



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | MARCH 2022



The Key to Independence!

YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

A Letter from the Executive Director



Dear HFOT Supporters,

Reflecting on the challenges of the last two years, I am humbled by the loyalty of donors like you who have kept our mission moving forward. The onset of the pandemic in March 2020 was an uncertain time for organizations, not knowing what the future held. I am proud to say two years later, we have overcome the obstacles and continue to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.

This issue clearly demonstrates the impact of your generosity. With the added challenge of living in a non-accessible home, starting a dream job, pursuing goals, or raising a family may seem out of reach for many severely injured Veterans. Receiving a specially adapted custom home gives our home recipients more time to dedicate to the important things in life, and enables them to thrive in a living environment where the barriers have been eliminated. In this issue, we feature the remarks Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson gave at Marine Lance Corporal Bryan Chambers' Community Kickoff in Indiana. In it, he explains how his home has helped him advance his career and start a family. On page 5, we hear from Army Staff Sergeant Henry Escobedo and find out how he's been rebuilding his life since receiving his home in Texas last February. We also introduce you to Army SSG Randall Young, who cannot wait to see what he will be able to accomplish once he receives his HFOT home in Alaska later this year. YOU are the engine that makes these success stories possible.

As you can imagine, fundraising is a vital part of your efforts. Every year we look forward to celebrating our Annual Top 10 Fundraisers, and it is always exciting to see our supporters develop creative ways to engage others in our mission. Please understand that no idea is too small – our Fundraising Team is always looking for new and innovative concepts.

Please enjoy these updates on the impact you are having. We look forward to continuing to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives with you.

Sincerely,

Bill

Bill Ivey

Executive Director

Homes For Our Troops

March 2022 *Spring is in the air!* INSIDE THIS ISSUE Stories that Inspire

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2021 Team HFOT Fundraising Champions



ON THE COVER: Marine CW03 David Field
HFOT home recipient, March 2022



A History of Excellence

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



When given the choice of anywhere to live in the country, Alaska may not be the first location to come to mind for many. The colder climate and lack of daylight during the winter months might discourage some from settling in the area, but Army Staff Sergeant Randall Clay Young couldn't picture himself anywhere else. The scenic landscape and vast opportunities for outdoor activities drew him to the area. *"My first impression of Alaska was that I had come to a place that would be full of life and adventure. The state has four distinct, beautiful seasons, all with their sights and outdoor experiences to explore,"* he says.

An important aspect of the HFOT program is that the Veterans choose where they want to build their forever home. So far, we have built homes in 42 states – Randall's home, the first HFOT home in Alaska, will bring us to 43. The Veterans' decisions are often based on factors like climate, healthcare, family, and, most importantly, a place where the Veteran can see themselves thriving. *"Veterans all know that during recovery, motivation is a key element in becoming the best we can be,"* says Randall. *"The beauty of Alaska is a constant motivator to get out and do things. Since the seasons are so different, you rarely get bored or let life become monotonous."*

After sustaining severe injuries to both legs while serving in Iraq in 2006, Randall experienced many challenges within his home. Though he can walk with the assistance of a cane, his injuries put pressure on his back and upper legs, causing tension pains. His current home cannot accommodate a wheelchair, so he cannot rest his legs often. Living in a non-accessible environment, Randall feared he would always need help in his own home. *"I am restricted from certain areas in my living space because I cannot get to them without risking injury or pain,"* he says.

Randall says receiving an HFOT home will be the gateway to his independence. The open floorplan, wide doorways, and accessible bathrooms will enable him to use his wheelchair more frequently. HFOT kicked off the building of Randall's home in August 2021, and he is currently living right across the street from where the home is being built, giving him a front-row seat to watch his future come together. *"As I watch my home being built, all I can think of is: 'What on earth am I going to do first?' It's almost as if I am being released from a prison of limited space,"* he says.

Randall looks forward to growing a garden and cooking more when he moves into his new home. He also wants to focus on photography, and he will have no shortage of scenery to capture in Alaska. *"When I have the space, I will be able to gather equipment that will allow me to improve my techniques. The home will provide me with the ample space I need."*

Randall wants HFOT's donors to know how much he appreciates their time and support. *"You have no idea how much these homes mean to Veterans like me."*

Six years of living barrier-free

Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson was the Veteran Representative for Marine Lance Corporal Bryan Chambers' Community Kickoff on Jan. 8, 2022. In his remarks, Cpl Nelson describes how life has improved for his family since receiving his specially adapted custom Homes For Our Troops home six years ago.

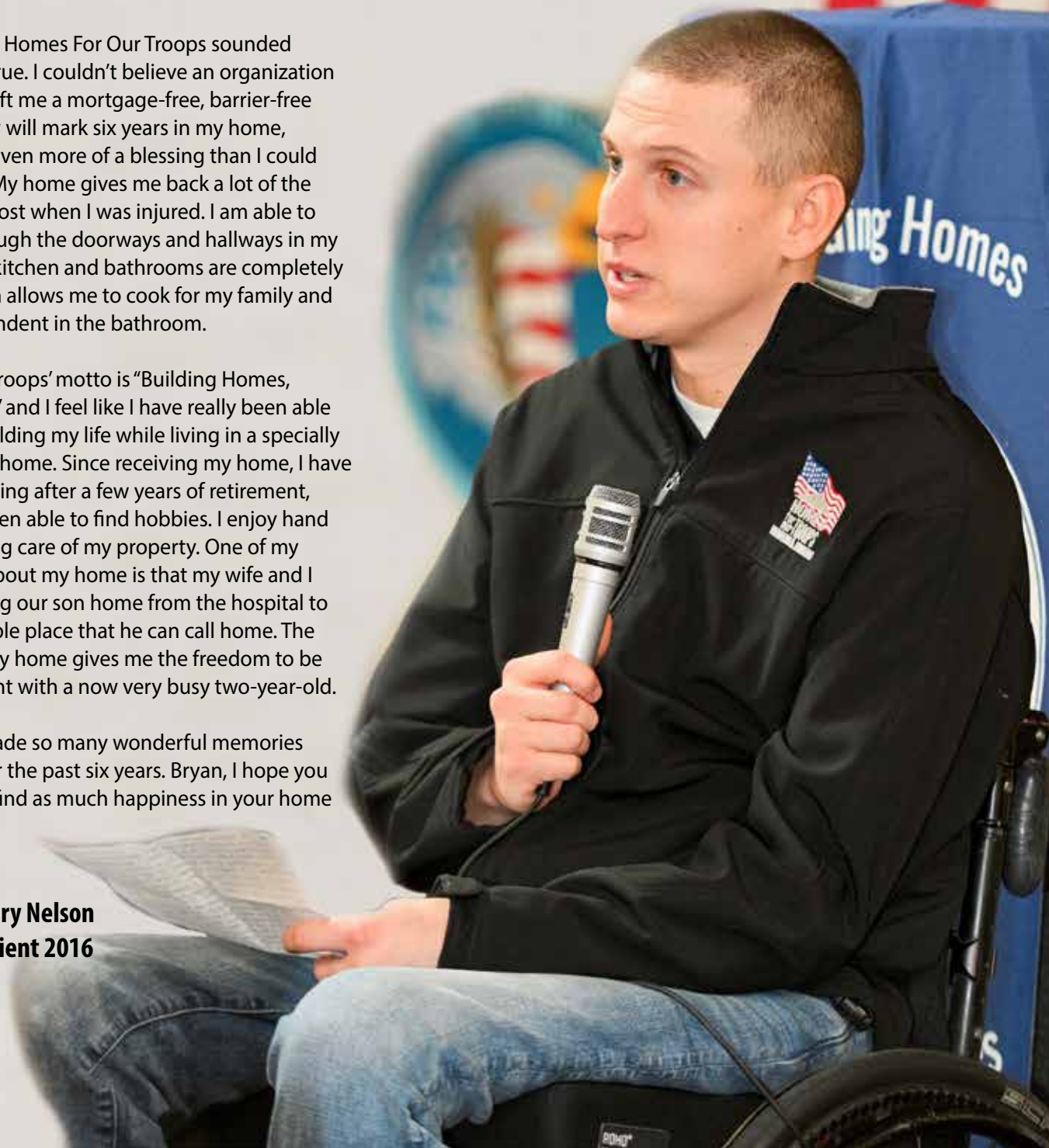
Hi, I'm Zachary Nelson. I enlisted in the Marine Corps right out of high school and was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. July 5, 2012, I was severely injured when I was involved in a vehicle rollover while I was positioned as the gunner on top of our vehicle, resulting in a complete spinal cord injury at T3 and paralysis from the chest down. I spent the next several months in the hospital, and I learned about Homes For Our Troops from another Veteran there.

At first, I thought Homes For Our Troops sounded too good to be true. I couldn't believe an organization would want to gift me a mortgage-free, barrier-free home. Tomorrow will mark six years in my home, and it has been even more of a blessing than I could have imagined. My home gives me back a lot of the independence I lost when I was injured. I am able to move easily through the doorways and hallways in my wheelchair. The kitchen and bathrooms are completely accessible, which allows me to cook for my family and safely be independent in the bathroom.

Homes For Our Troops' motto is "Building Homes, Rebuilding Lives" and I feel like I have really been able to focus on rebuilding my life while living in a specially adapted custom home. Since receiving my home, I have returned to working after a few years of retirement, and have also been able to find hobbies. I enjoy hand cycling and taking care of my property. One of my favorite things about my home is that my wife and I were able to bring our son home from the hospital to a nice, comfortable place that he can call home. The accessibility in my home gives me the freedom to be a hands-on parent with a now very busy two-year-old.

My family has made so many wonderful memories at our home over the past six years. Bryan, I hope you and your family find as much happiness in your home as I have.

Marine Cpl Zachary Nelson
HFOT home recipient 2016





It was just over a year ago when Army Sergeant First Class Henry Escobedo received the keys to his specially adapted custom home in Texas. Now, he's participating in sports and activities he never thought he would pursue. This past fall, Henry joined Houston's Bayou City Heat Beep Ball team. Beep ball is a form of baseball that is played by blind people using a ball that beeps.

Henry was intimidated by the sport at first. *"I had never played baseball in my life and it had been years since I played any sport,"* he says.

At the start of his first practice, Henry crashed into a few players, and fractured his ribs while diving for the ball. Despite the mishaps, Henry found the sport exciting and fun. *"I felt free, invincible, and, most of all, alive,"* he says.

Henry says regaining his independence within his HFOT home gave him the boost he needed to break out of his shell. When he started losing his sight from multiple injuries he sustained while serving in Iraq, he initially had a hard time with the diagnosis and felt lost. Once accepted into the HFOT Family, Henry's outlook began to change for the better, knowing he would soon regain his freedom and independence. Now, one year after moving into his HFOT home, Henry is thriving. *"I am more energetic, active, and, most of all, happy."*

In addition to playing beep ball, Henry has also gone skydiving and was recently invited to attend the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) Blind Soccer camp in Los Angeles. *"At times we think that it is the end of the world, but then a helping hand lifts you up and redirects your path."*



HFOT home recipient SFC Henry Escobedo recently started playing beep ball, which is baseball for blind players.



Gen Allen with his family.

Board Member Spotlight:

General John Allen



Gen Allen with Army SGT Emmanuel Melendez-Diaz.

John R. Allen is a retired U.S. Marine Corps four-star general and former commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Prior to assuming the Presidency of the Brookings Institution in November of 2017, Allen served as Special Presidential Envoy to the global coalition to counter the Islamic State, a position he held for 14 months. Immediately following retirement from the Marine Corps, he was the senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Middle East Security, and in that role, he led the security dialogue with Israel and the Palestinian Authority for 15 months within the Middle East peace process.

Gen Allen joined the HFOT Board of Directors in 2014 and has been an integral member ever since.

Why is HFOT's mission important to you?

It would be hard to overstate the importance of the work that HFOT does. Its motto "*Building Homes ... Rebuilding Lives*" says it all. HFOT has placed hundreds of our most grievously wounded or injured young American Veterans and their families in their own homes, mortgage-free, and in so doing, has lifted an enormous burden from their shoulders as they navigate the realities of their respective situations. Here, what HFOT does, is real, tangible, long-lasting help for Americans and their families who have paid an enormous price on behalf of all of us. They deserve this kind of care from the American people, and HFOT is delivering on it.

How did you find out about the organization?

I'd been observing HFOT for some time among the array of Veterans support organizations, and those specifically focused on honoring our injured. In that context, I'd heard of HFOT for some time, but when the HFOT Board Chairman General Richard Cody asked me to join the Board, I jumped at the chance. I'm deeply grateful to him for this opportunity to help our wounded.

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

I was motivated to be part of something that was dramatically changing lives for the better. When you hear the individual stories of our Veterans and how much better their lives and those of their families were made by these magnificent homes, you can't help but come away committed to this mission and this organization. A final reason, but perhaps the most important reason for my wanting to help HFOT, is that it was my honor to serve with many of our Veterans either in Iraq or in Afghanistan, and I feel an obligation to help however I can.

What would you say to encourage others to get involved with HFOT's mission?

As someone thinks about making a time or monetary investment in an organization, putting it here will deliver a huge return on this investment. HFOT has built and transferred more than 325 homes into the hands of our Veterans and their families. While the Veterans benefit personally from the work of HFOT, so too does the spouse or principal caregiver, and if there are children, so too do they as well. The "rebuilding lives" dimension isn't just about the Veteran ... it is of course ... but also about the families as well, and because of the benefits to the children, the work of HFOT will truly transcend the generations. So, to someone contemplating HFOT, I say: "*Get involved. Donate. Help build a house for an American Veteran and his or her family.*"

How does our organization differ from other charities you've worked with in the past?

While I don't have a lot of experience with other charities, my experience with HFOT has been uniformly very positive. The organization is highly mission-focused and results and output-driven. The staff is of the very highest caliber, and each and every one of them is dedicated to helping our Veterans and their families. The level of individual and organizational dedication and personal selflessness, existing within a culture of self-sacrifice, is truly something to behold and worthy of the highest praise and support.

What's the biggest challenge for HFOT- and what steps is the Board taking to meet / accomplish its mission despite that challenge?

COVID, as it has with every other sector of our society and economy, has also touched HFOT's operations as well. Construction crews being forced to socially distance on sites early on during the pandemic, and supply chain issues, have had their effect on the construction momentum of the organization over the last two years, but HFOT persevered nonetheless, and homes were still built for our precious Veterans and their families. In 2022, HFOT will recover its intended pace of building. Another challenge is simply the economy. As inflation increases, and as the price of land and the building of homes increases, it will place greater pressure on the resources of the organization. Even so, the incredible generosity of the American people, the dedication of the HFOT team, and the tireless work of the organization's Board and Ambassadors will keep up the mission. I have never seen a group of people so completely and utterly committed to fulfilling their support to our young Veterans and their families. I am so truly humbled and honored to be associated with HFOT and to be a member of the Board.



Corporate Partner Spotlight: COSENTINO - Silestone® Products

Homes For Our Troops is proud to have partnered with Cosentino for the past five years. HFOT recognized this milestone by presenting the company with a U. S. flag flown over Army Sergeant Emmanuel Melendez-Diaz's home last month.

Cosentino is celebrating 25 years of being in business in North America this year. They have been HFOT's official supplier of quartz countertops since 2017, and donated over \$500,000 in gift in kind.

"We take pride in the quality of our homes and the products we use. We are very fortunate to have had Cosentino as a Corporate Partner for the last several years, and are extremely grateful for their genuine commitment to our mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives," says HFOT President/CEO Brigadier General, USA (Ret) Tom Landwermeyer.

"It is an honor for Cosentino to be able to contribute to such an important cause and make a difference in the lives and homes of these Veterans to whom we owe a great deal," says Eduardo Cosentino, CEO of Cosentino North America & EVP of Global Corporate Sales. *"We look forward to many more years of an impactful partnership, and in homes across the country".*

OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

PLATINUM NATIONAL PARTNERS



GOLD NATIONAL PARTNERS



SILVER NATIONAL PARTNERS



NATIONAL PARTNERS



MISSION PARTNERS



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

Top 10 FUNdraisers of 2021

Congratulations on raising over ONE MILLION DOLLARS!



1

Teamsters Local 120 Picnic & Golf Tournament

\$208,818

Location: MN
Years Fundraised: 6



6

Honoring Our Wounded Military Gala & Golf Tournament

\$90,000

Location: TX
Years Fundraised: 2



2

Rosedale Country Club Golf Tournament

\$133,205

Location: FL
Years Fundraised: 9



7

United States Cold Storage Central Region Connect For A Cause

\$81,801

Location: U.S.
Years Fundraised: 1



3

Haselden Construction Clay Shoot

\$125,063

Location: CO
Years Fundraised: 7



8

MMC Corp Purchasing Summit

\$75,000

Location: KS
Years Fundraised: 3



4

Run For The Wall Bike Run

\$100,000

Location: U.S.
Years Fundraised: 1



9

Luke Forelle Running Across Iceland

\$74,329

Location: Iceland
Years Fundraised: 1



5

Tactilian Flag Magnets

\$92,029

Location: U.S.
Years Fundraised: 2



10

You, Me, & RV

\$69,004

Location: U.S.
Years Fundraised: 2

Running For A Cause!

As we reflect on our Annual Top Ten Fundraisers list, we feel immense gratitude for everyone who participated in supporting our deserving Veterans last year. We know the dedication, commitment, and effort it takes to host a fundraising event, and we couldn't be more thankful for every one of you.

We are always excited to see who makes our list, and it is no surprise to see the Teamsters Local 120 and Rosedale Country Club round out our top two. They continuously lead the way with their efforts and abilities to connect their communities with our mission.

This year we had several fundraisers make their Top Ten debut, including one fundraiser who not only raised \$74,329, but is also the first HFOT fundraiser to go international. Luke Forelle inspired us with his tenacity, strength, and endurance while running across Iceland. He, along with his close friend Elliot Berenger, broke the Guinness World Record completing their run in nine days, six hours.

If raising money and breaking a world record isn't enough, Luke is also a Veteran himself. He served in the Marines with HFOT home recipient Cpl Garrett Carnes. Reflecting on what motivates him to support HFOT, Luke says:

"I was with Garrett in Khan Neshin, Afghanistan when he stepped on an IED and lost his legs on February 19, 2012. It was a very dark day for me and for the rest of the platoon. I remember trying to call his wife, Courtney, from a satellite phone a week or so later when I returned to our Combat Outpost. I had no words to share with Courtney that could convey the deep sadness I was feeling and how much I wanted everything to be OK for them. Knowing Garrett's character and drive, I was convinced that he was going to be uniquely able to weather the storm, but I also knew it was going to be a tough road."

I found out about HFOT when I attended Garrett's Key Ceremony. I was immediately struck by the simplicity of the mission and the tangible impact that HFOT's program was already having on Garrett's life. The Key Ceremony marked a turning point, in my mind, in Garrett's recovery. Prior to his HFOT home, I knew Garrett struggled with living independently and that it was wearing on him emotionally. As Garrett's former platoon commander and his friend, I will always be indebted to HFOT for what this amazing organization did for him in a time of need."

After leaving the military, Luke was determined to continue challenging himself mentally and physically, which led him to the world of ultramarathons. After a few attempts at running long-distance races, he and Elliot set their sights on breaking the former record in Iceland, which was 10 days, 13 hours. Luke is proud of his accomplishment yet humbled. "I have no delusions of grandeur and fully expect someone to come along and break it again. Hopefully, they raise even more money for HFOT!"

Luke and Elliot are already in the planning stages for another year, and Luke is preparing us for the adventure. *"The plan hasn't been finalized but I expect it will be at least 500 miles and be something bordering on the absurd."*

While we don't know Luke's destination yet, we do know his HFOT family will be cheering him on from all over the world. We couldn't bring more deserving Veterans into their specially adapted homes every year without our fundraisers, and we are thankful for this growing community. As we launch into another year, we remember that we couldn't do our jobs, here at HFOT, without all of YOU. We may have the vision; however, it takes all of you to advance our mission. **Happy FUNdraising!**

Luke Forelle takes on Iceland!



Luke and Elliot



— OLS Spotlight: — HFOT home recipient Marine Corporal Christopher Montgomery



To Marine Corporal Christopher Montgomery, the decision to give monthly to Homes For Our Troops is a personal and long-term one: *"HFOT will be a recurring donation for me because of the impact they have on the Veteran and the Veteran's family."*

Christopher knows how a specially adapted home can change a Veteran's life firsthand. He received his own HFOT home in Mobile, Alabama, on July 14, 2013. Three years prior, Christopher lost both of his legs and severely injured his left arm in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast while on patrol in Afghanistan. *"At 23, losing your legs is a huge alteration to everyday living. Learning to cope and deal with my new circumstances was not an easy task,"* Chris explains.



"Everywhere I go I have to worry about accessibility and if I'm going to need someone to help me. Being a former Marine and a very proud person, this affects me in ways people cannot understand. I'm a very independent individual and this home alleviates any stress that may come with travel or just visiting someone else's house. No matter where I go, I always know that I get to return to a home specifically suited for me. It's an unbelievable feeling."



Thankfully, Christopher's fully accessible home from HFOT drastically eases the daily obstacles he faces. *"Coming home is always a relief because I don't have to worry about how I'm going to do common, everyday life tasks."*

After being in his HFOT home for over eight years, Christopher has been able to rebuild his life. He has gotten married and gone on to study sustainable agriculture. He is also a firm believer in giving back. For the past few years, Chris has been a dedicated member of HFOT's monthly giving program, Operation Lasting Support (OLS). As he puts it, *"I decided to give because of the impact HFOT has had and currently has on my life. The construction of a new fully accessible home changed my life... how can you repay an organization that changed your life?"*

Chris is just one of many HFOT Veterans who have decided to "pay it forward" by giving monthly through Operation Lasting Support (OLS). OLS is a perfect giving option for those who want the ease of monthly donations, while helping HFOT build a sustainable stream of income to support our mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.



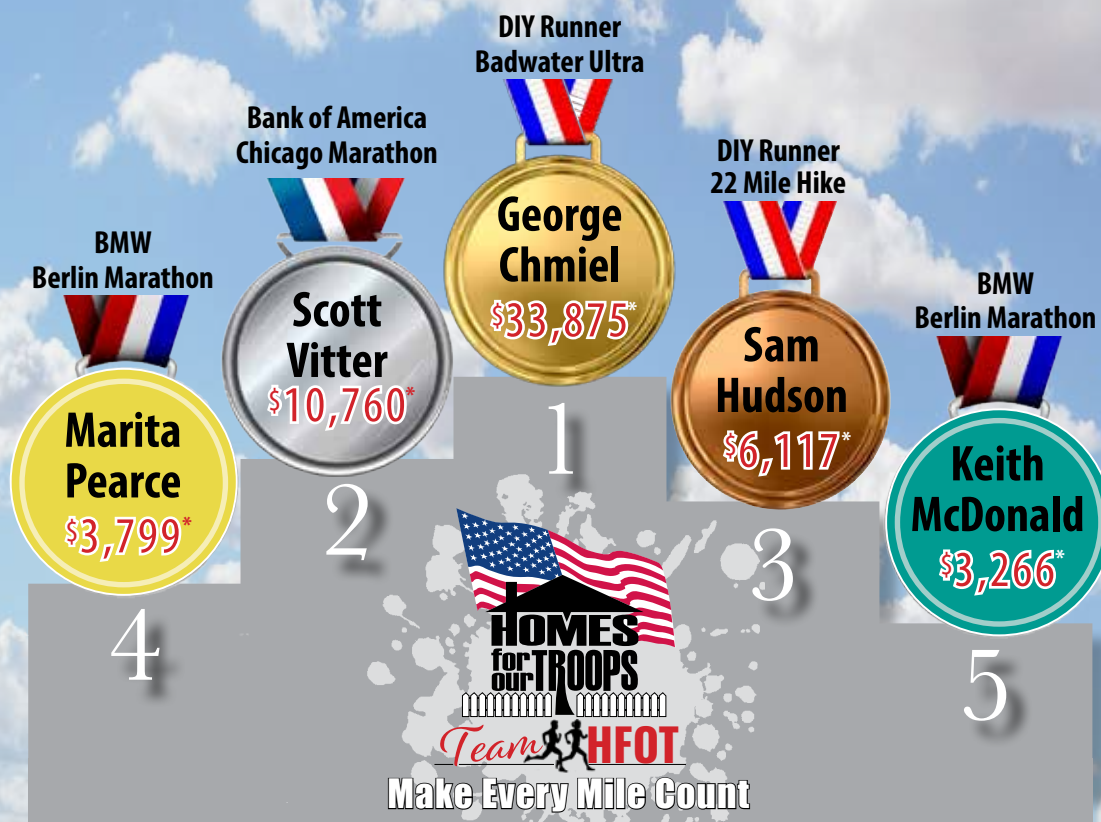
SAVE THE DATE

**CAMARADERIE CLASSIC
2022 GOLF TOURNAMENT**
JUNE 13
 ARMY NAVY COUNTRY CLUB



HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS

2021 Team HFOT Fundraising Champions!



*amount over fundraising requirement