

The Road to Recovery Report

An Update for Supporters of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes

Volume 46 ★ April 2014

*Providing Emergency Aid
to Troops Severely Disabled
in the War on Terror*



Troops severely disabled in war on terror thank Coalition donors for 10 years of help

“It's not about the money or gifts, but about the selfless donors who work to keep the Coalition going.”

— Wife of wounded hero

Sometimes a picture says more than a thousand words. This is one of those times.

The heartwarming photo above was taken at the Coalition's 2013 Road to Recovery Conference in Orlando, Florida, which was attended by nearly 100 severely disabled troops and their families.

And on the final night of the four-day

educational conference, several wounded heroes found a creative way to say thank you for sending them to this life-changing event.

As you can see, your support is making a real impact.

And the upcoming Memorial Day holiday is the perfect time to celebrate all we've done together since the Coalition was founded 10 years ago, in 2004.

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Letter from President David Walker



Dear Friend of Our Wounded Heroes,

I'm pleased to share with you this issue of *The Road to Recovery Report* – the Coalition's newsletter highlighting how we're putting your donations to work to combat the frightening crises facing our severely disabled military service members today.

This newsletter shows how your donations are making a difference in the lives of our wounded servicemen and women every day.

It is my sincere privilege to lead the Coalition in boldly addressing, head-on, a national crisis that finds thousands of wounded warriors and their families homeless, impoverished, and unemployed after returning home from the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Though this crisis is severe, I have hope. Every day I am encouraged by the uplifting words and patriotic hearts of supporters who generously give their time, money, and prayers to serve our severely disabled heroes.

You are the lifeblood of this organization. You are the ones who keep our wounded heroes whole and healthy. You are the ones who give them cheer and comfort through your prayers and thank you cards. And you are the ones who keep them off the street, put food on their table, and keep the lights on in their homes when they are struggling to provide for themselves.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the sacrifices you make to lighten the load of our suffering wounded heroes.

They stepped forward without hesitation to answer our country's call. And I am honored to call "friends" supporters like you who do the same in the service of our severely disabled heroes.

Gratefully yours,

David Walker
President & CEO

Board of Directors

David W. Walker
President & Chief Executive Officer

Gail Laude
Director

LTC Thomas J. Orłowski,
U.S. Army (Ret.)
Director

Tom Sircher
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Bruce Kelly
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U.S. Army (Ret.)
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Lt. Colonel Roy White
USAF (Ret.)

Colonel Evan G. Miller
U.S. Army (Ret.)

Colonel Charles Bogle
U.S. Army (Ret.)

Colonel Pamela S. McGinty
USAF (Ret.)





Your support for emergency aid program rescues disabled troops from hunger, homelessness

“I made it back from Iraq in one piece, but we couldn’t pay the bills or put food on the table.”

— Army Sgt. James Sides (Ret.)

Coalition’s **Emergency Financial Aid** program is at the heart of our mission to provide direct assistance – with your generous help – to our veterans severely disabled in the war on terror.

A sluggish bureaucracy means our disabled troops and veterans wait an average of 10 months (and often longer) for their first government disability check.

But for a severely disabled veteran who is unable to work, that wait spells disaster for their family – especially when their spouse often has to leave their job to become a fulltime caregiver.

When you donate to the **Emergency Financial Aid** program, your gift goes to a severely disabled veteran who needs help keeping a roof over his family’s head,

keeping food on the table, or keeping a car in the driveway. Sometimes he will use it for medical bills; sometimes she will use it to pay overdue utility bills. But no matter what the emergency, you can rest assured that your gift is drastically changing the life of a wounded hero who might otherwise go homeless, hungry, or suffer some other frightening hardship.

Hundreds of desperate military families thankful for holiday meals programs

Coalition’s **Easter Meals Project** and **Thanksgiving Meals Project** provides hundreds of severely wounded troops with \$60 each so their families – who have sacrificed so much – can enjoy a special dinner during the holidays.

As a faithful Coalition supporter, you’ve heard many times how the families of our disabled troops and veterans often struggle to put any food on the table – let alone a special holiday dinner with all the trimmings. Special meals projects are just another way Coalition donors’ gifts go to work to show our severely disabled veterans that we remember them and appreciate their sacrifices.

These special meals brighten the holidays for veterans who might otherwise go hungry. “I got out of the army last year and it has been hard,” veteran Luz Cowell told us. “It is people like you that make it all worth it. The boys and myself will have a nice dinner because of your gift card. Thank you for what you do and for making our Thanksgiving a great reason to be thankful.”

In fact, thanks to your giving, we’ve just concluded another successful **Easter Meals Project**. In an upcoming newsletter, we’ll share some “thank you” letters we’ve received from grateful veterans whose holiday was brightened by your generosity.



“I really wanted to share this photo with you because for me it’s important for the people that support this great cause to see how they help veterans and how they put big smiles on families’ faces.” — Pablo J.

How your \$500 Secret Santa gifts spread the Christmas cheer

“Now I do have a way to give the children a happy Christmas.”

— Michele M.

Coalition’s **Secret Santa Project** provides \$500 Christmas gift checks so our troops who have been maimed, burned, blinded or suffered other severe injuries in Afghanistan or Iraq can give their families Christmas presents.

The severely disabled troops and veterans your Coalition gift reaches are in financial dire straits – they are struggling to keep their home, pay the electric bill, and put food on the table. They certainly don’t have money for extras like Christmas gifts.

That’s why we created the **Secret Santa**

Project. The Coalition – and our generous donors, like you – couldn’t stand the thought of children being heartbroken on Christmas morning because their wounded parent couldn’t afford gifts from Santa.

Each year we hear from grateful veterans overwhelmed by the generosity of Coalition donors whose gifts ensure not one disabled veteran’s family misses out on Christmas cheer. These letters are truly heartwarming. That’s why I felt it was so important to share some of them with you. You can find **Secret Santa Project** thank you letters from grateful veterans on page 16 of this newsletter.



Coalition's national spokesman,
Major Gen. John K. Singlaub (Ret.)

Coalition President David Walker salutes legendary General John K. Singlaub for 'critical role' as national spokesman

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes' 10th anniversary is the perfect time to recognize the contributions made by retired Army Major General John K. Singlaub, says Coalition President David Walker.

"I can't think of anyone who better understands what our severely disabled troops and their families are going through than Gen. Singlaub, a living legend whose military career spanned 35 years," Walker said.

"As national spokesman for the Coalition, Gen. Singlaub has informed millions of patriotic Americans about the challenges faced by our wounded troops when they return home from the war on terror.

"And that has translated into more financial support for our desperate military families."

Military historians consider Singlaub one of America's most distinguished special operations officers of all time. As a young officer in World War II he volunteered for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and later co-founded the CIA.

In August 1944, Singlaub and two others parachuted into France to conduct guerilla warfare and sabotage missions to help the French Resistance prepare for Allied liberation.

The following year Singlaub parachuted into a Japanese POW camp and liberated hundreds of Allied prisoners.

He later saw action in the Chinese Civil War, served as Chief of Staff to the supreme commander of all U.S. troops in South Korea and performed intelligence missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Vietnam.

In 2007, The OSS Society presented Singlaub with the prestigious William J. Donovan Award, named in honor of "Wild Bill" Donovan, first head of the OSS.

The Donovan Award is intended to "honor a person whose courage and commitment to country and freedom exemplify the life and public service of General Donovan."

Previous winners include Presidents Reagan, H.W. Bush and Eisenhower, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Admiral Lord Mountbatten.

Medals earned by General Singlaub

Distinguished Service Medal (2)

Silver Star

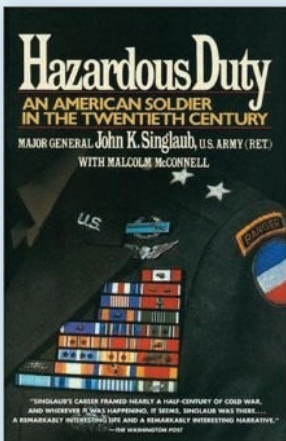
Legion of Merit (3)

Bronze Star (2)

Air Medal (2)

Army Commendation Medal (2)

Purple Heart (2)



Singlaub's autobiography, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century*, recounts his exploits in unconventional warfare, espionage, covert missions, and frontline action in World War II, the Chinese Revolution, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and Central America. A *New York Times* reviewer said, "In this readable, often engaging memoir, Jack Singlaub sounds like the kind of guy you would want with you in the trenches."

“Singlaub is ‘a legendary warrior.’”

— Columnist Patrick J. Buchanan



Coalition donors rescue wounded hero and son by providing emergency aid for food and housing

Many troops returned from Iraq and Afghanistan with missing limbs or gunshot wounds. But an even greater number suffer from more insidious injuries – the traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) some have called the “signature wounds” of the post-9/11 wars.

These veterans may look as healthy as you or I, with no missing limbs or burned skin to give away their secrets. But while a soldier with a prosthetic limb can learn to adapt to his new reality, the erratic behavior, depression, cognitive difficulties, and migraines accompanying TBI and PTSD can make returning to normal life almost impossible.

Take the example of Andrew Smith, a Marine veteran who attended the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference with his young son Laren.

The harrowing experiences of war left Andrew weak, exhausted, and confused. After returning home from Iraq, he went back to college. He had always been a good student, but his grades were suffering. He left school and took a job working in an oil field.

“At this point in time I couldn’t sleep,” Andrew recalls. “I started to lose touch with reality. I was seeing things that weren’t there, I was dreaming with my eyes open. I couldn’t tell what was real from what was false.”

Andrew’s relationship with his family deteriorated as he grew increasingly erratic and explosive. He divorced his wife, his parents and brothers grew distant, and he temporarily lost custody of his son.



“I felt lost in a sea of people who didn’t have any idea who I was. But the people with the Coalition are warriors just like me.”

Andrew’s finances were in shambles. The bank foreclosed on his house, and his next home had drafty windows and doors that sent his electric bills skyrocketing. The medical bills for Laren’s muscular dystrophy piled up. Andrew lost 90 pounds, as money for food went to keeping the lights on and for gas to drive his 4-year-old boy to his doctor appointments.

The Coalition stepped in to help Andrew, giving him money for his mortgage, food, medicine, and basic necessities for his son. And Andrew is equally grateful for the aid the Coalition is giving him to deal with his TBI and PTSD. Before the Coalition, he says, “I felt lost in a sea of people who didn’t have any idea who I was. But the people with the Coalition are warriors just like me. They’re the same.”

Sadly stories like Andrew’s are all too common among today’s veterans. These severely disabled troops often have difficulty reintegrating into civilian life. Their marriages and relationships suffer as friends and family struggle to understand their erratic and sometimes frightening behavior. And it can be difficult for them to hold down a job, creating a financial disaster that only increases their stress.

And just compare the 1,558 troops who experienced a major limb amputation for a battle injury in Iraq or Afghanistan to the 250,000 troops suffering from PTSD, and it’s pretty clear what a formidable issue this is among veterans of the war on terror.

These men and women have sacrificed everything to preserve our freedom. The Coalition remains committed to helping these “walking wounded” rebuild their lives shattered by war.

Key problems facing our severely disabled troops

- ★ **Long wait for government disability check:** Wounded troops wait an average of 302 days, or about 10 months, to get their first government disability check after leaving the hospital and being separated from the military.
- ★ **Homelessness:** Nearly 50,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans were either homeless or in a federal program aimed at keeping them off the streets during 2013, almost triple the number in 2011, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ★ **Amputations:** More than 1,500 Americans have lost a leg or arm in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan, and hundreds have suffered the amputation of multiple limbs.
- ★ **Joblessness:** The unemployment rate is 10 percent for those serving since September 2001, which is far above the national average.
- ★ **PTSD:** According to the military, about 30 percent of troops who served in Afghanistan or Iraq have PTSD, whose symptoms include uncontrollable memories of the trauma, feelings of intense anxiety, outbursts of anger, emotional numbness, flashbacks and nightmares. But many experts say the actual number of troops afflicted is far higher than 30 percent.
- ★ **Home foreclosures:** The rate of foreclosure filings in 163 zip codes located near military bases rose 32% between 2008 and 2010, according to RealtyTrac, a foreclosure research firm.



Donor generosity sends severely disabled veteran to flight training program

The Coalition has awarded a \$6,500 grant to Purdue University to enable a severely disabled combat-wounded veteran to participate in an innovative flight-training program.

Purdue's Able Flight Program provides seven weeks of intensive flight instruction and ground training led by aviation professionals with significant industry experience. The program includes classroom training and flight time in Purdue's matching simulators and state-of-the-art fleet.

The grant covers all expenses for the veteran to participate, including instruction, course materials, and 45 hours of flight time.

"Few experiences are more exhilarating than piloting an aircraft, and we've found that wounded veterans make some of the best pilots out there," said Dr. Bernard W. Wulle, who manages the program. "We're proud the Coalition is supporting our program."

Coalition President and CEO David Walker describes the program as "an outstanding example of the innovative approach we should be taking to assimilate our wounded



Coalition President David Walker with members of Purdue's Able Flight Program.

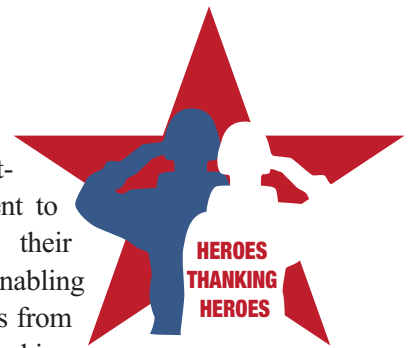
heroes back into civilian life. The brave men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces are some of the best-trained and most dedicated individuals on the planet. There's no telling how far they can soar with the type of personalized instruction they receive at Purdue."

More ways you can help troops severely disabled in the war on terror

- ★ **Volunteer at a Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center** near you. Your skilled hands and warm heart are needed by our patients to heal, progress, and find comfort. Hospital employees are also grateful for your assistance and will pay careful attention to finding tasks to match your skills and abilities.
- ★ **Volunteer your time as a caregiver** to give the spouse or parent of a severely disabled service member a much-needed break.
- ★ **Offer to run errands** for a wounded service member or his/her spouse.
- ★ **Mentor or tutor wounded troops** who need help developing new skills for job training, or networking and finding new career opportunities.
- ★ **Take a wounded hero out** to a movie, sporting event, or other activity. You can help a severely disabled service member forget pain and discomfort for a while, help in their mental and emotional recovery, and ease the transition to civilian life, by getting them out of their home or hospital for an afternoon or evening.



Helping our struggling military families find the road to self-sufficiency



Our Emergency Financial Aid programs are so important – they are truly lifelines to severely disabled veterans on the brink of financial disaster. But the Coalition goes beyond those financial “hand ups” by equipping our heroes to survive and provide for their families in the long term.

The **Heroes Thanking Heroes (HTH)** program is our innovative way of doing just that – giving wounded heroes and their caregivers the opportunity to provide for their families by doing important work, while learning skills preparing them to ultimately re-enter the job market.

As a Coalition supporter, you’ve heard countless stories of severely disabled troops the Coalition has rescued from the brink of homelessness, hunger, and financial ruin.

Many troops are waiting ten months (or longer) to receive their first disability check after leaving the hospital and separating from service. Their spouse often has to quit their job to care for them. Suddenly, the family is without income, and the bills start piling up.

When you’re supporting a family – often one with young children – it doesn’t take many months without any income at all to suddenly find yourself on the edge of financial ruin.

HTH provides part-time, flexible employment to wounded veterans or their primary caregivers by enabling them to make phone calls from their homes, personally thanking donors for their contributions to the Coalition. Caregivers even have the option to make their calls from military hospitals, allowing them to remain by the side of veterans while they undergo treatment or surgery.

Program members recover their self-worth and find healing in this opportunity. As HTH employee Antoinette Batchelor told us, “Heroes Thanking Heroes means I can stay home and look after my husband while still feeling like a contributing member of our family.” (Antoinette’s husband Jim is pictured below.)

Many HTH employees, like Antoinette, would otherwise be unable to work due to ongoing medical appointments and treatments or caregiver responsibilities.

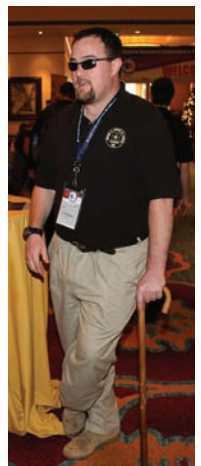
Since the program’s inception in April 2006, more than 100 wounded veterans or their primary caregivers have participated in Heroes Thanking Heroes.

Meet a few of the wounded troops you’ve assisted already



An eye injury sustained in Iraq left retired Army Sgt. Juan Perez with extensive nerve damage, seizures, and extreme headaches which kept him from holding down a job. The Perez family struggled financially, until they discovered the Coalition. Now Juan works for Heroes Thanking Heroes. The job was a life saver for their family, which includes five young children. And Juan has thrived in the position, moving up to the position of Team Leader.

Army SPC Jim Batchelor (Ret.) was shot between the eyes while serving in Iraq – an injury so traumatizing Jim was actually declared dead. He survived, but the resulting PTSD and TBI make it impossible for him to work. His wife Antoinette says the flexibility of the Heroes Thanking Heroes program has helped lighten her burden. Now “I don’t have to worry about him getting lost or injuring himself,” she says.



Just a few of the smiling faces of severely disabled veterans, their spouses or caregivers employed by the Heroes Thanking Heroes program that allows them to provide for their families while thanking our generous donors.



10 years of providing emergency financial aid to troops severely disabled in the war on terror

10 years of Coalition success stories

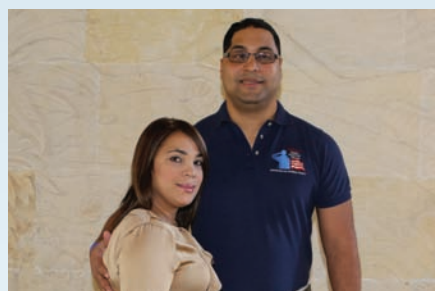


In October 2004 Marine Cpl. Donny Daughenbaugh was on a night foot patrol conducting vehicle searches when an enraged driver with an AK-47 rifle shot him in the face, breaking his jaw, and severely damaging his nerves.

After leaving the Marines, Donny tried to go back to work as a construction worker, but says “having a bullet in the brain and nerve damage from all the bullet damage in my neck, wearing a hard hat and looking up, it was killing me.”

Coalition donors helped Donny put his life back together. Now he works with CSAH as Vice President East and a national spokesperson. Donny’s story of resilience has inspired many wounded heroes.

“I’m living proof the Coalition does not just aim to help the wounded service member,” Donny said at the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference. “We want to pay as much attention to the family’s recovery as the service member that’s injured that we’re here to help.”



While serving in Iraq in June 2004, SPC Hugo Gonzalez’s combat patrol mission was ambushed. An IED blast resulted in a traumatic brain injury (TBI) which left him almost blind. During his recovery he developed post traumatic epilepsy syndrome, and struggles with migraines and PTSD symptoms daily.

The Coalition helped Hugo catch up on his mortgage payments when he fell behind. He says he is grateful that the Coalition “addresses your situation with a long-term vision, not with a band-aid solution to your problem.”

Now Hugo works for the Heroes Thanking Heroes program, which allows him to provide for his family while managing his physical limitations and his struggle with PTSD – an opportunity for which he says he will always be grateful.



In April 2004, Sgt. Jorge De Leon’s Humvee ran over an anti-tank mine. His right leg was severed and his left leg was severely injured.

While enduring a long recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Jorge fell behind in his car payments, and the bank was about to repossess it. His situation was so desperate he had no money for diapers for his three small children. Jorge contacted the Coalition, who stepped in to help his family, contacting the bank to pay off his car, and shipping several cases of diapers and wipes right to the De Leons’ door.

Today Jorge is employed full-time with the Coalition as the Assistant Vice President West and serves as National Spokesperson for CSAH to raise awareness for the organization and to inspire other wounded veterans to remain hopeful, even in times of extreme distress and isolation.



A snapshot of the wounded heroes whose lives have been changed by the generosity of you and other faithful Coalition friends

Coalition by the numbers

- ★ Since its founding in 2004, the Coalition has distributed over 30,000 separate emergency aid payments, grants and holiday gift checks to severely wounded troops and their families.
- ★ Since 2004 the Coalition has held seven Road to Recovery Conferences – a multi-day, all-expenses paid educational and motivational event for wounded veterans and their families designed to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead.
- ★ Severely disabled troops and veterans have received more than 6,400 Secret Santa gift checks worth \$500 each during the Christmas Season to help them provide their families with Christmas presents and pay emergency expenses.
- ★ Thank You and Get Well cards are an important way Coalition supporters lift the spirits of severely disabled veterans. In 2013 alone, the Coalition distributed more than 580,000 cards.

From injured veteran to successful entrepreneur

In 2004, Marine Cpl. Justin Bajema suffered severe shrapnel damage to his legs during an IED attack in Iraq. It took eight surgeries, six weeks of hospitalization, and months of therapy before he could walk again – and the scars of PTSD continued to haunt Justin long after he overcame his physical limitations.

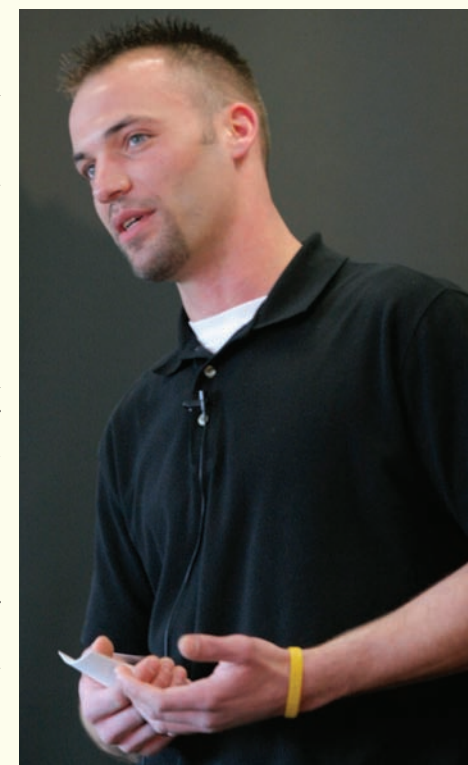
In 2005, Justin connected with the Coalition. His vision, determination, and articulateness uniquely suited Justin to become a Coalition national spokesperson. And the Coalition was able to match Justin with an innovative educational program – Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities.

In 2008, Justin returned to his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and began buying and renovating

foreclosed properties with money he had saved while serving in the military. His company, Access Property Management, is now a multi-million dollar company which rents residential units and leases and manages buildings for others.

Since its inception in 2004, the Coalition has remained committed to helping severely disabled troops find innovative ways to overcome their disabilities and become active, successful members of society once again.

Success stories like Justin’s demonstrate how effective the Coalition’s efforts are – and spur our commitment to the vital task of changing the lives of our wounded heroes for many years to come.





Double amputee salutes your “life changing” generosity by parachuting into college bowl games

Cheering fans at the Military Bowl and the Hyundai Sun Bowl college football games were treated to a special thrill when double-amputee Dana Bowman parachuted into the stadiums prior to kickoff – floating from the sky on a special parachute bearing the Coalition logo.

Bowman is a retired Special Forces soldier and former member of the U.S. Army’s elite parachute team, the Golden Knights, who lost his legs during a parachute training exercise in 1994. Bowman re-enlisted in the Army just nine months after the accident – skydiving with his commander into the ceremony.

“I’m extremely impressed by the life-changing work being done by the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes,” said Bowman. “That’s why I wanted to fly their colors and bring more awareness to the organization and to the thousands of brave men and women that benefit from the emergency aid and other critical services they provide.”

“During my tenure at the Coalition, I’ve met hundreds of inspirational men and women who have overcome adversity and gone on to be a beacon of light to their fellow veterans,” said



Dana Bowman descends from the sky on a special parachute bearing the Coalition’s logo.

Coalition President David Walker. “Dana has to be at the top of that list. He is truly an extraordinary man, and we are so proud the Coalition is riding along with him at these bowl games and other events still to come.”

In 2014 Dana will continue raising awareness about our mission by jumping with the special Coalition logo parachute at several NASCAR events.

Heroes gallop along road to recovery

In March the Coalition awarded a second \$6,000 grant to the *Horses Helping Heroes Project*. The project allows military veterans with disabilities like PTSD, TBI, spinal cord injuries, amputations, and orthopedic issues to participate in free, equine-assisted activities and therapies, as well as an innovative music therapy pilot program.

Each incoming veteran is assigned a horse to work with for the entirety of the session. Participants learn how to safely work and communicate with their horses, developing self-esteem and self-confidence, improving mobility and focus, and building relationships with other veterans and volunteers. Physically, equine therapy helps disabled veterans improve balance, muscle

strength, and posture.

“We were extremely impressed by exceptional work done by the Horses Helping Heroes Project through the initial grant we made last year,” said Coalition President David Walker. “When [HHHP Program Director] Debi Demick told us about her pilot [music therapy] project, we agreed a second grant was more than justified.”

The music therapy program will work in conjunction with equine therapy to enhance the long-term benefits of the HHHP program. Music therapy is proven to improve speech, memory functions, and focused attention, as well as balance and gait.



Irish tenor Anthony Kearns performs at Coalition benefit fundraiser

World-renowned Irish tenor Anthony Kearns performed during a reception and tribute to U.S. military and their families, held at the Salamander Resort & Spa in Middleburg, Virginia. The event benefitted the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes and the Boulder Crest Retreat.

Coalition President David Walker said he was “absolutely thrilled with the event and the wonderful support of all of our attendees and sponsors. It was truly an exquisite and inspiring evening of song and patriotism.”

Irish tenor Anthony Kearns performs at a tribute to U.S. military and their families, benefiting the Coalition.



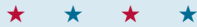
How your Coalition is helping troops with “invisible wounds” of post traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries

Every day these veterans struggle with the invisible wounds of TBI and PTSD that affect their relationships with their family, keep them from holding down jobs, and cause them to suffer with anxiety, depression, and anger. Your contributions help them stay afloat financially so they can focus on their recovery, and offer them support and resources to aid in their healing.



Dealing with retired Army Specialist Michael Frost’s traumatic brain injury (TBI), cognitive issues, and leg injury has his family “in crisis mode,” says his wife Joy. Their family has struggled as a result of his injuries, and the Coalition stepped in to help them with rent, money for food, and car payments.

Attending the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference gave the Frost family hope for the future. “My husband finally got around enough people to see that this is a beginning, not an ending. There are opportunities for him,” Joy says. “It was eye opening to see so many other veterans and how they and their families process this tragedy into a workable reality for a good life and happy life. It can be done.”



Army Staff Sgt. Jamel A. served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. On his first tour of duty he saw one of his friends die right before his eyes; on his second tour, he was ambushed by Taliban supporters and shot three times.

Jamel’s leg was injured, but his post traumatic stress (PTSD) was his most crippling wound. Jamel says his wartime experiences “kind of destroyed me physically, and most of all, mentally. I can’t even sleep at night. I have nightmares a lot now, and feelings of being helpless – like being left alone.”

Thanks to the generosity of Coalition supporters, Jamel and his family were able to attend the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference, where they gained valuable insight into the options available to PTSD sufferers, and connected with fellow troops who shared similar experiences. “Now that I’m here I realize what the Coalition is and what it does. It actually does a lot,” Jamel says. “I’ve been here four days, and I wish I was here a little longer to get more out of it. It’s definitely amazing.”



Army Staff Sgt. Jason Gilbert (Ret.) says his injuries left him feeling “worthless” and “isolated.” Jason’s back, legs, and face were wounded while serving overseas, but it was his TBI and PTSD that meant he “didn’t feel like himself anymore. It was hard to accept,” Jason said.



Jason’s injuries have made it nearly impossible for him to find a job. The Coalition helped the Gilbert family make their mortgage and car payments, as well as giving them money for utilities and food.

And spending time at the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference helped Jason confront his PTSD. “It helped me come out of my shell and see where I was making mistakes and not being the husband and father I used to be,” Jason says.

Coalition donors “saved my life”

Retired Sgt. Matthew Pennington lost his left leg while on his second tour of duty in Iraq. But even more devastating than his physical injuries was his struggle with PTSD. VA doctors attempted to win the battle waging in Matthew with narcotics, antipsychotics, and sleep aids – but he only grew more irritable, anxious, and depressed.

After a frightening incident of blacking out and driving into a wall, Matthew came into contact with the Coalition, who helped his family relocate to Houston. There he was able to tackle his PTSD head-on. “What the Coalition did for me I don’t think I could ever repay,” he says. “They saved my

life.” Today he speaks publicly about PTSD to raise awareness, and blogs about PTSD for the Coalition.

“I thought it was impossible to get back and be a part of the world, to participate in a place that I just didn’t seem to fit into. I was wrong, and by learning that, amongst many other things, I have been able to grow again and get closer to the person I am every day.”

“I have not always been a very resilient person. There have been many times, particularly post-injury, that I have been very down and thought there was no hope. I was wrong.”

*Excerpted from Matthew Pennington’s blog posts about dealing with PTSD. To read more, visit <https://saluteheroes.org/about-us/blog/>



Matthew Pennington participates in a panel discussion with fellow wounded veterans at the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference.



How monthly giving makes your gift go farther and help more severely disabled troops

As a loyal supporter of the Coalition, you already know severely wounded troops and veterans across our country are facing homelessness, hunger, and other hardships.

I'm sure you agree this isn't the way we should "thank" our wounded troops for their service – especially those who have sacrificed life and limb for our freedoms.

With that in mind, I hope you'll consider joining *Partners for Heroes*, the Coalition's monthly giving program, which allows you to automatically and securely donate to the Coalition by checking account or credit card.

Your monthly gift will ensure the Coalition has the much-needed funds to provide emergency aid to wounded heroes and their families – right away, when they need it most. Because every moment counts when you're facing homelessness or your child is going hungry.

Having a predictable monthly income stream enables the Coalition to plan more efficiently. And that allows us to rescue more disabled troops facing evictions, utility cutoffs, and other financial disasters.

And participating in *Partners for Heroes* has great benefits for you, as well:

- ★ Your monthly donation will be conveniently debited from your checking account or charged to your credit card each month. There is no need to waste time writing checks or searching for stamps and you can cancel at any time.
- ★ The number of Coalition mailings you receive will be reduced, so the money saved on postage and printing will make your gift go farther each month.
- ★ Your monthly giving will be tracked and at the end of the year, you will receive a statement of your donations for tax purposes.

Your monthly gift is important no matter the amount. When you have lost your legs and can't work, or your wife has quit her job to care for you as you battle PTSD, every dollar makes a huge difference just to help put food on the table.

Please consider becoming a *Partners for Heroes* contributor today so your monthly gift can start making a difference right away for more severely wounded service members and their families. For more information on how to enroll, please see your enclosed reply form.



Have you remembered our wounded heroes in your Will?

“*What I spent I lost; what I possessed is left to others; what I gave away remains with me.*”

— Joseph Addison, Poet

Leave a legacy of love and support for America's troops severely wounded in the war on terror by remembering them in your Will or insurance policy. For a private and confidential discussion of how to leave the Coalition a charitable bequest, contact:

Mary Price, Donor Relations Manager
Coalition to Salute America's Heroes
Direct line: (703) 348-9914
Toll Free: (888) 447-2588, Ext. 103
info@saluteheroes.org

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes does not provide legal or financial advice to prospective or current donors. Always consult with your attorney and financial advisor before making any important decisions regarding your estate.



Emergency financial aid from Coalition donors was “a godsend,” says wife of wounded hero

“They helped us relocate to where I could get help for myself and help taking care of Chuck.”

— Jennifer Stewart



Army veteran Chuck Stewart is pictured with his family at the 2013 Coalition Road to Recovery Conference in Orlando, Florida.

The first time Chuck Stewart was wounded in Iraq in 2003, he healed from the injury – a gunshot wound to the right hand – without incident and returned quickly to the front line. The second time, he was not so lucky. An IED hit the supply convoy Chuck was traveling in, knocking him unconscious. The explosion left him with a damaged back and a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

It took four years for Chuck to be officially diagnosed with TBI – by a specialist whose treatment Chuck was grateful for, but whose Denver offices were five hours away from the Stewarts’ home in rural Colorado. The doctor visits Chuck needed two to three times a week began taking their toll on the Stewarts and their three young children.

Then, in 2010, Chuck’s wife Jennifer was diagnosed with cervical cancer. She says she knew something was wrong, but she was “so wrapped up with Chuck’s injuries that I didn’t have time. Once I did, it was almost too late.”

Between Chuck’s trips to Denver and her cancer treatment, Jennifer says, the Stewarts “were slowly sinking. We were barely treading water.”

Then Chuck and Jennifer connected with the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes. “The Coalition was a godsend,” says

Jennifer. “They helped us relocate to where I could get help for myself and help taking care of Chuck.”

The Coalition helped Chuck and Jennifer relocate to be near family members in West Virginia who could help them deal with the stress of Chuck’s injuries, Jennifer’s illness, and care for their three children. They provided emergency financial aid for traveling expenses and the deposit and first month’s rent for the Stewarts’ new home.

And the Coalition was able to help Chuck and Jennifer with more than just their financial needs. Because Chuck was injured so early in the war, Jennifer recalls feeling very alone in wading through his diagnosis, treatment, and the accompanying paperwork and red tape.

“Everything that we’ve done, we’ve pretty much done on our own – up until we found the Coalition,” she says. The Coalition stepped in to help Chuck get his VA disability rating, walking him through the paperwork and making sure nothing fell through the cracks.

“It wasn’t just, ‘Here, let me write you two a check,’ ” Jennifer says. “It was a personal thing for us. CSAH is a wonderful organization. Not only do they help you financially, but they also help you personally.”

Coalition policy on using troops’ names and photos

Readers of *The Road to Recovery Report* may wonder why some service members are identified by their full names and in other cases only initials are used. The U.S. Department of Defense has asked the Coalition to refrain from using the full names of active duty military personnel. We comply with that request by using initials instead of full names. To protect the privacy of retired service members, the Coalition uses full names and photos only with their permission.



Congressional Recognition

We're honored to present a few of the kind words directed to the Coalition by members of Congress. Members on both sides of the aisle support our veterans and several have gone on the Congressional Record lauding the Coalition for the impact we have – in large part thanks to our supporters' generosity.

Any member of Congress can add to the Congressional Record, but with 535 members, getting a mention isn't an easy task. The Coalition has been mentioned six times — not quite the Congressional Medal of Honor, but a rare honor indeed.

“Virginia has a proud tradition of military service to our nation, and is the grateful home of millions of veterans and their families. I am especially proud of the work of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes and the work it is doing to fill a terrible void in our society. I commend the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, which honors and remembers our heroes by helping them transition into civilian life so they may prosper.”

— Hon. Frank R. Wolf, Virginia (R)

“On behalf of the state of Arizona ... I would like to offer my deepest admiration, respect and appreciation to Sgt. Herrera and the Coalition for their efforts to improve the lives of those who have fought and served our country with distinction. We owe Mary a debt of gratitude. She is an example to us all.”

— Hon. Ann Kirkpatrick, Arizona (D)

“But Sergeant De Leon's commitment to service did not end as a result of his battlefield injuries. Currently, he is employed by the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (CSAH) as Director of the Family Support Network and CSAH Liaison to Brooke Army Medical Center. In addition, he serves as the National Spokesperson for CSAH to help to raise awareness for the organization.”

— Hon. Lamar S. Smith, Texas (R)

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (HI) recognizes Coalition in Congress

On December 12, 2013 Representative Tulsi Gabbard made a statement in the House of Representatives recognizing the hard work of the Coalition and wounded servicemen and women across the nation. Her remarks are excerpted below.

“Mr. Speaker, as President Calvin Coolidge said, “A nation that forgets its defenders will soon be forgotten.” **I rise today to recognize the contributions of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, a group that recently invited me to participate in an event honoring the sacrifice and the service of our servicemembers.** There, I had the privilege of meeting Corporal Donny Daughenbaugh, a Coalition spokesman who was severely injured during routine patrol in Iraq, as well as Sergeant Mary Herrera, U.S. Army (Ret.), and Sergeant Jorge De Leon, U.S. Army (Ret.). Herrera and De Leon also were injured in the line of duty while serving our country overseas. Despite their injuries, these selfless heroes have weathered an extremely challenging recovery and are now using their own experience to help fellow veterans make the transition to civilian life. Like so many other veterans, their resilience and love of country endures after they return home and begin to face these tremendous challenges.

The event focused on the growing, serious challenges facing young veterans, particularly, homelessness, which is fast becoming a crisis among female combat veterans. These veterans, who step up to serve and are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect our nation, all too often don't have the support they need when they return home.

The Coalition, led by David Walker, is a national 501(c)(3), non-profit, non-partisan organization, established in 2004 to address the needs of severely wounded veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their families. The organization provides emergency financial assistance and other support services to help them recover from their injuries, rebuild their lives, and successfully transition back into civilian life. In addition to its work to address homelessness, the Coalition's emergency aid services also aim, to combat the troubling rates of suicide and domestic abuse among servicemembers and veterans.

I commend the work of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes to ensure that our nation's defenders are never forgotten.”



Donny Daughenbaugh, Jorge De Leon, and Mary Herrera meet with Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (center) after her statement recognizing the Coalition in the House of Representatives.

Photo © DCEventPhoto.com



Double amputee spreads word about plight of wounded heroes by cycling from Maine to California

Retired Marine Sgt. Rob Jones has an ambitious goal: biking cross-country from Maine to California in a 5,400 mile journey that included riding through the Rocky Mountains in the dead of winter.

His ride is an impressive feat in itself. But what makes Rob Jones' journey even more astounding is that he is a double amputee. In 2010, four months into a tour of duty in Afghanistan, Rob was hit with an IED explosion that claimed both his legs.

Rob used athletics as a tool for recovery, refusing to allow his disability to keep him from staying active. But when he got the chance to travel to California to train with an Olympic medalist rowing coach, Rob didn't have the money to cover his expenses. The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes stepped in to fill the gap. "The flight out and back, the hotel and rental car all came to about \$5,000, which I didn't have," Rob said. "Coalition took care of it."

Now Rob is determined to give back to those who helped him push through that difficult time. His goal, in addition to raising an ambitious \$1,000,000 to help the Coalition reach more wounded servicemen and women in desperate need of aid, is "to show what Americans can accomplish when we come together for a purpose."

And he's doing a great job. In cities and towns across America Rob has been greeted by cheering, flag-raising crowds and high-fives from firefighters, police officers, and fellow troops. Coalition President David Walker even traveled to Colorado in January to cheer Rob on at the halfway point in his journey.

"There is potential to transform this negative thing that has happened to you into something that can change your life for the better," Rob said. Coalition is proud to have supported Rob since the beginning of his journey, and is grateful for the support of patriotic donors who make it possible for us to assist in the recovery of inspirational and selfless veterans like Rob.

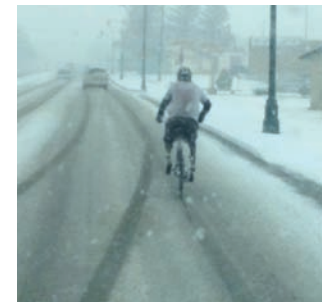
For more information on Rob's cross-country journey, visit www.robjonesjourney.com.



Rob recovers from his injuries at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., after the amputation of his legs.



Rob pedals uphill early in his journey, flanked by his support system – a box truck, driven by his brother Steve, full of necessities like water, food, and two cots with a pillow for each man.



Rob battles the elements while biking through the Rocky Mountains in early February.



Coalition President David Walker met up with Rob in February at the halfway point of his journey.



Rob Jones' Journey

- ★ Day 1: October 14, 2013
- ★ Miles per day: 30
- ★ Total trip mileage: 5,400
- ★ Expected Completion: Mid-April



Thank you letters from troops and veterans severely disabled in the war on terror

In November you probably received a letter from us requesting donations for our 2013 Secret Santa Project, a project to provide troops and veterans severely disabled in the war on terror with \$500 for presents “from Santa.” Thanks to your generosity, we were able to reach over 500 heroes who might otherwise have had no presents under the tree. Here are just a handful of the heartfelt thank you letters and e-mails we received from wounded heroes you helped reach this past Christmas.

We could not express how grateful we are for the generous \$500 gift we received in the mail. This month has been especially hard for us financially and this \$500 will help us out tremendously. We were going to have to skip traveling to our families' houses for Christmas gatherings because we did not have the money to spend on gas, but with this gift from you we will be able to make it. Thank you so much for your generosity, it truly means a lot to me and my family.

— Jacob S.

I am writing to express my thanks and gratitude for your help over the past year. I have a lot on my plate daily due to ongoing medical issues and family. Your generosity has helped my family and I through the very tough times we have had transitioning from military to civilian life. We are in your debt. Thank you.

— Darryl Hall

Words can't explain the joy and shock my heart felt when I received the check in the mail for Christmas. I honestly wasn't expecting it and I definitely needed at the time for I am struggling in the civilian world. However that small gift of kindness motivated me to keep hope. I thank you from the depths of my heart.

— William Brentney

In December, we were sitting here broke, stressing, and feeling down because we couldn't get anything for our three children for Christmas. We are drowning in medical bills that reach the thousands, my husband's condition is worsening. To say the least, every time we check the mail, my gut just drops because I know it's just bills that we receive that we can't really pay. And then we received an envelope from the Coalition. I read the card first and it was lovely, warming my heart that someone we didn't even know was thinking of us. There were such kind words that made me smile. Then I unfolded the letter and a check fell out. I looked at it and honestly thought, “This can't be real” – but it was. A \$500.00 check sat in my hands. I just broke out into tears, almost sobbing uncontrollably ... I honestly can't thank you all enough. You all think of us when we can't even think of ourselves. It's not about the money or gifts, but it's about the selfless donors and all who work to keep the Coalition going. God bless you all and thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

— Trent Aisner & Family

We received your very generous gift which caught us totally off guard. Again I am humbled by the generosity. I was on my way home from school and my wife called and told me that we received a mysterious Christmas check. I was so overwhelmed that I had to pull over just to talk to her. With the donation I was able to buy my wife a wedding band, we have been married 5 years and just have never been able to get that ... And I got what I want too, to be home and give everyone a little something. Thank you so very much to Coalition Supporter who provided so generously.

— Seth Brawley

Please consider sharing your e-mail address

By providing your e-mail address on your enclosed newsletter reply form you'll start receiving thank you notes, photos and updates about how your continued generosity is improving the lives of our wounded heroes and their families.