



The Road to Recovery Report

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

Volume 55 ★ 2015 Holiday Edition

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

*“You and your organization
are truly angels sent by God.”*

— SSG Cory A., U.S. Army (Ret.)



Your generosity makes the holidays bright for our heroes

For the families of our disabled heroes, the holidays can be depressing instead of happy. Stress and anxiety over finances, along with painful physical and psychological injuries, turn what should be a time of joy into a time of despair.

But each year generous friends like you go the extra mile to make the holidays bright for our wounded warriors and their families. Through programs like our Secret Santa Project and Christmas Angel Project, we help disabled parents make sure their children have presents under the tree on Christmas morning. Thanks to friends like you, the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes has

sent 6,985 gift checks – worth \$500 each – to our seriously injured servicemen and women over the past ten Christmas Seasons.

And of course the holidays are often accompanied by bitterly cold weather, making your emergency financial aid gifts truly life-saving for our wounded heroes – averting foreclosures, evictions, and utility disconnections that might otherwise leave them homeless or without heat.

So thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Inside your holiday newsletter you'll find exciting updates on key Coalition programs and events. I hope you're encouraged to see how you're bringing joy and cheer to so many grateful heroes and their families at Christmas and in the New Year.

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Letter from President David Walker

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U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)
Field Representative

Matthew Pennington
U.S. Army (Ret.)
Field Representative, East



Dear Friend of Our Disabled Heroes,

As I prepare to spend this Christmas with my loved ones, my heart is full of gratitude for the sacrifice the men and women of our Armed Forces make each year: spending the holidays far from country, home, and loved ones.

Our military men and women are in my heart and in my prayers as they selflessly serve our nation, sacrificing their Thanksgivings, Christmases, and New Years to make sure you and I can celebrate ours in freedom and safety.

That takes a special kind of self-sacrifice ... and as you know, the brave heroes who went away to fight the terrorists and returned home broken and suffering are very special men and women.

Their heroism is just one more reason we owe them a debt of gratitude – and the reason it’s unthinkable we should forget them at Christmastime.

Because NO ONE who has given their arms or their legs or more to protect our families and preserve our freedoms should go hungry on Thanksgiving ... or have to tell their tearful child that Santa won’t be visiting their family on Christmas morning.

You’ve been such a faithful friend to the Coalition, I know you feel the same way. You’ve shown it time and again by giving generously to special holiday programs like our **Thanksgiving Meals Project**, our **Secret Santa Project**, and our **Christmas Angel Project** – to make sure our disabled heroes and their families can enjoy a special hot meal and a few presents under the tree.

That’s why this Christmas I’m also thankful for *you*. Because each time you give to the Coalition to help our wounded warriors, you show that you’re also a self-sacrificing, patriotic American – one who would never let our heroes be forgotten.

Thank you for making sure they have a roof over their heads and food on their tables. And thank you for giving to make their holidays bright.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your family from all of us at the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes.

Gratefully yours,

David Walker
President & CEO

P.S. Please see page 3 of this Newsletter to read about the 2015 holiday parades in which the Coalition is taking part. One of these parades will be televised on both the Hallmark channel and The CW on December 5th, so check your TV listings to watch.





Your Coalition is committed to doing all we can to change the lives of our nation's severely disabled War on Terror veterans. To further that mission we're constantly working to raise awareness about the issues these heroes face and reaching out to help them in the community. Here is just a sampling of the accomplishments and recognition the Coalition has experienced recently because of the loyal support of donors *like you!*



Coalition participates in American Veterans Center's 2015 Annual Conference

The AVC conference was held from November 5-7, 2015 in Washington, DC, and included several events structured to preserve the legacy and honor the sacrifice of our nation's heroes. The weekend began with the Wounded Warrior Experience, a televised program which gives wounded veterans the opportunity to discuss their experiences on the front lines as well as their transition into civilian life. This year Coalition field representative Sgt. Mary Jessie Herrera, U.S. Army (Ret.) participated in the Wounded Warrior Experience panel. Learn more at www.americanveteranscenter.org.

Coalition participates in holiday parades

The Coalition was excited to have a float in the 2015 America's Parade – an annual parade held on Veterans Day in New York City. We will also be participating in a parade that will be broadcasted on the Hallmark Channel and The CW on December 5. Look for pictures on our Facebook page and in upcoming newsletters!



NASCAR legend Rusty Wallace joins Coalition celebrity friends



David Walker and Matthew Pennington visited recently with one of the Coalition's newest supporters, NASCAR legend Rusty Wallace. You will be seeing more of Rusty and hopefully his support will help us reach even more people to educate them on what the Coalition does and the heroes we help. We are so grateful for the support of our celebrity friends!

Coalition rep receives wheelchair-accessible van from local auto body shop

For wounded veterans like Sgt. Matthew Pennington, a U.S. Army veteran who lost his left leg serving in Iraq, transportation is a major obstacle as they adapt to their injuries and assimilate back into the civilian workforce. Matthew now has access to a newly-refurbished, wheelchair-accessible van that was donated as part of Caliber Collision's Recycled Rides program. The van was provided by 1-800 Charity Cars and refurbished by Caliber Collision associates in Burke, Virginia. Matthew and his colleagues will use the van to visit VA hospitals and attend other events serving and encouraging wounded heroes and their families through the recovery process.





At the Coalition, we're vets helping vets

At the Coalition, we're proud of the fact that two thirds of our employees are veterans or spouses/caregivers of veterans. We like to say we're veterans helping veterans. From our field representatives to our board members, we're excited to work with men and women who served our country – and are now passionate about serving their fellow veterans.

Over the next few newsletters we'll be introducing you to our Coalition veterans. Some of the names and faces below may be familiar to you. We hope you enjoy getting to know our family a little better.



Rob Jones, U.S. Marines Corps (Ret.)

Special Assistant to the President

You may remember Rob Jones from our extensive coverage of his epic, 5,180 mile, cross-country bike ride in 2013. Rob is a retired Marine combat engineer who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and lost both legs to an IED explosion in 2010. Rob also competed in the 2012 Paralympics in London, where he won a bronze medal in the mixed double scull (rowing) event.



Rob details his experiences as a disabled veteran at saluteheroes.org/about-us/blog. He is passionate about sharing a message of hope, healing, and living a full, active life despite a disability with other veterans around the country.



Donny Daughenbaugh, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)



Vice President, Field Operations, National Spokesperson

In October 2004 Donny Daughenbaugh was on a night foot patrol conducting vehicle searches in Mahmoudiya, a city south of Baghdad. A driver engaged his squad with an AK-47 rifle – and a bullet hit Donny in the face, breaking his jaw and severely damaging his nerves. His jaw

was wired shut to heal the break and the bullet left in place, too close to vital nerves to be removed. After leaving the Marines, the pain caused by the bullet's presence made it impossible for Donny to return to his former career in construction, and he struggled to provide for his family. His life was changed when he connected with the Coalition through a Road to Recovery Conference.

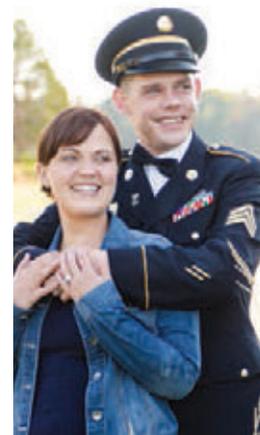
Today Donny works with the Coalition as the Vice President of Field Operations and a national spokesperson. Donny's involvement with the Coalition helped in his own recovery and inspired others through his story of resilience and the positive effects a family can have on recovery. Donny lives in League City, Texas with his wife Sarah and their two children, Gabby and Kollin.



Matthew Pennington, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Field Representative, East, National Spokesperson

In 2006, after multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, an IED explosion cost Matthew Pennington his left leg and caused severe damage to his right. But his physical injuries, while difficult, were less debilitating than the PTSD that permeated his daily life. The Coalition helped his family relocate so he could get the treatment he desperately needed.



Today Matthew works with the Coalition as a National Spokesperson – sharing a message of hope and healing with War on Terror veterans struggling to overcome PTSD. Matthew and his wife Marjorie (also shown above) have been married for 11 years, and together they look forward to a life full of giving to and assisting those in need.