

Homes for Our Troops
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A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | www.homesforourtroops.org | YEAR END 2011

'TEXAS SIX' MAKES A MARK ON VETERANS DAY

In observance of Veterans Day, Homes for Our Troops delivered the keys to six homes within the state of Texas. This momentous occasion also marked completion of the 100th home undertaken by Homes for Our Troops.

The first home was given to Marine Corporal Jose "Daniel" Gasca on Thursday, November 10, which was also the Marine Corps Birthday. The celebration was one of two homes to be presented in El Paso; the second Key Ceremony occurred on Friday, November 11 when Army Specialist Adrian Garcia received the keys to his home.

Also on Veterans Day, three more homes were delivered, which began with the 100th home presentation in San Antonio when Army Master Sergeant Daniel Robles and his family are presented with their home. Army Specialist Craig Andrade then received the keys to his home in Marion, near San Antonio. The day concluded with delivery of a home to Army Staff Sergeant Nicholas McCoy in Boerne. The sixth and final home to be presented by Homes for Our Troops that weekend was done on Saturday, November 12 in Killeen when Army Sergeant First Class Charles Armstead and his family were celebrated.

As we close out the year, we are sharing these stories with you – stories that would never have been a reality if not for the generous support of folks like you. *For more information on these and other projects, please visit us online at www.homesforourtroops.org*



Thank you to the Volunteers who built each of the "Texas Six" homes and to the communities who raised funds!



Charity Navigator, one of the premiere charity rating agencies in the country, has awarded Homes for Our Troops with its highest rating of 4 stars.



Homes for Our Troops is a Top-Rated Military & Veteran Charity by the American Institute of Philanthropy.



#12525 For our active duty military supporters: CFC #12525 is a national beneficiary of the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign. Your CFC pledge will help Homes for Our Troops build our next 100 specially adapted homes for our nation's severely injured troops.

100 MORE... ...And Counting

Homes for Our Troops delivers 100th Home and Looks Ahead to 100 MORE...
Story Inside



SSG Nicholas McCoy (foreground) cuts the yellow ribbon before opening the door to his new specially adapted home in Boerne, Texas on Veterans Day 2011. Behind SSG McCoy, from left to right are Building Partner Jake Murillo of Veritas Custom Homebuilder, Scott McCoy (Nick's father), Gene McCoy (Nick's grandfather), and John Gonsalves.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBIN JERSTAD

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER

Dear Friends:

As the year comes to an end I want to thank you for your continued support. This year was, without a doubt, a very special one. As we close out 2011, I am very proud to say we have helped more than 100 severely injured veterans, officially handing over the keys to our milestone 100th home on Veterans Day. As we look forward to 2012 – and beyond – we have committed to building 100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops. And while each goal is marked by the guidance and commitment of the Homes for Our Troops staff, we all realize we could never surpass our goals without the time, talent, and treasure we have received from every one of you. No gift is too small, no gesture insignificant.

As we continue our mission of building specially adapted homes for our returning heroes, I am constantly reminded by the daily challenges faced by these veterans and the impact it has on their entire family. I have seen, also, how their lives have been transformed by the work we continue to do through this organization. Knowing we are all playing such a crucial role in restoring the freedom and independence our service members have lost fighting for our freedom, is humbling to say the least.

Despite our achievements, there is no time to rest. There is much more work that needs to be done.

Our nation has been at war for more than a decade now. In that time, more than two million American troops have served in combat overseas. More than 6,000 have been killed and more than 42,000 have been seriously injured; of those, the number sustaining multiple amputations is rising. According to a report released by the U.S. Department of Defense in September, the number of major-limb amputations had increased from 86 in 2009 to 187 in 2010 and 147 through September. But increases in the numbers of multiple amputations -- three or more limbs -- are even more dramatic, from 23 in 2009 to 72 in 2010 and already 77 during the first nine months of this year.

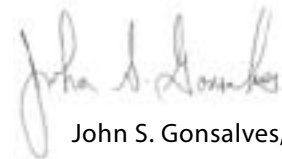
Despite these startling statistics, if you ask any of these veterans, they would likely tell you they would do it all again. There truly is no action that is as selfless as one who serves. But it doesn't have to stop there; we all have a part to play. Through our actions, we are defining ourselves as a nation for future generations. What story do you want your children or your children's children to tell? We are judged in times of war by how we fulfill our obligations to our wounded. And when the story comes to an end, while the conclusion may not be happy, with your help, it can still be positive. For this reason, I am personally asking you to respond to their needs once they return home after suffering devastating injuries by supporting our mission with a tax-deductible donation. Homes for Our Troops has consistently maintained an average cost for administration and fundraising at nine percent of revenues, so you can be assured your donation is being used efficiently.

Our waiting list continues to grow so it's critical now more than ever to raise awareness and build as much support as possible for the Homes for Our Troops mission. With your help we will be able to build 100 More...Homes for Our Troops.

Thanks to you my fellow Americans.

May you have a wonderful Holiday Season and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,



John S. Gonsalves, President and Founder, Homes for Our Troops





PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK GREENBERG

SPC Craig Andrade, his wife Danielle and two of their three young children; Christian and Isabella walk towards their new specially adapted home, surrounded by the wonderful Marion, Texas community on November 11, 2011. Welcome Home Andrade Family!

UPCOMING BUILD BRIGADES

LCpl. Daniel PETERSON DECEMBER 6, 7 & 8, 2011
Tomball, TX Building Partner: SpawGlass

COMPLETED BUILD BRIGADES

Cpl. Tyler SOUTHERNAUGUST 12, 13 & 14, 2011
Saint Augustine, FL Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes
SSG Juan ROLDAN AUGUST 19, 20 & 21, 2011
Parrish, FL Building Partner: Badger Construction
SGT Justin BOND AUGUST 26, 27 & 28, 2011
Hanford, CA Building Partner: G.J. Gardner Homes
SPC Luis PUERTAS SEPTEMBER 16, 17 & 18, 2011
Orlando, FL Building Partner: NWC Construction, Inc.

UPCOMING KEY CEREMONIES

SSG Juan ROLDANDECEMBER 10, 2011
Parrish, FL Building Partner: Badger Construction
SGT Justin BONDDECEMBER 16, 2011
Hanford, CA Building Partner: G.J. Gardner Homes
www.homesforourtroops.org

SPC Luis PUERTASDECEMBER 17, 2011
Orlando, FL Building Partner: NWC Construction, Inc.

Cpl. Tyler SOUTHERNDECEMBER 18, 2011
St. Augustine, FL Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes

COMPLETED KEY CEREMONIES

Cpl. Jose "Daniel" GASCANOVEMBER 10, 2011
El Paso, TX Building Partner: Veliz Construction, LLC
SPC Craig ANDRADENOVEMBER 11, 2011
Marion, TX Building Partner: Hardin Construction
SPC Adrian GARCIANOVEMBER 11, 2011
El Paso, TX Building Partner: Veliz Construction, LLC
SSG Nicholas MCCOYNOVEMBER 11, 2011
Boerne, TX Building Partner: VERITAS Custom Homebuilder
MSG Daniel ROBLESNOVEMBER 11, 2011
Garden Ridge, TX Building Partner: RD Campbell Custom Homes
SFC Charles ARMSTEAD.....NOVEMBER 12, 2011
Killeen, TX Building Partner: Cameo Homes, Inc.
SPC Robert J. KISLOW III DECEMBER 3, 2011
Danielsville, PA Building Partner: Blue Valley Builders, Inc.

A MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY PRESENT WORTH REMEMBERING

El Paso Marine Daniel Gasca gets keys to his specially adapted home; first of six delivered by HFOT during the Veterans Day weekend in Texas

Blue and red lights from police vehicles lit up the dark Upper Valley street as a firetruck carrying Marine Cpl. Daniel Gasca and his family made its way to a crowd gathered at a driveway.

Cheers and applause greeted Gasca as he stepped down and grabbed his four-year-old son's hand.

The former Marine, with a slight limp, walked toward his new home.

A Marine Corps color guard, soldiers from Fort Bliss, and state and federal legislators from El Paso were on hand to celebrate Gasca's receiving a free home Thursday night from Homes for Our Troops, the first of six to be delivered during the Veterans Day weekend, this one on the 236th birthday of the US Marine Corps, November 10, 2011.

Gasca lost both of his legs in 2008 when an improvised explosive device (IED) struck his unit's armored vehicle during a mission in Fallujah, Iraq.

After the explosion, insurgents ambushed the unit. Besides losing his legs, Gasca sustained a bullet wound in his back, a spinal fracture and a ruptured spleen. Gasca uses prosthetic legs and a wheelchair to get around.

"I went from being an active Marine in a combat zone to being completely dependent the rest of my life," Gasca said. "It's been really hard."



Thursday, November 10, 6 p.m.



PHOTOGRAPHER: CHRIST CHAVEZ

Marine Corporal Daniel Gasca is joined by his wife Angel and sons Matthew and Eli as they cut the ribbon for their new home.

Gasca and his wife Angel had been living in cramped apartments with their two sons Matthew, 4, and Eli, 1, since moving back to El Paso.

Daniel Gasca said the new home will help him regain some independence.

"It's kind of hard to explain," he said. "I'm speechless. I'm very happy and humbled. I feel peace of mind knowing I can sit here

and raise my kids and spend time with my wife and grow old."

Veliz Construction built Gasca's home as well as the home of Army Specialist Adrian Garcia, whose key presentation was the second among six delivered in three days by Homes for Our Troops. Hundreds of volunteers and contractors finished construction of each home in about four months.



Thursday, November 10, 6:30 p.m.



Thursday, November 10, 7 p.m.

RULES of ENGAGEMENT

**VETERANS DAY KEY CEREMONY
GIVES NEW LIFE IN MORE WAYS
THAN ONE TO ARMY SPECIALIST
ADRIAN GARCIA**



Adrian Garcia is handed the keys to his new home by Larry Gill, Veteran's Liaison with HFOT.



SHE SAID YES! Adrian Garcia proposes to long-time girlfriend during his Key Ceremony on Friday, November 11, 2011.

PHOTOGRAPHER: CHRIST CHAVEZ

After just two and a half years in the military, Army Specialist Adrian Garcia knew his life would never be the same.

"I was hit by a rocket, I was in the turn of the vehicle," Garcia said.

But even though he doesn't have legs, Specialist Garcia says he's free.

"I can do everything I thought I couldn't do, I am independent I am free they have given me my life back and to me that's more important than if I were to get my legs back because I can always get my legs back, but

they gave me a home and they gave me a new life and new chapter and I am ready," Garcia said.

The entire community came together with Homes for Our Troops and thanked Adrian with this new home in El Paso.

"Here I am in this house that was built specifically for me, I can cook, I can clean, I can do all the things normally couldn't do and here I am doing and I am ready," Garcia said.

Now with the key to his new home, Adrian

had one last thing to do.

He proposed to his girlfriend and among those celebrating this family's new beginning is Omar Veliz of Veliz Construction.

Veliz says helping with this project is nothing compared to what soldiers like Specialist Garcia do every day for our country.

"I enjoy the freedoms of here, but I understand that freedom doesn't come free there is a big price and big sacrifice and we need to honor those defending and making those sacrifices," Veliz said.



Friday, November 11, 11 a.m.



Friday, November 11, 11:30 a.m.



Friday, November 11, 12 noon

BUILDING HOMES, REBUILDING LIVES

Operation Enduring Support Helps Us Continue Restoring Freedom and Independence Every Day

Your monthly participation in Operation Enduring Support is a guarantee of regular and predictable funds, allowing us to serve veterans who have fought for our freedom by building specially adapted homes for those who have sustained severe combat injuries since September 11, 2011.

How Does Your Monthly Gift Work?

As a member of Operation Enduring Support, you provide ongoing funding resources to our teams in the field with a regular monthly gift. It's simple. Each month your contribution is transferred from your credit card or bank account to Homes for Our Troops. You can increase, decrease, or suspend your gift amount at any time by contacting HFOT at 1-866-7-TROOPS.

You will receive a tax receipt for your cumulative annual contributions at the end of each fiscal year. You will also receive our quarterly newsletter Foundations, which provides updates about our missions and the veterans we serve.

Operation Enduring Support monthly gifts guarantee Homes for Our Troops regular and predictable funds, allowing us to make solid commitments to new and current projects. Since we know we can count on receiving your support every month, we are able to decrease the expenses of our fundraising and put more of our money into our programs in the field. This is a high priority for us. Year after year, at least 91 percent of all funds raised by HFOT go directly to support our program activities.

If you are interested in making an annual commitment of \$5,000 or more, you may want to consider joining our Multiyear Pledge Initiative.



100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops Campaign

Homes for Our Troops has launched the 100 MORE.....Homes for Our Troops campaign. In the last seven years, Homes for Our Troops has committed to giving back freedom and independence to 100 military families. This commitment is set to be fulfilled in 2011 and we are looking toward the future; to 100 more and beyond. As the number of eligible applicants continues to grow, we estimate that there are between 1,000 to 1,500 OIF/OEF veterans among us that have injuries so severe that they are in need of an adapted home. With America's support, Homes for Our Troops can "give back" freedom and independence to them through a gift of a specially adapted home.

Your Enduring Support will Help Build 100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops

A marine corporal with over six years in the service earns \$2,325 each month, according to the Department of Defense. Couple that with the \$675 hostile fire/imminent danger pay received each month by those service members deployed to a combat zone and monthly pay increases to \$3,000. This translates to \$692.30 per week paid to many of the brave men and women who are thrust into harm's way on a daily basis.

As we look to build 100 MORE... Homes for Our Troops, we need the support of the American people more than ever. Consider pledging \$3,000 toward this effort. Through Operation Enduring Support, you can contribute \$58 weekly, \$250 monthly, or one lump sum. Or, if you have a special service member in your life, consider pledging the equivalent of his or her monthly pay.

It's up to you, but it's a small price to pay to give back freedom and independence to our veterans who have served us and protected our safety.

For more information, visit us at... www.homesforourtroops.org/donate



FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE RESTORED FOR KILLEEN SOLDIER

Army SFC Charles Armstead shares first day of the rest of his life with family and friends as he receives a new, specially adapted home

In May 2009, Army Sergeant First Class Charles Armstead of Killeen was shot in the stomach during his third deployment in Iraq.

“It struck an artery in my hip,” Armstead said. “They had to amputate my leg because they couldn’t get blood to my leg.”

Because of his injuries, Armstead underwent an uncommon surgical procedure that removed his right leg up to the pelvis. Armstead has been with the Army for fifteen years.

The challenges he faced were many, upon returning home. Confined to a wheelchair, access to rooms and the ability to care for himself, let alone his family, were compromised. That changed Saturday, November 12 when the sixth and final home was delivered in the state of Texas during the Veterans Day weekend.

Area residents and volunteers who helped support the building of Armstead’s new home gathered at the Owens Court site in Killeen.

Armstead said the new home will help him be more independent. “I’m in a chair most of my time and I lived in a two-story home,” Armstead said. “The new home is wheelchair accessible, and it will give me the ability to do things on my own with limited to no help at all.”

“This will be a life-changing experience for us, returning our lives back to a sense of normalcy,” Armstead said of his family, which includes his wife, Tonia, and three daughters, Ashley, Amber, and Amauri. “I’d like to thank Homes for Our Troops and all



PHOTOGRAPHER: THOMAS MEREDITH

SFC Charles Armstead looks ahead to his future after receiving the key to his specially adapted home.

of the community members helping build our new home.”

Dawn Teixeira, Executive Director of Homes for Our Troops, presented Armstead with the keys to his new home.

“Not only are we providing him a home, but reintegration with the rest of the community. During his Build Brigade, hundreds of people come out. This is

‘thank you’ in a big way. I know this means a lot the veterans we serve. He’s done an awful lot.”

The project started in March, under the direction of Tim Farek of Cameo Homes.

“This is the least we can do for our veterans, who have given so much for us,” he said. “I am humbled to have been a part of this meaningful project.”



Saturday, November 12, 11 p.m.



Saturday, November 12, 11:30 p.m.



Saturday, November 12, 12:30 p.m.

MARKING A MILESTONE WITH MEANING

Homes for Our Troops Delivers 100th Home and Looks Ahead to 100 MORE...

It was a gift that marked a milestone for Army Master Sergeant Daniel Robles in more ways than one – the specially adapted home presented to Robles on Friday, November 11, 2011 represented not only freedom and independence to the veteran, but the 100th home completed by Homes for Our Troops.

“I can’t say thank you enough to all these people out here who contributed,” said Robles after seeing his new home. “It is more than what we expected. It is amazing.”

The ceremony was among three in the San Antonio area and six in Texas in total during the Veterans Day weekend.

Dignitaries, homebuilders, volunteers and veterans gathered to welcome the Robles family into their new home, which was constructed by volunteers with Homes for Our Troops, a nonprofit organization that builds handicapped-accessible homes for service members who have been severely injured in combat.

Robles said his new home will make life easier for him and his family. He was serving in his first deployment in Iraqi in



PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK SOBHANI

John Gonsalves (l) greets Army Master Sergeant Daniel Robles during his Key Ceremony.

impressed by the outpouring of support from the Garden Ridge community.

“The community has just come together and made us feel at home since the beginning,”

received tremendous support in Texas, as volunteers have constructed and donated 15 homes in the state.

“The wonderful thing is when we look at what we are doing now, not just with Homes for Our Troops, but with all the things we do to honor our veterans right now, we are defining ourselves as a generation,” Gonsalves said. “We are defining ourselves as a generation that puts everything aside to honor our veterans and to make sure that we do all we can to support them — not just by a slogan or a bumper sticker but by actions.

“We are here to honor all veterans today,” Gonsalves added. “You honor one veteran you honor all veterans.”

“We are defining ourselves as a generation that puts everything aside to honor our veterans...”
- John S. Gonsalves, President and Founder, Homes for Our Troops

2006 when the vehicle he was riding in was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED), leaving him a double amputee below the knees.

The retired Sergeant said he has been

Robles said. “We really appreciate that; that means a lot. To be the 100th recipient of a Homes for Our Troops home is awesome — I can’t explain it.”

John Gonsalves, President and Founder of Homes for Our Troops, said the agency has



Friday, November 11, 8:30 a.m.



Friday, November 11, 9 a.m.



Friday, November 11, 10 a.m.

VETERAN OF A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Freedom and Independence are Restored to SPC Craig Andrade, among the Texas Six Home Recipients

On this Veterans Day, many in the town of Marion could be found lining Daisy Street on the city's South side.

It was a welcome home for a hometown hero, U.S. Army SPC Craig Andrade, confined to a wheelchair after an improvised explosive device attack on his convoy while serving in Iraq in 2005.

"My legs were off automatically. Everybody in my squad was hurt in some way; a friend of mine was killed instantly," said Andrade, recalling the attack.

A father of three, Andrade had spent the past few years trying to find a place to live -- a place that would accommodate his wheelchair and his growing family. That search ended as Andrade opened the door to his new home.

"I'll be able to go in every room, bathrooms, without any complications," said Andrade with a smile on his face.

The home was constructed for Andrade under the direction of Homes for our Troops.

Hardin Construction Company built the home, along with volunteer help. This is



PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK GREENBERG
Army SPC Craig Andrade is joined by family and friends as he cuts the ribbon to his new, specially adapted home in Marion, Texas.

specifically built for Andrade, including buttons to open and close doors, wider doorways for easy access, and a

so excited for the future," said Danielle Andrade, Craig's wife.

A large number of veterans and community members from Marion showed up to see the Andrade's receive their new home.

"When it's the whole community, that's something that's going to help this family to feel they are appreciated. It really takes community efforts like this to do that," said John Gonsalves, President and Founder of Homes for our Troops.

"I can see Craig moving throughout the home with ease and it makes me so excited for the future."

- Danielle Andrade, wife of SPC Craig Andrade

the second home Hardin has constructed for Homes for our Troops.

Throughout the home are features

roll-in shower.

"I can see Craig moving throughout the home with ease and it makes me



Friday, November 11, 11:30 a.m.



Friday, November 11, 12 noon



Friday, November 11, 1 p.m.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO BUILD A 'HOME'

Community of Boerne Comes Together for Veterans Day Key Ceremony

McCoy's home is located off Farm Road 3351 between Bergheim and Kendalia, but Boerne Mayor Mike Schultz said the city limit boundary was extended so McCoy could be a Boerne resident.

Gene McCoy presented his grandson the key to the 2,800 square-foot home.

Nicholas cut the ribbon and toured the specially designed home for the first time with his granddad, dad Scott McCoy and John Gonsalves, President and Founder of the Homes for Our Troops.

McCoy, who said he is a person of few words, thanked his dad and granddad.

"The truth is I wouldn't have gone as far as I have if not for what I learned from these guys," he said during the Key Ceremony. "This is a day I will never forget. I am starting the rest of my life.

"The best thing are the people I have met along the way, the friends I have made. They will always be a part of my life now."

"This is all overwhelming. I will be here forever. That's for sure. I am at a loss for words."

"The local community is such an important part of what we do."

- John S. Gonsalves, President and Founder of Homes for Our Troops

Gonsalves said McCoy's home was the third his group presented on November 11 and sixth in three days. There are 14 Homes for Our Troops homes in Texas.



PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBIN JERSTAD

A crowd of more than 200 people welcomed Staff Sergeant Nicholas McCoy to his new home in Boerne, Texas on Veterans Day.

Jake Murillo, owner of Veritas Custom Homebuilder in San Antonio, said Homes for Our Troops contacted him in October 2010.

"Once I realized it was such a good cause, I stepped up and volunteered my

adapted for McCoy, including automatic door openers, easy access to the shower, kitchen appliances and cabinets.

McCoy was serving in Iraq in 2006 when he was injured in an explosion that cost him both of his legs. He was eventually taken to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio where he was in a medically induced coma for almost two months.

Gonsalves said Americans need to show their support for troops by action "and the actions of this community speak loudly. The local community is such an important part of what we do."

services," he said. "Over 80 percent of the materials were donated."

Area residents donated their time and effort to build the home, which is specially



Friday, November 11, 4:30 p.m.



Friday, November 11, 5 p.m.



Friday, November 11, 5:30 p.m.