



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | November 2017

MAKING EVERY MILE COUNT



YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Dear Friends,

In honor of Veterans Day, I want to thank you for your continued support of all Veterans, but in particular those severely injured Veterans who make up the Homes For Our Troops Family. Out of 43,000 plus nonprofit Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and military charities nationwide, we are proud and humbled to know that you remain loyal to HFOT's noble cause of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.



Each month, by sharing our mission with family, friends and colleagues, or by bringing them along to one of our build events, you have helped us expand our support network that has resulted in HFOT delivering over 240 new homes to our Veterans. There's much work to be done for the remaining 1,200 - 1,400 severely injured Veterans throughout our country still in need of our specially adapted homes, but I am confident that together, our team can take on this challenge.

Inside this issue, you'll learn more about the ways that HFOT is partnering with communities, corporations, and nonprofits around the country to advance our mission. We'll introduce you to injured Veterans Michael and April Lage, and the couple's inspiring journey of recovery as they look forward to receiving their new HFOT home. You'll also meet Veteran home recipients, Bobby Withers and Geoffrey Quevedo, who despite their injuries, are making every mile count on Team HFOT, as they run and raise funds so that other deserving Veterans in our program may receive the gift of a new specially adapted custom home.

If you are moved by the work being done by HFOT, and want to make a special Veterans Day gift as a tribute and gesture of thanks to Michael, April, Bobby and Geoffrey, or to the thousands who have served and sacrificed for our country, I encourage you to mail in your charitable contribution using the enclosed envelope. Rest assured HFOT remains in the top five percent of Military and Veterans charities rated by Charity Navigator, with nearly 90 cents of every dollar donated going to programs for our Veterans.

On behalf of the hundreds of Veterans and families you have helped by donating to Homes For Our Troops, I thank you for making a difference in their lives this Veterans Day, and every day. Happy Holidays and All the Best for 2018.

Sincerely,

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE STORIES THAT INSPIRE

- 3** **Veteran Spotlight, Then & Now**
HFOT highlights SSG Michael Lage and revisits Sgt Adam Kisielewski.
- 4** **TEAM HFOT**
Veterans CPT Bobby Withers and SPC Geoffrey Quevedo pay-it-forward.
- 5** **Dreams Come True**
LCpl Matias Ferreira first double amputee police officer in country.
- 6** **VSO Symposium**
HFOT hosts first Veterans Service Organization Symposium.
- 7** **Donor Spotlight**
Supporting HFOT from Germany.

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A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

HFOT is evaluated as one of America's Top-Rated Veterans and Military Charities for six consecutive years.



NEVER LEAVE A FELLOW SOLDIER BEHIND

Retired Army Staff Sergeant Michael Lage exemplifies this motto every day with humility and empathy. Severe burns and the loss of his left hand in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Iraq in 2007 didn't stop Michael. While being treated at Brooke Army Medical Center, he joined the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB). He enjoyed the work so much he extended his service in the military to continue his efforts. "After spending four years rehabilitating, I decided to stay on the Warrior Transition Battalion and help other injured Soldiers," he says.

In order for Michael to continue serving his fellow Soldiers, he needs a home that allows him to rest and relax. He and his wife April, who is also an injured Veteran, encounter challenges in their current home every day. Michael has difficulty opening doors, and both he and April find climbing stairs challenging. A single-level, adapted HFOT home with automatic doors will solve these issues. Michael says the best part of receiving his forever home: "It will be easier to spend more time giving back and doing what we love."

Michael is humbled that HFOT's supporters are willing to build him and his family a specially adapted home. "We are so very lucky to live in a country where our Veterans are taken care of," he says.

Homes For Our Troops will be building for Michael in Texas. Learn more about his story and how to get involved with his project at www.hfotusa.org/lage.



Future HFOT home recipient, SSG Michael Lage and wife April.



THEN & NOW: Marine Sgt Adam Kisielewski

THEN: In August 2005, Marine Sergeant Adam Kisielewski, a squad leader with the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines, lost his left arm and right leg when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated as a trigger-wired door was opened while looking for insurgents near Fallujah, Iraq.

When Adam returned home after his injury, he realized traditional housing did not accommodate his needs. His

previous home was three stories, making it nearly impossible for him to carry his son up and down the stairs. Routine tasks like showering were a challenge for him because he could not fit his wheelchair through the bathroom's narrow doorway.

NOW: After receiving his HFOT home in 2011, Adam has accomplished many of his goals and dreams. He was able to obtain a bachelor's degree and is now pursuing a master's degree in policy at Georgetown University. He has become an instrument-rated pilot and is working toward his multi-engine certification. He is also paying it forward for other Veterans as a member of HFOT's Board of Directors. Most importantly, the home has improved his family life. "Since moving into my home, I have been able to actively take part in raising my son in ways I could not have possibly done without the home," he says.

MESSAGE TO HFOT DONORS AND SUPPORTERS: Adam says the home impacted him in a much bigger way than he had anticipated. "The barrier-free home provided by HFOT really is just that – from the physical, to the financial, and even emotional. Its impact is hard to properly describe, but I could not imagine a life without it. Saying 'Thank You' does not come close to the amount of appreciation I have for HFOT's donors and supporters," he says.

Learn more about Adam's story by watching his *Rebuilding Lives* video at www.hfotusa.org/kisielewski.

HFOT VETERANS BOBBY WITHERS AND GEOFFREY QUEVEDO THRIVING ON **TEAM HFOT**

Many of our HFOT Veterans do not let their injuries get in the way of athletic aspirations. Army CPT Bobby Withers and Army SPC Geoffrey Quevedo both lost limbs while serving – Geoffrey lost his left leg and left arm in Afghanistan in 2012, and Bobby lost his right leg in Afghanistan in 2010. Immediately following his injury, running did not cross Geoffrey's mind. As he began integrating back into sports during his recovery he heard about Team HFOT's Disneyland Half Marathon team. Being a recipient of an HFOT home in California, he felt it was a great way to give back and a good way to challenge himself. "I thought to myself 'I can do this,'" he says.

Bobby had a goal to run a road race to inspire his platoon. He was able to reach his goal a few years later, when he ran his first 5k right before he received his HFOT home in Florida in 2015. He has now completed several races, including two half marathons. He credits HFOT Events Manager Cara Yanosick with giving him the confidence. "She inspired me to start running and keep running," he says.

During the grueling 13-mile treks, both Bobby and Geoffrey say they find motivation from fellow runners and those cheering them on from the sidelines. "The thought of not giving up and seeing others inspired keeps me going," Geoffrey says.

Preparing for a half marathon, of course, requires rigorous training beforehand and recovery afterward. Bobby and Geoffrey are grateful to have their own HFOT homes where they can do both. Their favorite features are the therapy tub and shower bench seat for recuperating after a race.

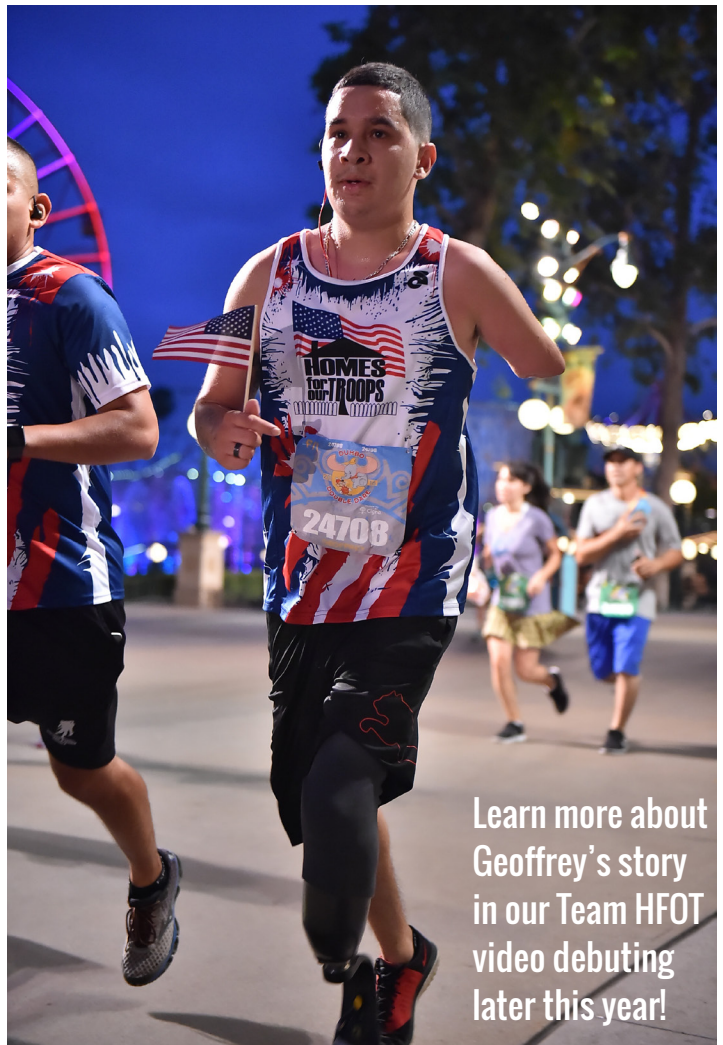
Geoffrey says his athletic performance has improved since moving into his home. "I have less physical and mental stress to worry about, allowing me to have more time for myself," he says.

Geoffrey and Bobby say they choose to run for Team HFOT because they want other Veterans to experience the benefits of a specially adapted custom home. "It is important to me to bring attention to an organization that has done so much for me. To me, this is the definition of a life rebuilt well," says Bobby.

If you are inspired by Geoffrey and Bobby to join Team HFOT, sign-up for a race at www.hfotusa.org/teamhfot.



CPT Bobby Withers received his home in 2015 in Winter Garden, Florida.



Learn more about
Geoffrey's story
in our Team HFOT
video debuting
later this year!

SPC Geoffrey Quevedo and his family received their home in 2015 in Temecula, California.



Future HFOT home recipient Marine LCpl Matias Ferreira.

LCpl Matias Ferreira proves hard work makes **DREAMS COME TRUE**

Matias Ferreira proves that with determination and hard work, nothing can get in the way of achieving your dreams. As a child Matias aspired to be either a U.S. Marine or police officer. Back then, he never imagined he would achieve both.

Matias joined the Marines at the age of 19. The 9/11 attacks ignited his desire to serve, as he had several friends who were impacted. In September 2010, he deployed to Afghanistan as a machine gunner with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines. His military career abruptly ended during that tour when he lost both legs and broke his pelvis after stepping on an improvised explosive device (IED) in January 2011.

After his injury Matias assumed his chances of serving his country and community again

were over. "I never in a million years thought I would be able to accomplish becoming a police officer after my injury," he says.

Once Matias started physical therapy, the prospect of reaching his goal to serve on a police force became a possibility. "I began to think that maybe I would have a chance to meet the physical needs of the job," he says.

Matias made national headlines when he became the first double amputee full time police officer in the country. Matias says his family, specifically his wife Tiffany and their young daughter Tianna, is what kept him motivated to reach this achievement.

Receiving a specially adapted custom HFOT home will complete the American dream for Matias. "It will be our forever home and we

will be able to raise our family without having to worry about the future," he says.

Though he can get around well on prosthetics now, Matias knows that this will not always be the case. "Having the home will set me up for future success. When I am older, having those amenities will be huge," he says.

For others facing adversity, Matias encourages them to never give up. "When something is in your mind and in your heart, nothing can put that fire out. If you work hard, anything is possible," he says.

HFOT will soon begin construction on Matias' specially adapted home in Smithtown, N.Y. To learn more about this project visit www.hfotusa.org/ferreira.



Motivational speaker and HFOT home recipient, SSG Earl Granville, speaks at the Symposium.

HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS HOSTS FIRST EVER VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION SYMPOSIUM

This past July, Homes For Our Troops hosted its first Veterans Service Organization Symposium in Massachusetts. The event was coordinated to further open the lines of communication between VA/government, corporations, and Veteran service organizations, and to share best practices in the field.

HFOT home recipient and motivational speaker, Earl Granville, delivered the keynote address, and spoke about the challenges he and many combat Veterans have faced while transitioning to civilian life, including depression and other mental health issues. Granville shared the stage with "Cindy," a 40 lb cinder block wrapped in chains, which he frequently carries to initiate the conversation of suicide prevention.

Attendees included National Commander of DAV Dave Riley, as well as leaders from the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Operation Homefront, Charity Navigator, Home Base/Red Sox Foundation, Fisher House, Veterans Inc., Institute of Veterans and Military Families, Dept. Veteran Affairs, and the Massachusetts Dept of Veteran Services among others. Nicole Green from CVS Health also spoke about the CVS MinuteClinic, and its recent expansion to provide quality care to Veterans served by the Phoenix, Arizona VA Health Care System.

Many attendees indicated through surveys that they appreciated meeting their Veteran sector colleagues face to face, adding that they had learned about services they had not previously known

existed. HFOT's community of Veterans will also benefit from the many resources that were introduced, thus enhancing its Rebuilding Lives program. HFOT looks forward to hosting a VSO Symposium on an annual basis.



Left to right: HFOT President, Tom Landwermyer with Dave Riley, former DAV National Commander, and Francisco A. Ureña, Secretary of the Mass. Department of Veterans' Services.

STOCK GIVING

As we near the end of 2017, it is a good time to begin thinking about supporting your favorite charities. Did you know that you could donate stocks, bonds or other securities?



This is a great way to support **Homes For Our Troops** and the Veterans we serve, with an added bonus of potential income-tax savings!* For more information about donating stock, please contact Christina Kujanpaa at 508-823-3300 Ext 248.

** HFOT recommends you consult a tax professional about your personal giving strategy.*

A MONTHLY DONOR AND ALLY

Thomas Six has been a loyal contributor to Homes For Our Troops since 2012. Six, a German resident, served in The Bundeswehr (the Unified Armed Forces of Germany) for 12 years. During that time, he met many American brothers in arms. Some of his friends from the United States told him about Homes For Our Troops, and he was inspired by the way Americans rally together to support our severely injured Veterans. After some research on the internet, Six knew he wanted to join HFOT's mission. He started out by making a few one time donations and purchasing items from the eStore, but soon decided he wanted to support HFOT more consistently. He joined HFOT's monthly giving program, Operation Lasting Support (OLS), and has been contributing \$50 monthly since 2013.

When asked why he chose to join OLS, Six says, "It's easy to give an answer. These men and women have done, and will do, an unselfish and honorable job across the world to keep me safe - and they fight for my freedom too. They are my allies and friends, and deserve my support after sacrificing so much."

Six stressed the importance of contributing monthly to a nonprofit like HFOT. "Giving monthly is the best way for the organization to plan their work. When HFOT can expect a certain amount each month, it makes it easier for them to plan, organize, and help those in need. Every amount is important," he says.

Are you interested in becoming a monthly donor? Find out more by visiting www.hfotusa.org/ols.



"They are my allies and friends, and deserve my support after sacrificing so much."

- Thomas Six



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