SUPPORTING EVERY KIND OF HERO

Expanding Our Mission to Include First Responders

Operation FINALLY HOME has expanded its mission to include providing mortgage-free homes and home modifications to another kind of hero: the men and women who serve as first responders in communities across the country.

Since our organization was established in 2005, there are more than 300 home projects for military veterans in 31 states which have either been completed or are in the planning stages. Expanding our scope of work to include first responders allows us to positively impact the lives of an even greater number of men and women in the years to come.

We have expanded our mission to support first responders for multiple reasons, including:

- We are often reminded of the tremendous sacrifices made and risks taken by our first responders.
- There is a limited number of existing organizations which provide mortgage-free homes or home modifications for these heroes.
- The number of military veterans who choose to enter public service professions upon completing their military duty is increasing every year.

In the last couple of years, we have had the opportunity to provide a mortgage-free home to veterans who are also first responders, including U.S. Marine Sgt. Jacob “Jake” Churchwell and U.S. Army SSG Tammy Barrett Renfro.

Jake served seven years in the Marine Corps as a gunner, parachute rigger and jump master. He did a single tour of combat duty in Afghanistan and was recognized with multiple awards for his service. He returned to civilian work in 2015 and was accepted as a recruit into the Midland (Texas) Police Department. In 2016, he was injured in a car accident in the line of duty and was left paralyzed from the chest down. Jake and his family moved into their mortgage-free home in 2018.

Tammy served in the Army for 10 years with stations in Korea, Kansas, Texas and Germany. After her honorable discharge, she continued serving her community as a state trooper with the Georgia State Police Department. When a tragic automobile accident claimed the life of her brother, Tammy moved to Texas to be closer to family and served with the Austin Police Department an additional 10 years. In 2018, an off-duty ATV accident left Barrett with severe spinal injuries and paralyzed from the waist down. Austin Cops for Charities, Henley Homes and Operation FINALLY built Tammy a mortgage-free home in 2019.

Just like Jake and Tammy, there are thousands more men and women who, due to their own sacrifice, find themselves and their families in need of a new home or home modifications.

Helping those who have served get their lives back on track remains our core mission, and we will continue to seek out opportunities to support our military veterans with new homes and home modifications.

As we begin a new year, we are excited and honored to begin serving even more and different kinds of heroes.

“After being paralyzed, Operation FINALLY HOME, Henley Homes, and everyone who swung a hammer, stepped in and blessed me beyond words! I was not only given a mortgage-free home, but the best thing? I have been given my independence back.”

– Tammy Barrett Renfro
A Few Words from Dan

We have all learned over the last year to look for and enjoy the bright spots in our lives. There’s no question that we have all experienced new challenges. And, some have experienced incredible heartache and loss.

I am delighted that our first newsletter of 2021 highlights so many bright spots for our organization. We certainly faced challenges after the onset of the pandemic, but we are positioned today to grow in new and exciting ways as we begin the new year.

Our mission is the same - to provide homes and home modifications for American heroes, and the last year has certainly redefined what it means to be a hero. We have many heroes working here at home as police officers, EMTs and firefighters. Now, we are thrilled to add first responders to our list of eligible applicants.

You’re likely receiving this newsletter around Valentine’s Day, which always reminds me of our Notes of Love. For years, we have worked to bring our heroes home to loving and welcoming communities. Throughout such a difficult year, every photo I saw of a note written on the studs and walls of a home reminded me that we are succeeding at our work, even through tough times. We’ll of course continue one of our most important traditions as we grow and evolve.

We can now begin to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. We have many bright days ahead and we continue on our mission to be a bright light in the lives of our heroes.

Thank you for continued support and allowing us to serve those who serve us.

God Bless,

Dan Wallrath
Founder of Operation FINALLY HOME

2020 - HELPING MORE VETERANS THAN EVER

The last year, despite unusual and difficult circumstances, was a record-breaking one for Operation FINALLY HOME. The organization owes that success to its supporters, who enabled it to persevere through new challenges and to continue serving others.

Thanks to continued support from donors, builders and many others, Operation FINALLY HOME was able to impact the lives of 47 veterans and their families. In total, Operation FINALLY HOME was able to accomplish the following:

• Built 12 new homes for veterans and their families
• Modified 29 homes for veterans and their families
• Served 40 spouses, nine widows and 60 children
• Improved the lives of 156 Americans

As the organization moves into 2021, it is poised for additional growth and to continue changing the lives of those who have sacrificed.

Below is a map highlighting our impact not only in the last year, but since 2005 when Operation FINALLY HOME began helping heroes and their families.

SPOTLIGHT: BEHIND THE NOTES OF LOVE EVENTS

As we begin our 16th year, we’re more excited than ever to head into our communities and to see neighbors, friends and partners share Notes of Love with our heroes.

We host Notes of Love events so the community can share inspirational words of support and encouragement on the studs of the unfinished home. The family then reads these heartfelt messages before the home is completed, making them forever aware of the love and appreciation the community feels for them.

These messages are the reason we do what we do, but they are eventually tucked away behind insulation and drywall. To truly understand our mission, please follow us on social media to read what’s written behind the walls of our homes.
PILLAR EVENTS: SURPRISES, GROUNDBREAKINGS, NOTES OF LOVE & DEDICATIONS

Aug. 14  Surprise/Groundbreaking  U.S. Marine SSGt William Gonzales III  Charlotte, NC
Sept. 2  Surprise/Groundbreaking  U.S. Marine SSG Shawn Friesen  League City, Texas
Sept. 10  Dedication  U.S. Army Veteran J.L. Cross Family  Cleveland, Tenn.
Sept. 28  Surprise/Groundbreaking  U.S. Marine Sgt Bradley Thomas  Fernandina Beach, Fla.
Oct. 7  Groundbreaking  U.S. Army 1LT Erin Benson  Bartow, Fla.
Oct. 8  Notes of Love  U.S. Army SSG Matthew Andrews  Kalispell, Mont.
Oct. 14  Notes of Love  U.S. Marine SSGt William Gonzales III  Waxhaw, NC
Oct. 29  Notes of Love  U.S. Marine Sgt Aaron Zurn  Vandalia, Ohio
Oct. 30  Notes of Love  U.S. Marine SSG Shawn Friesen  League City, Texas
Nov. 6  Dedication  U.S. Navy PO3 Russell Snodgrass  Lubbock, Texas
Nov. 6  Notes of Love  U.S. Army 1LT Erin Benson  Bartow, Fla.
Nov. 7  Surprise  U.S. Army SGT Rich Stayskal  Nashville, Tenn.
Nov. 20  Surprise  U.S. Army SSG Stephen Netzley  Cypress, Texas
Dec. 16  Notes of Love  U.S. Army SFC Rich Staykal  Pinehurst, NC
Dec. 17  Dedication  U.S. Army 1LT Erin Benson  Bartow, Fla.
Dec. 18  Dedication  U.S. Marine SSGt William Gonzales III  Charlotte, NC
Dec. 22  Surprise  U.S. Army SGT Javier Torres  Tampa, Fla.
Dec. 23  Dedication  U.S. Marine SSG Shawn Friesen  League City, Texas
Jan. 12  Dedication  U.S. Marine Sgt Bradley Thomas  Fernandina Beach, Fla.
Feb. 2  Surprise/Groundbreaking  U.S. Marine Sgt Felipe Tremillo, Jr.  Waco, Texas
I am ugly crying and can’t stop! This blessing is finally sinking in. It’s the release of stress knowing we are secure and safe. It’s the feeling of finding a solid surface to stand in the midst of a sea of shifting sands. It’s the laughter coming from the kids who have had to deal with so much. It’s the ability to put up a Christmas tree for the first time in three years and watch the kids giggle while they decorate a gingerbread house that was left for us at our Dedication. I’m still crying, but this time in joy. I’m so thankful and we are so blessed.

– Caira Benson
NEIGHBORHOOD FUN RUN SUPPORTS VETERANS

Residents of Santa Rita Ranch in Liberty Hill (Texas) gathered for their annual RanchGiving 5K Run which benefited Operation FINALLY HOME in 2020. The Santa Rita Ranch community welcomed the David DeTuccio family in 2017 and the Coffey family in 2015!

IN MEMORIUM

U.S. Army PFC Christopher Sullivan joined the Operation FINALLY HOME family in 2013 when he received his League City (Texas) home. Christopher passed away July 31, 2020.

U.S. Army Veteran J.L. Cross passed away Sept. 6, 2020, just one week after moving into his family’s new home in Chattanooga. His home was rebuilt after being destroyed by a tornado that ripped through the area on Easter Sunday (2020).

Our condolences and prayers are with these families - may you be eternally blessed.

US LBM FOUNDATION DONATION

The US LBM Foundation, a nonprofit organization founded by leading specialty building materials distributors, has donated more than $75,000 to veteran organizations this year, including Operation FINALLY HOME. The US LBM Foundation is supporting the construction of U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Cory Hixson’s home in Conway, Ark., by providing discounted building materials.

MAXWELL HOUSE DONATES $200,000 AND ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH OPERATION FINALLY HOME

Maxwell House has partnered with Operation FINALLY HOME by donating $200,000 towards five mortgage-free homes for veterans throughout the year. The partnership was announced prior to Veterans Day (2020) and was kicked off by surprising U.S. Marine Sgt. Bradley Thomas and his family with news they would be receiving a mortgage-free home. Maxwell House also hosted a “Houses For Heroes” sweepstakes around the 2020 Bank of America ROVAL 400 at Charlotte Motor Speedway in October. Fans made donations for a chance to win a fire suit worn by NASCAR driver Ryan Preece.

CRAIG MORGAN HELPS SURPRISE VETERAN AT THE GRAND OLE OPRY®

Operation FINALLY HOME, Beazer Homes and Ashlar Development enlisted Army Veteran and country music entertainer Craig Morgan to surprise U.S. Army SGT Ethan LaBerge and his family with the news they are receiving a mortgage-free home in Mt. Juliet, Tenn. The LaBerge family was surprised Nov. 7 at the Grand Ole Opry® during a show honoring veterans.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Lakeway Elementary School (Austin, Texas) students received a history lesson on Veterans Day from two special military veterans who received homes from Operation FINALLY HOME. U.S. Army SSG Tammy Barrett and U.S. Army CW2 Daniel Carlton were virtual guests and shared their powerful stories with the children. The children then wrote messages on hearts that were sent to U.S. Army SFC Rich Stayskal and his family for their Notes of Love event in Pinehurst, N.C. (See Rich and his wife, Megan, looking at the notes on the Social Corner page!)

BANK OF AMERICA SUPPORTING SAN ANTONIO VETERANS

Bank of America has joined Operation FINALLY HOME in supporting our nation’s heroes! The grant will benefit veterans and families in the San Antonio area.

FACES, PLACES & SPACES

Visit OperationFINALLYHOME.org or call 615-732-6143 to help a hero!

FINAL THOUGHT:

“Home is where love resides, memories are created, friends and family belong and laughter never ends.” – Unknown
Operation Finally Home

Happy two-year homeversary U.S. Army Specialist Joshua Ashby and family! They moved into their home around this time last year thanks to Pulte Homes Built to Honor Program!

Operation Finally Home

At Operation FINALLY HOME, we're so grateful for those who protect us at home and abroad. Did you know we also provide homes and home modifications for first responders?

Operation Finally Home

Thank you to everyone who joined us in leaving notes of love for U.S. Army SFC Richard Stayskal and family, and thank you to Daniel Adams Construction and Cashman & Weisz for making this happen.

Army Sergeant’s New Home Lined With Well Wishes

Thank you for your continued support of our nation’s heroes! Our community makes us strong.

One of the best parts of handing over the keys to a new home to our heroes: Making new memories.

Thank you for your service! May you & your family have many happy memories in your new home!

-Fairlyn R.