



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | FALL 2016



HFOT home recipient, Army SGT Luis Alvarado and his parents, Sonia and Julio.

CELEBRATING OUR NATION'S VETERANS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends,

While Veterans Day traditionally celebrates America's Veterans for their patriotism and willingness to sacrifice for our freedoms, I am dedicating this issue to the unsung heroes of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – our nation's military spouses and caregivers.



Since 9/11, while millions of Servicemembers have deployed to defend this nation, a different band of brothers and sisters undertook that same mission here on the home front. They wore no uniform and carried no rank other than wife, husband, mother, father, brother, or sister, but their duty was - and remains today - a crucial testament to the strength of America's character.

Homecomings aren't as joyous and smooth as we see in the movies or on TV. Readjusting to family life, or transitioning to civilian life brings new challenges to the military family. And for those whose Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine came back home with life-altering combat injuries, their journey proves tougher altogether.

From hospital to home; surgery to recovery; inpatient to outpatient; through endless appointments and prosthetic fittings – every exhausting hour – these proud Patriots have proven their unwavering loyalty not only to their Veteran, but to their country.

Yet there is no national holiday nor medal to recognize their sacrifices.

We should all share the load these caregivers carry if we hope to succeed in keeping America's promise to its Veterans. Supporting HFOT's efforts to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives is a great start. I believe HFOT is most worthy of your support not only because of the freedom our homes provide to our most severely injured Veterans, but because of the tangible impact these homes have on their families and caregivers too. It is my pleasure to introduce a few of their incredible stories on the following pages.

This Veterans Day, I hope you will find a moment to keep our caregivers as well as our Veterans in your thoughts.

Lastly, I thank you for your continued support of HFOT, and all you help us do to honor the Heroes who gallantly fought for the freedom our great Nation offers its people today.

May God bless you, and may God bless America.

Sincerely,

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

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A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

HFOT is evaluated as one of America's Top-Rated Veterans and Military Charities



Future HFOT home recipient, Army SGT LisaMarie Wiley.

MISSION READY:

Army Veteran LisaMarie Wiley continues to lead and serve others

Don't let her barely five-foot frame fool you. Army Sergeant Lisamarie Wiley has ample strength and might to tackle any mission - and that's just her physical toughness.

The Army relied heavily on her brainpower as well. As a former Human Intelligence Collector, Wiley was responsible for gathering information about the enemy force's assets, weaknesses and potential battle areas. It was a job she loved, and she thrived among the camaraderie of fellow brothers and sisters who fought alongside her to defend their country.

In November 2011, however, Wiley's dream job ended during her second deployment to Afghanistan, when she stepped on a daisy chain improvised explosive device and lost her left leg. "I was immediately depressed," recalls Wiley. "There was a plan, and it just got blown up. Now what?"

It was a devastating and life-altering injury, but by the following March, Wiley was already walking on a customized high-heeled prosthetic leg.

Wiley remained on active duty as a member of the Army's Warrior Transition Unit, which supports injured Servicemembers and helps them get back to Army or civilian life. During her hospital stay, she went from room to room mentoring other patients, their spouses, and families; the role modeled a process for her own recovery. "In helping others and being there for them, they helped me," she says.

After speaking at an event at the Richmond VA, representatives approached her about joining the VA's Prosthetics and Sensory Aid Federal Advisory Committee, which provides advice to the

Secretary of Veterans Affairs on VA prosthetics and technology. She was subsequently appointed as the consumer rep of the committee. "I hope to bring the voice from the patient's perspective, contributing the questions and comments of those who are not in a position to communicate," she says.

Last August, Wiley was also accepted into the Homes for Our Troops Program; a new mortgage-free home customized to her injuries is now in her sights. With a fully accessible home, there will be no barriers and ample space when she opts to use her wheelchair. "Feeling safe in a place where I am alone and at my most vulnerable is something I've longed for since my injury," she says. Currently, when she slips in the shower or trips on the carpet, Wiley says she feels taunted by her current home, imposing limits on her as an amputee.

The financial independence she will gain will allow her to pursue a degree in education, and become more engaged in her local community too. She and her fiancé Matt Ryals, along with friends, are creating a nonprofit that will serve as a thrift shop/donation collection and pickup spot. It will also offer community space for various art and music shows, enrichment classes, and therapeutic activities. "We are interested in providing a safe place for the community to learn and teach, to experiment, and be creative," Wiley says.

While at times she feels her Army career was cut too short, Wiley chooses to remain positive. Right now she's embracing the opportunity from HFOT, one that will help her flourish in her new mission, and provide a safe and comfortable home in which she can start a family. "I can't imagine anything better than this," she says.

Homes for Our Troops will be building Wiley a specially adapted home in Texas. Learn more at www.hfotusa.org/wiley.



Reporting for Duty: Meet HFOT Volunteer, Jim Gray

Several days a week, Jim Gray can be found volunteering at HFOT's headquarters office in Taunton, Massachusetts. A proud Navy Veteran, Gray is usually sporting a baseball cap adorned with an array of military insignias and HFOT pins.

Gray has helped the organization since its early days in 2004, most recently assisting the Development Department with donor correspondence and HFOT mailings. During the busy year-end giving season, Jim helps process over 500 donor thank you letters daily, allowing the HFOT staff to work on other tasks.

Usually arriving 15 minutes early every volunteer shift, Jim stays until the job is done. When he works a full day, he only stops briefly to eat lunch. Employees try to get him to stay and chat on their lunch breaks, but he insists that he needs to get back to work as soon as possible.

Jim served as a Radarman aboard the destroyer USS Willis A. Lee. During his service, he deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the Mediterranean Sea. "I am thankful for my military service and having served my country," he says. Currently he is an active member

of Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Chapter 57 and serves as their Officer of the Deck.

HFOT never seems to leave Jim's mind, even while traveling. During his vacation, he sent HFOT employees a postcard, and brought back pictures to share with the staff. At a Naval Reunion this past year out in California, he brought along some HFOT materials to distribute to fellow Veterans to spread awareness about HFOT's cause.

Last year, Jim received a special commendation from HFOT for helping the organization propel its mission of building adapted homes for injured Veterans.

"I am really humbled and proud to be part of an organization such as this one," says Jim. "My hope is that a new home will make a drastic difference in the lives of these Veterans and their families, and that it gives them peace of mind and comfort," he says.

Looking to get involved? Visit hfotusa.org/help to find dozens of ways to stay connected to our cause.

FUNDRAISING FACTS:

Fundraising options are unlimited: "Simple things you are already doing, like car washes, bake sales, and sporting events, can often turn out to be the most successful fundraisers." – Fundraising Coordinator Monica Sweeney

Best part of the job: "Guiding enthusiastic supporters in the right direction, and helping them host successful events is great." – Fundraising Coordinator Dylan Curtis

Anyone can hold a fundraiser or volunteer: "You don't need a uniform to serve, just passion for the mission." – Events Manager Cara Yanosick

Meet the Department: Community Outreach and Fundraising



The Community Outreach and Fundraising Teams at HFOT.

Two teams at HFOT serve as its "boots on the ground," and are tasked with creating awareness about our cause at the local level and engaging communities to rally behind each Veteran's home build project.

The Community Outreach Coordinators (COCs) plan and facilitate all of the logistics for each signature build event for our Veterans, while the Fundraising Coordinators enlist area residents, civic groups, and other community members to help raise the funds necessary for the construction project.

The COCs start off many weekends jet setting all over the country to kick off a build project, landscape a home, or hand over the keys to a home recipient. They work from dawn to dusk pouring over details and arrangements ranging from porta potties to podiums, and booking guest speakers and military dignitaries to ensure each event is a success.

While each build may be in a different location, the welcoming atmosphere the community members give each Veteran is the same. "We witness the first-hand love and support a community can provide," Community Outreach Coordinator Katelyn Donovan says.

Independent Fundraising Coordinator Monica Sweeney says if you want to witness America's giving spirit, plenty of patriotic supporters can be found around HFOT build events. "The majority of our fundraisers are so passionate and fired up about HFOT and the mission already. But when they experience one of our build events in person and meet our Veterans, they realize how special our cause is," she says.

To find a build event or fundraiser happening in your community, visit www.hfotusa.org/calendar.

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THE CREW:



Top picks to grab a bite: "Texas Roadhouse barbeque, burger at Stickies in North Dakota, mac and cheese at the Pickled Pig in the Kansas City airport." - Brianne McNamara



Don't forget your umbrella: "Wherever I am on the road it rains. At Anthony Simone's Volunteer Day in Illinois, it was a torrential downpour. Everything and everyone was covered in mud and it was freezing. But the community still got the job done in good spirits!" – Mary Espinoza



The planning and traveling is all worth it: "After a long trip, we helped handover a house that will become a new home, and a new beginning. To us, this is an honor and a privilege." – Katelyn Donovan



Brianne McNamara, HFOT Community Outreach Coordinator.

HFOT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Ever wonder how HFOT selects its Veterans? Or how long it takes to build an adapted home? This Program Overview addresses these questions, and outlines our approach in providing forever homes to our nation's most severely injured Veterans, and rebuilding their lives.

THE HFOT DIFFERENCE...



To safeguard our donors' investment, HFOT conducts a thorough review on each Veteran who applies to our program, including a criminal and financial background check.



HFOT provides three years of pro-bono financial planning and household budgeting education to every Veteran in our program.



Homes are 2,650 square feet, four bedrooms and two baths, which we feel is the right size home for a Veteran to comfortably raise a family while limiting expenses for utilities. HFOT provides a warranty to guard against defects, and is committed to resolving any issues.

1. The Application

HFOT's Intake department responds to all inquiries from Veterans or their caregivers applying to Homes for Our Troops. One basic requirement is that the Veteran must be approved for the Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) benefits by the Veterans Administration. The applicant's information is then reviewed by HFOT's Veterans Selection Committee (VSC), who then determines if the Veteran will be invited to the final step of the application process, the Veterans Informational Conference held in Massachusetts. This final step includes an interview with HFOT staff and a Veteran representative.



2. Vet Conference & Acceptance

Our three-day conference is where the Veterans learn more about HFOT and our expectations for their home build project, while meeting other Veterans who wish to join our program, and the HFOT staff. The Veterans Conference is the final assessment tool used to evaluate and confirm that HFOT's Program model and the Veteran are right for each other.

3. Land Search, Purchase and Closing

HFOT's Land Acquisition Team then begins searching for land in the area where the Veteran has chosen to live. The entire process - locating a viable parcel of land, engineering, purchasing and closing - takes an average of 6-9 months, depending on the location and the flexibility of the Veteran and his/her family.



5. Construction

HFOT secures a licensed general contractor to build the home. The construction phase takes about 5-8 months to complete. Variable factors include weather, local ordinances, and permit approvals etc. During construction, each home is physically inspected by our team a minimum of three times.



4. Community Kickoff

The Community Kickoff event is scheduled after land is acquired, and is the first phase of welcoming the Veteran to the neighborhood. HFOT's Community Outreach Coordinators organize the event as a means of creating awareness for the Homes for Our Troops mission, and engaging local residents, civic groups, and area businesses to support the Veteran's project.

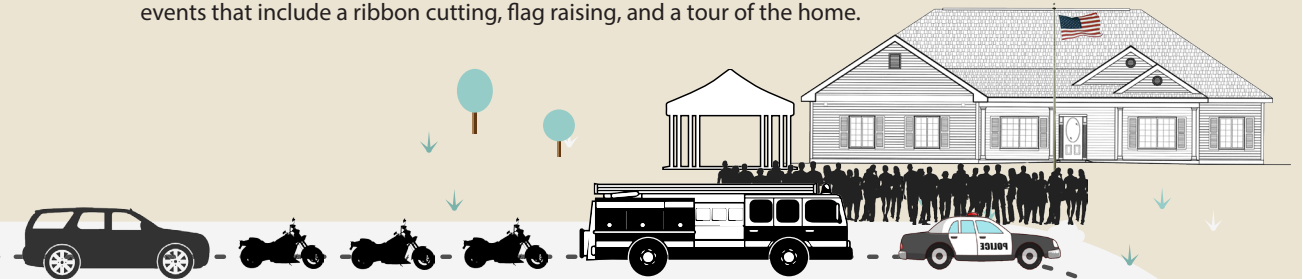
6. Volunteer Day

As the home nears completion, a Volunteer Landscape Day is set. This day gives community members a hands-on opportunity to beautify the outside of the home with plants, trees, shrubs and flowers, and put the finishing touches on the Veteran's home.



7. Key Ceremony

At this ceremony, the Veteran and his/her family are presented with the keys to their new home. Community members are invited to share in the day's events that include a ribbon cutting, flag raising, and a tour of the home.



8. Rebuilding Lives

HFOT stays in touch with each Veteran long after we turn over the keys to their new "forever" home. We have built a strong network among our staff, the Veterans in our program, their families, and the communities in which we build. Since 2004 we have helped over 220 Veteran home recipients transition from military to civilian life, and provided them with a solid foundation to establish roots and a sense of belonging in their community. Our goal is for every Veteran in our Program to feel that HFOT is an extension of their family. Visit hfotusa.org/faqs to learn more.

THEN & NOW:

FIVE YEAR HFOT ANNIVERSARY

We can give you no better proof of how your support is making a difference than by letting our Veteran home recipients tell you themselves. Here's an update on two of our Veterans, each of whom are celebrating five years of living barrier free this November.

Adrian Garcia

KEY CEREMONY DATE: November 11, 2011



Charles Armstead

KEY CEREMONY DATE: November 12, 2011



THEN: Army Specialist Adrian Garcia was only three weeks into his first deployment when he lost both legs after a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack in Ramadi, Iraq, in March 2007. Prior to moving into his HFOT home, Garcia was living in his mother's house, which was not wheelchair accessible.

UPDATE FROM ADRIAN: "I can't believe we have lived in this house for five years come November. Time flies when you truly are happy. November 11, 2011, was one of the best days of my life. It was the day I received the keys to my new home from Homes for our Troops, and the day I proposed to my wife Sarah!

We couldn't be happier, thanks to you and everyone else who has supported Homes for Our Troops. Life in my home feels like a dream. It might be too comfortable! I couldn't sweep or mop at my mother's house, but here at home I've become Mr. Clean. Sweeping and mopping are a breeze. Everything is possible for me now in my own home, including cooking for my wife or doing the laundry. I no longer feel worthless. This home is my life.

It was honestly scary living in such a beautiful home at first. So much responsibility. But HFOT has given me a new life. A new purpose. A home. My grandmother who passed away would always say "Que castillo tienes," *What a castle you have!* I could not agree more."

LOOKING AHEAD: "I care deeply about the oceans and forests and our environment as a whole, and I have a passion for screenwriting. Living mortgage-free in this home will allow me to carry out a new mission, spreading the word about pollution, deforestation, and extinction - topics that are important to me."



THEN: Army Sergeant First Class Charles Armstead was on his third deployment in Hamman Al Alil, Iraq on May 2, 2009, when he was shot in the stomach. He sustained internal injuries and shattered his right hip, along with extensive nerve and spinal damage. As a result of his injuries, his right leg was eventually amputated.

Charles was previously living in a two-story home, confined to only a few rooms. At the time he debated selling his existing home and building another one, but he could not carry two mortgages. Eventually he was going through some papers and ran across information from HFOT, and took it as "a sign from God." Finally, he says, he filled out the application.

UPDATE FROM CHARLES: "My life was changed for the better forever. The freedom that HFOT has given me in this home has been amazing. I don't have to worry about getting in and out of the bathroom or shower. Every room in the house I can maneuver in freely, what a feeling. My favorite part of the home is the kitchen because I love to cook and it allows me to move around and do what I need to do.

Thanks to everyone at HFOT for taking away all the worry and uncertainty of the future for me as far as living conditions. I am so thankful and grateful that you chose to help me and all the other Vets that were in similar situations. You guys were heaven sent in my opinion. Even now when HFOT staff members call or message me, the receptions are so warm. It really feels like an extended family - and not just "Here is a house and we're done." I don't know how many times I can say it but on behalf of me and my family, THANK YOU, THANK YOU and THANK YOU."

LOOKING AHEAD: "All of the girls are doing great. My

oldest, Ashley, graduated from nursing school and is an ER nurse; Amber is in the Army at Ft. Carson, Co., and my baby girl is going in to eighth grade and doing well. I'm preparing for the upcoming basketball season now, training in order to try to make it back to the Invictus Games next year in Toronto."



HARDI

Heating, Air-conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International

HARDI joins HFOT mission, signs on as official supplier of HVAC

On July 31, 2016, HFOT President & CEO, Major General USA, Ret. Tim McHale, and HARDI CEO Talbot Gee, participated in a signing ceremony to solidify a partnership between HFOT and HARDI for the next three years. As part of the sponsorship agreement, HARDI's contributing distributors will provide Energy Star rated HVAC equipment and installation supplies in every HFOT home. The total value of this commitment may reach \$2 million, funds which will allow HFOT to more efficiently Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.

"Support from partners like HARDI is crucial to completing our mission of building adapted homes for our nation's most severely injured Veterans," says McHale. "As HFOT embarks on its mission to help even more injured Veterans in 2017, it becomes increasingly important to have patriotic businesses step up and fulfill America's promise to these deserving Veterans."



HFOT's Tim McHale (L) and Talbot Gee, from HARDI.

HARDI's initial support of HFOT began in 2011, at its Annual Conference; in 2015 the company had a record-breaking year with \$60,000 being raised for HFOT through employee donations.

"It is a badge of honor for us to partner with Homes for Our Troops," says Gee. "There's also a very practical reason for this partnership: our members are in a position to acquire high-efficiency equipment for these homes, which can lower a Veteran's utility costs and provide better indoor air quality."

For more information on becoming a Corporate Partner for Homes for Our Troops, please email us at: partnership@hfotusa.org.

BUILDING
REBUILDING

Did you know that corporate volunteer programs actually drive employee engagement? Companies that promote active corporate volunteer programs enjoy greater employee satisfaction, higher morale, and – as a result – greater productivity and profitability.

ADD YOUR COMPANY TO HFOT'S GROWING LIST OF PATRIOTIC PARTNERS!



HOW YOU CAN HELP OUR VETERANS TODAY!

Donate today at www.hfotusa.org/donate

Include Homes for Our Troops in your estate plans*

Make a gift of stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares

Operation Lasting Support (OLS), and pledge to become one of HFOT's monthly donors



**As always, we recommend you contact your financial advisor to make an informed decision.*



Dustin and Melissa Johns, HFOT home recipient



MORE WAYS TO HELP!

- Celebrate Giving Tuesday on November 29, 2016. Be sure to watch for this year's special music video with the HFOT staff!
- Help us reach this year's fundraising goal of \$75,000 on Giving Tuesday to help us Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.
- Share our website and social media updates with your family, friends, and contacts.

Homes for Our Troops

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Homes for Our Troops

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