.m.

12/7/19 – **Marine LCpl Sean Carroll**  
KEY CEREMONY • Pine, CO • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

12/7/19 – **Army PFC Vicente Ramirez**  
KEY CEREMONY • Crestview, FL • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

12/14/19 – **Army SPC Carlos Gomez**  
VOLUNTEER DAY • Menifee, CA • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

12/14/19 – **Army SGT Patrick Wickens**  
VOLUNTEER DAY • Orlando, FL • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

1/11/20 – **Marine 1stSgt Marcus Wilson**  
VOLUNTEER DAY • Winchester, CA • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

1/25/20 – **Army SPC Carlos Gomez**  
KEY CEREMONY • Menifee, CA • Saturday at 10:00am

1/25/20 – **Army SGT Patrick Wickens**  
KEY CEREMONY • Orlando, FL • Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

1/25/20 – **Marine 1stSgt Marcus Wilson**  
KEY CEREMONY • Winchester, CA • Saturday at 3:00 p.m.

To find out about build project updates, visit [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org)

**OUR MISSION:** To build and donate specially adapted custom homes nationwide for severely injured post-9/11 Veterans, to enable them to rebuild their lives.



## WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION

- **Donate** *Today*
  - **Join** *Operation Lasting Support (OLS)*
  - **Fundraise** *for HFOT*
  - **Sponsor** *an event or become a Corporate Partner*
  - **Volunteer** *at Events*
  - **Run** *with TEAM HFOT*
  - **Enroll** *in our Honor Home Program*
- Visit [www.hfotusa.org/ways](http://www.hfotusa.org/ways)**





Homes For Our Troops  
6 Main Street  
Taunton, MA 02780

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## OUR MISSION

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To build and donate specially adapted custom homes nationwide for severely injured post-9/11 Veterans, to enable them to rebuild their lives.



**YOU** can **HELP** injured **VETERANS!**

Help us reach our goal of \$150,000 on

**#GIVINGTUESDAY**

**DECEMBER 3, 2019**

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

