



# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) | SEPTEMBER 2022

## Rebuilding Lives Together!



YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES



## A Letter from the President/CEO

Dear HFOT Supporters,

The September 11 terrorist attacks happened over 20 years ago, but the Veterans we serve are still feeling the impact of that infamous day.

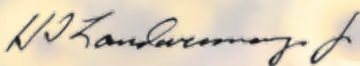
Many were school age at the time, and it became a major factor in their decision to serve and protect their country. These brave men and women have been living with their injuries for years, some for over a decade. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that there are still over 1,000 severely injured post-9/11 Veterans in need of adapted housing. This is why organizations like ours are still operating today. We will not rest until every Veteran who qualifies for one of our homes receives one. We can only do this with your continued commitment to our mission.

YOU are the reason our organization is where we are today. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated supporters who are truly invested in our mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives. This newsletter demonstrates how you are changing the lives of these Veterans and their families. On page 3, we introduce you to Army Staff Sergeant Timothy Kramer who will receive his HFOT home later this year. Timothy had just finished basic training and was serving as an MP in front of the Pentagon when it was attacked on September 11. You will see how his life was forever changed by that day and his subsequent deployment, and how your commitment to our mission ensures Veterans like Timothy are able to live safely and comfortably in a barrier-free environment.

Our supporters consist of not only individual donors, but many corporate partners, fundraisers, and foundations. This issue highlights a few of these supporters, including former NFL tight end Jacob Tamme, who holds an annual golf tournament that has grown exponentially over the years. Our team is always open to new, creative ways to champion our cause. If you have an idea, do not hesitate to reach out; we would love to hear from you.

As we head into the fall, our team continues to diligently work to get more deserving Veterans into homes. I encourage you to attend one of our build events near you and see for yourself how your support is changing and rebuilding lives.

Sincerely,



Tom Landwermeyer  
President/CEO  
Homes For Our Troops



September 2022

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**ON THE COVER:** Army SSG Oscar Guerra (center) received his HFOT home in Texas on June 10, 2022. Here he is joined by fellow HFOT Veterans and staff including home recipients SGT Adam Putt and SGT Michael Gower who were injured with SSG Guerra.



## A History of Excellence

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



Army SSG Timothy Kramer during one of his deployments to Iraq.

## 9/11 Remembrance: *An Unforgettable Day*

Cassidy Kramer cannot wait to give her husband, Army Staff Sergeant Timothy Kramer, the warm homecoming he deserves but never got when they receive their forever home in Nebraska later this year. *"Both tours he did to Iraq, he returned alone. I didn't know him then, we met shortly after. I always told him that I would have given him a huge 'Welcome Home' if we knew each other then," she says. "We are so blessed for this amazing opportunity."*

During his second combat deployment to Iraq in 2006, Timothy sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) during an improvised explosive device (IED) blast. He remained in theater after the incident and finished his deployment. In 2009, Timothy experienced a stroke, resulting in the loss of the use of his left arm and leg, bilateral hearing loss, seizures, and traumatic headaches.

It's been a long road for Timothy to get where he is now. He began his military career during one of the most historic times in recent American history. On the morning of September 11, 2001, Timothy was a new private having just graduated from basic training the previous month. He and several other Military Policemen were on duty less than a quarter mile from the Pentagon on September 11th. That morning, a plane flew low over their heads; the aircraft was so close to the ground that winds from the passing aircraft blew Timothy's headgear off. Timothy assumed it was headed toward Reagan National Airport until he saw it crash into the Pentagon. *"A fireball lit up the sky, and the ground shook as if there was an earthquake happening," he says. "As you can imagine, it was total chaos for a while. I was right there in the mix of it all. The experience is something I'll never forget. I personally witnessed history happening."*

Timothy's life changed forever after the September 11 terrorist attacks. The injuries he sustained while serving in the years after the terrorist attacks have left a permanent imprint on his daily routine. His current home presents several challenges; he often becomes frustrated when he cannot care for his daughters while in his wheelchair because of the narrow hallways and doorways. Once he receives his HFOT home, he will be able to do more. *"The things I'm looking forward to in our HFOT home are the automatic doors and zero thresholds because nobody will have to help me into the home. Now I will be able to say, 'I'll get the door for you, my loves.' It's the little things."*

Timothy is grateful there are people like HFOT's donors who are still taking care of Veterans who were severely injured while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan over 20 years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. *"Without the support of the American people, none of this would be possible for my family."*

*HFOT is building Timothy and his family a home in Nebraska.*





# *Cherishing the Simple Things*

To Navy PO3 Justin Hendrickson and his wife Jennie, their Homes For Our Troops home in Pennsylvania isn't just walls and a roof, it is everything.

While serving as a Navy corpsman with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, Justin lost his right leg after being hit by an improvised explosive device (IED) in Iraq. In the years after his injury, Justin met and married the love of his life, Jennie. From day one, Jennie was determined to make sure he had the best quality of life. In their previous home, she often feared for his safety since it was not wheelchair accessible.

After being married for 12 years, the couple received some devastating news. Jennie now faced a battle of her own – she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Despite her illness, Jennie still wanted to support Justin in any way she can. She is now in remission but experiences mobility and balance issues as a result of her illness. Their specially adapted custom home enables Jennie to take care of Justin and herself as well. *"Having everything on one floor and not having to worry about falling downstairs is beneficial, especially when doing laundry. I am notorious for falling up the stairs too. This also applies to Justin. I watched him countless times using his crutches for support going downstairs. As a wife, I can hardly find words to explain the fear I had for him and what could have happened."*

Since Justin and Jennie are able to live safely and comfortably, they can pursue goals they have always wanted to do. Recently, Justin took on a job as a traveling nurse. This gives them the chance to travel the country together. *"This home provides me the opportunity to enjoy life in ways I never thought possible after my injury,"* he says.

Justin and Jennie say they could never fully explain how grateful they are for HFOT's donors and supporters. *"Waking up every morning, sitting outside with our cups of coffee, enjoying the morning air with our dog Cuddles, watching the deer in the field across the street from our front yard as the sun rises, is just one example of the peacefulness Justin and I have wanted for so long. Both of us have been dealt some cards in life that have been very trying and scary for us, so we always appreciate moments like this. We could never do this in the house we lived in before. It's these little things the donors and supporters of HFOT gave us. They gave us our peace. They gave us our serenity. They gave us our forever home."*



Justin and Jennie  
Hendrickson

## ***Board of Director Spotlight: Major General (USA, Retired) Timothy McHale***



Major General USA, Ret. Timothy P. McHale was born and raised in Minnesota. In May 1977 he completed his undergraduate studies at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota as a Distinguished Military Graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Transportation Corps. During his 35 years of service, he has commanded both aviation and logistics units at every echelon from platoon to theater support command, with duty in Germany, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the United States.

Major General McHale has served as a Board Director since 2012 and was the organization's President/CEO from 2013 to 2017. He currently is serving as the President and CEO at Knollwood, a Senior Military Retirement Community and nonprofit organization that provides housing for seniors and families with a military connection.

### ***Why is HFOT's mission important to you?***

Our service members and their families have sacrificed so much for the freedoms we have in the United States of America. We at HFOT, through the generosity and deep respect and admiration of the citizens of America, are helping these Veterans and their families regain some of the freedoms they lost while sustaining incredibly life altering injuries while serving their country.

### ***What motivated you to become a member of the organization's board of directors?***

The organization's mission to not only build homes but rebuild lives captured my heart.

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

Make a commitment to yourself and your family and friends to go to either a Community Kickoff, welcoming the Veteran and their family to the community; a Volunteer Day, helping planting trees and bushes and laying sod; and I highly recommend attending a Key Ceremony, giving the Veteran and their family the keys to their new home. Any of these three events will move you to be part of a very important mission in which you will be humbled and proud to be a part of this wonderful and giving organization!

### ***What has been your most memorable moment with the organization?***

I will tell you honestly there have been literally hundreds of memorable moments. We call them "Mission Moments" where you are so deeply touched, as well as spiritually and emotionally moved to be in the presence of these heroic, great American patriots and their families. When they are receiving their homes and knowing these homes will make their lives better, and are clearly from the love and respect of the American people, it is truly an exceptional moment unfolding before your eyes. One particular experience that made me very proud of the HFOT team was when we had a Veteran and his family come to a Veterans Conference. This Veteran had ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease, which is a progressive disease with no cure. We moved this Veteran and his family to the head of the line, found the land, and built a home in less than a year. It was truly a team effort and had a great impact on the Veteran and his family when we gave him the keys to his new specially adapted custom home.

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

I have had the honor and privilege to be with several great charities. They all had incredible impacts for the recipients based on the charities' support. HFOT has an incredible and immediate impact on the Veterans and their families. This idea of "Building Homes" is powerful but the second part of our tagline, "Rebuilding Lives" is the secret sauce that goes on for their entire lives. You see, we stick with the Veteran and their family long after we give them the keys to their forever home. We check on them after bad weather conditions, forest fires, or hurricanes to ensure their home is still in good working order. We deeply care... At Homes For Our Troops we call them family from day one and we really mean it.

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

We are out of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and so without the national media coverage, it is harder to raise funds to build new homes for Veterans and their families. The board fully supports the magnificent staff located in Taunton, Massachusetts, who work tirelessly to raise funds through corporate donors, individual donors, and fundraising events around the country. Our board members and ambassadors all donate generously to the mission. We continue to work at getting exposure and notoriety through connecting with philanthropic organizations and national news outlets to help us continue to build top notch specially adapted custom homes.

### ***How did the 9/11 terrorist attacks impact your decision to serve and your career path?***

The 9/11 terrorist attacks I take very personally. I was in the Pentagon when we were savagely attacked, and I personally lost friends and fellow military and civilian professionals on that day. I was honored and privileged to serve in memory of all the men and women who died on 9/11. I served 11 more years with a 2007-2009 deployment to Iraq and a follow-on 2010-2011 deployment to Afghanistan. I will never forget 9/11.



## ———— Donor Spotlight: ————

### *Wings of Freedom Foundation*

Last year, Homes For Our Troops received \$9M in grant funding. Small and large, these grants are crucial to our operations, and increase our capacity to build more specially adapted custom homes. While some grants come from large corporations, most of them come from family foundations run by supporters who want to ensure their gifts truly make a difference.

In April of 2021, the Wings of Freedom Foundation reached out to HFOT to find out if they could meet us to learn more about what we do. Having heard about HFOT initially through friends, they had conducted considerable research and were impressed with our mission. After meeting with HFOT President and CEO Tom Landwermyer, the foundation decided to award HFOT a grant to help build fully accessible homes in California.

The gift was made in honor of the foundation founder, Betty Higgins. Betty was dedicated to supporting our nation's Veterans. Some examples of her philanthropic support include assisting Veterans with PTSD, funding scholarships for children of fallen military personnel, and assisting to build a medical facility to produce high-tech prosthetics. The grant to HFOT was allocated to help build the homes of Marine 1stSgt Ben Holmes, Army SGT Joshua Hooker, Marine Cpl Kionte Storey, Navy PO1 Ryan Sykes, and Army SPC Gustavo Zarate. Three of the homes have been completed, and the other two will be finished later this year. All five Veterans will be able to focus on their recovery and rebuilding their lives thanks to the generosity of the Wings of Freedom Foundation.

Betty Higgins passed away in late 2021, so this gift in her honor is especially poignant. Betty never wanted to make a big show of her philanthropy, but the Foundation felt it was time to celebrate her generosity.

The grant from the Wings of Freedom Foundation has made a significant impact for the Veterans we serve. We would like to thank Betty Higgins and the Wings of Freedom Foundation for their generosity, and especially for their patriotism.

## HFOT Welcomes

## Storage Gives

Homes For Our Troops is proud to welcome Storage Gives into the HFOT family as our newest National Partner. Storage Gives honors our Veterans through their generosity and is committed to finding ways to support Veterans who were injured while serving in the military so they can return to civilian life. The dedication and philanthropy of organizations like Storage Gives and patriots all over the United States help us continue advancing our mission of *Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives*.

*"We are facilitating a platform to connect the storage industry to worthy causes to make an impact in lives all over the world,"* says Lonnie Bickford, Founder, Storage Gives, and President, Storage Auctions.

Recently, Lonnie and his wife hosted two HFOT staff members for dinner while they were in Wasilla, Alaska, for Army Staff Sergeant Randall Young's Volunteer Day. We are grateful to have such hospitable and invested partners supporting our cause.





## *Swings for Soldiers Celebrates Over a Decade of Supporting HFOT's Mission*



Former NFL tight end Jacob Tamme and his wife Allison have been supporting HFOT for more than a decade with their annual Swings for Soldiers golf tournament. In recent years, the tournament has coincided with HFOT's Annual Day of Giving, and helped us reach and surpass our goal each time. The couple reflects here on how their involvement with HFOT has grown over the years.

*"This event, which began as an idea at our kitchen table over 12 years ago, has been such a blessing to Allison and me. We have been supported by a wonderful group of donors who love the cause and enjoy getting out for, what we think, is a really fun golf event. But the most rewarding part of the whole deal has been the relationships that have been forged with our recipient families over the years.*

*We are very proud to partner with Homes For Our Troops. The HFOT Veterans and their families we have worked with and gotten to know all continue to speak highly of HFOT, many years after their homes have been completed. That means a lot to us. When choosing a nonprofit to support and help raise funds for, there are so many things to consider. HFOT has hit all the marks for us for over a decade and we look forward to continuing to help support the mission."*

Swings for Soldiers sunk a "hole in one" during their 12th tournament that took place on July 18th - all while supporting the HFOT home build for Marine Lance Corporal Bryan Chambers and his family in Attica, IN.

We are honored to have the Swings For Soldiers family support over the past 12 years where they have raised over \$1 Million for the HFOT mission.



Jacob and Allison Tamme



The children of HFOT Veterans help with the flag raising during the opening ceremonies.





# Monthly Giving Program Operation Lasting Support (OLS)



## Join OLS and Help Our Nation's Most Severely Injured Post-9/11 Veterans

- Various commitment options (\$15 monthly minimum):
  - Automatic deduction - Credit Card - Check
- Special updates with information on how your donation is making a difference
- Foundations Newsletters & Annual Impact Report
- Invitations to HFOT events in your area

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

ebay FOR CHARITY  6th ANNUAL

## HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS

### VETERANS DAY 2022

# NOVEMBER 3-13



Hosted by Jake Tapper, George Clooney, Wynonna Judd, Don Cheadle, and Mindy Kaling



# Celebrity Auction

[WWW.HFOTUSA.ORG](http://WWW.HFOTUSA.ORG)