

# The Road to Recovery Report

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

Volume 52 ★ May 2015

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

“*I am honored to have served my country and I am even more honored for your organization reaching out to the soldiers and their families. We so often feel like we are on an island alone and no one cares. Gifts like this allows me to know I am not in this struggle alone.*”

— Sgt. Edward B., disabled  
Iraq War veteran

## Honor a hero this Fourth of July

We're excited to share this special Fourth of July *Road to Recovery Report* newsletter, because we know you're a patriotic American who cherishes this day and honors the founding of our great nation, just as we do.

Inside your exclusive *Road to Recovery Report* you'll read stories of heroes you've already helped. I hope you're excited and encouraged to see how your patriotism and generosity make a difference every day in the lives of American heroes.

Just like Edward B., whose quote is to the left, we hear these brave men and women say over and over: “I'm proud of my service. I'm proud of my sacrifice. *I wouldn't change a thing.*” Coming from a disabled veteran who is blind or may never walk again, that's true patriotism.

And I hope you'll consider showing *your* patriotism and honoring a hero this Fourth of July in a very practical way – with a special gift for a severely disabled veteran who needs to know he isn't in this struggle alone.

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# Letter from President David Walker

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Dear Friend of Our Wounded Heroes,

On June 14, 1775, the Continental Army was officially formed to defend the fledgling colonies from the tyranny of Britain’s government and soldiers.

And since that day nearly 240 years ago, our nation’s great military – eventually encompassing the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard – has been defending our families and our way of life against tyranny and terror.

As we celebrate our nation’s birthday in a few weeks, I’m reminded just how proud I am to be an American. And I’m reminded how much of that pride I can attribute to the determination and bravery of our men and women in uniform.

It’s incredible to hear a veteran who has lost an arm or leg, her eyesight, or even part of his face say, “I’d do it all again in a heartbeat.” And yet that’s something we hear them say over and over.

These men and women believe that America – and our principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – are worth fighting for. Worth dying for. Worth losing limbs, leaving families, and upending their lives for.

American statesman Hamilton Fish once said: “If our country is worth dying for in time of war, let us resolve that it is truly worth living for in time of peace.”

The men and women of our military believe our country is worth dying for. So now it’s our responsibility to make these heroes’ country and homes worth *living* for now that they’ve come back to us. Because no soldier, sailor, airman or Marine should come home from war with a disability, only to become homeless or go hungry.

Before I close, I need to share one more thing that makes me proud to be an American this Fourth of July – you.

Because your generosity, dedication, and compassion towards our nation’s disabled veterans reminds me of the goodness of the American people and of the values we hold so dear.

This Fourth of July, I’m so honored to have by my side friends like you – generous, caring Americans who would never let a hero’s service go forgotten on this patriotic day.

Thank you for your generosity. And Happy Fourth of July to you and your family.

With gratitude,

David Walker  
President & CEO





**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 they face and reaching out to help them in the community.**

## Exciting Coalition grant gives fun & normalcy to veterans' kids

The Coalition's recent \$5,000 grant to Our Military Kids will enable 10 children of wounded veterans to enjoy the extracurricular activities of their choosing – activities their families couldn't otherwise afford.

We know that when disabled veterans struggle, their children do too. But we don't want any of our heroes' kids to miss out on fun, educational activities that are such a great part of being a child. Thank you for your support which will enable children of wounded warriors to enjoy

their favorite activities and lead more normal lives!

"We are so grateful for the Coalition's support, which will go directly toward helping the children of true American heroes," said Linda Davidson, Executive Director of Our Military Kids. "We've learned over the years that one of the best ways to serve our veterans is by helping to give their kids as normal a life as possible. Sports, fine arts, camps and academic tutoring programs help nurture and sustain children during a

parent's lengthy recovery and/or rehabilitation."

"In my job, I have been introduced to countless groups devoted to serving veterans in one way or another," said Coalition President David Walker. "I can't remember any with whom I've been more impressed than Our Military Kids. Like the Coalition, they put their money to work literally where people live, making a meaningful difference in the lives of our veterans, and their children."

## Coalition grant fuels innovative PTSD, TBI treatment

The Coalition was honored to provide a grant to the Rocky Mountain Hyperbaric Institute, which uses its amazing chamber technology as a drug alternative for PTSD, TBI, and Post Concussive Syndrome.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy enhances the body's natural

healing process by inhalation of 100% oxygen in an atmospheric pressure increased chamber. The treatment process is safe, painless, and has few side effects, and is particularly useful in the fields of neurology and wound care.



## Coalition President David Walker tells it like it is in the *Chicago Tribune*

**“Therapy is best cure for veterans’ ills.”**

— David Walker

“My organization has identified a variety of therapies to help victims of PTSD deal with their problems successfully and return to useful work in the private sector. Therapy can take time but in the long run

is better for the veterans and less costly to the government. Simply throwing pills at them is a cop out that serves nobody well.” (Read the rest in David Walker's January 16 op-ed entitled, “Therapy is best cure for veterans' ills.”)



“*Heroes Thanking Heroes means I can stay home and look after my husband while still feeling like a contributing member of our family.*”

— Antoinette Batchelor, whose husband Jim was severely disabled in Iraq

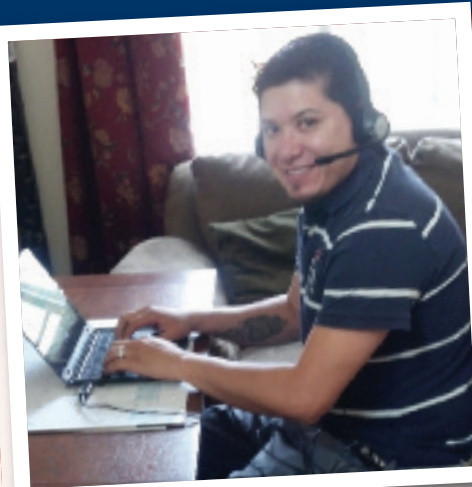
The Heroes Thanking Heroes (HTH) program provides part-time, flexible employment to wounded veterans or their primary caregivers by enabling them to make phone calls from their homes, most often to personally thank donors for their contributions to the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes. The program also offers qualified participants training and experience working in a “virtual call center,” preparing them for other potential jobs requiring similar skills.

Those who are enrolled in the program find increased self-worth and continued healing from this opportunity, especially since many cannot work otherwise because of ongoing medical appointments and treatments or their care-giving responsibilities. Caregivers in the program may even make their calls, if they choose, from a military hospital setting, thus enabling them to remain by the side of veteran loved-ones while they undergo treatment or surgery.



“*The Heroes Thanking Heroes program has given me the ability to work from home so I can continue caring for my husband – none of which would be possible without the donations from our ‘Heroes’ here at home.*”

— Marjorie Pennington, whose husband Matthew lost a leg in Iraq



“*My family and I were struggling to support ourselves, since I was not receiving benefits. I contacted the Coalition and they were able to assist us with some of our bills. When I had lost my job in 2009 I was brought on [to] the Heroes Thanking Heroes program.*”

— Juan Perez, a disabled veteran who sustained blunt force trauma to the head in Iraq



“*My wife [Laura] was hired on to HTH. It is a part time job from home, and she still is able to take me to appointments I need to go to and care for our daughter while I am in school. The extra income she receives really helps us get through our paycheck to paycheck situation. We are so thankful.*”

— SPC Louis Dahlman, U.S. Army (Ret.), who lost much of his lower jaw while serving in Iraq



“*The Coalition is giving me the opportunity to feel productive – to feel that I am able to put food on my table and at the same time not need a military uniform to work for my country – and I will always be grateful to the Coalition for that opportunity.*”

— Disabled veteran Hugo Gonzalez, who was blinded while serving in Iraq



“*The Heroes Thanking Heroes program has truly changed my life – and the Coalition is the ONLY organization that provides such an opportunity to veterans and caregivers. I can’t thank the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes enough for helping me find my balance as a wife and caregiver and providing me with an incredible opportunity.*”

— Ashlee Williams, whose husband J.D. (above) lost three limbs in Afghanistan

**One day, your phone may ring ...**

... and on the other end could be one of these veterans or caregivers calling to say “thank you!” for your donation and for supporting our nation’s disabled veterans. (If you’ve received a thank you call already, we’d love to hear about it! Just write us a note and include it in the return envelope, hopefully with another gift to help our heroes.)



**Heroes Thanking Heroes: By the numbers**

- ★ The Heroes Thanking Heroes program has been active for 9 years (since its inception in 2006).
- ★ More than 100 wounded veterans or their primary caregivers have been employed.
- ★ HTH has been responsible for over 1 million completed calls (including personalized voice messages and phone surveys, in addition to thank you calls to donors like you).
- ★ Two-thirds of Coalition employees are veterans, making us truly a “vets serving vets” organization. HTH is a big part of our mission to help our heroes on a deeply personal level.

For regular updates and heartwarming stories on the heroes you’re helping through HTH, visit [www.facebook.com/HeroesThankingHeroes](http://www.facebook.com/HeroesThankingHeroes).



## A special letter from Sgt. Mary Herrera, U.S. Army (Ret.)

**“Many of these veterans are mothers — and they know if they become homeless or go hungry, their children will too.”**

**M**y name is Sgt. Mary Jessie Herrera, and I’m a disabled Army veteran who almost lost my arm to a gunshot wound while serving in Iraq. The day I was shot, I thought I was going to die. But I didn’t – and today I’m passionate about helping my fellow disabled women warriors by working with the Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes.

I’m writing to you today to share a special story – that of disabled veteran Rebecca Kempton – and an update on the difficult situation many of America’s female veterans are facing.

Did you know female veterans are the fastest growing segment of America’s homeless population ... and they’re also four times as likely as male veterans to be homeless?

In addition to the threat of homelessness, these women are also facing utility disconnections, car repossessions, and even starvation. And their problems are often compounded by knowing if they become homeless or go hungry, their children will too.

I want to take a moment to tell you the story of Rebecca Kempton, a female veteran who fought in Iraq and suffers from PTSD, a spinal cord injury, and nerve damage in her right arm.

Her struggle with disability took a financial toll on Rebecca and her young son. “We were almost homeless,” Rebecca describes. “We weren’t really able

to afford food. I was making sure my son was in school every day so he could have meals. There were days I didn’t even get to eat just because we didn’t have the money for it.”

Fortunately Rebecca contacted the Coalition. We helped her catch up on bills – and today she and her son are doing well.

But Rebecca is just one of many women warriors struggling to survive and rebuild after war.

And as you just read, when a female veteran is struggling financially, she’s almost never struggling alone. Often she has young children who are also in jeopardy of homelessness, hunger, and other dangers.

I wanted to share this update with you because I’m so grateful for your continued support, which makes it possible for the Coalition to provide emergency financial aid to disabled women warriors – ones like me, whose world was upended in an instant and who need a friendly face and a helping hand.

We will continue to share updates with you, including the story below, regarding ways the Coalition is helping our nation’s women warriors.



**Sgt. Mary Herrera,  
U.S. Army (Ret.)**

## America’s forgotten women warriors

**F**emale veterans aren’t America’s only women warriors. Many of our nation’s disabled servicemen are cared for, day in and day out, by their wives, mothers, or girlfriends – caregivers who pour their hearts and souls into caring for their hero.

But that dedication isn’t without cost to themselves. The sweet family you see above is J.D., Ashlee, and Kaelyn Williams. J.D., an Army veteran, lost both legs and one of his arms after stepping on an IED in Afghanistan. Ashlee shared how she struggled in the years that followed.

*“How can you truly prepare yourself for an event like this?” she wrote. “Our lives were turned upside down in an instant. I struggled to find a balance between being my husband’s caregiver and being his wife. I constantly felt*



*like I was failing as a mother and the guilt I was feeling began taking a toll on my family.*

*I began losing weight, 43lbs in a 4 month period. I wasn’t eating right, I rarely slept, and most of all, I barricaded myself from the love and support that I needed most. I was falling apart and too busy too even notice.*

*After reading an article on a term known as ‘caregiver burnout,’ I realized I was a true victim. If I didn’t start taking care of myself, I was going to die.”*

It’s only with the help of dedicated supporters like you that we’re able to help, not just America’s disabled veterans, but another set of heroes – the wonderful women who care for them. (To read about one major way we’re helping our veterans’ caregivers – including Ashlee Williams – turn to pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter for a special report on our Heroes Thanking Heroes program!)



## Two simple ways to help a hero

**Talk to us!** Maybe you've been following the Coalition's Facebook and Twitter pages, or reading our letters and newsletters, and wonder how you can help us reach our goals of awareness and fundraising. If you'd like to share or get ideas of ways to bring the Coalition to your community please contact Matthew Pennington at [mpenn@saluteheroes.org](mailto:mpenn@saluteheroes.org). 2015 is going to be a banner year – and we need your help!

**Return a “Thank You and Get Well” card for a hero.** Your kind words and patriotic messages mean so much to heroes who are struggling to recover from crippling injuries. Consider this thank you email from an Army veteran who received a supporter-signed get well card (maybe even one YOU returned!). The Thanksgiving meals gift card we sent this veteran with brain and cognitive injuries allowed him to share a special meal with his brother, who is also a combat veteran. “But the notes. Those blessed words of Hope, Sincerity, and Genuine Kindness ... that for me was the true, all-out gift for me,” Michael R. wrote. “Thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me more than I could have ever imagined.”



## How to leave a legacy of love for our disabled heroes

**“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”**

— Albert Pike, American Writer

By remembering the Coalition in your will or insurance policy, you continue your legacy of service and sacrifice for America's severely disabled war on terror troops and veterans for years to come. 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](mailto:info@saluteheroes.org)

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

### **A delicious way to support the Coalition and America's veterans!**

The Coalition is excited to announce the “Steaks for Good” campaign in collaboration with the fine folks at Omaha Steaks. Coalition supporters can shop a wide variety of Omaha Steaks products at specially reduced prices – and 10% of your purchase price will benefit our veterans through the Coalition!

To participate, shop online at [www.steaksforgood.com/saluteheroes](http://www.steaksforgood.com/saluteheroes), call (800) 994-7455 and specify the Coalition as your beneficiary, or shop one of Omaha Steaks' 80+ retail locations.



## Your giving brings tears, joy for these heroes

*Every disabled veteran we help has a unique need – whether it’s caring for young children, struggling with medical procedures, battling PTSD, or just not being able to put food on the table. But while their circumstances vary widely, these heroes have one thing in common: the gratitude they want us to share with you, the generous supporters who do so much to help them.*

“Thank you so very much for thinking about my family during the holidays. They can and usually are some of the worst times for my family because of how depressed I get. **As a disabled veteran, things are mostly difficult financially, so every bit helps.** Thank you for standing up for veterans and always having our backs.”

— Timothy H.

“I have been trying to decide what to say in my e-mail every day since, but am not sure there are words to describe how much this means to us. My husband requires significant medical care due to his service related injuries/illnesses and also requires help throughout the day. **During a time when it is harder and harder to find resources to help military and veteran families in need, you guys are sending blessings all over the country to give a little help to those families!** Thank you thank you thank you from the bottom of my heart!”

— Kara R.

“I can’t thank you enough ... I haven’t been able to buy food to eat for a while. It’s just like a cycle I received my check, and I have to pay back my payday loan, and re-borrow, in order to pay my regular bills. My car made it to the gas station, and I bought \$2.00 worth of gas with the [gift] card in order to get to the store, and back home. I used the rest to buy food. I am so grateful for an organization like this who cares for others.”

— Jackie M.

“I am sorry not to have written sooner but I have been in and out of the hospital due to a systematic infections. It is hard to be on a fixed income with two young children and their needs grow daily. **This gift card was a true gift that reminded our family some people still care.** Your organization gave us, and I hope many others, a moment to be able to take a deep breath.”

— Thomas H.

“I would like to thank you for your gift to me and my family. [When] I opened your letter I cried for an hour. **A lot of people just don’t understand how we as veterans struggle sometimes. We have limited finances that don’t last us the entire month after we pay rent, lights, utilities.** So I am so grateful for your gift. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!”

— Hellen S.

### 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 disabled heroes and their families.