



15 YEARS LATER:

REMEMBRANCES AND REFLECTIONS ON 9/11



HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT:

HFOT President/CEO Tim McHale recalls his experience at the Pentagon on September 11



Remembrance Ceremony Sept. 11, 2011 Kabul, Afghanistan ... We will never forget!

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, while serving on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, the news of an airplane hitting the North Tower of the World Trade Center came over the television in our office. We quickly stood up from our desks and turned up the sound as we watched the smoke billowing out of the tower. In a matter of minutes a second plane that you could clearly see was a commercial airliner crashed into the South Tower. We knew in an instant after seeing the second plane hit the South Tower that this was an act of terrorism.

We also knew what we had to do, so we immediately emptied the office and moved to the Joint Staff Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the basement of the Pentagon to man our positions. In the EOC there were flat screen monitors throughout the center. Most of the flat screens were tuned into all the major news networks, with many action officers and senior leaders watching intently as more terrorist attacks were about to unfold.

We had been in the EOC for about 30 minutes watching in disbelief the unfolding devastation of the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center when all of a sudden we heard a loud noise and the Pentagon floors and tables shuttered in vibration. It was 9:43 AM and the Pentagon had just been hit by American Airlines Flight 77. Immediately, deafening alarms and sirens were loudly blaring, and electronic voice loud speakers were directing all personnel to evacuate the building. We in the EOC had previous orders to stay in place and run continuity of operations in the Pentagon.

Almost immediately, television crews were live streaming on all news stations the Pentagon in flames. It was surreal as we watched the news reports, then all of a sudden reality set in when the rooms in the EOC started smelling like jet fuel and a hazy acrid smelling smoke started filling the air.

I thought to myself "What a terrible way to die." We had no protective gas masks and we would be trapped in the EOC. I was proud to see no one panicked. We all worked through the

emergency operations procedures improvising by putting articles of clothing over our mouths and noses to filter the stinging smell.

Shortly after the airplane crashed into the Pentagon and while I was down in the EOC, I saw Secretary Donald Rumsfeld walking through the smoke filled hallway. He was a man on a mission. The next thing I saw was Secretary Rumsfeld on television at the crash site manning a stretcher and helping the injured victims. Clearly he was focused on aiding the injured while assessing the situation.

While all this was going on, the news networks reported the crash of Flight 93 in Somerset, Penn. We would later learn the details of how several brave men and women gave their lives to fight the terrorists and disrupt the plan to crash the plane into the White House or the United States Capitol.



The aftermath of the Pentagon attack, Sept. 11, 2001.

I will never forget that day. I might forget the details as I grow old, but I will never forget the feelings and deep emotions of knowing so many innocent men and women were tragically and senselessly killed on that day.

That said, I was filled with pride and humbled by personally witnessing in the Pentagon and watching on the news from New York, to Washington D.C. to the fields of Pennsylvania, the thousands of first responders, brave men and women in and out of uniform who risked their lives and lost their lives to save their fellow Americans.

To me 9/11 was up close and personal. That drives me to never forget what happened that day. We as a nation must never forget, and we must always continue to honor the thousands of men and women we lost as well as their families.

Homes for Our Troops is a direct result of 9/11. It is truly a great Veterans organization made up of patriotic Americans that every day honors the men and women who served and sacrificed to protect our freedom, our liberties and our American way of life.

The team at Homes for Our Troops will never forget 9/11, and we will never quit until the mission is accomplished.

A Legacy of Kindness

Two families turn to HFOT to honor their loved ones.



Jennifer Kane, daughter of George and Faye Kane.

Jennifer Lynn Kane was working at Marsh & McLennan Companies on the 100th floor of the North Tower in the World Trade Center, when she perished in the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. She was just 26 years old.

To honor their daughter's memory, Jennifer's parents, George and Faye Kane, founded the Jennifer Kane Scholarship & Charitable Trust, which seeks to support philanthropic causes that mirror Jennifer's kindness and her ability to bring joy to others. Since 2007, the Jennifer Kane Scholarship & Charitable Trust has awarded \$243,000 to Homes for Our Troops, to assist the organization in rebuilding the lives of the Veterans critically injured in Post-9/11 wars.

Jennifer grew up in a loving family in Plymouth, Mass, and was a role model and mentor to her two brothers, Matt and Tim. She excelled as both student and athlete in high school, and attended the College of Commerce and Finance at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1997.

It was in New York City at Marsh & McClellan where Jennifer launched a distinguished career as a certified public accountant. The colleagues she left behind recall her as being a strong leader who was never afraid to speak up for them with upper management.

The Kane family cherishes the 26 years they had with Jennifer, a devoted daughter and sister who always managed to make time for family despite her busy schedule and drive to excel in her career. The Kane family is proud that her giving spirit, along with the family values and sense of loyalty she possessed, will live on through the Homes for Our Troops mission.

In times of grief, it may be comforting to know that your loved one is still making a difference and inspiring others to give back. Donating to Homes for Our Troops is a thoughtful and meaningful way to honor someone who was special in your life while supporting the organization's vital work of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.

Alton "Oz" Grobbel proudly served in World War II as a member of the US Army, serving with the 207th Military Police Company, and was a faithful member of the Old Settlers VFW Post. Oz was committed to the men and women who served this great country, and wanted others to be mindful of the sacrifices our nation's Servicemembers made to protect our freedom.

When Oz passed away in March 2016, his family requested that loved ones and friends consider making a donation in his honor to Homes for Our Troops, in lieu of flowers. Friends and loved ones contributed over \$3,000 to Homes for Our Troops in honor of Oz's memory. The legacy Oz established by working tirelessly to see fellow Veterans gain the independence, dignity and respect they deserve, will be carried out with each donation made in his memory.

"I'm grateful for all the good work these donations will secure," says Kathy (Grobbel) Canapini, Oz's daughter.



World War II Army Veteran, Alton "Oz" Grobbel.

When the Towers Fell, They Rose to Defend America and Its People

If the events on September 11, 2001 were an attempt to weaken or demoralize the American spirit, one needs to look no further than to the proud men and women who joined the Armed Forces in the weeks and years after the attacks. The valor, commitment, and sacrifice these Heroes displayed defending our country against enemy threats is at the heart of the Homes for Our Troops' mission. In recognition of that pride and spirit on the 15th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, we are honored to share some of our Veterans' reflections about this date.



Marine Cpl Garrett Carnes, HFOT home recipient, North Carolina

For Garrett Carnes, world history will always be broken into two halves:

Pre and Post 9/11. While the former Marine Corporal feels he missed out on what America was like before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he considers himself lucky to have been shaped by a Post 9/11 world – even after losing both legs while serving in Afghanistan.

What he's grateful for: "I have had the privilege of watching Americans rally together, shoulder to shoulder, in ways not seen since World War II. I got to serve in an all-volunteer military force who raised their right hands, knowing full well that doing so meant their country would send them into a far off, volatile land to exact revenge on those who seek to harm us, and those who did. I got to serve with men and women who stood up during a time of war and said, 'Here I am, America, send me,' because they love their countrymen and what the United States stands for."

Reflections on 9/11: "We must honor those we lost on 9/11, and every day since in support of OIF and OEF. We promised we would "never forget"...so don't. Take advantage of living in that second half of world history. Show what it is to be a part of a free nation. Every day, we need to flex those freedoms and somehow, somewhere, make a difference, whether big or small. That is how we honor those who fell 15 years ago, and those who've fallen as a result of 9/11 every day since."

Marine LCpl Hector LunaRodriguez, Future HFOT home recipient, Texas

On Sept. 11, 2001, Hector LunaRodriguez was in school and in the 4th grade.

Memories of the day: "I remember a teacher running into the classroom and turning on the TV. And I remember watching the TV, being very confused, watching the second plane hit and realizing what had just happened."

Military Service: LunaRodriguez enlisted with the Marines on Nov. 15, 2010 and deployed to Afghanistan on Sept. 23, 2011. A mortarman with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, the former Lance

Corporal lost his right leg and critically damaged the left when he stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED) in Sangin, Afghanistan.



For more on Hector's project, visit hfotusa.org/LunaRodriguez

What he will tell his children: "I will tell my children when they are older that there are people out there that want to hurt us just because we are who we are. And that there are people like me out there keeping all the bad people away."



Army SGT Justin Bond, HFOT home recipient, California

Justin Bond joined the Army when he was 18

and was out of the military well before the events of 9/11. "After 9/11 happened I watched the towers falling over and over on the news and I had an empty feeling inside me. I knew I had to reenlist and help our country and I wanted to be part of that brotherhood again that would carry our country forward."

Bond reenlisted with the local National Guard unit and fought in the battle of Fallujah in Iraq, where he was shot in both knees and eventually lost his left leg. "I have never regretted my decision to re-join and I would do it all over again even knowing the outcome."

A New Purpose: "The military teaches us to be warriors but nobody teaches us to turn that switch off to become Veterans." Bond started the nonprofit Our Heroes Dream to help Veterans deal with the psychological challenges of combat. "There have been over 100,000 suicides since the war started. I feel that we cannot leave a brother or sister behind so I have dedicated myself to serving those in the biggest battle of their lives, readjusting to civilian life after combat. I am blessed to be part of that brotherhood and a few great organizations like Homes for Our Troops that realize the struggles we face as Veterans, and help us in our suffering by building a safe place that we can call home and live in comfortably while raising our families."

Army SGT Lyndon Sampang, Future HFOT home recipient, Pennsylvania

Lyndon Sampang grew up in the Philippines before moving to Anchorage, Alaska, as a young adult. He joined the Alaska Army National Guard as an Infantryman and deployed during Operation Iraqi Freedom to secure the Iraqi-Kuwait border in 2006. In 2009 he went on active duty and deployed to Afghanistan with the 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division from Ft. Campbell, K.Y.

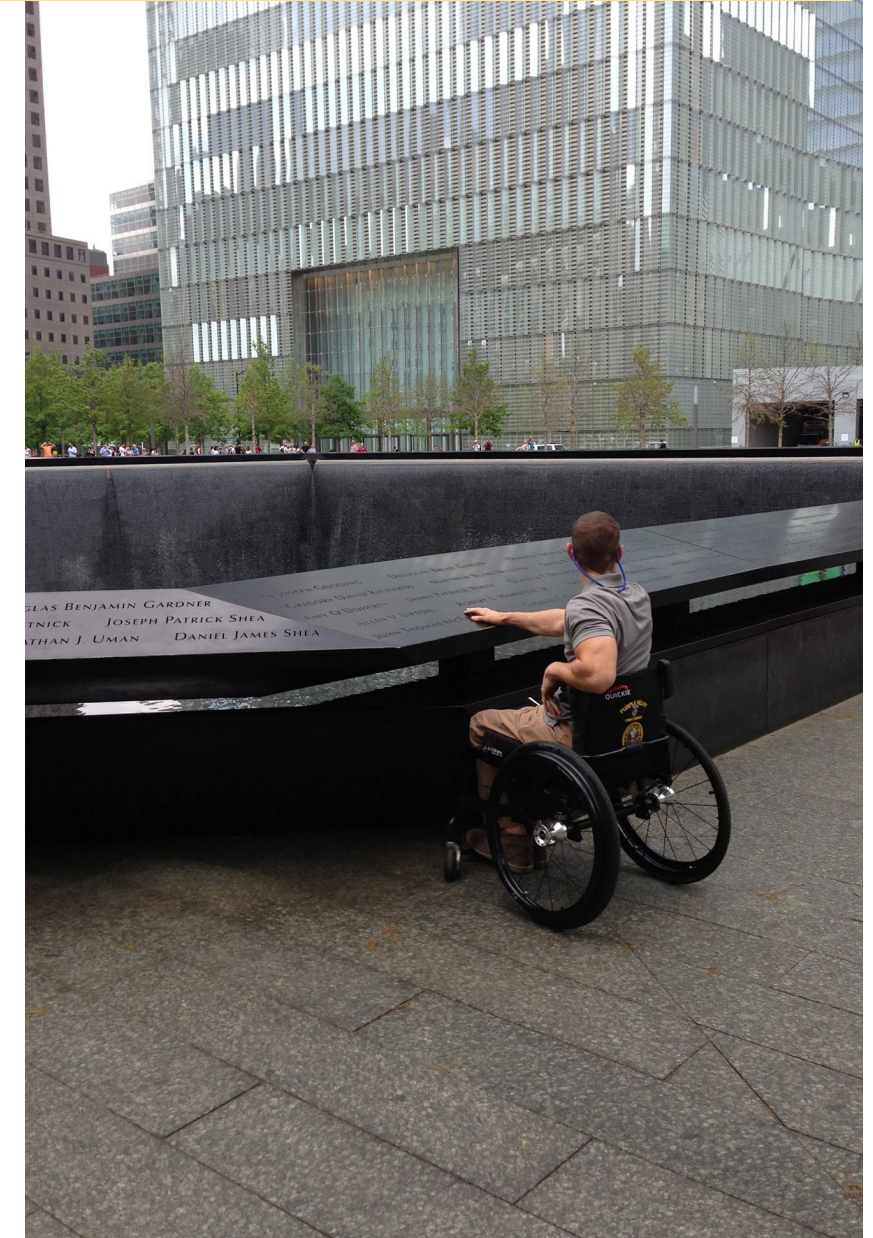
What he remembers about 9/11: "I was at work that day and saw it on TV. It was terrifying and scary, not knowing what was wrong. I didn't think it was a terrorist attack, but when I found out what it was, I needed to do something."



For more on Lyndon's project, visit hfotusa.org/Sampang

Sense of duty: "I did what most citizens do for their country, just like my grandfather did. Even before the 9/11 attacks my grandfather wanted me to join the Army. He was one of the Filipinos who served with the Americans in the Philippines during World War II."

Still serving: Despite losing his right leg to a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack on March 18, 2010 in Paktika Province, Lyndon still plays a pivotal role in keeping America safe. He works for the Federal Communications Commission's Public Safety Homeland Security Bureau.



Army Veteran and HFOT Florida home recipient Alex Dillmann visits the 9/11 Memorial in New York. Dillmann was injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast while serving in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan on Feb. 27, 2011.

U. S. MILITARY CASUALTIES OF POST-9/11 WARS: Deaths: 6,889
Wounded in Action: 52,441

~ Department of Defense as of July 25, 2016

About **half of the Veterans** of Iraq and Afghanistan served with someone who was killed.

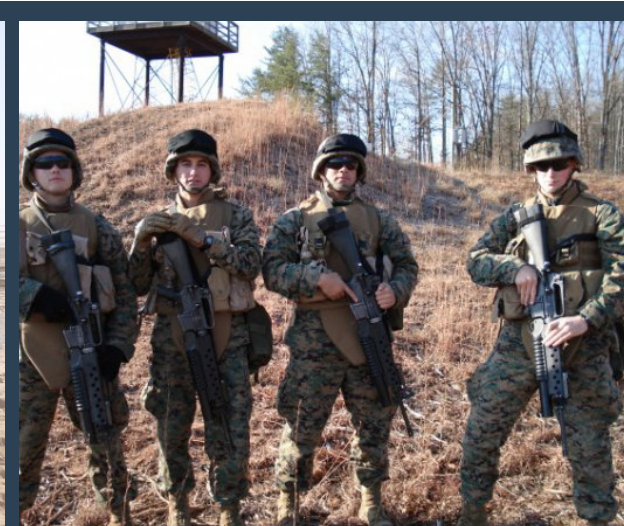
~ Pew Research Center

HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED

The terrorist attacks on 9/11 left a permanent mark on Americans, but for thousands of brave men and women who were then inspired to enlist in the military, it led them to find a special family like no other. Fighting alongside their fellow brothers and sisters, each member became part of a unit joined by a common mission, dedicated in mind and body to protect our freedoms and to guard our country against future attacks. Here are just some of those Heroes we would like to honor.



Army Staff Sergeant Benjamin Breckenheimer was a Cavalry Scout with 8-1 CAV, 5th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division in Iraq.



Marine Sergeant Josh Sweeney served with the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines in Afghanistan.



Army Sergeant Austin Burchard served with the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan.



Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson served with the 6th Regimental Combat Team in Afghanistan.



Army Master Sergeant Daniel Robles served with the 8-10 Cavalry, 4th Infantry Division in Iraq.



Marine Corporal Jon Schumacher served with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines in Afghanistan.



Members of the Patriot Guard Motorcycle Riders en route to an HFOT event in Texas.

STANDING GUARD FOR FREEDOM: HFOT Ambassador and Patriot Guard Rider, Paula Johnson

One thing is abundantly clear about the masses of motorcycle riders who show up to pay their respects to Veterans at HFOT build events: their hearts speak as loudly as their engines. Among those riders is Paula Johnson, from the American Legion Riders who helped start the Patriot Guard chapter in San Antonio. Johnson has coordinated dozens of motorcycle escorts for military funerals, coming home events for active duty members, and HFOT build events for Veterans.

"Our hope when we do these are to remind the warrior and the families that their service and sacrifice are not forgotten, and that it has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated," Johnson says.

Johnson says she has a deep pool of "fellow military loving riders" who jump to volunteer in the heat, rain, and cold to ride, stand and honor our nation's warriors. "I always tell my riders what an honor it is that we have been asked to do these things. Once a rider has the wonderful opportunity to participate, they understand the honor."

Now a regular face at HFOT build events in Texas, Johnson has offered her assistance as an HFOT Ambassador at Community Kickoffs and Key Ceremonies for Edgar Barrera, Luis Alvarado, Tamarsh Thompson, and Jeremy Breece. "With each mission, my admiration for the organization grows," she says. "If someone asks me about donating, volunteering or needs a charity to support, I always speak of HFOT."

Every ride, Johnson says, fills her and the others with pride and a sense of duty. "To be able to do the welcome to the neighborhood, when you get to interact with the same family more than once, it leaves a special place in your heart. Honoring our men and women who volunteered to serve this country has been a blessing."



American Legion/Patriot Guard Rider, Paula Johnson, lines up attendees at an HFOT event. Johnson is also an HFOT Ambassador.

Homes for Our Troops

6 Main Street

Taunton, MA 02780



The Homes for Our Troops staff is dedicated to accomplishing its mission of building mortgage-free, specially adapted homes nationwide for severely injured Veterans Post- 9/11, to enable them to rebuild their lives. We consider it an honor to serve these Heroes and their families, our donors, volunteers, and supporters. Our employees have pledged to work and abide by these core values every day:

Commitment
Accountability
Respect
Excellence
Service

Tim McHale- President & CEO

Bill Ivey- Executive Director

Kylee Adams
Annemarie Amoedo
Melanie Auger
Cindy Baptiste
Cindy Burch
Patricia Catalano
Randi Chen
Michael Cogliano
Dylan Curtis
Katelyn Donovan
Bill Easley
Patrick Erban
Mary Espinoza
Jan Francis
Kristi Galanek
Renée Gugliotta

Jenny Hauver
Alison Hayward
Edward Holland
Cheryl Kaufman
Christina Kujanpaa
Megan Lourenco
Dan Lovendale
Beth Lyons
Catherine MacDonald
Matt McGuire
Brianna McNamara
Chris Mitchell
Matthew Murphy
Isabel Pais
Joe Pellegrini
Cheryl Peterson

John Robicheau
Robert Samonte
Suzanne Shaheen
Julie Sharkey
Sharon Sherman
John Silvia
Justin Silvia
Maegan Socha
Monica Sweeney
Lisa Tacker
Aldo Thomas
Stephen Thompson
Teresa Verity
Dorothy Whiffen
Cheryl Wick
Cara Yanosick
Maura Yanosick