‘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 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 Armetstead 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!

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 (Nicky’s father), Geno McCoy (Nicky’s grandfather), and John Gonsalves.

PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBIN JERSTAD

www.homesforourtroops.org/100more
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

www.homesforourtroops.org
**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 for my daily life,” Gasca 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 p.m.

PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK GREENBERG

**Texas Six**

**TC**

**LCpl. Daniel PETERSON**

DECEMBER 6, 7 & 8, 2011

Building Partner: SpaeGlass

**Cpl. Tyler SOUTHERN**

DECEMBER 18, 2011

Orlando, FL

Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes

**SSGT Juan ROLDAN**

AUGUST 19, 20 & 21, 2011

Parrish, FL

Building Partner: Badger Construction

**SGS Leah ANDERSON**

SEPTEMBER 16, 17 & 18, 2011

St. Augustine, FL

Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes

**Cpl. Jose “Daniel” GASCA**

NOVEMBER 10, 2011

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

**SSGT 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.

**SPC Robert J. KISLOW III**

DECEMBER 3, 2011

Danielsville, PA

Building Partner: Blue Valley Builders, Inc.

**LCpl. Daniel PETERSON**

DECEMBER 6, 7 & 8, 2011

Building Partner: SpaeGlass

**Cpl. Tyler SOUTHERN**

DECEMBER 18, 2011

Orlando, FL

Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes

**SSGT Juan ROLDAN**

AUGUST 19, 20 & 21, 2011

Parrish, FL

Building Partner: Badger Construction

**SGS Leah ANDERSON**

SEPTEMBER 16, 17 & 18, 2011

St. Augustine, FL

Building Partner: Dream Finders Homes

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

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.

“She said yes!” Adrian Garcia proposes to long-time girlfriend during his Key Ceremony on Friday, November 11, 2011.

“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.

Operation Enduring Support Help 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, 2001.

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 Enduring 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.

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 $592.30 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.

The community members helping build his 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 the people out here who contributed,” said Armstead after seeing his new home. “It is more than what we expected. It is amazing.”

Robles said his new home will make life easier for him and his family. He was serving in his first deployment in Iraq in November 2006 when the vehicle he was riding in was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED), leaving him a double amputee below the knees.

Robles said “We really appreciate that; that means a lot. To be the 100th recipient of a Home 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 received tremendous support in Texas, as volunteers have constructed and donated 15 homes in the state.

“It was a gift that marked a milestone for Army Master Sergeant Daniel Robles in more ways that 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.

“We 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.

“The community has just come together and made us feel at home since the beginning,” Robles said. “We really appreciate that; that means a lot. To be the 100th recipient of a Home for Our Troops home is awesome — I can’t explain it.”

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

MARKING A MILESTONE WITH MEANING

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

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“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 a meaningful project.”

“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

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

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

PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK SOBHANI

PHOTOGRAPHER: THOMAS MEREDITH
Throughout the home are features specifically built for Andrade, including buttons to open and close doors, wider doorways for easy access, and a roll-in shower.

“I can see Craig moving throughout the home with ease and it makes me 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 Gonzalves, President and Founder of Homes for our Troops.

“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.”

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McCoy’s home is located off Farm Road 3351 between Bergehim 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 2,300 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 Gonzalves, 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.”

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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 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 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.

Gonzalves 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.”