



# Foundations

A Newsletter from Homes For Our Troops | [www.hfotusa.org](http://www.hfotusa.org) | MAY 2024

A photograph of a family of four standing in a modern kitchen. On the left is a young man with a beard wearing a red polo shirt. Next to him is a man with a shaved head wearing a blue polo shirt and a prosthetic arm. To his right is a woman wearing a red polo shirt and a baseball cap. In front of her is a young girl with blonde pigtails wearing a red t-shirt and holding a stuffed animal. The kitchen has grey cabinets, a stainless steel refrigerator, and a white countertop.

## *By the Numbers —* HFOT IMPACT

### Building Homes, Rebuilding Lives

YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES VETERANS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

## A Letter from the President/CEO

Dear HFOT Supporters,

The year of our 20th anniversary is upon us, and we are honored to celebrate the 379 (and counting) homes we've built and donated since our inception in 2004. Yet, we are equally as proud of the most important part of our mission—**Rebuilding Lives**.

The lasting impact of a specially adapted custom home extends far beyond providing Veterans with a physical, accessible place to live. Our HFOT homes provide lifelong comfort and stability to Veterans, enabling them to focus on their family, recovery, and future. These homes help restore some of the freedom and independence our Veterans sacrificed as a result of their service.

In 2018, we sought to capture this information by asking our home recipients how their HFOT home has helped them in various capacities, including freedom and independence, reduction in household stress, financial stability, education, family, and career. This effort grew into our biennial By the Numbers Impact assessment, and I'm proud to share this year's results on pages 4 and 5. Once again, the statistics highlight growth in key areas of empowerment and reflect positive outcomes for Veterans, their caregivers, and their families.

Currently, we have 77 home-build projects underway nationwide. In this issue, you'll meet one of our future HFOT home recipients, Marine Lance Corporal Matty Mathis, and his wife, Veronica, who recently expanded their family and are looking forward to spending time together in their HFOT forever home, a dream that will soon come true because of your continued commitment and generosity.

On behalf of all of us in the HFOT family, thank you for being a valued mission supporter. I look forward to seeing you at a build event soon.

Sincerely,



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



May 2024

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ON THE COVER: Army SSG Juan Amaris and his family received the keys to their HFOT home on August 19, 2023.



## A History of Excellence

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





# A Stable Environment

Duncan “Matty” Mathis was just a boy when he set his sights on becoming a Marine. *“I knew I was going to be a Marine from the age of eight,”* he says. *“My entire youth was geared toward that—making sure I was physically fit, joining the Junior ROTC in high school. When I got to the fleet, it was absolute paradise. The core values of the Marine Corps are honor, courage, and commitment. I took these values to heart in every endeavor.”*

In the spring of 2013, during his first deployment to Afghanistan, Matty was serving as a Lance Corporal with the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines when he was severely injured on an evening patrol. *“Our movement at night was really distorted—how well we could see the ground,”* he remembers. *“We all get that gut feeling. Something’s off. Something weird. You get it a lot when you’re in combat, so you pay attention to it. I scanned and looked around—nothing. So, I went to take a step and the ground just disappeared underneath me.”*

He fell 83 feet through a non-explosive booby trap, shattering the bones in both legs, dislocating his hips, and sustaining multiple severe injuries, including traumatic brain injury (TBI). Trapped underground for over four hours until he was evacuated on a winch by Air Force Pararescue, Matty eventually returned stateside to Walter Reed Medical Center, where he began the long, arduous process of recovery.

*“My body was so broken that the mental health part and the brain injury part kind of got pushed into the B column,”* he says. *“They tried to save my leg for about a year, and then once my leg was amputated, it took away about forty percent of the pain, and six months later, I was running and lifting and squatting. It was amazing to get rid of as much bad as I could and hang on to as much good as I could.”*

Matty’s positive attitude and unbreakable spirit continued to foster goodwill in his life when he and his wife, Veronica,

welcomed their daughter, Sara, in 2021. In November of 2022, they expanded their family once again by joining HFOT as future home recipients, an opportunity that Matty believes will improve his quality of life. *“Healing instead of medication—that’s what an HFOT home is. It’s healing. It lets you move on and be able to see the future,”* he says.



A family of four now with the birth of their second daughter, Natalie, just this past February, the Mathis family is looking forward to moving out of their cramped, inaccessible home and into their specially adapted custom home in Virginia, a location they chose because of its proximity to Matty’s medical team at Walter Reed Medical Center. The mortgage-free

home will allow Matty to expand his self-defense training company while also increasing the family’s financial security. *“I’ll be able to reallocate funds toward my family’s future, health, and well-being while also having a stable environment to tackle any future issues that may arise from my injuries.”*

Matty would like HFOT donors and supporters to know some of the things he values most about Homes For Our Troops. *“The entire organization is filled with kindhearted, trustworthy people who care about the individuals they are assisting. Not once was I hounded about combat stories, asked to show scars, or defined by my injury. To be treated like a person who just wants what’s best for his family’s future, and to have a team from HFOT working around the clock to support that dream has been one of the greatest blessings I have ever received.”*



# By the Numbers — HFOT IMPACT



Recent survey results demonstrate what we've known all along: HFOT homes make a lasting impact on the lives of our nation's most severely injured Veterans and their spouses/caregivers. Here is a look at the different ways our program sets the conditions for our Veterans' and their families' lifelong success.\*

More than 1,000 service members who returned from post-9/11 wars with life-altering injuries still need adapted housing.

As of May 2024, HFOT has built and donated 379 specially adapted custom homes nationwide.

**Help us build more.**

*"Whether rolling into my daughter's room to change her diaper or preparing a snack for my son, I can do these parenting tasks and much more, all from the safety of my wheelchair. I am thankful that I have my HFOT home to help make it possible for me to thrive as a parent."*

**Army SSG Chris Gordon**  
2018 Home Recipient

## How HFOT's specially adapted custom homes empower Veterans



**92%**  
of Veterans have regained some/much of their  
**Freedom & Independence**



Veterans Paying It Forward  
**Community Involvement and Volunteering**

BEFORE RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**21%**  
AFTER RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**82%**



**Education**

Obtained/Pursuing a degree or trade certification

BEFORE RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**19%** Veterans  
**21%** Spouse/Caregiver  
AFTER RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**81%**  
**87%**



**Financial Stability**

Education, better jobs, and no mortgage result in

**66%** FAMILIES WITH INCREASED INCOME  
**67%** FAMILIES WITH DECREASED DEBT  
**80%** FAMILIES WITH INCREASED SAVINGS



**93%**  
of Veterans have seen a  
**Reduction in Household Stress**



**Employment Rate**

AFTER RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
Veterans  
**110%** INCREASE  
Spouse/Caregiver  
**OVER 295%** INCREASE



**Family**

Start/grow families, focus on role as parent and spouse

BEFORE RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**55%** Married  
AFTER RECEIVING HFOT HOME  
**74%**

Average America household size was steady at 3.0 from 2005-2020 - U.S. Census

HFOT FAMILIES **2.7** to **3.6**

Over **270** Babies have been born to HFOT families since 2010!

\*Results are based on a 2024 survey of Veteran home recipients and their caregivers; response rate was 71%.

**www.hfotusa.org**



# A New Life



In the spring of 2000, 22-year-old Woody Slate enlisted in the Army. His love of country and desire to work on the water inspired him to train as a diver, where he grew to appreciate the complexity of the arduous work. *"I genuinely enjoyed the difficulty in the wide range of activities we completed daily, from running a hyperbaric chamber to clearing fouled propellers,"* he says.

In 2004, he deployed to Iraq as a Staff Sergeant and sustained injuries that eventually led to the amputation of his legs and medical retirement from the military.

Now, twenty years later, Woody still challenges his mind and body on the water as a wakesurfer for Wake for Warriors, a Veterans charity focused on the transformative power of watersports. When he's not traveling as a rider at events across the country, he's at his HFOT home in Yorktown, Virginia, where he raised three children, Lane, Kyle, and Christy, with his wife, Sandra.

Recipients of a specially adapted custom HFOT home in 2016, the single-level, open layout with widened doorways throughout the home provided a welcome change to their former house, where it was often difficult to spend time together as a family because of the cramped, non-adapted

floor plan. *"Our HFOT home took a huge burden off my shoulders,"* Woody says. *"It enabled our family to reconnect after years of me being in and out of the hospital."*

The mortgage-free home also provided Woody the opportunity to pay it forward in his community as a volunteer dive team trainer for the local fire department, and a football coach for his sons' high school team, while Sandra was able to focus on renewing her phlebotomy license.

Not to be outdone by the successful endeavors of their parents, the three Slate siblings have plenty to be proud of in their own lives. Graduates of Hampden Sydney College, Lane is serving his country as an Army fire support specialist while Kyle, who majored in Human Biology, is preparing for nursing school. Christy is majoring in English as a sophomore at Christopher Newport University.

Woody and Sandra would like HFOT supporters and donors to know their support and generosity allowed their family a new start and a safe and secure place to grow and heal. *"Homes For Our Troops is amazing,"* Sandra says. *"It's extraordinary that there are people in our country who are willing to give someone a home and a new life."*

## Employee Spotlight: Maura McGowan Yanosick

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

As a military mom, my eyes were opened to the sacrifices made by our service members and their families in this post-9/11 world. Coming from a family with a long history of military service, I am forever indebted to those who serve. HFOT gives me the opportunity to help our nation's most severely injured service members regain some of the freedom and independence they sacrificed while protecting mine.

In 2009 a Veteran attending his Veterans Conference addressed the room saying I should be called "Ma" because I was the person who provided care and support throughout their application process to get them to the point where they were accepted into the HFOT Family. I am so honored to have been given the title of the "HFOT Ma" by one of my early "HFOT Boys". It still means the world to me. It is a privilege and an absolute pleasure to know these incredible Veterans. This mission is rooted in my heart.

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

After my son returned from his first deployment in early 2005, I saw an unfulfilled emotional support need for local military moms. In 2006 I founded the Eastern Massachusetts Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America (MA2). Our very first event was managing the registration table at the home of the 23rd HFOT Veteran. We were immediately hooked on HFOT, eventually holding a Fundraising Gala that raised more than \$10,000 for HFOT.

After my son's third deployment, I was contacted by HFOT Leadership regarding a new position. The eleventh person hired, I am coming up on my 16th anniversary working at Homes For Our Troops and am grateful each and every day for the blessings to be a small part of something so meaningful. I have truly found my calling.

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

As the Intake Manager my most memorable moments at HFOT are many; processing all Veteran candidates through the HFOT application process to them becoming part



of the HFOT Family. How could I ever pick one memorable moment over another? But I would have to say that working alongside my daughter for nearly nine years will always hold a special place in my heart. I watched a young college freshman find her future career by leading with her heart as she volunteered at HFOT Events alongside me before I joined the HFOT Staff; she herself joined the HFOT Staff in 2009. Now part of a National non-profit in DC, it is clear that HFOT provided her with an amazing philanthropic foundation. As a parent and Staff member I can tell you that HFOT develops well-rounded leaders who embody the HFOT C.A.R.E.S. core values of Commitment, Accountability, Respect, Excellence, and Service...for life.

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

I am proud to say that HFOT is different from other non-profits in our space because we work to try to find assistance for all Veterans who come to us looking for help. When Veterans contact us but do not meet our basic qualifying criteria, we do not turn them away. We listen to their situation and provide suggested organizations that may be able to address their needs. We encourage them to contact the vetted organizations we refer them to from within our Community of Care and empower them to start finding a solution to their current needs/situation.

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

The biggest challenge is getting the word out to qualified Veterans who meet our basic qualifying criteria but don't think they are eligible due to the length of time that has passed since their in-theater injury; or because they may have purchased a home at some point; or they may have been denied VA benefits previously when they are now actually entitled to that benefit. We would love nothing more than to guide them through our application process and see all of those who meet our criteria be considered for a Homes For Our Troops home. We need to spread the word!



# Corporate Partner Spotlight: A Sense of Home for All



Since 2018, Wayfair has collaborated with Homes For Our Troops by making a house truly feel like a home for severely injured Veterans and their families. Over the past years as an HFOT National Gold Partner, Wayfair has supported HFOT in a variety of ways including furnishing six HFOT forever homes, inviting customers to donate to HFOT at checkout, volunteering at HFOT build events, and providing substantial donations to help Veterans and their families feel comfortable and secure in their homes.

Founded in 2002, Wayfair is one of the world's largest home retailers, serving over 22 million customers, and transforming the way people shop for their homes. Through their partnership with HFOT, Wayfair's design team works with Veterans and their families to identify their likes and dislikes through a style survey and design boards. The Wayfair team then fills the home with furniture that is ADA-compliant, such as low-pile rugs, lift-top coffee tables, and extendable dining tables.

Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Rebecca Mann, who received her HFOT home in Mattapoisett, Massachusetts in 2023, is grateful to Wayfair for thoughtfully selecting décor that reflected her lifestyle. "Every piece of furniture for my new

home was chosen with such care. The adaptive features that HFOT put in place allow me to live with ease in my new home and the furniture from Wayfair turned my house into a home," she said.

Wayfair's Head of Social Impact Kaiya DiPippo recently spoke about the organization's partnership with HFOT:

*"At Wayfair, our social impact mission is to support housing and a sense of home for all, and our partnership with Homes For Our Troops allows us to bring this mission to life. We have been a proud partner of Homes For Our Troops since 2018 and continue to be enamored and impressed by the work that they are doing to create accessible and life-changing homes for Veterans. We look forward to celebrating HFOT's 20th anniversary and their 400th home and cannot wait to see all the incredible work that our friends at HFOT continue to bring to the table."*

Companies, businesses, and corporations, like Wayfair, 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 Partnership Team at: [partnership@hfotusa.org](mailto:partnership@hfotusa.org)