

OP FH HOME FRONT

2022 // SPRING

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

VOICES OF VETERANS

On March 23, Caira Benson, wife of U.S. Army First Lieutenant Eric Benson, sat before the U.S. Senate Committee on Veteran's Affairs and boldly shared her story as the caregiver of a veteran.

A 2020 Operation Finally Home recipient, testified on Capitol Hill as part of hearings focused on improving the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. While she was only able to speak briefly at the hearing, Caira had previously submitted more than 3,000 words of written testimony, detailing Eric's traumatic injuries while serving in Iraq and recounting the many trials they had faced in obtaining support through the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC).

In order to make a difference in her husband's life—and in the lives of other veterans—Caira had to be painfully vulnerable in her words to the committee. It was difficult, but worth it, she said.



U.S. Army First Lieutenant Eric Benson Family

Credit: Lennar



"I prayed long and hard before entering the room. I knew it would hurt to put things out there, and it did. It was my vulnerability at its best. I can only hope that becoming so vulnerable will help others and make a difference." —Caira Benson



Credit: WISN-TV, Milwaukee, CBS58

Caira isn't alone in her work as an advocate. She joins a number of Operation Finally Home recipients who are working to assist, support and advocate for veterans and their families. U.S. Air Force SSgt. David R. Veros Jr., who received a home from Operation Finally Home in 2016, currently serves as an alumni manager with Wounded Warrior Project. U.S. Army Major Eric King, who received a home in 2019, started his own nonprofit, VetsWhatsNext, to help and support veterans as they transition into civilian life. Jessica Cole (pictured left), an Operation Finally Home recipient along with her husband, U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Tyson Cole, recently played an instrumental role in creating a photography exhibit and veterans resource fair at the Menomonee Falls Library near their home in Wisconsin.

"At Operation Finally Home, we are blessed to honor veterans, first responders and their families with mortgage-free homes, transitional housing and home modifications," said Rusty Carroll, President, Operation Finally Home. "Because of the passion and desire of our recipients, the generosity of our donors and partners creates a ripple effect that can have a far-reaching impact on the lives of veterans, first responders and their families."



A FEW WORDS FROM DAN

As I look back over the past few years, I'm continually amazed by the impact Operation Finally Home has been able to have in the lives of America's veterans, first responders and their families. We are incredibly blessed to play a role in honoring these deserving heroes.

Even as I reflect on the past, I am excited for the future of Operation Finally Home. Each year, we strive to increase our reach and grow our impact among military and first responder families in need. This issue of Homefront presents one of the best ways we can grow our impact and one of the best reasons I could make for supporting Operation Finally Home. This issue is focused on our veterans and all they do to help other veterans.

A mortgage-free home is an incredible gift, and many of our families over the years have recognized it as an incredible opportunity as well. It is certainly an opportunity to worry less and focus on one's own life, family, and health. But many recipients have gone a step further and are using the opportunity to support and advocate for others.

The work of veterans like Caira Benson and Jessica Cole are highlighted in this issue. They are both great examples of how Operation Finally Home can grow its impact and how the contribution of a donor or partner goes further than just one family. The generosity we have all experienced over the years has had a ripple effect that changed lives far beyond the walls of any one home.

As we complete our 200th home this year, it is my challenge – our challenge – to ensure that every home recipient and every partner or donor understands that they play a vital role in making the world a better place for veterans and first responders in their communities and across the country.

I am humbled by the work we do at Operation Finally Home, and I am thankful for the opportunity to lead this great organization.

God Bless,

Dan Wallrath

Founder of Operation Finally Home

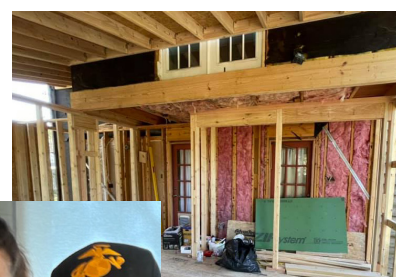
THANK YOU, LOWES!



Credit: Paul Raley

A big thank you to Operation Finally Home partner Lowe's Home Improvement for their help completing a home modification project in Bastrop, Texas, for retired U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Ronald Welch. The project included plumbing and wiring repairs as well as adding handrails

and a ramp for accessibility and stability. Operation Finally Home is blessed with partners that help us fulfill our mission to help veterans, first responders and their families.



Credit: Paul Raley



BEHIND THE BUILD: DAVID DREW

Operation Finally Home recently announced the appointment of David Drew to Senior Vice President of Operations. Drew previously served as a member of the Operation Finally Home Advisory Board. In this role, Drew provides leadership to all Operation Finally Home projects, including project budget development, management and execution and helps foster relationships with builders, contractors, suppliers and others who support the mission of Operation Finally Home. Drew brings more than 30 years of industry experience to the role, most recently serving as the Director of Product Development at MiTek. "I love the mission of Operation Finally Home and am excited to step into this role," Drew said.



IN REMEMBRANCE



John Anthony (third from right) of Anthony Estate Homes and Anthony Orchards, a longtime partner of Operation Finally Home, passed away on May 5 in Granberry, Texas. In 2016, John, along with his wife and son, helped Operation Finally Home surprise U.S. Army Sgt. Diana Vasquez with the news she was receiving a mortgage-free home on national TV as part of FOX's New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square. Join us in praying for the Anthony family.



U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant
Nathan Rodriguez – Melissa, TX

Credit: Ashion Woods



U.S. Army Sergeant Aaron Cabrera
Groundbreaking – Liberty Hill, TX

Credit: H-E-B Operation Appreciation



U.S. Army Specialist Jacob Sanchez Notes of Love – Pharr, TX

Credit: H-E-B Operation Appreciation



U.S. Marine Corporal Ray Lopez
Dedication – Odessa, TX

Credit: Silver Leaf Homes



U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Jason
Plank Dedication – Meridian, ID

Credit: Tyler McFarland



U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Third
Class Luisa Velez Notes of Love –
Irving, TX

Credit: Dallas Builders Association



U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Daniel
Holt Notes of Love – Melissa, TX

Credit: Silver Leaf Homes

PILLAR EVENTS: SURPRISES, GROUNDBREAKINGS, NOTES OF LOVE & DEDICATIONS

January 19	Danny Billek	Dedication	Bartow, FL
January 27	Ray Lopez	Dedication	Odessa, TX
February 14	Luisa Velez	Notes of Love	Irving, TX
February 18	Jason Plank	Dedication	Meridian, ID
February 18	Jacob Sanchez	Notes of Love	Pharr, TX
February 23	J.A. Recer	Dedication	McKinney, TX
March 2	Jonathan Stephenson	Dedication	New Braunfels, TX
March 2	Daniel Holt	Notes of Love	Melissa, TX
March 8	Peter Way	Surprise	Martinez, GA
April 8	Nathan Rodriguez	Notes of Love	Melissa, TX
May 11	Aaron Cabrera	Groundbreaking	Liberty Hill, TX



U.S. Army Private First Class J.A.
Recer Dedication – McKinney, TX

Credit: Huntington/Robert Tsai



U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Danny
Joe Billek Dedication – Bartow, FL

Credit: Paulo Belhencourt Neto



U.S. Marine Sgt. Jonathan Stephenson Dedication – New Braunfels, TX

Credit: Built to Honor/PulteGroup

CELEBRATING SPRING



Mikeska Family—Summerville, South Carolina (Lennar)



DeTuccio Family—Georgetown, Texas
(Highland Homes, Santa Rita Ranch)



Goodrich Family – Stafford, Virginia
(Miller & Smith and Embrey Mill)



Zurn Family—Vandalia, Ohio (JM Dungan Custom
Homes and the Home Builders Association of Dayton)



Veros Family—Jacksonville, Florida
(Pulte Group's Built to Honor)



Sweger Family—Bixby, Oklahoma
(Castlerock Builders and New Gulf Resources)



"Day 1 of many with my new running legs and it went well! I made it like 150 meters (track!) before my first stop. Besides that, I'm feeling very strong, fam!"

— U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Joseph James

Joseph is celebrating his return to running after getting new prosthetic legs that allow him to enjoy the sport again. In September 2015, Operation Finally Home and Goodall Homes partnered to provide James and his family a place to call home in Hendersonville, Tennessee.


HERE TO HELP


Would you or someone you know benefit from a mortgage-free home, transitional housing or a home modification? The Operation Finally Home process begins with our initial contact forms. Please check them out at operationfinallyhome.org/apply.


SCAN THIS QR
CODE WITH
YOUR PHONE
TO DONATE TO
OPERATION
FINALLY HOME.




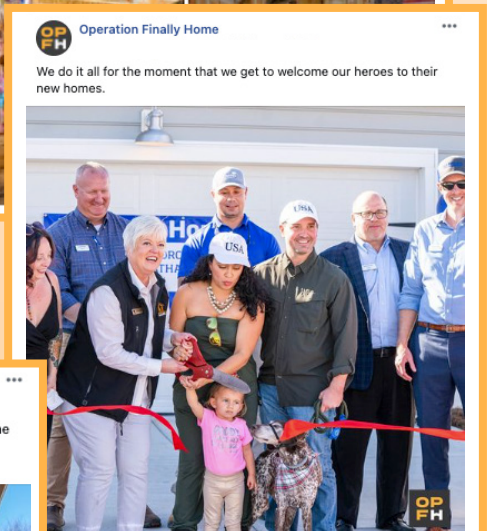
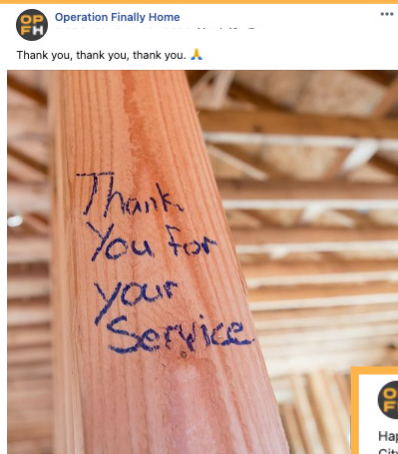
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FACES, PLACES & SPACES

GOING BEYOND THE EDGE



Credit: © Grand Ole Opry, photos by Rachael Black

The past few months have been busy for Operation Finally Home Ambassador and long-time supporter Craig Morgan. He recently competed in "Beyond the Edge," a CBS reality show in which nine celebrities faced off in the jungles of Panama, earning money for their chosen charities through challenges and competitions. During the Grand Ole Opry's special Salute to the Troops show on May 24, Morgan surprised Operation Finally Home executives with a check for \$100,000. This donation reflects Morgan's \$70,000 winnings from "Beyond the Edge" as well as a \$30,000 donation from Monster Energy Cares. In September, Morgan's new book, *God, Family, Country: Soldier, Singer, Husband, Dad—There's a Whole Lot More to Me*, will be released. Throughout the summer and fall, Morgan will be on tour, culminating in a Veteran's Day concert at the Ryman in Nashville, Tennessee. Be sure to catch the entire season of "Beyond the Edge," which ended on May 18, on Paramount+ and other streaming services.

TINY HOMES UPDATE

Students involved in the Big Heroes, Tiny Homes project of the Humble Independent School District (Texas) continue their work constructing tiny homes for veterans. The project involves high school students at three district schools: Kingwood High School, Kingwood Park High School and Summer Creek High School. Earlier this month, Operation Finally Home representatives joined students at Kingwood Park and Summer Creek to dedicate the tiny homes the students built. The goal is to provide student-built tiny homes for homeless veterans in the Houston area. Learn more at humbleisd.net/bigheroestinyhomes.



Credit: Operation Finally Home

SPORTING CLAYS SHOOT

On Feb. 28, participants gathered in Houston to take part in the sixth annual 2022 Sporting Clay Shoot benefiting Operation Finally Home. The event raised funds in support of Operation Finally Home's mission.



Credit: Operation Finally Home



Credit: Robert Voets/CBS ©2021 CBS Broadcasting, Inc.



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Credit: Robert Voets/CBS ©2021 CBS Broadcasting, Inc.

BIG SHOT SHOOT OUT



Credit: Operation Finally Home

The annual Big Shot Shoot Out took place on March 31 at The Range of Richfield in Richfield, Wisconsin.

FINAL THOUGHT

If you make your business about helping others, you will always have plenty of work.

— Chris Guillebeau, author and entrepreneur

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