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# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | [www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org) | VETERANS DAY 2011

Dear Friends:

Inspiration can come in many forms – through a story, a picture, or the action of an individual. For me, inspiration came in the form of all three. The words and images resulting from the actions of the brave men and women tell the stories of selfless gestures meant to help preserve the lives and well being of people they have never met. Some have paid the ultimate sacrifice and some have come home to a life they never imagined, but a reality that is far from the freedom and independence they once enjoyed.

This issue of Foundations brings to you the stories of, not only members of the Homes for Our Troops family, but our extended family as well. Those who were inspired to work on behalf of the veterans we serve because these volunteers care deeply and feel just as strongly as we do that this is the right thing to do. Over the past seven years I have been amazed and humbled by the generosity of the American people. More humbling is the spirit of our severely injured veterans that we serve.

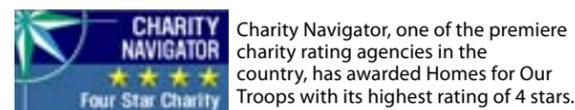
You have helped us rebuild the lives of 100 deserving military families to date. Together we have given back freedom and independence to many of our nation's most severely injured veterans through the gift of a specially adapted home. I am very proud of what we have accomplished together thus far.

Homes for Our Troops is much more than an organization, it is an American movement which you have become a part of. We have come very far together but we need your help now more than ever. To learn more about the “100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops” campaign and how you can contribute please visit our website at: [www.homesforourtroops.org/100more](http://www.homesforourtroops.org/100more)

We will do our part by maintaining our high standards in fiscal responsibility and in the quality of the homes we build for our nations wounded heroes. Your help makes a profound difference in the lives of our severely injured veterans and their families and for that you should be proud.

Sincerely,

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



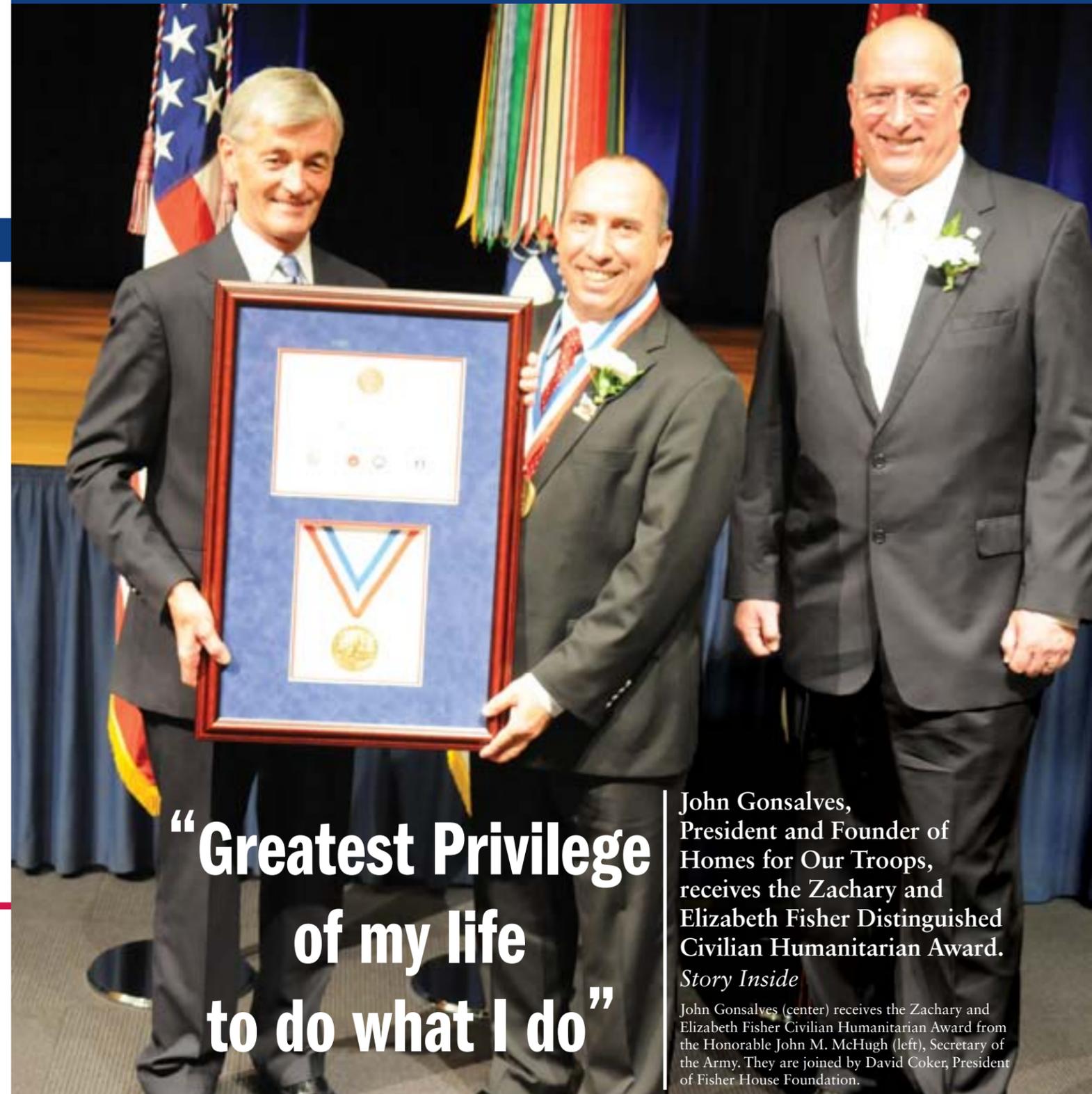
Charity Navigator, one of the premiere charity rating agencies in the country, has awarded Homes for Our Troops with its highest rating of 4 stars.



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.



“Greatest Privilege  
of my life  
to do what I do”

John Gonsalves, President and Founder of Homes for Our Troops, receives the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Distinguished Civilian Humanitarian Award. *Story Inside*

John Gonsalves (center) receives the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Civilian Humanitarian Award from the Honorable John M. McHugh (left), Secretary of the Army. They are joined by David Coker, President of Fisher House Foundation.

## REMEMBERING MILESTONES AND FINDING INSPIRATION IN THE PAST



**HFOT family recounts reasons to get involved; urge others to do the same**



This past year found us reflecting on the 10th anniversary of September 11, 2001, and as a result, we note, too, the Global War on Terror has also reached a milestone. Is it finally coming to an end? When you take into account that there are thousands of our brothers and sisters whose lives have been lost during that time, and nearly 2,000 of us who have suffered injuries so profound a specially-adapted home is necessary in order to continue living day-to-day, self-imposed timelines seem so irrelevant.

What's not irrelevant is the need to provide our veterans with homes they and their families can call just that, "home;" free from the unnecessary barriers of making it through just one day.

This is something I know all too well – I lost both of my legs while deployed to Baghdad, Iraq in October 2006. I was on, what I thought was a routine patrol, but it turned out to be anything but. An IED struck the vehicle I was riding in, killing another passenger in the vehicle instantly. I suffered immediate amputation of both legs and was transported to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where I spent more than 11 months recuperating from my injuries. But I'm grateful to say, my life didn't end there. I'm currently pursuing a fine arts degree, I married my beautiful wife Kristine, surprising her with the wedding of her dreams this past spring when we were given the keys to our new home by Homes for Our Troops.

Asking for help does not come easily, especially for those of us who are - or have been - in the military, even in the face of challenging injuries. When we discover that it is nearly impossible to find a suitable home that meets our needs, we adapt and carry on; many of our nation's severely injured veterans camp out in their living rooms to avoid the stairs, build makeshift ramps to get to their front doors, or simply "learn tricks" for getting around the bathroom when their wheelchair won't fit through the door. You may never hear any of us complain much about our situations; in reality, there are very few among us who wouldn't do what we did all over again, but in many cases, challenge emerges through this sacrifice.

No two stories are exactly the same, but the

lasting effects of the injuries we sustained have ramifications extending beyond us to our families – wives, husbands, parents, siblings, caregivers, and even the children who never made the conscious decision to live the military life, but whose future with us will be forever changed by fate.

Commemorative occasions serve a purpose: they help us to remember, to honor, and to hopefully establish a legacy for future generations.

What has changed in the past decade? Have we become closer as a nation? Are we putting our differences aside to work toward a common good? Some have and some are. The urge to forget is there – forget the horrific events that unfolded that morning, forget the thousands of troops deployed to foreign soil, to protect our nation, to ensure it would never happen again on our watch.

But we – the veterans - will never forget. The majority have come home, safe and free from physical injuries, but the pain lingers in the form of post traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries. Those hidden wounds for some, may never heal. For others, their injuries are so profound it has changed the way they will now live – no longer free to move about at will. Prosthetics have taken the place of legs, arms, and hands. Holding a child is a challenge; hugging a spouse takes a different form, a new meaning.

Many good Americans we have met since embarking on the Homes for Our Troops mission some seven years ago have expressed feelings of helplessness – they want us to know our sacrifices aren't for naught, but they are often challenged to figure out just how they can help. Ten years have passed and what has really changed? How have you changed?

As you take a moment to reflect on what this occasion truly means, don't leave change to someone else. You can make a difference: Reflect how we as Americans can contribute in a positive and peaceful way and help restore freedom and independence to veterans just like me. Supporting organizations like Homes for Our Troops can be a positive first step.

SGT Jude Recendez (Ret.), U.S Army



PHOTOGRAPHER: TOM COOPER

SSG Juan Roldan's Build Brigade was held August 19-21, 2011. The volunteers worked hard and made this Build Brigade, in the great state of Florida a success! Way to go Parrish, Florida! We look forward to welcoming SSG Roldan and his daughter Bryana home later this year.

**COMPLETED BUILD BRIGADES**

- SPC Robert KISLOW III..... JULY 22, 23 & 24, 2011  
Danielsville, PA Building Partner: Blue Valley Builders, Inc.
- Cpl Tyler SOUTHERN .....AUGUST 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.

**COMPLETED KEY CEREMONIES**

- SGT Latseen BENSON .....OCTOBER 22, 2011  
Elizabeth, CO Building Partner: G.J. Gardner Homes
- Sgt. Kenneth "Dylan" GRAY.....OCTOBER 22, 2011  
Wellington, NV Building Partner: Eureka Builders, Inc.
- SGT Joseph SMITH.....OCTOBER 29, 2011  
Thomasville, NC Building Partner: Beane Construction, Inc.

[www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org)

**VETERANS DAY WEEK - KEY CEREMONIES**

*Honoring our heroes of the past and present, we celebrate Veterans Day by presenting homes to six more heroes:*

- Cpl Jose "Daniel" GASCA .....NOVEMBER 10, 2011  
and Celebrating the 236TH MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY!  
El Paso, TX Building Partner: Veliz Construction, LLC
- SPC Craig ANDRADE .....NOVEMBER 11, 2011  
Marion, TX Building Partner: Hardin Construction
- SPC Adrian GARCIA .....NOVEMBER 11, 2011  
El Paso, TX Building Partner: Veliz Construction, LLC
- SSG Nicholas MCCOY .....NOVEMBER 11, 2011  
Boerne, TX Building Partner: VERITAS Custom Homebuilder
- MSG Daniel ROBLES .....NOVEMBER 11, 2011  
Garden Ridge, TX  
Building Partner: RD Campbell Custom Homes
- SFC Charles ARMSTEAD.....NOVEMBER 12, 2011  
Killeen, TX Building Partner: Cameo Homes, Inc.

Homes for Our Troops thanks the hundreds of volunteers who gave their time and heartfelt support to each of these projects.

**HOMES FOR OUR TROOPS FOUNDER RECEIVES HIGH MILITARY PRAISE**

**John S. Gonsalves receives the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Distinguished Civilian Humanitarian Award**

A former construction supervisor and home-improvement contractor was recognized Monday, September 26 at the Pentagon for giving it all up to help seriously injured veterans.

Homes for Our Troops President and Founder John Gonsalves was awarded the 2010 Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Distinguished Civilian Humanitarian Award for his commitment to build specially adapted homes for wounded warriors at no cost to them.

Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh draped a red, white, and blue ribbon and brass medallion around Gonsalves neck and presented him with a framed citation signed by all the service secretaries.

Gonsalves' move to create the nonprofit organization began after he watched a television news story about a soldier who had lost both legs to a roadside bomb in Iraq. He wondered what was being done to help provide severely injured and disabled veterans with specially adapted and barrier-free homes.

After finding no organization supporting such a need, Gonsalves began researching the needs of the severely injured by visiting service members and their families at military hospitals and speaking before veterans' organizations.

In 2004 he donated most of his life savings to start Homes for Our Troops. Today, he volunteers all his time and expertise to the organization by coordinating donations of building materials, professional labor and funds. To date, Homes for Our Troops has built 83 homes at no cost to the veterans. Gonzales said the homes give them physical freedom, independence and restore their personal dignity.

Hosting the ceremony, McHugh praised

To view the entire award ceremony, visit us online at [www.homesforourtroops.org/newsletter](http://www.homesforourtroops.org/newsletter)



John S. Gonsalves, Founder and President of Homes for Our Troops, is joined by home recipients and volunteers as he accepts the Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Distinguished Civilian Humanitarian Award at the Pentagon ceremony. In attendance (l-r) Steve Norris, volunteer; Kristine Recendez, wife of home recipient SGT Jude Recendez; Mr. Gonsalves; Nancy Kearney, Blue Star Mothers of Virginia; and CPT Ferris Butler (Ret.), home recipient.

Gonsalves for exemplifying Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher's personal qualities of patriotism, generosity and selfless dedication to improving the quality of life for members of the armed forces.

together over a long weekend in what resembles an old-fashioned barn raising. "It's the greatest privilege of my life to be able to do this and I thank you for this honor that you bestowed on me," Gonsalves said,

*"John Gonsalves truly represents the best of the American spirit and the spirit of this award, finding inspiration by serving those who serve."*  
- Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh

"Homes for Our Troops has been recognized as one of the best charities in the nation receiving top honors from the American Institute of Philanthropy and other independent watchdog groups," McHugh said.

Following McHugh at the podium, Gonsalves said he was humbled by the award, but credited his staff for their work and dedication.

"It's an awesome thing to see to hundreds of people come out and reintegrate these wounded warriors back into their communities and to really say thank you with more than just a slogan or bumper sticker -- they do it with action," he said. He explained that the frames of the homes are constructed by volunteers who work

"but it really is for those who make Homes for Our Troops."



The Honorable John M. McHugh, Secretary of the Army (l) presents Mr. Gonsalves with his award.

[www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org)

## Homes for Our Troops Welcomes Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston to its Board of Directors

Homes for Our Troops is extremely pleased to announce Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston (Ret.) has joined the Board of Directors. The move will strengthen the leadership team, enabling the organization to fulfill the commitment to build 100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops within the next three years.

As Sergeant Major of the Army, Preston served as the Army Chief of Staff's personal adviser on all enlisted-related matters, particularly in areas affecting soldier training and quality of life. He devoted the majority of his time to traveling throughout the Army observing training, and speaking with soldiers and their families. He sits on a wide variety of councils and boards that make decisions affecting enlisted soldiers and their families and has routinely testified before Congress. The longest serving Sergeant Major of the Army, Preston retired March 1, 2011.

"We are honored [SMA Preston] has agreed to play an active part in advancing the mission of Homes for Our Troops.



His experience and leadership will play a pivotal role in preparing this organization to continue the successes of the past seven years," said John S. Gonsalves, President and Founder of Homes for Our Troops. "This appointment will help ensure

Homes for Our Troops is well positioned to capitalize on the significant strengths and opportunities available as we build for the future and continue restoring freedom and independence to our severely injured service members."

During his 35-year career, he served in every enlisted leadership position from cavalry scout and tank commander to his position as Sergeant Major of the Army. Other assignments he held as command sergeant major were 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, 3rd "Grey Wolf" Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Armored Division in Bad Kreuznach, Germany, and V Corps in Heidelberg, Germany. Immediately prior to his appointment as Sergeant Major of the Army, he was the command sergeant major of Combined Joint Task Force 7, Iraq.

Among honors received during his career include the Army Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star. He served in Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

## FROM ONE BATTLEFIELD TO ANOTHER

*HFOT Home Recipient Bryant Jacobs continues to Pay It Forward with Battle of the Bulbs fundraiser*

I'll never forget hearing John Gonsalves speak for the first time. He said something that will stick with me for the rest of my life – "It's not a left thing, it's not a right thing, it's the right thing to do." He was referring to taking care of the veterans who serve this country. I know, I am one of those veterans. And like too many of my comrades, I returned home severely injured and was introduced to a world previously unknown to me.

As a result of my injuries, one thing was clear, I needed an accessible living space. Easier said than done, however - handicap accessible apartments were simply unavailable in the Salt Lake valley, so I had to make due with what I could find.

Through the work of Homes for Our Troops, that changed as I was given the gift of a specially adapted home – it's now

my turn to "Pay it Forward." Homes for Our Troops has changed many lives, mine included; I have loved being a part of this.

I was out with a bunch of buddies one night and we were all talking about golfing. I remember mentioning how cool it would be to hold a golf tournament to raise money for other wounded veterans who could benefit from a HFOT home. One of my buddies said that he had always wanted to put together a golf tournament and thought that this would be an amazing program to benefit. We held a golf tournament twice now and raised about \$25,000.

Organizing a fundraiser can be a lot of work but is more than worth it in the end. They can also be pretty simple; like the fundraiser that Tracy Keil and I are putting together. "Battle of the Bulbs" is open to all HFOT home recipients – and we want

everyone to get involved. The concept is simple - decorate the outside of their homes for the holidays and then post pictures on the HFOT website. Contestants, with the help of HFOT, will encourage family and friends and anyone else, to get online and vote for their home. Votes will cost \$1 each and people can vote as many times as they wish. This fundraiser has the potential to be huge and we are asking everyone to be involved. Be on the lookout for more information about our fundraiser.

People pay it forward for many reasons; and the main reason I do it is because it's the right thing to do. My Homes for Our Troops home has changed my life. I feel great after an event that I put on knowing that the money I raise is going to keep Homes For Our Troops building homes that will change the lives of other severely injured veterans for the better.

SPC Bryant Jacobs, US Army (Ret.)

## Oorah! Fundraising on the Run in DC!



Team HFOT gathered during a luncheon at Clyde's in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, October 29. The group participated in the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Marine Corps Marathon on Sunday, October 30. The group raised over \$50,000 collectively to support Homes for Our Troops.



## Good Eats for a Good Cause

During the month of November, Texas Road House will be donating 10 percent of the proceeds raised through the sale of gift cards to Homes for Our Troops. The specially designated HFOT gift card can be purchased online at [www.txrhgiftcards.com](http://www.txrhgiftcards.com)

## Holiday Giving!

This year's limited edition HFOT 2011 Holiday Ornament is now available! Only 200 of these ornaments were made, so get yours soon! With the launch of the "100 MORE... Homes for Our Troops" fundraising campaign, the organization's goal is to fund the construction of 100 more homes over the next three years. As you display your 100 MORE...Homes for Our Troops ornament in your home, we hope that you think often about the 100 stars displayed on the blue ring to represent the 100 heroes we will build homes for and how you have helped to restore their freedom and independence.

Also this year, two new giving card designs are available! Giving cards can be purchased through the Homes for Our Troops online store to make a donation in your loved one's honor. To view these festive new designs, visit [www.homesforourtroops.org/store](http://www.homesforourtroops.org/store)



## Building Great First Impressions!

Pella Corporation committed to a fundraising effort during 2011 resulting in \$35,000 to support Homes for Our Troops. The manufacturer of windows, doors, and other building solutions launched its program in January, which included visibility for HFOT during Pella Expos held at over 30 locations nationwide, along with other efforts. Visiting HFOT headquarters recently, Chris Dana, Trade Marketing Manager, Pella Corporation, presents the check to John S. Gonsalves, Founder and President, Homes for Our Troops.



## 'COMING HOME' VIA THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

There was never a time in Adam Kisielewski's life that he didn't expect to follow a career in law enforcement. So it was no surprise when he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 2001. In fact, Adam said it was just the obvious and natural progression he thought he needed to take to fulfill his childhood dream. How is it, then, that a mere decade later the young marine from Kenosha, Wisconsin finds himself in Maryland, not as an officer of the law, but as the vice president for the non-profit organization Operation Second Chance?

*Fate simply had other plans for Adam.*

A 2011 Homes for Our Troops home recipient, Adam, his wife Carrie and son Evan moved in July. He said the gift personifies the road he has taken since being injured in Iraq six short years ago.

"The first night we spent in our new place, it just felt like we were home; like we belonged here," he said. "It's really humbling to know there are so many people out there, people I would have never had any reason to meet, who cared enough about my family."

His involvement with Homes for Our Troops and Operation Second Chance, among other things, has inspired Adam to live a life giving back and helping those whose challenges he knows all too well.

Although September 11, 2001 wasn't the reason Adam joined the Marines, he said it certainly solidified his decision. It was that fateful decision that, unknown to Adam at that time, would change the course of his life forever four short years later. It was August 2005 when Adam was on a mission, looking for insurgents in Fallujah, Iraq. He and a fellow Marine were clearing an unoccupied school, when a triggered door activated an improvised explosive device (IED), leaving Adam severely injured – losing his left arm at the shoulder and his right leg below the knee; his comrade was mortally wounded in the blast. Treated first at a local hospital, Sgt. Kisielewski was airlifted to Landstuhl, Germany before being transported to Bethesda Medical Center and later to Walter Reed where he spent 15 months recovering.

Following his eventual retirement from the Marine Corps, Adam took a government



job as a project officer with Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center. It was also at this time he started volunteering with Operation Second Chance, an organization supporting veterans and their families while the service member recuperates in military hospitals, by building relationships and identifying and supporting immediate needs and interests. He became acquainted with OSC when its President and Founder Cindy McGrew visited him. While he

*"It's really humbling to know there are so many people out there, people I would have never had any reason to meet, who cared enough about my family."*

*- Sgt. Adam Kisielewski, 2011 Homes for Our Troops home recipient*

was a patient.

"That visit was really impactful for me, especially at that time," he said. "Someone who didn't even know me took her time to do something as trivial as just saying hello to me, to see how I was doing. It really meant a lot."

Adam started visiting wounded service members himself, sharing common experiences. He was eventually invited to join the Board of Directors. And the time he gave to OSC was averaging 40-50 hours per week. That, coupled with his full time job, a new wife, and a baby on the way, Adam

knew he had to make a choice. Although the intention was to drastically reduce the time spent volunteering, when he made the announcement he said he was offered a full-time, paid position with OSC – the decision was not a difficult one.

"I had a good job, but I just never got the same sense of satisfaction I had while I was in the Marines," he explained. "Operation Second Chance gave me that feeling of satisfaction, as though I was playing a part in making a real difference."

He said the thing that was truly exciting about playing a role on the executive team was that he was involved in a young organization and would really have an opportunity to chart the direction and bring OSC to a national level. It was that same feeling that drew him to Homes for Our Troops. After being discharged, Adam and his family lived in a three-story home, which he found especially challenging to navigate due to the loss of his leg. At the urging of a friend, Adam applied to receive a specially adapted home – he was accepted into the program and the rest is history.

For now, his plan is to continue his work with OSC, and raise funds and awareness

for HFOT. Through a local chapter of the Nam Knights Adam started, the motorcycle riding group comprised largely of veterans, participated in an event in Florida responsible for raising some \$15,000 for Homes for Our Troops earlier this year. And Adam said that is just the beginning. "People I didn't know were there for me in my time of need; I now have some great friends I know will be a part of my life for a long, long time," he said. "I can't say 'thank you' enough – this experience has meant the world to me and I hope I can continue to give back in a meaningful way."

## FROM DARKNESS, LIGHT AND INSPIRATION EMERGE

*Jennifer Kane's untimely passing on September 11, 2001 has inspired a legacy of good will benefitting Homes for Our Troops and other causes*

There has never been a day George and Faye Kane have not been inspired by their daughter Jennifer. Her love for life and her positive outlook was infectious. A friend, mentor, leader, and role model, there were so many facets to her, each as good as the next.

Yet, it seems so unfair that on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, the life she had just started living was cut tragically short – as were the lives of so many innocent human beings the day the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City were felled by terrorism. A graduate of Villanova University, Jen earned a degree in accounting in 1997. She became a certified public accountant and went on to work for Marsh & McClellan on the 100th floor of the World Trade Center.

For many, the story could have ended there. But for George and Faye, in their grief they found the strength to carry on Jen's legacy; they weren't certain what they were going to do – the only thing they did know was that their daughter would not die in vain. A decade has passed and the lives she continues to touch are endless – through the tireless work led by her family, more than \$1 million has been raised to benefit a number of organizations, including Homes for Our Troops, the beneficiary of nearly a quarter of the funds raised.

"I can't even wrap my head around that; it's just incredible to me," said George. "There was such amazing support for us in the beginning and that hasn't changed."

The family chose to organize a golf tournament that first year. The outpouring, according to George, was astounding. The event raised \$175,000 that year, as a result of contributions and matching gifts. That, coupled with funds raised shortly after 9/11 enabled them to establish the Jennifer Kane Scholarship and Charitable Trust, offering scholarships for Jen's alma mater, Villanova University.

"Jen loved her time at Villanova, so it only seemed like the appropriate thing to do," said George.



Sgt. Adam Kisielewski (HFOT Recipient) and friends with HFOT CFO Tom Benoit

Her hometown of Plymouth benefitted as well – funds were awarded to the town softball program for field and program enhancements. The concession stand was dedicated in her honor there in 2009. Scholarship funds were granted to the Old Colony YMCA's Camp Clark, where Jen spent time working as a lifeguard. A cabin was constructed in her memory there and bears her name. They have chosen,



also, to support organizations that will not only keep Jen's memory alive, but ensure September 11 is never forgotten, which is what brought them to Homes for Our Troops.

Founded as a result of September 11 and designed to fulfill a need largely unmet in this country, it was an obvious and perfect fit for what the Kanes were hoping to accomplish.

"Our men and women in uniform have volunteered to protect this country so something like September 11th will never happen again," said George. "They are taking care of us, it only seems right that we take care of them."

A Purple Heart recipient from the Viet Nam War, George said he feels very strongly helping organizations that assist his brothers and sisters in arms.

"We can't do it all and we know that, but we can do our best to do our best – that's the way Jen would have wanted it to be."



Cpl Daniel Gasca



Cpl Tyler Southern with his father and two brothers

# MULTI-LIMB AMPUTATIONS, LOSS OF MORALE ON THE RISE, REPORT STATES

**Military physicians find that while severe injuries resulting from the War on Terror are on the rise, deaths are decreasing, but morale is suffering**



Sgt. Kenneth "Dylan" Gray

The counterinsurgency tactic that is sending U.S. troops out on foot patrols among the Afghan people, rather than riding in armored vehicles, has contributed to a dramatic increase in arm and leg amputations and the loss of multiple limbs following blast injuries.

These devastating injuries affected unit morale. And they gave rise to talk on the battlefield that some troops had made secret pacts not to help each other survive if they were so severely injured, a new report revealed.

The number of U.S. troops who had amputations rose sharply from 86 in 2009, to 187 in 2010 and 147 so far this year, military officials said upon



SSG Mike Minard



SGT Chase Matthews

releasing the report on catastrophic wounds earlier this year.

Of those, the number of troops who lost two or three limbs rose from 23 in 2009 to 72 last year to 77 so far this year. Only a dozen or so of all amputations came from Iraq and the rest were from Afghanistan, where militants are pressing the insurgency with roadside bombs, handmade land mines, and other explosives.

The sharp rise in severe injuries came as a buildup of foreign forces expanded the counterinsurgency strategy that seeks to protect civilians, win their support away from insurgents and help build an Afghan government the population will embrace instead. The service member on foot is at greater risk for severe injuries, the report noted, "and the injury severity (in Afghanistan) confirms this."

Military doctors concur that while the severity of injuries is on the rise, the rates of those killed in action is going down. Physicians attribute the improved survival rate to improved care both immediately on the battlefield - such as applying tourniquets - and in their later care.

The report, completed in June, was ordered early this year by the Army Surgeon General

Lt. Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, to examine the causes of the steep increase in severe injuries, prevention, protection, treatment and long-term care for the troops. The task force report made 92 recommendations, including some on training, injury analysis, improved blood products, and improved care for the injured during transport - some of which have already been implemented. But officials said they weren't just looking at saving lives, but also saving lifestyles.

"These are life-defining injuries for

*"It's not just about saving lives, it's about doing everything military medicine can do to help them lead full and productive lives."*  
- Brigadier General Joseph Carvalho, Jr.

these warriors and their families, but it is not desperate," said Brig. Gen. Joseph Carvalho, Jr., an army doctor and head of the study. "It's not just about saving lives, it's about doing everything military medicine can do to help them lead full and productive lives."

Their care addresses what he called the

"emotional and spiritual" aspects of the injuries, which Carvalho noted some of the troops could be living with for the next 60 years or more.

The task force was looking into what the doctors called "dismounted complex blast injuries" - dismounted meaning those suffered by troops on foot and complex in that they produce a pattern of wounds. It involves amputation of at least one leg, severe injury or loss of a second extremity and wounding of the pelvis, abdomen or urinary tract, and genitals. The report said

that these devastating types of injuries "took their toll on unit morale."

"To some, the resultant burden on their family and loved ones seemed too much to accept, and, anecdotally, some actually developed 'do not resuscitate' pacts with their battle buddies in the event of this type of injury," it said.