



The Road to Recovery Report

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

Volume 45

March 2014

Severely disabled troops face going hungry on Easter if Coalition's emergency meals drive falls short

"I've been struggling so hard since I got out. I was homeless for a while."



The wife and daughters of a wounded hero enjoy Thanksgiving dinner as a result of the \$60 they received from faithful Coalition supporters. Can you help feed another desperate military family this Easter?

If the Coalition's **2014 Emergency Easter Meals Project** falls short it could have a profound impact on severely disabled troops struggling to feed their families.

So faithful supporters who haven't yet had a chance to contribute are being asked for a second time to pitch in to help make sure every desperate military family who requests help during the Easter Season receives \$60 for meals.

As Coalition supporters are aware, many wounded warriors helped by the Coalition are hungry and even homeless, and receiving \$60 for meals over the Easter weekend can make a real difference for them.

Retired Marine Wayne L., for example, suffered disabling injuries in Iraq.

"I have been struggling so hard since I got out [of the military]," he told the Coalition. "I was medically retired from injuries I received in Iraq, and I was homeless for a while."

By the time Wayne contacted the Coalition for help he had secured housing but was still desperate to feed his family. Just in time for Thanksgiving, the Coalition's faithful supporters came through and provided him with \$60 for meals.

"When I received your check for \$60 I broke down in tears," he said. "I am so thankful that you did that for me and my family. We really needed it more than you could ever imagine."

As Easter approaches, the Coalition is trying to send \$60 to hundreds more seriously injured troops and their families. In February, supporters received an urgent Easter appeal. Now Coalition President

and CEO David Walker is making a second request, and asking friends who already contributed to consider giving again.

"If we don't see a surge in donations in the next couple weeks, this could be a very bleak Easter Sunday for many disabled troops and their children."

The latest government figures show troops injured in Afghanistan or Iraq are waiting an average of ten months – and sometimes over a year – for their first government disability check to arrive after leaving the hospital and being discharged from the military.

"Obviously our wounded warriors can't wait ten months to feed their families," Walker said. "We have to throw them a financial safety net until their government disability checks start arriving."

Incoming donations from our supporters will be used to help wounded heroes like Pablo J., whose family is shown on the left.

After receiving \$60 from the Coalition last Thanksgiving, Pablo wrote,

"The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes has done so much for us. I've attached a photo of my wife and two daughters on Thanksgiving because it's important that the people who support this great cause see how they help veterans."

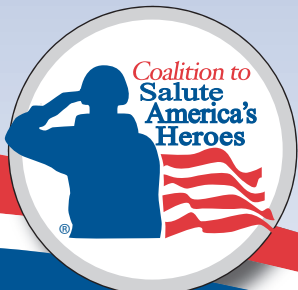
Another wounded hero, who received \$60 last Easter to feed his wife and five children, wrote back to say, "I'm amazed by the way your organization has helped my family and several others in our time of need. The best feeling in the world was opening the envelope and knowing my kids will have a wonderful day. I will always cherish the love you've shown us." ■

KEY PROGRAMS:

- Emergency Financial Aid*
- Heroes Thanking Heroes*
- Road to Recovery*
- Conference and Tribute*

INSIDE:

- 2013 Road to Recovery Conference2 & 3*
- The Coalition at Work4*



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



806N-NW

Highlights from Coalition's 2013 Road to Recovery Conference in Orlando

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *"Your generosity is changing our life. Thank you for caring about us!"* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



◀ A panel of Coalition spokespersons — all wounded veterans themselves — answer questions and offer practical advice to severely wounded troops struggling to get medical help, pay the bills, or readjust to civilian life.

Nearly 100 more severely disabled troops got an opportunity to learn, live, laugh and heal at the Coalition's seventh Road to Recovery Conference and Tribute.

The popular educational event, held in Orlando, Florida from December 9-13, 2013, also enabled wounded heroes and their families to make new friendships, explore civilian career opportunities and even receive a surprise \$500 Christmas gift check.

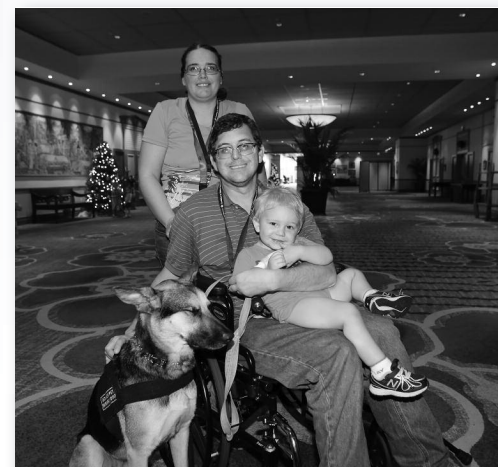
Including the spouses and children of the wounded veterans, approximately 360 people attended the all-expenses-paid event where they:

- Heard inspiring speeches from other disabled troops and veterans who discussed their own "road to recovery"
- Attended panel discussions and workshops
- Received assistance on obtaining their VA benefits
- Attended a Career Fair where they met representatives from major companies actively recruiting veteran employees, such as Raytheon, Hilton, Chase Bank, Lockheed Martin, USAA and the CIA
- Received resume assistance and career counseling from Northrop Grumman
- Received free passes to attend Universal Studios' holiday parade with their children, where 25 of our combat-wounded attendees participated, and
- Saw a closing-night performance by country music singer Darryl Worley, who performed his hit song about September 11, *Have You Forgotten?*

Retired Navy Petty Officer Chris Bradley uses a guide dog in addition to his wheelchair because of his severe PTSD and TBI. ▶



▲ Chris Mickle of West Des Moines, Iowa, suffered severe spinal injuries and PTSD while serving in Afghanistan. Like all wounded heroes who attended, Chris received a \$500 Secret Santa gift check, which he said he'll use to buy Christmas presents for his 6-year-old daughter.



▲ Like the surprised families pictured here with David Walker, each family who attended the conference received a \$500 Christmas gift check.

Nearly 100 more severely disabled troops have embarked on their own Road to Recovery, thanks to the Coalition's generous supporters. Remarked one wounded hero, whose life had been turned upside down by his injuries, "Thank you for a little while of normal!"



At the conference's Career Fair, disabled troops got the chance to discuss job opportunities with representatives from Lockheed Martin and many other major employers.

Matthew D. served in the Army in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has severe injuries including a spinal injury, TBI, and a reconstructed knee and ankles. His wife Angela told us, "Your generosity is changing our life. Thank you for caring about us. We hope to pay forward this opportunity one day." ▶



▲ True grit: Despite their injuries, many determined heroes scaled a 30-foot wall at the Sports Expo.



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

My family and I received a check for \$500 as part of the Coalition's Secret Santa Project. It was totally unexpected. As our government disability claims are still taking forever we really were in need this month. Things were getting pretty desperate as we have exhausted all other avenues, whether borrowing money, taking out loans, etc. So receiving that check in the mail has tied us over on bills, food and gas for the month of December. My family and I wanted to thank you so very much for this relief.

— Dan M.



When I opened my mailbox and saw the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes' \$60 Thanksgiving gift card, I was so surprised and delighted. It is just very good timing since my daughter and I have never had a turkey for Thanksgiving on our dinner table for a long time. I am so glad and do appreciate the amount and the thoughtfulness of the Coalition's donors. Please extend my warmest "Thank you" to all who made this happen.

— Maggie D.



I would like to extend a sincere "Thank You" to the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes for the generous holiday surprise. We used the money to purchase Christmas gifts for our two children: a new baseball bat and glove for our son who wants to play major league baseball (he is 10 and already has a plan!) and a new doll and dress-up boutique for our 2-year-old daughter who loves to have pretty fingernails. They are going to be thrilled! Your caring spirit and warmth did not go unnoticed to this family. God bless and Merry Christmas.

— Melissa

I am married with four children and was prepared to do whatever necessary to ensure my kids would wake up to gifts from Santa. I am 100 percent disabled due to a gunshot wound suffered in Iraq, but I will not allow my injury to hold me back from ensuring my family is well taken care of. We are so thankful for your generous gift and now can have a little more peace of mind while checking off some of our kids' Christmas wishes. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

— Rodolfo G. & Family



We could not express how grateful we are for the generous \$500 Secret Santa 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. We hope you and your family have a great and safe holiday season.

— Jacob S.



I am forever grateful! You guys saved me and my family from losing our only vehicle and then sent a \$60 gift card for Thanksgiving, and to top it off that unexpected check of \$500 for Christmas. And even when me and my wife agreed to not get each other anything because of our budget, I can at least surprise her thanks to you all. I can never thank you guys enough; I am forever grateful!

— R. Ramirez

Severely disabled troops and their families signed this huge "Thank You" banner to express their gratitude to Coalition supporters for sponsoring the 2013 Road to Recovery Conference, which was held in Orlando, Florida from December 9 to December 13.

