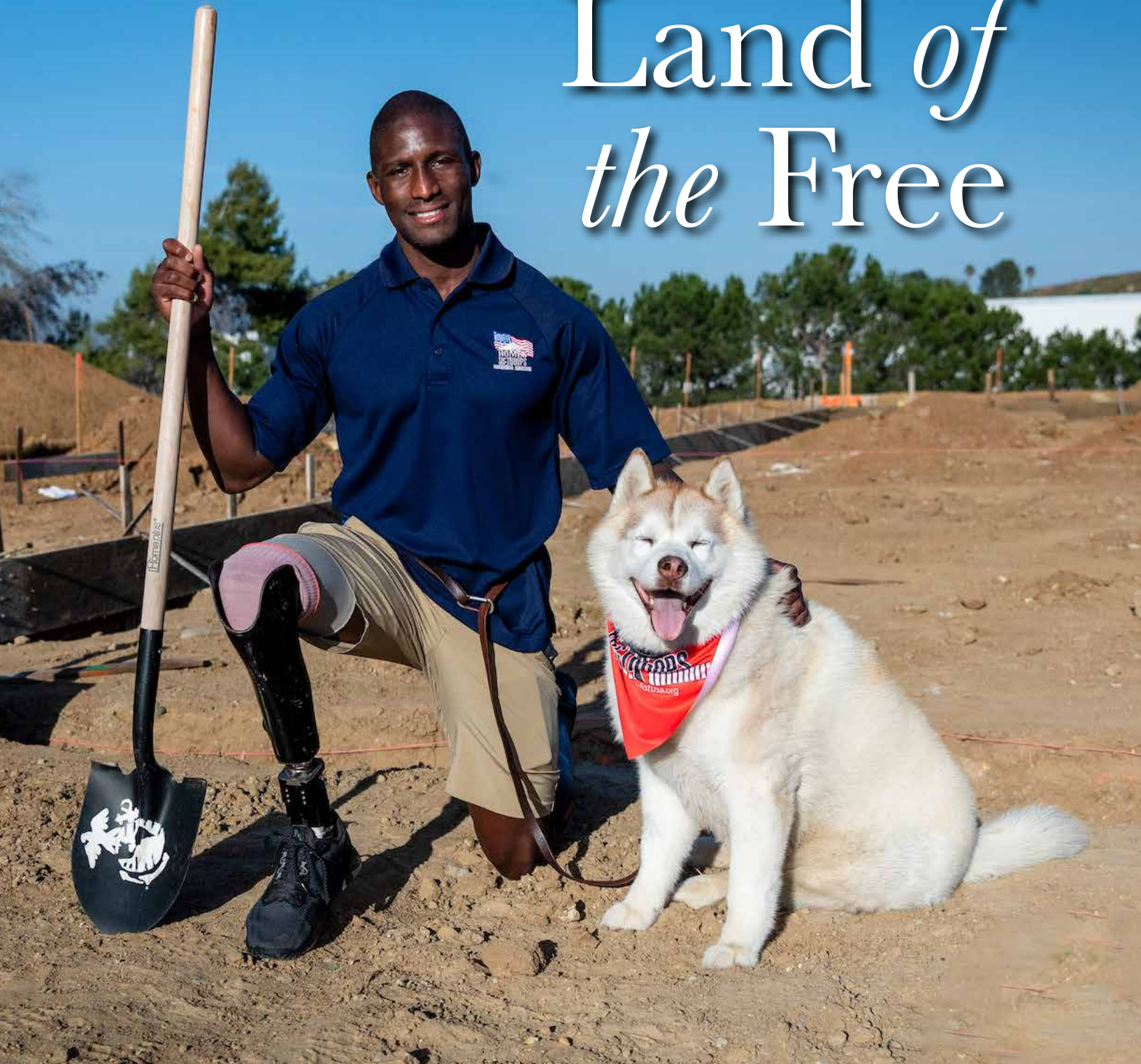




Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | JULY 2021

Land of the Free



YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of HFOT,

I know many of you are excited about celebrating Independence Day this month. After a year and a half of fighting the pandemic, the country is turning the corner as cases decline, vaccine distribution increases, and states reopen. Americans are ready to get together with loved ones for gatherings that have been long postponed.

As we celebrate, we reflect on the true meaning of the holiday: The United States declaring itself a free, independent, democratic nation that Veterans past and present have fought so hard to preserve. As you know, Homes For Our Troops exists to assist these Veterans who have sacrificed their freedom and independence defending ours, and I want to thank you for your tremendous dedication to our mission. **YOU** are the reason we can continue providing specially adapted custom homes to severely injured post-9/11 Veterans, enabling them to rebuild their lives.

The following pages showcase some of the freedom and independence HFOT Veterans experience – or will soon experience – in their specially adapted homes. On page 4, you will meet Army Specialist Jon Roberts who received his HFOT home in 2008. The independence he regains in the home enables him to enjoy his favorite activities and host family and friends. We will also introduce you to Army Specialist Lucas Schmitz, and hear how he anticipates his HFOT home will benefit him and his family.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our important cause. You are providing these Veterans with the adapted homes they need and deserve, enabling them to rebuild their lives.

Have a safe and happy Fourth of July. Hope to see you at a build event soon.

Sincerely,

Bill

Bill Ivey,
Executive Director
Homes For Our Troops

ON THE COVER:
Marine Cpl
Kionte Storey
Future HFOT
home recipient



JULY 2021

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Check out our new Planned Giving Website!

Homes For Our Troops is excited to unveil our revamped Planned Giving website. This new site is user-friendly and provides valuable information for your Planned Giving Gift Options, including resources about wills, stocks, IRAs, and trusts.

As one of our valued supporters, we appreciate your commitment to our mission of *Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives*. We hope this new website will provide a better user experience as you explore the options. You can get started today at:

<https://hfotgiving.org>

If you have any questions or need more information on leaving a legacy with HFOT, please reach out to Suzanne Shaheen, *Planned Giving Officer* at: sshaheen@hfotusa.org

Have you tried HFOT's donor center yet?

To enhance your online experience, visit Homes For Our Troops' donor center. The portal provides access to your giving history, enables you to customize the communications you receive from HFOT, and gives you the ability to update your contact information. *Log in and check out your profile today at:*

[Log in and check out your profile here.](#)



A History of Excellence

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

Learning to Rebuild

As an Infantryman with the Minnesota Army National Guard, Specialist Lucas Schmitz never envisioned becoming an elementary school teacher. After losing his right leg while serving in Iraq in 2006, Lucas had to reconsider his future plans.

While mulling over potential career paths, Lucas decided to pursue special education, knowing it was a job in high demand. For the last few years, he's worked at the high school and middle school levels, and is currently at a local elementary school. After working in the field, Lucas realized his military background and experience going through a traumatic injury help him relate to his students, specifically those with behavioral challenges. *"I understand how they're feeling,"* he says. *"I understand when they're going through their fight mode, where you don't know what to do except fight everyone around you. That's how I felt for years."*

Lucas finds his job rewarding, but the role, understandably, requires much focus and energy. After a long day in the classroom, Lucas heads home to recharge, but relaxing is hard to do in his current living environment. Although he wears a prosthetic, it often becomes painful after extended use, so he prefers to take his leg off while at home. Since his home is two levels, Lucas usually has to remain on the second floor where he and his wife Tina and their two daughters have bedrooms. However, if he needs to venture downstairs to tuck his son in at night, he has to use crutches or hop on one leg, risking further injury to himself. Lucas also has to be cautious about falling outside his home, which is on a hill, especially during the cold and snowy Minnesota winters. Receiving a single-level, specially adapted custom Homes For Our Troops home will mitigate many of these obstacles Lucas faces. *"I am looking forward to having that extra security in the home,"* he says.



Army SPC Lucas Schmitz with his family



Army SPC Lucas Schmitz

Lucas acknowledges it took some convincing for him to join the HFOT family. He felt that others deserved a home more than he did, and thought he could manage without one. When he realized the benefits the home would have for his family, he changed his mind. Tina is a registered nurse at a local hospital and often works unconventional hours. Having an accessible environment will make it easier for Lucas to care for their children when she isn't home. Most importantly, the financial freedom will enable Lucas to provide for his family. *"My lesson in mortality has changed how I value life and what is a priority for my family and me. My happiness is intertwined with my family. Securing a positive future for them makes me beyond happy,"* he says.

Lucas wants HFOT's donors to know he is appreciative of their support, not only for himself but for his family. *"The peace of mind knowing my family is going to be okay means more to me than anything else. That's the best gift you can give,"* he says.

Homes For Our Troops kicked off the building of Lucas' home in Minnesota in June. Follow his project at:
www.hfotusa.org/schmitz

Riding on to Recovery

Army Sergeant Jon Roberts has a lot to look forward to every week, especially on Sundays and Tuesdays. After church on Sundays, his family gathers at his home for a potluck lunch. After the meal, Jon takes his trike out, and he and friend go for a ride together around Jon's neighborhood in Waxhaw, North Carolina. Every Tuesday, he heads out to Angelic Riders, a local farm, for horseback riding lessons. *"I love horseback riding. Tuesday is my favorite day of the week,"* he says.

The memories Jon is making are possible because of the generous support from the Homes For Our Troops donors and supporters who contributed to the building of his specially adapted custom home in 2008. Jon sustained a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) while serving in Iraq in 2005. As a result of his injury, he cannot walk independently, and he has difficulty controlling the left side of his body.

While he was in the hospital after being injured, Jon's parents, who were missionaries in the Philippines at the time, worried about how they would adequately care for their son in a non-adapted home. Features in traditional housing, like stairs, are a challenge for Jon. *"I can put weight on my legs, but I have little balance because of my TBI. So, without help, I would fall,"* he says.

His family's concerns dissolved when they heard about HFOT and learned the organization would build Jon an adapted home. His grandfather gave Jon land next to his and Jon's aunt's residences in North Carolina. *"I really appreciate that this home was built for me right next to my family,"* says Jon.

Jon's home has enough space for him to keep a recumbent trike, which he uses for rehabilitation and to stay active. The independence he regains in the home empowers him to venture outside for horseback riding and trike rides. Most importantly, the home enables Jon to be comfortable in his wheelchair while being surrounded by family and friends. *"Having this very nice and accessible home given to me, just because I did my job, is amazing,"* he says.



SGT Jon Roberts at his horseback riding lessons.

Read more stories about Veterans like Jon at: www.hfotusa.org/rebuilding-lives



SGT David Guzman prepared hot meals for neighbors during the Texas snowstorms earlier this year.

Stirring up Warmth Through the Storm

When snow and ice storms pummeled Texas earlier this year, causing rolling blackouts across the region, Army Sergeant David Guzman was relieved to hear the generator in his Homes For Our Troops home kick in. "When the power went out, the generator would turn on and keep the house comfortable. It was a huge blessing," he says.

David and his family weren't the only ones to benefit from this home feature – their neighbors did as well. As one of the only people in his neighborhood with a generator, David helped others out by preparing and distributing hot meals. His friends across the street, John and Kathleen Knoll, were grateful to David's generosity during this time. They had no power for the better part of ten days. *"Our neighbor, David Guzman, was an angel of mercy during this storm. His home is equipped with a generator in the event of emergencies. Not only was he able to cook hot meals, but he was also kind enough to share them with us,"* says John. *"These meals were delicious, and they were truly life-saving in this time of emergency."*

As a professionally trained chef, food has always been a source of comfort for David. He felt providing meals was the least he could do for the Knoll family and others nearby. He first met John and Kathleen when HFOT kicked off the building of his home. David and his family were grateful for their hospitality when they first moved in, and he sees providing them meals during the storm as a way to thank them.

While David feels fortunate to have his HFOT home during times of crisis, he also enjoys the simple things, like making his wife Maribel breakfast while she relaxes. David often became discouraged in his previous home because he could not easily prepare meals since the kitchen was not wheelchair accessible. As a result, David would have to rely on Maribel and his children for help around the home. *"It feels good to see Maribel taking a break while I make meals and help around the home,"* he says.

David says he cannot even imagine what his life would be like without the HFOT staff, donors, and supporters. *"This home is a dream come true."*

Read more stories about Veterans like David at: www.hfotusa.org/rebuilding-lives



Board Member Spotlight

Shelley Yarborough
Treasurer



Army Colonel (Ret.) Shelley Yarborough is in her tenth year at Cypress International in Alexandria, Virginia, joining the company after 30 years leading Army and Joint organizations, as well as advising the most senior executive leaders. She is an expert in defense industry strategic planning, program & portfolio management, defense budget analysis, business development, and proposal review.

Shelley's education includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Physics from Murray State University, a Masters in Aerospace Management from Embry Riddle Aerospace University, and a Masters in Strategic Studies from the USAF Air War College. She is a graduate of the US Air Force Air Command & Staff and Air War Colleges, the US Navy Engineering Test Pilot School, and has earned defense acquisition workforce certifications from the Defense Acquisition University in executive program management and test and evaluation.

Shelley joined the HFOT Board of Directors in 2014 and has been an integral member of the team ever since, often speaking at and attending HFOT events around the country. Here, she shares how she got involved with the organization's mission.

Why is HFOT's mission important to you?

The HFOT mission is important because it's focused on serving and enabling our families to live and thrive in their own homes. My dad was a triplegic for over 25 years. I know how hard it can be for a physically challenged Veteran to function and raise a family in a house that isn't accessible. HFOT changes that for our Veterans and their families. Homes For Our Troops Veterans live in well-constructed and fully accessible homes. And the homes are built where they want to live. This gives our families more opportunity to focus on family life and not worry about mobility and safety in their own homes. Also, they become part of our HFOT family – they know that the HFOT team remains engaged in how they're doing, and the Veterans can reach out if assistance is needed.

How did you find out about the organization?

GEN Richard Cody, our Chairman of the Board, brought me into the organization several years ago to assist with organizational strategic planning. I had worked for GEN Cody in a couple of assignments while in the Army, and seen first-hand his leadership and passion for caring for Soldiers. I knew that if he was the Chairman, that HFOT was focused on serving Veterans and their families.

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

I saw the impact on our families. Being an HFOT Board member allows me to continue to actively care for our military families who've given so much of themselves in their service to others.

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

Meet one of our Veterans and their families. Listen to them explain what being in the HFOT family means. See one of our homes – learn how having a safe home really brings more freedom to an injured Veteran and their caregiver. See how you can make a difference in their lives.

What has been your most memorable moment with the organization?

Participating in key ceremonies, the event where HFOT hands the keys to the family and says, "This house is now your home - live in it, enjoy it, be safe in it. Welcome to the HFOT family."

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

First off, HFOT is not a charity. HFOT, as a nonprofit, is driven by its mission to continue serving our military families who, through their severe injuries, have earned one of our homes. Additionally, the HFOT team doesn't just build a house and walk away – the HFOT team remains available for our families as they continue on their journeys of healing and life ahead.

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

As a Board Member, my challenge and mission are to enable the HFOT team to start and complete every home build quicker. When a great team has the resources they need, they accomplish great things. In our case, that's building well-constructed and safe homes where our Veterans and families want to live. Every day they must wait is a day away from the safety and assurance of being in their HFOT home.



HFOT Welcomes Sparkling Ice® as a Corporate Partner

Homes For Our Troops is excited to welcome Sparkling Ice® beverages as our newest Corporate Partner. Sparkling Ice, made by Talking Rain Beverage Company, is a full-flavored zero-sugar, sparkling water made with natural colors, real fruit flavors, vitamins, and antioxidants. The brand will be heavily involved in three build projects in 2021, and will help raise awareness about HFOT's mission through various marketing channels and platforms. Additionally, the company will provide Sparkling Ice to attendees at selected build events.

"We're proud to support Homes For Our Troops in their mission to build specially adapted custom homes for post-9/11 Veterans," said Chris Hall, Chief Executive Officer at Talking Rain Beverage Company. "As a third generation Veteran, I'm grateful for the opportunity to honor my fellow service members for their sacrifice and service. We wouldn't have the freedoms we have today without our Veterans' heroic service, and now, it's our turn to give back to those who have given so much. By supporting Homes For Our Troops, we hope to play a small part in helping these Veterans rebuild their lives and regain their freedoms."

Corporate Partner Spotlight: Ferguson® Enterprises



Ferguson Enterprises has been a loyal partner of Homes For Our Troops since 2015. Ferguson provides top-of-the-line plumbing fixtures and rough-in materials for every home we complete.

Veteran home recipients rave about the features in the master bathroom. Thanks to Ferguson, Veterans enjoy large roll-in showers with the ability to precisely control water temperature, before getting in, with the digital thermostatic valve (DTV) using the controller on the wall or an app on their phone. Temperature control is important for our homes since many Veterans have nerve damage from injuries and burns, and cannot sense the temperature of the water. The bathtub features spa-like features such as whirlpool jets and heated air bubbles to enable Veterans to continue therapy at home or relax after a long day.

"HFOT's remarkable work ensures our Veterans and their families are able to live a healthy, happy life in a home that meets their needs. Our entire company is inspired by the work of HFOT and the men and women who courageously fought for freedom. We're certainly proud to serve as the official plumbing supplier and do our small part in appreciation of our military families," says Melissa Hazelwood, Ferguson Cares Senior Manager for Sustainability.

Ferguson always goes above and beyond to make sure Veterans are receiving high quality items, and is quick to help when an issue arises, such as the availability of a particular product. Please join us in thanking Ferguson for all they do to support HFOT's mission and our Veterans.

Is your business or company interested in becoming a Corporate Partner? Learn more at: www.hfotusa.org/partner

SAVE THE DATE!

JULY 12th!



Join us in Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives!

Q & A

*with Dick Power,
HFOT's pro-bono financial planner*



To set the conditions for our Veterans' long-term success, Homes For Our Troops provides each Veteran a pro bono financial planner for three years to assist with financial planning and household budgeting. For ten years, Financial Planner Dick Power has led this initiative and connected HFOT Veterans with certified financial planners nationwide.

"Homes For Our Troops is fortunate to have Dick Power and his network of financial planners offer their expertise to our Veterans," says HFOT Executive Director Bill Ivey. "Getting the opportunity to sit down with a professional financial planner enables them to establish a strong financial foundation as they rebuild their lives. It is also another tool that we use to safeguard our donors' investments."

In our Q&A, Dick explains how he got involved with HFOT and the role financial planning plays in rebuilding Veterans' lives.

How did you first hear about HFOT's mission?

A number of years ago, one of my professional friends, Hal Estabrook from Bridgewater, was working out at a fitness facility in Massachusetts. Hal is a former Marine and was a pro bono volunteer I worked with in our Massachusetts Financial Planning Association program to serve the military and Veterans. Hal got into a conversation with an HFOT employee and developed an interest in the program and what we could do. He and I met with the HFOT founder and key staff, and discussed some of the issues Veterans in new homes were encountering.

What inspired you to get involved with HFOT's mission?

Hal and I knew financial planning could be the answer to money problems. It certainly fit with our role in pro bono work with the military community in Massachusetts. We also saw that it would align with the national Financial Planning Association (FPA) pro bono program that I was also actively connected with. Our idea was to create a relationship between HFOT and FPA wherein FPA would access its extensive network of pro bono planners to serve these Veterans who are spread all over the United States. FPA has about 85 chapters and is in almost every state. It seemed to be a perfect fit. And so, we worked with HFOT and national FPA to create a model and service arrangement that's evolved, and has been in place for over 10 years.

What is your role in helping HFOT Veterans achieve financial success?

My role is three-fold. First, I present the financial planning program to every Veteran at the HFOT conferences. As a retired Army officer, I can relate to these young Veterans and their families, and tend to "tell it like it is." It seems to resonate. Second, I'm the lead proponent of this pro bono initiative in FPA. I work with the FPA leadership to be sure they are connected and fulfilling our professional commitment. And finally, I act as one of the pro bono volunteers for selected Veterans.

Why is financial planning important for these Veterans?

Failure to plan one's financial life is one of the greatest and most common mistakes an individual or family can make. I often remind people they spend way more time planning a one-time vacation than they do planning for the rest of their financial lives. And yet everyone's life is facilitated, for better or worse, by their financial well-being. So, it is important for the new homeowner, particularly if they have never owned a home before, as is the case with many young service families, to plan their spending. There are things they must do and things they'd like to do. And that means having a proper and realistic spending plan. They must pay for utilities, insurance, maintenance, and perhaps taxes on the home. Then they must put food on the table and pay for transportation, medical, clothing, and other needs. Once they have addressed those things, they must think about the future. College funding for children; insurances in case someone passes away prematurely; retirement income flows; etc. It is much easier to plan to do it right than to try to dig out from failing to plan.

What is your goal in working with HFOT Veterans?

I often tell audiences that everyone should have a financial mission. Because I'm a retired colonel, I often give them that mission: "To provide for financial security for yourself and your family for the rest of their lives." That is precisely what we try to do with every Veteran and their family, just as we do for a paying client. Our work for HFOT is pro bono (free of any charge), but totally following the same practice standards we use with all clients.

Star-Spangled Fundraising Ideas

"We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable," said Benjamin Franklin on the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As we head into July, it is not only a time to celebrate family, friends, and fun, it is also about reflecting on our independence and the sacrifices many brave men and women have endured for our freedoms. We are the land of the free because of the brave. And, it is our duty as a nation to come together and honor our Veterans.

There are many ways people celebrate our independence and liberties: parades, fireworks, concerts, backyard BBQs, and other beautiful American traditions. We love all of these; however, at Homes For Our Troops, we feel one of the best ways to show our appreciation for those who have defended our independence is by helping to rebuild the lives of these Veterans.

Here are some great, and easy, ways to get involved with our mission during the month of July:

- Icon Sales – Businesses are sent small, paper HFOT homes for their clients/shoppers to purchase and write their name in support of our mission.
- Round up campaign – Patrons are solicited to round up their bill to the closest dollar amount, and the additional money is donated to HFOT.
- Check out for charity campaign – At checkout, customers are asked to contribute to our organization.
- Percentage of sales.
- Donate all sales on the 4th of July.
- Homes For Our Troops night at your home or business.
- Share our mission on your social media.
- Host a fundraiser such as a family reunion, best BBQ contest, church picnic, brewery tasting, etc.

As our states, cities, and communities continue to fully re-open across our great country, it is a time to reflect on what is truly sacred and undeniable: Our family, friends, and freedom! Please join us in celebrating our nation and our Veterans by getting involved this summer with one of the ideas listed above or create one of your own.

If you would like to help us advance our mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives, please contact our team at: ifundraising@hfotusa.org

Join our monthly giving program, OPERATION LASTING SUPPORT (OLS), and Help Our Nation's Most Severely Injured Veterans.

When you join our special, dedicated group of monthly donors, you help HFOT build a sustainable stream of revenue for us to *Build Homes and Rebuild Lives*.

- Convenience of automatic deduction (\$15 monthly minimum)
- Special updates with information on how your donation is making a difference
- Invitations to HFOT events in your area
- Subscription to *Foundations* newsletter
- For more information, please visit: www.hfotusa.org/ols

