



Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | www.hfotusa.org | JULY 2015

IN CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

This July 4th holiday, I would ask you to pause and reflect on the many freedoms that we and our families are blessed to have as American citizens. Thanks to the Constitution drafted by our Founding Fathers who safeguarded our rights, among others, to freedom of speech and assembly, we are free to gather with friends and family to celebrate this holiday and welcome summer.

Let us be mindful of the fact that it is the men and women of our Armed Forces who now preserve and defend these very freedoms as we go about our daily activities; and many of these men and women have paid a huge price doing so.

On the following pages of this Foundations newsletter we will introduce you to future HFOT home recipient, Army Sergeant Michael Beck, and his Army brother, TV actor Melvin Kearney. Their story of friendship on and off the battlefield is a testament to the bond among military brothers and sisters, and serves as a sobering reminder of the sacrifices they have made defending our freedoms overseas.

In this issue, we'll also share an excerpt from the book, *Blasted by Adversity*, written by HFOT home recipient, Army Staff Sergeant Luke Murphy. Luke is a prime example of the Veterans who continue to Pay It Forward for our mission: proceeds from book sales will be donated to HFOT, paving the way for another severely injured Veteran to one day experience the freedom and independence that come from living in one of our homes.

With your support, Homes for Our Troops has now built over 190 specially adapted homes in 39 states, giving these Warriors a significant advantage as they go about rebuilding their lives in pursuit of personal goals and dreams. No longer do these Veterans, many of whom rely on wheelchairs or prosthetics, have to worry about climbing stairs to tend to a young child, or shifting in and out of an unsafe chair while bathing. The struggle for independence that these Heroes and their families faced daily while living in a barrier-filled home is finally over.

Through your generosity, Homes for Our Troops has redefined freedom for these Veterans. It is only with your financial support that we have been able to restore security, safety and comfort back to their everyday lives, and we thank you on their behalf. In this way, you have served your country, and the liberties for which it stands, and we are proud to serve alongside you as we Build Homes and Rebuild Lives. We hope that we can count on your continued support to complete our mission and take care of the nearly 2,000 Veterans who still need one of our specially adapted homes.

May you have a wonderful and safe summer, and enjoy the blessings of freedom with your families today and always.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. McHale
Major General USA, Ret.
President / CEO
Homes for Our Troops



Timothy P. McHale
Major General USA, Ret.



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.



A Top-Rated Military & Veteran Charity by the American Institute of Philanthropy.



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HFOT to Reach 200th Home Milestone

Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson's Key Ceremony Planned for This Fall

On July 5, 2012, Marine Corporal Zachary Nelson was severely injured in a vehicle rollover while serving in Afghanistan. Zachary, who was stationed on top as the vehicle's gunner, was crushed in the accident, paralyzing him from the chest down.

Zachary says it is frustrating not being able to easily navigate his wheelchair in his home now, which is not customized to meet his needs. "As a man, I want to be my wife's provider and protector. I don't always feel like I am able to do that when I have to depend on her to help me with things in our current home," he says.

Things will change in the fall, however, when Zach and his new bride Kiley receive a specially adapted home in Noblesville, Indiana. The home will have more than 40 major adaptations that will eliminate Zach's current challenges. Zach is looking forward to taking on more to help his wife around the home. Kiley is a night shift nurse, so while she sleeps during the day, Zach does the dishes, laundry and even makes dinner for her every evening before she heads off to work. But there are barriers preventing Zachary from doing as much as he wants. Bending and reaching for items in the kitchen and carrying in groceries while in a wheelchair are challenging for him in their current living situation.

This home marks an important milestone not only for Zach and Kiley, but for the organization. This will be the 200th home HFOT has awarded since its inception in 2004.

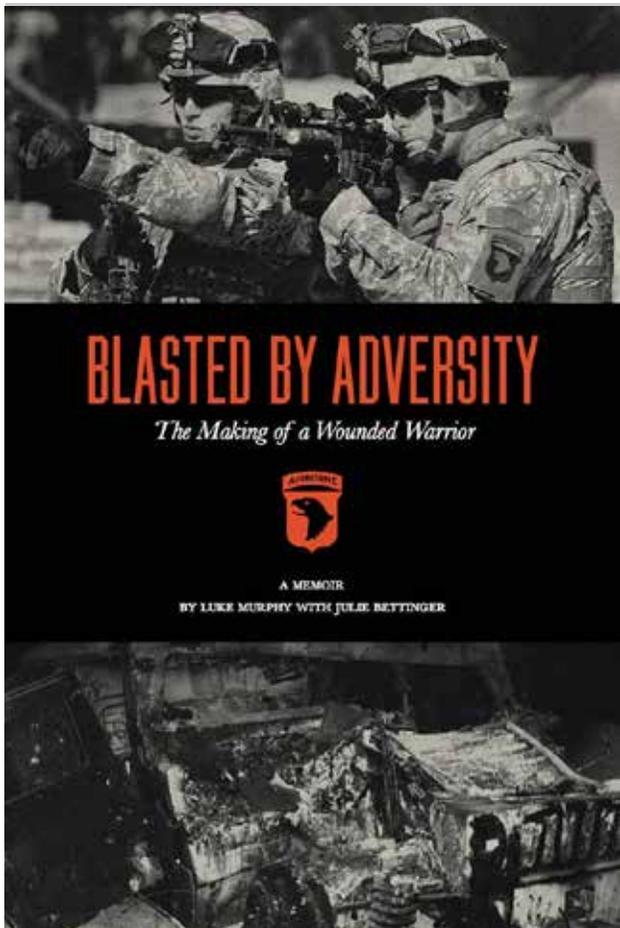


Zach and Kiley Nelson, future HFOT home recipients.

Zach and Kiley are looking forward to making this house their "forever home." The place they have been renting for the past two years has never truly felt like home, feeling only temporary to the couple, Kiley says. In preparation for the big move, Kiley has been watching home décor shows to get ideas. "I want to decorate our new house and make it our personal haven," she says.

Zach says he is most looking forward to living in a home that makes his injury a distant thought, where he'll be able to work on his future plans. He would like to enroll in college within the next few years and start hand cycling competitively. "Homes for Our Troops provides Veterans with so much more than a place to live; it provides us with the opportunity to move on with our lives and work toward accomplishing our goals," he says.

Read more about Zachary's story at
www.hfotusa.org/nelson.



HFOT's Luke Murphy Publishes Memoir:

“Blasted by Adversity”

Then he let me know why he was there. “I need to take your left leg off, and let me tell you why. You’re missing nine inches of your calf. You have a compound fracture, your tibia and your fibula. It’s a very bad break. We can definitely reattach this, and I bet I can get this leg to live, but you have no idea how bad it’s going to be. I won’t know if that foot’s going to get cold and need to be taken off someday. I don’t know if it’s going to work. I can tell you right now it’s going to be very painful. It’s my recommendation that we take it off right at the break, about halfway between your knee and your foot. I think you’ll be up and walking a lot faster.”

I shifted a little in my bed. The doc handed me a clipboard and pointed. “I just need you to sign right there.” He paused and looked at me. “I’ll give you some

Retired Army Staff Sergeant Luke Murphy, a 2014 Homes for Our Troops home recipient, has shared his courageous story of battle and recovery at speaking engagements all over the country. He recently published a memoir, “*Blasted by Adversity: the Making of a Wounded Warrior*.” The book chronicles Murphy’s two tours with the 101st Airborne Division, his recovery from an IED blast that took his leg, and his advocacy for wounded service members.

The following is an excerpt from the book:

When I woke up at Landstuhl Regional Medical in Germany, I was confused. I was on a ventilator in the intensive care unit. I communicated to the nurses by blinking once for yes and twice for no. They kept me sedated for a few days and finally took me off the ventilator. My bed was raised slightly one day, and I saw a doctor come in. He stood over me in his white coat, very businesslike, and told me I’d lost my leg. I said I already knew. Then he said that my left leg was there, but barely. I said I knew that, too.



Luke Murphy and fiancée Stephanie Wernke at Luke’s Key Ceremony, Feb. 2014.

time to think about it. I know this is really hard, but we think it's better for you. Just trust me." Then he left.

This was a difficult decision to make, one that would impact the rest of my life. I was still pretty out of it, and I didn't have anybody to advise me—my family was thousands of miles away. I didn't have anyone to call. My mother was inconsolable, and they still hadn't located my dad so he didn't even know about the blast. As I lay there thinking about signing the form, a nurse came in. She said, "You don't have to do this." I looked at her. "What do you mean?" I was thinking, The doctor said to do it. I'm in the Army. I do what I'm told. She said, "You have another option. It's called limb salvage."

I wasn't buying it. "He just told me that's very painful and it would probably need to be taken off someday anyway." She looked straight at me. "Yeah, but you never know unless you try. There's a chance that your leg will be—not perfect—but good enough. Think about it." And she left.

The doc came in a few minutes later, and I told him, "I think I'm going to give it a shot—limb salvage. Is that an option?" His face dropped. He took the clipboard and form, then looked right at me. "If you weren't awake right now, I'd take your leg anyway, because I wouldn't need your consent." It wasn't like he was being a jerk, he was telling me like it is. Of course, he was one hundred percent right. He was right on everything, every detail: the difficulty of saving the leg, the pain of rehabilitation. But I didn't sign that form, and I've still got my leg today thanks to that nurse.

And I can tell you there were so many times at Walter Reed that I wished I had listened to him. It hurt so bad. I don't think people can really relate to the kind of pain we're talking about, which affects you on a daily basis. I guess you can imagine shooting somebody in the leg with a shotgun hundreds of times, and that's kind of what it's like. Your leg is there, but it's a constant source of pain. So I don't know if it was the right decision, but I tell you, I don't like putting a fake leg on the stump every day, either. The process is not fun.

Putting it on in the morning is miserable. You know, I've been in a warm bed, my stump is warm, and I have to grab the cold liner and slide it painfully over the warm body part. It doesn't feel good. Then I go to put the leg on and try to stand up and start pushing. There have been times that I've started walking out to get the coffee going and looked down and realized the right

foot is toed out, the toe is pointing the wrong way, so I have to sit down, take it off, and readjust. There's always discomfort. Every day is different, and some days are better than others. If I had two fake legs, then I'd have two fitting issues; maybe two legs would be toed out and I'd be walking like a duck.

Years after they are wounded on the battlefield, severely injured Veterans, like Luke, who have undergone amputations still experience extreme pain in their residual limbs. Recovery is indeed a lifetime process; it is not uncommon for these Veterans to undergo dozens more surgeries post-amputation to treat infections or alleviate discomfort with tissue, bone or skin grafts. A wheelchair accessible home from Homes for Our Troops facilitates the healing process in the months and years to come.

*Luke is grateful for his HFOT home and the comfort it affords him as he rebuilds his life. Sale proceeds from *Blasted by Adversity: the Making of a Wounded Warrior* are being donated to HFOT. The book is available through all major booksellers and Amazon. Find out more at www.LukeMurphy101.com.*



HFOT home recipient Luke Murphy.



Battle Brothers **FOR LIFE**

Army Veteran Melvin Kearney with HFOT's Michael Beck.

Future HFOT home recipient, Army SGT Michael Beck has been fortunate to have his wife, family and friends by his side since he was severely injured in Iraq in 2008. Among that support system is Beck's close friend, TV actor and Army Veteran Melvin Kearney. But Kearney will tell you that it is in fact Beck himself who provides everyone with the inspiration and motivation to push on.

"Beck's become my brother for life and pushed me into my true calling," Kearney says.

Kearney, whose dad was in the Army, enlisted after high school in 2001 and served his first tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004 and a second with Beck in 2007. Beck and Kearney first met in 2007 while they were both training to deploy to Iraq. Once in Iraq, the two would talk while conducting combat operations in downtown Baghdad with Iraqi Police, and while running

to the bunkers for protection against daily rocket attacks.

One attack on April 6, 2008 proved devastating; Kearney's Staff Sergeant, Emmanuel Pickett, was killed and 14 others were injured. Beck had just stowed his gear and was checking to see if he had mail when he was knocked unconscious by the force of the blast. Five days later he woke up in a Baghdad hospital to learn that doctors would need to amputate both of his legs.

When Kearney arrived home weeks later in June, he headed to Walter Reed in D.C. to be at Beck's bedside, joining Beck's wife Nadia and other family members. Says Beck, "I was just happy to be alive, but when I saw Melvin there, I was really happy to have someone there who served with me in my unit."

Kearney would stay for hours, often while Beck was heavily sedated. Recalls Kearney, "I still remember the look on Beck's face after a surgery when he would look up just to see if someone was there."

Kearney says the time he spent with Beck in the hospital also got him thinking, "What happens next, what happens to Soldiers after they are wounded?" A short while later, he learned about the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), and landed a job with them as an Advocate. In between filming episodes of TV's *Nashville* in the role of "Bo", Kearney says he helps ensure that military troops and their families are equipped with the tools, resources and confidence to heal with valor and strength. Much of that he has already learned from watching his buddy Beck.

"Beck is so special - he will not give up. If anybody's having a bad day, I just show him Beck's picture," Kearney says.

Last September, Kearney came out to the HFOT Groundbreaking event for Beck in Rocky Mount, N.C. to help welcome him to the community. Witnessing the event, he says, has made him become one of HFOT's biggest cheerleaders. "I am very impressed with the Homes for Our Troops mission because providing a mortgage-free specially adapted home gives the Warrior and family one less thing to worry about, and more focus can be put on the path to independence," Kearney says.

The Becks are looking forward to moving into a safe and accessible home with their two young daughters. There will be plenty of room for extended family too, especially Kearney.

"Melvin will always have a space at our home. He is my brother after all," Beck says.

To learn more about the HFOT project underway for Michael Beck, visit www.hfotusa.org/beck.



Army SGT Michael Beck at his Groundbreaking.



Army SGT Michael Beck with wife Nadia and their two daughters.



HFOT Groundbreaking event for Beck, September 2014.

SPOTLIGHT ON HFOT'S FUNDRAISING TEAM

**A team of three helps coordinate
the fundraising needed to
*Build Homes, Rebuild Lives.***



HFOT's Fundraising Team: left to right, Dylan Curtis, Brianne McNamara and Cara Yanosick.

For every home HFOT awards, there are many community members working behind the scenes hosting bake sales, car washes or running races to raise funds to make that happen.

At Homes for Our Troops, there are three employees dedicated to managing fundraisers and reaching out to each of the build communities. The Fundraising Department is headed by Fundraising Events Manager Cara Yanosick, who leads fundraising coordinators Brianne McNamara and Dylan Curtis.

The department has two programs – Team HFOT and Independent Fundraising.

Yanosick organizes the six major running events that Team HFOT participates in each year, including the Walt Disney Marathon Weekend, Disney's Wine & Dine Half Marathon and the Marine Corps Marathon. Yanosick says these events are important because they help the organization reach so many new donors and get HFOT's brand on the race course. "Each year we have runners join us simply because they saw someone in our jersey," she says. "Anyone can run a race, but Team

HFOT runners are special because they run for a reason."

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Anyone can host a fundraiser if
they have a creative idea and the
will to do something good.

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The Independent Fundraising portion is beneficial for similar reasons. "We don't spend a lot of money on advertising, so for our Independent Fundraisers to be out there spreading the word and sharing our mission, they make a huge impact and raise a lot of awareness, in addition to the funds they raise," she says.

McNamara joined the department in early 2014. Since that time, she has experienced many rewarding moments meeting Veterans at fundraisers and HFOT

events. "They all inspire me to work harder at what I do," she says.

McNamara says the most challenging part of her role is connecting with a community remotely and encouraging them to fundraise through phone and e-mail. However, the fundraisers she has made it easy. "We have a lot of dedicated fundraisers out there who help us spread the word," she says.

Curtis, the newest addition to the team, first became familiar with HFOT when his college fraternity did a fundraiser for HFOT during his senior year. He knew after graduating from college last year that he wanted to work in the nonprofit sector; he joined HFOT in March. "Fundraising allows me to not only be a part of an organization, but also to have daily communications with outside supporters who do so much work for us," he says.

Yanosick says it's always rewarding to meet the fundraisers she's been working with and to thank them in person for what they do. She especially loves to cheer them on from the sidelines. In the six years she has worked in fundraising, Yanosick has worked with HFOT fundraisers ranging from elementary school students to NFL players. "Anyone can host a fundraiser if they have a creative idea and the will to do something good," she says. Last year (FY14) the department oversaw more than 650 fundraising activities and raised about \$2.5 million toward HFOT's operational budget supporting its mission of *Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives*. Yanosick says her group is aiming to hit the \$3 million mark over the next two years by doing more outreach in the communities where HFOT is building, and by expanding Team HFOT.

To find out more or host a fundraiser of your own visit www.hfotusa.org/fundraise

5 WAYS TO FUNDRAISE

Here are five ways to help our Fundraising Department raise money to Build Homes and Rebuild Lives.

Lace Up Your Sneakers

Set up a personal fundraising page on our website and ask friends/family to support you while you run. Get a team together and ask everyone to raise a donation toward the team's goal. <http://www.hfotusa.org/teamhfot>



Wear a Hat to School Day

Have students and staff donate \$1 to wear a hat to school on a specific day. Also fun for children: Tie Day and Crazy Sock Day!

Golf Tournament

Host a Golf Tournament for your clients! Have a small lunch before the tournament and a dinner after. Recognize sponsors and present winning foursomes with a trophy or plaque.



Red Shirt Fridays

Encourage employees to make a donation to Homes for Our Troops and wear jeans or red shirts on Friday to show their support for the military.

Military Appreciation Dinner

Show your support for all of our nation's Service Members by hosting a Military Appreciation Dinner! Sell tickets, have door prizes and raffles, and honor local Veterans at the event.



PARTNERSHIPS



Seeing a clear future

Thompson Creek Window Signs on as Partner with HFOT

From left to right: Katie Sushko, Chris Mitchell, Timothy McHale, Adam Kisielewski, Rick Wuest, Brian Wuest and Beth Murphy.

As a new Regional Partner for Homes for Our Troops, Thompson Creek Window Company is currently volunteering, donating, and installing windows and gutters on brand new homes for Army Sergeant Steven Curry in Nokesville, Va., and Marine Corporal Marcus Dandrea in Haymarket, Md. These homes are being built to restore some of the freedom and independence these heroes sacrificed while defending our country, and will enable them to focus on their families and their recovery.

“It is truly a humbling experience to meet brave service men and women who lay their lives on the line, day in and day out, for our freedom”, says Thompson Creek CEO Rick Wuest. “Our partnership with Homes for Our Troops is our opportunity to help severely injured Veterans rebuild their lives and enjoy the freedoms we enjoy as Americans.”

HFOT Aligns with William James College to Help with Veteran Health and Wellness

Homes for Our Troops recently launched a new partnership with William James College (WJC). A signing ceremony kicking off the new venture was held on June 16 at Homes for Our Troops headquarters with William James College President, Dr. Nicholas Covino, and several colleagues, along with HFOT President/CEO Tim McHale and the HFOT staff.

The new partnership will facilitate training for HFOT personnel in areas of Veteran health and support services, including Acute Stress Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress in Veterans and basic strategies and skills for crisis management. In conjunction with the college’s Richard and Joan Freedman Center based in Newton, Mass., HFOT personnel will be able to refer Veterans to a variety of professional resources related to mental health and wellness to help them during their recovery as they rebuild their lives.



HFOT President/CEO Tim McHale and William James College President, Dr. Nicholas Covino, at signing ceremony on June 16.



On June 8, HFOT hosted an Evening at Gillette Stadium to celebrate its collaboration with TV's *This Old House*. Among the night's guests were the cast and producers of the show, HFOT Veterans and staff members, and various donors and sponsors. During the event, a special Directors Cut of the TV episodes featuring the build project for Army SSG Matt DeWitt was aired. HFOT's President and CEO, Tim McHale also presented each cast member with an honorary flag that was flown over the DeWitt home in recognition for their contributions. Thanks to all who attended the event to support HFOT.

To watch the webisodes featuring HFOT, check out [this link](#)



HFOT Video Gallery

Get to know the Veterans we're building for. Check out HFOT's Video Gallery.



Army SGT Kevin Jaye

Marine Cpl Kevin Hanrahan

Army SFC Edga

Cpl John Curtin

Army SPC Ret. Alex Hussey

Army CPL Kevin McCloskey

Marine Cpl Joseph Woodke

Army SSG Russell Dennison

www.hfotusa.org/video