



# Foundations

www.homesforourtroops.org | A Newsletter from Homes for Our Troops | February 2009

## Veterans' Conferences

Homes for Our Troops has laid the groundwork to build many more homes in 2009 by recently holding two Veterans' conferences where 11 more veterans and their families met with Homes for Our Troops personnel to begin planning their new homes.

These conferences allow the veterans to learn all about what will happen over the next months as Homes for Our Troops plans their



home-building project. It also gives them the opportunity to meet with other veterans and their families to share stories, get to know each other and just have fun!

It is only through your continued support that we are able to sustain this mission to build specially adapted, barrier-free homes for these families.

**We thank you for your past support and ask you to continue to be a part of our mission in 2009.**

## This Family Gives New Meaning to 'Stretching a Buck'



Kristin Kosch, 4th from the right, pictured here at the December 3rd, 2008 Board of Education Meeting at Mahwah High School with representatives from surrounding participating High Schools.

In 2007, **Matt Kosch**, a senior at Mahwah High School decided one person could make a difference. His Dad, Kevin had recently read about a home built for SPC James Benoit in Wharton, NJ by Homes for Our Troops. Matt went straight to our website, "I realized that not only was labor needed but it obviously takes a lot of money to build these homes as well." He was thinking big and approached the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Charles Montesano. Matt asked all students, not just in his own school, but in the Mahwah Public School System to bring in a dollar on Veteran's Day. From this one thought came \$3,720. "It just seems like the right thing to do; not everyone agrees with the current war, but as Americans we should all contribute and help each other. Homes for Our Troops helps

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**Homes for Our Troops was named a Top-Rated Charity by the American Institute of Philanthropy**

Visit us online at:

[www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org)

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## A Message From Our Founder On Homes for Our Troops' Fifth Anniversary

Dear Friends,

February 4, 2009 marked a true milestone in our history.

It was five years ago on that day that Homes for Our Troops was incorporated. For me it has been a truly incredible journey.

I have been honored to have traveled across the country and see thousands of my fellow Americans come out to our projects and give back to the next greatest generation. It has been humbling to share laughter and tears with so many military families who have sacrificed so much. Their stories of dedication to our country and the long road to recovery are remarkable to say the least.

To date we have helped more than three dozen families from Massachusetts to California. Our past accomplishments are the result of you – our generous supporters. We could not have done this without your generosity and compassion.

Although the economic future for many Americans is uncertain, your support for our mission remains strong. Because of this we have been introducing many more military families to the compassionate spirit of the American people. Through your generosity we have been able to make our biggest commitment to date. In 2009 we have put a plan in place to take on 35 more home building projects. It is our hope that we will continue to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to support our mission.



I recently attended a groundbreaking ceremony for Corporal Visnu Gonzalez in New Jersey. In attendance was a high school student named Kristin Kosch from the Mahwah High School who got her whole school district involved in a fundraiser for Homes for Our Troops that raised \$22,000. It is people like her and

all of you that have allowed Homes for Our Troops to make a difference to so many injured service members.

I wish that every American could experience the emotions I feel when we turn over the keys to a specially adapted home to someone like Matt Keil, who was shot by a sniper and is now a quadriplegic. To see him wheel through his home with no barriers in his way. To watch him be able to use technology like the voice activated controls that control his heat, lights, doors and the audio and video components that for most of us are effortless. To see him smile.

Thank you everyone for believing in us and for helping us. But most of all thank you for supporting the greatest volunteers in the world. The men and women of the United States military.

With warmest regards



## 'Stretching a Buck' continued

remove some of the obstacles these soldiers encounter when returning home and hopefully enables them to move forward a little easier."

In September of 2008 Matt moved on to Villanova University but he wasn't finished supporting Home for Our Troops. He passed the torch to his younger sister, Kristin, a sophomore at Mahwah High School, giving her tips on how to improve on his original idea.

Kristin did not take this project lightly. She drafted a solicitation letter for her school district which was then presented by Dr. Montesano to approximately 70 other school districts in Bergen County, New Jersey. Nine districts responded and participated and they have already received interest from several more for participation in 2009. They designated a "Jeans Day" that would allow the teachers and staff to dress down for Veterans Day if they paid \$5 toward the fundraiser.

In addition to fundraising at school, Kristin decided to place collection cans at a few local restaurants expecting to simply raise a few more dollars. She was unexpectedly contacted by an anonymous donor in town who gave \$12,000. Kristin was overjoyed, "The support I received from everyone shows their belief in the efforts of Homes for Our Troops and I look forward to expanding these efforts next year." Kristin took the torch from her brother and turned it into a full blown bonfire with donations exceeding \$22,000.

**Our heartfelt thanks to Matt and Kristin – a brother and sister making a difference one buck at a time.**

**To start your own fundraiser  
visit our website  
[www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org)**

## Homes for Our Troops Green Building Update

### Marine Cpl. Visnu Gonzalez home to be LEED Certified

The home for Marine Cpl. Visnu Gonzalez is registered with the United States Green Building Council's LEED for Homes program. LEED is an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The program includes third party certification and performance testing to ensure that the home is built to a true green standard.

The SIP panels have a history of reducing air infiltration that is responsible for increasing energy costs by as much as 30%. To further decrease consumption, the home will be heated and cooled by a Geothermal HVAC system that utilizes the earth's energy with wells reaching depths of 250 feet.



The design focuses on reducing energy consumption and is targeted to use 50% less energy than a home built using standard building codes. To achieve this goal the home will be built using Structural Insulated Panels or SIPs.

While reducing energy consumption was the main focus, the design will also include features that improve air quality, reduce water consumption, decrease construction waste, and provide a beautiful drought resistant landscape.

## Facts About the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2008

During 2008, over 3,000 of our military men and women were injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, and over 1,000 of those were injured seriously enough that they were unable to return to duty. Some of those seriously injured Veterans suffered loss of limbs, spinal cord injuries and brain injuries. These Veterans will require specially adapted homes so they can face the challenges ahead of them.

We see less and less coverage of the wars on television and in the newspapers, but our troops are still fighting every day and many are being injured every day.

We need your continued support to keep building homes in the future for those who are suffering injuries every day in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## 2nd Annual Sporting Clays Event a Great Success

For the second year in a row, hundreds of people came out to Homes for Our Troops' annual sporting clays event in Fulshear, Texas. Thanks to the title sponsor - Energy Corporation of America - and the many other sponsors, volunteers, exhibitors and shooters, over \$100,000 was raised to support our military men and women.



A special

thanks goes out to

## Key Volunteer Spotlight:

### Jim Tortorelli – Hillsdale, NJ

James Tortorelli, a Real Estate Broker with Coldwell Banker in Hillsdale, NJ first heard about Homes for Our Troops in 2006, when selling a home to a client. After learning that his client's sister was looking for a handicapped accessible home for her son, Cpl. Visnu Gonzalez, a severely injured Marine, Jim knew he wanted to help in any way he could. Offering his assistance, it was quickly realized that a home to meet the needs of this young man would be far too costly for the family's budget. In the meantime, Maria Elena Baez, Visnu's mother, applied to Homes for Our Troops on her son's behalf, and James agreed to assist with the land search. Once a lot was secured and James' real estate expertise was no longer necessary, he knew he would continue to be an active member of the team supporting this project and American Hero.

Wearing multiple hats, James quickly assumed many of the Key Volunteer Roles for the Hillsdale, NJ project to build the specially adapted home for Cpl. Visnu Gonzalez. His expertise as a Community Liaison opened many doors as we planned for both the Groundbreaking and Community Dinner events. From searching for local venues to referrals for Porta Potty Rentals, James was the answer man! No request went unanswered and nothing was left undone when James was included in the planning!

Homes for Our Troops depends on the dedicated volunteerism of people like James Tortorelli. Would you like to learn more about becoming a Key Volunteer? Please visit [www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org) to learn more about the volunteer opportunities available in your area!



Marine Cpl. Visnu Gonzalez with James Tortorelli

## Upcoming Fundraisers & Events to Benefit Homes for Our Troops

### NORTH CAROLINA

**If you are looking for a challenge, this is the event to attend!** The Semper Fi Challenge Series is a series of 3 events. The first is the **Marine Buddy Challenge** which happened on Feb 7th, 2009. The second is the **Marine Ultimate Team Challenge** in May in Charlotte, NC, and the third is the **Marine Mud Challenge** in Aug in Belmont, NC. See [www.carolinamarines.org](http://www.carolinamarines.org) for more details and photos from last year's event.

### WISCONSIN

**Milwaukee Firefighter Brian McNulty** along with 11 fellow firefighters have been in training at Wisconsin Athletic Club and on March 11th will participate in running a relay on a treadmill for 24 continuous hours. Please visit [www.homesforourtroops.org/goto/MFD12](http://www.homesforourtroops.org/goto/MFD12) for more information.

### MASSACHUSETTS

**St. Patrick's Day Celebration** at the Bridgewater Vet's Club in Bridgewater, MA on Saturday, March 14th. Join them for a night of dancing, silent auction, raffles and more. For tickets & more information contact [ToddRoach@nemoves.com](mailto:ToddRoach@nemoves.com).

### TEXAS

On Saturday, April 4th, join the **Lone Star Cowgirls Precision Riding Team** at the Tomball VFW Post #2427 in Tomball, TX for a BBQ Dinner and Dancing. Contact Valerie Cranford at (281) 685-6355 for more information.

### MASSACHUSETTS

**SHHHH...** On Friday, April 17th at the Marriott in Springfield, MA there will be a silent auction. For more information and to see some of the amazing items in the auction, see [www.hfotauction.org](http://www.hfotauction.org)

### MASSACHUSETTS

**Friday, April 18th** – why not be part of something great! Cocktail reception and silent auction at the Montvale Plaza Ballroom in Stoneham, MA. Go to [www.homesforourtroops.org/providingforourpatriots](http://www.homesforourtroops.org/providingforourpatriots) for additional information.

### MASSACHUSETTS

**SAVE THE DATE!!** Saturday, June 13th at the Marriott Copley in Boston, MA – plan to attend the **Homes for Our Troops Third Annual Gala**. Featuring the band Room Full of Blues, silent and live auctions as well as dinner and dancing – bring your dancing shoes!!

**To make a contribution today, please return the enclosed donation slip for much needed support! Thank you.**