



# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) | MAY 2023

## HFOT Veterans Take the Challenge.



YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

## A Letter from the President/CEO

Dear HFOT Supporters,

Part of measuring success at Homes For Our Troops is the number of specially adapted custom homes we build and donate. However, our impact goes far beyond how many keys we present to Veterans.



What truly matters are the changes that take place after the Veterans move in. These homes help restore the freedom these Veterans sacrificed as a result of their service. Empowered by their renewed independence, they can continue moving forward with their lives by expanding families, pursuing passions and careers, and advancing their education. On page 5, you will read about three HFOT home recipients who summited Mount Kilimanjaro together this spring to raise awareness for Veterans organizations that helped them during their recoveries. Please know that these empowering stories are only possible because of donors and supporters like you.

While we celebrate the achievements of the over 350 (and counting) Veterans in their homes, we are mindful of the work ahead. We have over 70 projects underway nationwide and more than 125 Veterans in the application process for our program. On page 3, you will meet Army CPL Duane McGhghy. Duane is looking forward to living in a barrier-free environment in their future HFOT home, enabling him to be the father and husband he wants to be. Duane and his family have this promising future because of your commitment to our mission.

The companies, organizations, and individuals dedicated to raising funds and awareness for our cause are key to the success of our mission. In this issue, we introduce you to four new Corporate Partners on page 7, Haselden Construction, Ring, Capstone, and CAES, and highlight the work of a longtime fundraiser in Marshfield, MA, Elks Lodge #2494 on page 4.

On behalf of all of us in the HFOT Family, thank you for your continued support that enables these brave men and women to rebuild their lives. I look forward to seeing you at a build event soon.

Sincerely,

H.T. Landwermer, Jr.  
Brigadier General, USA Retired  
President & CEO

MAY 2023

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Stories that Inspire

- 3 A Promising Future - Army CPL Duane McGhghy
- 4 Taking The Pledge to Plunge
- 4 Charitable Giving through an IRA
- 5 Reaching New Heights
- 6 Employee Spotlight - Chris Mitchell
- 7 Corporate Partner Spotlight
- 8 Thank you to our Corporate Partners!



ON THE COVER: Three HFOT Veteran home recipients are "Reaching New Heights", see page 5.



give.org



## A History of Excellence

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

# A Promising Future

Duane McGhghy joined the Army in 2005, in hopes of a better future. On Oct. 11, 2007, CPL McGhghy was heading back to the Forward Operation Base (FOB) after a multi-platoon patrol with D Co., 1-28 Infantry, 4th BCT, 1st Infantry Division in Baghdad, Iraq when his vehicle was hit by an explosively formed penetrator (EFP). CPL McGhghy lost his left leg below the knee and sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in the blast.

Now medically retired, Duane and his wife Cortney are proud parents to their three children – Austin, Chloe, and Oliver. Duane rides motorcycles with a Veteran run organization called The Road Warrior Foundation, and sky dives with another called Jump For Valor. He found a great support network through these endeavors, and it has inspired him to help other Veterans find the same benefits.

However, Duane cannot dedicate as much time as he would like to these pursuits because he must cope with obstacles in his non-adapted home. He often becomes discouraged when he cannot rest his leg in his wheelchair at the end of the day because most rooms are not big enough for the wheelchair. On days when Duane must remove his prosthetic, he crawls up the stairs to access his bedroom and their children's bedrooms.

When Duane and Cortney look ahead to the future, they see the promise of a new beginning filled with opportunities for their family. They are friends with other HFOT home recipients and have seen first-hand the impact a specially adapted custom home has on injured Veterans and their families.

Receiving a single-level HFOT home will enable Duane to rest and recover at the end of a long day. Being able to comfortably maneuver throughout the home, without wearing his prosthetic, Duane looks forward to being the father and husband he wants to be. Duane says, "With this new HFOT home, I will no longer have to crawl up and down stairs when not able to wear my prosthetic. Getting out of bed to use the bathroom will no longer be on my hands and knees. Just the freedom of movement in the house will be like nothing I have had before."

Cortney admires the determination and resilience that Duane demonstrates every day. She looks forward to Duane living in a safe and secure environment so he can pursue his goals more easily and where daily tasks will no longer be a burden. Freedom and peace of mind are just a few of the aspects she knows the home will bring for their family. The couple also looks forward to giving back to the community and spending quality time with their friends and family.

Homes For Our Troops will kick off the building of Duane's home in Texas this year. "Thank you for giving us a chance at having an easier lifestyle, and for my children to see me able to get around our home comfortably and not struggle with daily tasks," Duane says. "We are so excited that this will be OUR home where I can rest and easily navigate in the future."



*Army CPL Duane McGhghy and family.*

**OVER 90%**

of Veterans have regained  
some/much of their  
**Freedom &  
Independence**



On January 1, 2023, at high noon, Elks Lodge #2494 of Marshfield, Mass., took the Plunge – the Polar Plunge – into the Atlantic Ocean. It was 50 degrees and sunny when over 100 participants joined in the Plunge-related festivities, taking a refreshing dip in the ocean, and then warming up back at the Marshfield Elks Lodge with hot soups and stews, live music, and raffles.

What is at the heart of their community coming together to do this? According to local legend, the Annual Marshfield New Year's Day Polar Plunge was started in the early 1990's by a Marshfield resident and a few of his friends who spent the night in a house on the local Rexhame Beach after an evening of New Year's Eve revelries. What did they decide when they woke up? They agreed to go for a swim on New Year's morning and the **tradition was born**. After a couple of years, a few more friends were invited, and the group grew to about 25 people. This crew soon became known as the Rexhame Rangers. By 2010, the Marshfield Elks started organizing the annual event into what it is today.

This great tradition has benefited Homes For Our Troops for the last seven years. Participants are encouraged to get pledges from family and friends to support their Plunge efforts. Their community has raised over \$18,000 for our mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.

"This was another great event for our Lodge and especially for area Veterans," says Kevin Shapter, Marshfield Elks member and event coordinator. "The weather was warm, or at least warm for January 1st in New England, and the participants all had a great time. Special thanks go to the Massachusetts Elks who traveled in from across the state."

*How will you take the Plunge for our nation's severely injured post-9/11 Veterans? Reach out to the Independent Fundraising Team to learn more about holding a fundraiser today at [ifundraising@hfotusa.org](mailto:ifundraising@hfotusa.org)*

## Charitable Giving through an IRA

**Consider donating to Homes For Our Troops through your IRA. The process is easy!  
This is a great way to support our severely injured Veterans by Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives.**

- You must be 70½ years or older. If you must take a required minimum distribution (RMD), the Qualified Charitable Distribution counts against the RMD.
- Distributions can only be made from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA).
- The maximum donation that can be excluded from taxable income in any year is \$100k.
- Distribution must be made directly to Homes For Our Troops from your IRA custodian.

Instruct your IRA Administrator to distribute up to \$100K or a designated amount as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to HFOT. By directing your IRA distribution to HFOT, you don't have to report the QCD as taxable income and won't owe any taxes on the QCD.

\*HFOT recommends you seek the guidance of a professional advisor, to assist you on making an informed decision.  
Any information provided by Homes For Our Troops is not meant as a substitute for legal or financial advice\*

**Contact your Plan Administrator directly to begin the process today!**

For more information, contact Suzanne Shaheen, Planned Giving Officer at 508-967-9041 or [sshaheen@hfotusa.org](mailto:sshaheen@hfotusa.org)

# Reaching New Heights



Marine Sgt Adam Kisielewski  
HFOT Home Recipient 2011  
Frederick, MD



Marine Capt Cameron West  
HFOT Home Recipient 2015  
Acworth, GA



Army SGT Steven Curry  
HFOT Home Recipient 2016  
Nokesville, VA



Marine Capt Cam West shown to the left  
and Marine Sgt Adam Kisielewski

There isn't a mountain high enough to keep severely injured post-9/11 Veterans from reaching their goals – even if it's one of the tallest peaks in the world. In February 2023, three Homes For Our Troops home recipients summited Mount Kilimanjaro to raise awareness for Veterans organizations that helped them during their recoveries.

The trio – Marine Sergeant Adam Kisielewski, Marine Captain Cameron West, and Army Sergeant Steven Curry – were severely injured while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and have all received HFOT homes. Each of the three has also led HFOT's Veterans Action and Advisory Team and served on our national Board of Directors.

The climb was sponsored by No Person Left Behind (NPLB) Outdoors and MI Charitable Foundation. Sgt Kisielewski is the president of NPLB, a non-profit organization that provides outdoor activities and outings for injured Veterans.

In March of 2022, one of Adam's volunteers suggested he take on Mount Kilimanjaro. Adam immediately liked the idea and was intrigued by the challenge. He began looking for sponsorships and presented the idea to Cam and Steve who eagerly signed on board. *"I wanted to pay it forward and use it as an opportunity to motivate other Veterans. I couldn't think of anyone better to bring along than Cam and Steve,"* he says. The trio began their rigorous training for the climb later that summer.

Cameron says the hike up Kilimanjaro was an adventure he will always remember. *"I highly suggest it to those desiring to test their grit. My favorite part of the experience was the local people and porters that accompanied us. Full of smiles and laughter, they made the journey into something quite beautiful,"* he says.

Steven hopes their climb will inspire others to overcome any obstacles they may encounter. *"I've been out of the military for 15 years and I'm missing a leg, but climbing Mount Kilimanjaro has shown me, and more importantly my children, that I still have the courage and determination to overcome any obstacle put in front of me,"* he says.

All three Veterans say it would not have been possible to make the trek without having the freedom and independence of their HFOT specially adapted custom homes. Prosthetics often cause cuts and abrasions during normal use for most injured Veterans, even more so when doing high intensity sports and activities. Having a wheelchair-accessible home enabled Adam, Cameron, and Steven, to complete the rigorous training and conditioning required to make the journey, and rest their injuries when they returned home. *"We wouldn't be able to do this without the generosity of others. This is a way for us to show our appreciation to them,"* says Adam.

# Celebrating Over A Decade Of Service



## *Employee Spotlight: Chris Mitchell - Director of Development*

### **HFOT'S CORE VALUES: C.A.R.E.S.**

Home For Our Troops' Core Values reaffirm our commitment to the Veterans we are privileged to serve, as well as our donors, volunteers and supporters. The HFOT staff is dedicated to these values:

**COMMITMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPECT, EXCELLENCE, and SERVICE.**

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

What we do is life-changing. Our team is a small group of dedicated people, all trying to help those who gave so much. With the help of some incredibly generous donors and corporate partners across the country, we provide our severely injured post-9/11 Veterans a custom built, specially adapted home to enable them to rebuild their lives.

#### ***What motivated you to become an employee of HFOT?***

I owned a landscape design company in Foxboro, MA. I was always the guy that would donate trees or gardens. After I sold my company, I wanted to find a job where I could continue to help people. The day I decided to look at non-profit work, a friend of mine told me about a job opening at Homes For Our Troops.

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

There are so many ways to help us with our mission. I encourage supporters to check out the build calendar or map on our website to see if we are building near you. You could then host a fundraiser for that build or sign up to volunteer.

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

My most memorable moments with HFOT have been the relationships and friendships I have made with our Veterans, donors, corporate partners, and coworkers. They are the most generous group of Americans, all wanting to help us get these men and women into adapted homes, so they can rebuild their lives.

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

I feel the main differentiator that sets us apart from other charities I have worked with is that we treat our employees and the Veterans we serve like family. In fact, the first thing we say to our Veterans when they get accepted into our program is "Welcome to the family."

#### ***What's the biggest challenge for HFOT?***

HFOT's biggest challenge is awareness. We spend nearly 90 cents on the dollar on our program of serving our Veterans so that doesn't leave a lot for getting the word out.

#### ***How can folks help?***

Please help share our mission with your family, friends, and coworkers.

## Corporate Partner Spotlight: HFOT Welcomes New Partnerships

Since inception in 2004, thousands of amazing people have contributed to the Homes For Our Troops mission of Building Homes and Rebuilding Lives. Our team would not be able to provide specially adapted homes without the selflessness of many supporters, including our Corporate Partners. Several new businesses have joined forces with HFOT to put our Veterans in their forever homes, and Karla Torres, Head of Community Engagement at Ring, describes how it feels to work with HFOT:

*"Over the last few months, I have had the privilege of connecting with HFOT members and the opportunity to learn more about their important work to create safe, accessible housing for Veterans across the country. We are proud to collaborate with an organization that honors the service of Veterans and helps make homeownership a reality so Veterans can rebuild their lives in a safe environment."*

**We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and commitment of our supporters, and HFOT is proud to welcome the following Partners to our family:**



• **Haselden Construction - National Partner**



• **Ring - National Partner**



• **Capstone - Mission Partner**



• **CAES Solutions - Mission Partner**

While Ring and CAES are new to HFOT, Haselden Construction has taken their longtime fundraising support to the next level and signed on to be a National Partner. Capstone has been fundraising and helping us raise awareness for years, and now has elevated their support to become a Mission Partner.

These partners' enthusiasm and diligence have been unwavering as they assist us in providing an environment where Veterans can rebuild their lives.

At the recent Community Kickoff for Army SGT James Klingensmith in Orlando, Florida, HFOT home recipient and Army CPT Bobby Withers shared how moving into his custom home on November 21, 2015, changed his life:

*"Prior to living in an HFOT home, my rental house was a prison of limited possibilities. They [HFOT] built me a safety net of a hammock or a springboard. I chose the latter."*

Companies, businesses, and corporations from all over our great nation are helping us to make a difference in the lives of our Veterans and their families. And you can too! For more information on how to become a Corporate Partner, please contact our Corporate Philanthropy Team at: [partnership@hfotusa.org](mailto:partnership@hfotusa.org)

**THANK YOU** to our Corporate Partners that continue to help restore freedom and independence to our nation's most severely injured post-9/11 Veterans.

PLATINUM NATIONAL PARTNER



GOLD NATIONAL PARTNERS



SILVER NATIONAL PARTNERS



NATIONAL PARTNERS



MISSION PARTNERS



Learn more at: [partnership@hfotusa.org](mailto:partnership@hfotusa.org)



Homes For Our Troops has been evaluated as one of America's Top Rated Veterans and Military Charities.

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