Operation FINALLY HOME was established in 2005 as a nonpartisan/nonprofit organization and has already had a significant impact across the country. To date, we have 218 homes completed or in planning in 33 states. While we are very proud of the work we have been able to do, we are keenly aware that there is much more to be done.

When people talk about Operation FINALLY HOME and our mission to provide mortgage-free homes to wounded, ill, or injured veterans and widows of the fallen, the conversation is most often about the military families we are supporting. Everyone appreciates our veterans and their sacrifice to defend our freedom. At Operation FINALLY HOME, the unsung heroes are the builders, builders’ associations, developers, and our donors. As a custom homebuilder for more than 30 years, I understand and appreciate the sacrifices made by our supporters who step up for our families.

The need to provide adequate housing for our veterans is great. We’ve only scratched the surface with what we’ve done since 2005, but we have aggressive plans for the future. To meet our goals, we need your help. We need to engage more builders across the country to use their resources to construct the home, new developers to donate lots, and more suppliers to provide product and service donations. And we need Americans across the nation to help us spread the word about Operation FINALLY HOME. Help us raise awareness and funds to build mortgage-free homes for our wounded veterans. This is a problem that can only be solved if we all work together as a nation.

As I’ve experienced and witnessed throughout this journey, I know people will respond to the call. Thank you for your support of Operation FINALLY HOME.

God Bless,

Dan Wallrath
Founder
Our Vision

With faith in God and determined action, we aim to have hundreds of homes built annually across the nation for our Heroes, those who have sacrificed while wearing America’s uniform in defense of our freedoms and values, helping them get their lives back on track after the hardships they have faced. We want Operation FINALLY HOME to be a nationally recognized charity and a household name that inspires others to help in our cause.

Our Mission

We bring together homebuilders, the military, and communities to build custom mortgage-free homes for America’s military heroes and the widows of the fallen, those who have worn America’s uniform and sacrificed so much to defend our freedoms and values, providing a strong foundation to help them move forward with their lives.

Our Organization

Operation FINALLY HOME is governed by a board of directors, along with a small and effective management staff of fifteen people. This collective group brings together proven military and business leaders from the home building, military, and nonprofit industries who work diligently and efficiently to meet our mission of providing mortgage-free homes to America’s military heroes and widows of the fallen who have sacrificed so much in the defense of our freedoms and values.
Corporal Jonathan E. Dowdell enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 2004 and deployed to Afghanistan in 2010, where his unit was charged with investigating intelligence of an improvised explosive device (IED) manufacturing operation. While searching a suspicious compound, Dowdell stepped on a pressure plate IED and was left with severe injuries, resulting in an above-knee amputation of both legs, amputation of his left index finger, and contracture of his right forearm. The swift response of Dowdell’s fellow Marines saved his life.

Following his initial treatment in Germany, Dowdell underwent several surgeries at Bethesda Naval Hospital, then continued his recovery at the Polytrauma Center and Veterans Hospital, and ultimately transferred to Balboa Naval Hospital where he learned to walk with the aid of prosthetics.

Dowdell’s extensive list of awards include a Purple Heart, a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with a Combat V, a Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, a National Defense Service Medal, an Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two stars, and an Iraq Campaign Medal with two stars.

Thanks to Operation FINALLY HOME, Harbour Classic Builders, City of League City, and Urban Companies, Jonathan and his family have a beautiful home to call their own. Since moving to League City, Jonathan Dowdell has continued his passion in martial arts including Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, boxing, and MMA. He trains daily in hopes to one day become a coach himself.
Pillar Events

TOWN HALL MEETING

Typically, this is the first meeting that the builder conducts to solicit community involvement along with product and service donations. During this event, the builder and Operation FINALLY HOME provide an overview of the mission, the build, and what’s needed from the trades and subcontractors—from products and services to monetary contributions.

SURPRISE

When a home recipient is officially named, a surprise event helps announce the details to the community and media. Successful announcement events range from high traffic public events with media already on-site, such as a concert or professional sports game, to surprise groundbreakings at the home site or a reveal held in conjunction with an established community event.

The event typically involves calling the veteran recipient on stage with a spouse, family member or friend, where the announcement is made that they are receiving a home. Distributing a media advisory to local media prior to the event prep media, and a post-event press release disseminated to local media after the announcement event helps gain additional coverage. Operation FINALLY HOME provides media relations and event planning support for the home recipient surprise event.

GROUNDBREAKING

Following the selection of the family and the official build announcement, Operation FINALLY HOME works with the builder and build sponsors to kick off construction with a groundbreaking event at the future site of the veteran’s new home. This event helps foster support of the build and family within the local community and raises awareness of the project.

The event begins with the National Anthem and includes a few words from the builder, the primary build sponsor (if applicable), and Operation FINALLY HOME. Prominent members of the community speak, as appropriate. The family then joins all participating organizations in a ceremonial groundbreaking. Operation FINALLY HOME provides media relations and event planning support for the groundbreaking celebration.

NOTES OF LOVE

Family, friends, and members of the community gather at the build site to surround the family with “Notes of Love” by signing inspirational phrases, scripture, and notes of appreciation on bare studs and headers. Based on response from our families, this event carries some of the deepest warmth and love of the entire process due to the support shown.

DEDICATION

As the capstone for each Operation FINALLY HOME build, the home dedication brings together the local community, the builder, and all other build participants to commemorate the delivery of the keys to the veteran’s family. Operation FINALLY HOME reaches out to local media to publicize the event. The organization invites members of the local community and local media to celebrate completion of the home. The event begins with the National Anthem and includes a few words from the builder, the primary build sponsor (if applicable) and Operation FINALLY HOME. Prominent members of the community are invited to speak, as appropriate. The family then receives the keys to their new home.
Our work

Operation FINALLY HOME provides mortgage-free homes to service members and their families who have become wounded, ill, or injured as a result of their service in the defense of our country. With advancements in combat trauma medicine as well as medicine in general, more of our servicemen and women are coming home wounded and disabled rather than as casualties than ever before.

Given the nature of the current military campaigns, today’s severely injured are experiencing severe burns and/or the loss of limbs as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Statistics show over 50,000 troops have been wounded and over 435,000 servicemen and women are suffering from PTSD and TBI sustained from their service in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation New Dawn (OND).

The support from Operation FINALLY HOME has primarily been to those wounded, ill or injured service members returning from the current campaigns, but we also support any and all service members regardless of the campaign in which they served.

Donate Now
HELP A HERO TODAY

Through your generous donation, we are able to offer mortgage-free homes to our nation’s heroes.

OperationFINALLYHOME.org/helpaheronow

15 PEOPLE ON STAFF

33 states represented by builds completed or in planning stages

138 FAMILIES SERVED

263 CHILDREN SERVED

218 HOMES COMPLETED OR IN PLANNING STAGES
Seeking excitement and adventure, U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Geoffrey Heath joined the military in his hometown of Miami in 2003, graduated boot camp in 2005, and joined his first unit, 3rd FAST Company, in Yorktown, Virginia. Injured in a training accident, Heath spent the next eight months in rehab and physical therapy while the rest of his unit deployed. Soon after, Heath and his family moved to California to work with a new unit, which deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, in September 2005. In March 2006, Heath earned a Purple Heart after being hit with an enemy ricochet fire in the legs and helmet. Three years later, Heath was struck by an improvised explosive device in Marjah, Afghanistan, leaving him with a traumatic brain injury, multiple injuries on the right side of his body, and loss of peripheral vision in his right eye.

Heath’s courageous journey earned him many honors including two Combat Action Ribbons, two bronze Afghanistan Campaign Medals, and two Iraqi Campaign Medals. Known in the field for his strong work ethic, moral character, and guidance, Keith retired after almost ten years of military dedication. Although Heath’s disabilities prevent full-time employment, he actively works toward recovery and volunteers for the nonprofit organizations Disabled American Veterans Charity, Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation, and the 03XX Foundation. Heath’s greatest joys are refinishing firearms with his father and supporting his wife, Lara, and their three children.

Operation FINALLY HOME and PulteGroup’s Built to Honor program are honored to come together to provide Geoffrey Heath and his family with a home to call their own in Estero, Florida.
U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Hutcheson always knew he wanted to join the military since a young age when he lived in Gainesville, Georgia and Nashville, Tennessee. He enlisted in the Army on October 12, 1994 and attended basic training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina, the same training facility that his father had attended years before. Throughout his time in service, Hutcheson sustained many injuries. In December 1995, he was injured in a tractor-trailer accident that resulted in his first of three traumatic brain injuries (TBI). He was put into a medically induced coma for 17 days. Fortunately, Hutcheson was able to return to active duty soon after recovering from the accident.

Hutcheson deployed twice to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) from September to December 2001 as well as from October 2004 to July 2005. On June 3, 2005, Hutcheson’s convoy was hit with an improvised explosive device (IED). Hutcheson survived the attack, but three of his friends did not. He believes he survived only because his commander had insisted he sit somewhere other than his normal seat. As a result of the attack, he suffered another TBI, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and back problems. Hutcheson “soldiered on” and continued his deployment, but realized the severity of his injuries when he returned home.

Hutcheson’s third injury occurred on June 16, 2006, while he was participating in an airborne operation. At 70 feet above ground, Hutcheson’s parachute lost canopy, forcing him to hit the ground hard when he landed. He eventually was diagnosed with PTSD, TBI and a host of issues with his back. Hutcheson medically retired on September 5, 2007.

As a result of Sgt. Hutcheson’s bravery and endurance, he received many honors and awards including two Army Commendation Medals, four Army Good Conduct Medals and one Humanitarian Service award. He currently resides in Ball Ground, Georgia with his wife, Leslie, and three daughters. Leslie is a retired U.S. Army medic and is a full-time caregiver for her husband.

Thanks to Operation FINALLY HOME, Portico Properties and the Southern Living Custom Builder Program, the Hutcheson family has a home to call their own in Ball Ground, Georgia in 2016.
Operation FINALLY HOME’s program does not work without the passion and commitment from builders and sponsors who are dedicated to changing the life of one of America’s wounded, ill, or injured heroes. The builder is the driving force in completing a project, responsible for all facets of building the home. The sponsors help alleviate some of the financial burdens and often assist with key pillar events. This is a challenge and a serious commitment. The builder(s) in partnership with Operation FINALLY HOME will undertake all that is necessary to complete a build. The goal is to finish the project at no cost (including money raised or contributed for a special project). Each build is unique and every builder may work differently with the homeowner, subs, suppliers, and other partners and with preferred processes necessary in successfully building a custom home. Here’s a snapshot of our process:

**Journey TO HOME**

**STEP 1**
**ENLIST BUILDER**
1. Gain commitment from builder to lead project
2. Gain general understanding of plan and/or location builder has in mind
3. Estimate cost per square foot

**STEP 2**
**SELECT FAMILY**
1. Identification and vetting
2. Family Needs Assessment provided to team

**STEP 3**
**SELECT LOCATION**
1. Refer to Family Needs Assessment
2. Determined by builder with Operation FINALLY HOME

**STEP 4**
**FINALIZE PLAN**
1. Incorporate Family Needs Assessment
2. If VA/SAH Grant eligible:
   a. Must follow VA/SAH guidelines
   b. Determine Minimum Property Requirements (MPRs) that can be waived by veteran

**STEP 5**
**FINALIZE BUDGET**
1. Conduct Town Hall Meeting
2. Determine how donation shortfalls will be funded
3. Operation FINALLY HOME approval for any funding needs

**STEP 6**
**ESTABLISH & EXECUTE PILLAR EVENTS**
1. Surprise
2. Groundbreaking
3. Notes of Love
4. Dedication Ceremony
Fundraisers + Sponsorships

FUNDRAISING

Given the current Operation FINALLY HOME projects and the opportunity for many more, fundraising is and will continue to be an important aspect of what Operation FINALLY HOME does. In addition to helping raise funds for specific local builds, these events allow us to market and promote the build as well as to provide volunteer opportunities for those not directly involved in constructing the home. They are also an opportunity to recognize the builder and sponsor and to promote the mission of Operation FINALLY HOME. These events can include golf tournaments, fishing tournaments, skeet shoots, and concerts. In many cases, we hope to establish these local fundraising events as annual events, with the first event supporting the local build and subsequent events supporting other Operation FINALLY HOME projects around the country. This will help further strengthen the community by allowing them to have an impact not only locally, but across the nation.

LOCAL FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Local fundraising events along with local build projects are at the heart of what Operation FINALLY HOME does. In addition to helping raise funds for specific local builds, these events allow us to market and promote the build as well as to provide volunteer opportunities for those not directly involved in constructing the home. They are also an opportunity to recognize the builder and sponsor and to promote the mission of Operation FINALLY HOME. These events can include golf tournaments, fishing tournaments, skeet shoots, and concerts. In many cases, we hope to establish these local fundraising events as annual events, with the first event supporting the local build and subsequent events supporting other Operation FINALLY HOME projects around the country. This will help further strengthen the community by allowing them to have an impact not only locally, but across the nation.

SIGNATURE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

With the many relationships that Operation FINALLY HOME has developed, we have had the opportunity to hold a number of signature fundraising events across the country. In 2016, we surprised a veteran and his family at the Craig Morgan American Stories Tour concert in Warsaw, Indiana. Craig Morgan will continue as an Operation FINALLY HOME ambassador with his American Stories Tour throughout the United States. These signature fundraising events will be instrumental in meeting our mission of providing custom-built, mortgage-free homes to America’s military heroes.

PRIVACY HOME SPONSORS

In the case that a company is the primary home sponsor for a particular project, there are several functions and activities that the company will participate in throughout the build process. Primary home sponsors typically take on the responsibility for planning and hosting any fundraising events that will be used to cover construction costs and will work with Operation FINALLY HOME to approve these events. They will also be involved in the Town Hall meeting, Surprise announcement, Groundbreaking, and Dedication ceremonies, as well as promoting the project throughout construction.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

Corporate sponsorships are essential to the functioning of Operation FINALLY HOME, and there are several ways that sponsors can help. In some cases, companies become primary home sponsors, providing monetary donations to cover the entire cost of a specific project. In other cases, sponsors can contribute to projects either through monetary donations to the Operation FINALLY HOME general fund or through donations of building materials and/or labor. In either case, these sponsors provide invaluable resources that allow us to meet our mission.
Inspired by the passing of his mother, Specialist Robert “Bo” Kitelinger enlisted in the U.S. Army on July 23, 2003, just before his senior year of high school. Assigned to HHC 1-502nd Infantry Regiment in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Bo completed Air Assault School, an accomplishment his mother would be proud of.

Deployed in August 2005, Kitelinger’s platoon was tasked with securing the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team stationed in Mahmudiyah, Iraq. A routine mission turned tragic when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated, knocking Kitelinger unconscious and severely injuring several members of his team.

Bo was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), yet he continued his military duty, reenlisting in 2006 as a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic and eventually deploying to Afghanistan in 2008 and Iraq in 2010. Kitelinger received numerous awards during his 10 years of commendable service, including a Purple Heart, an Afghanistan Campaign Medal with star, and an Iraq Campaign Medal with four stars. Since his medical retirement in 2014, Bo has received extensive treatment for his PTSD, making his transition into the civilian world as “normal” as possible.

Today, Bo lives in Wisconsin with his wife, Kimberly, and their three children. He is currently enrolled at Marquette University pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and hopes to practice sports medicine in the future. In his free time, Kitelinger is a third degree knight with the Knights of Columbus and a youth soccer referee.

Thanks to Operation FINALLY HOME, Belman Homes, Neumann Companies, and the Structural Building Components Association, the Kitelinger family has a home to call their own in Jackson, Wisconsin.