

The Wounded Warrior Family Care Program



Quality of Life Foundation

Spring 2011

Participating Organizations

*The following lists organizations cited in this newsletter – for a complete list of participating organizations, please visit our website and click on the **Who Helps** tab.*

Army Wounded Warrior Program

Azalea Charities

Belly Blessings

The Cabins in Broken Bow

Caulkins Construction

Cleaning for Heroes

Helping A Hero

Help Our Wounded

Military Spouse Corporate Career Network

Northern Virginia Fuller Center for Housing

Organizing Matters

Residence Inn by Marriott

Richmond VA Medical Center

Sylvan Learning Centers

VA/DoD Federal Recovery Coordinator Program

VA OEF/OIF Program

Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc.



Photo courtesy of Colleen and Terry Saffron

It's About the Family

Almost one year ago, we met our first client family at an Operation Homefront Village apartment and officially launched the Wounded Warrior Family Care Program. Since that time, we have reached out to 30 families to tell them about this program that focuses on strengthening and sustaining family members of veterans who require a substantial amount of care giving. We continue our outreach today and will do so until the need no longer exists.

We have met a variety of caregivers – grandparents, spouses, parents and siblings. Their veterans come from every branch of service - Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard – all with life-changing injuries – Spinal Cord Injuries, Traumatic Brain Injuries, PTSD, and multiple amputations. One thing was common – abiding, unconditional love between caregivers and their injured veterans. Whether it was a mother carefully shaving her grown son's face – a spouse handing her husband their new baby – or the loving gaze a young man gave to his parents as they hoisted him from bed

to wheel chair, communicating the only way he was able, with his eyes – we were blessed to be a part of their lives.

No matter what kind of home in which they lived, how much income had been forfeited, how old the veteran was, or how difficult the care giving responsibilities were – there was unconditional, unwavering, and determined commitment to provide the highest quality of life possible. We show that same level of commitment to the caregivers as our way of thanking them and their veteran for the incredible sacrifices they made in service to our great nation. We invite you to do the same – please visit our website today to see how you can participate – www.qolfoundation.org – together we can do so much more.

Quality of Life Foundation



92768

A New Home to Help a Family Care for their Loved One

We first met this Army Reserve family at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where the young veteran had spent the last several weeks as an inpatient battling a medical crisis. His 2003 war wound left him with a spinal cord injury, a traumatic brain injury and paralysis from the shoulders down. He cannot move his arms, walk, talk, see or eat. His mother and father have left their jobs to take care of everything he needs, from bowel and bladder care to administration of medicines and intravenous feedings. They monitor him constantly as he suffers seizures and requires frequent maintenance of his breathing tube.

This most recent hospitalization resulted in extensive, unexpected lodging expenses for the family. Thanks to the Emergency and Unmet Needs Fund that **Azalea Charities** holds for our program, we were able to rapidly respond.

When we asked the parents what would make it easier for them to care for their son, they responded with two basic requests; a night nurse so they could sleep at the same time and an accessible home. They told us that another non-profit organization had modified their basement to accommodate their son's needs back in 2005. But soon after, they realized that caring for him in the basement left him too iso-

lated from the family and it was difficult to monitor his condition when they were upstairs handling other household tasks. So, they hung a hospital curtain over the entrance to their dining room and moved their son upstairs. While this brought him back into the heart of the home, the hallways and main floor restroom are not accessible. In addition, this veteran's parents take turns sleeping on the couch in the adjoining room so they are nearby in case of an emergency.

We began researching local home health agencies to find a resource for night shift work that provided the level of care this veteran required. Once the family interviewed the providers, we connected the agency with the family's **OEF/OIF Case Manager** so they could establish a contract. The family now has a night nurse for the first time in two years.

We also looked for an organization to provide a fully-accessible, one-level home for this family. We found the **Northern Virginia Fuller Center for Housing**, which, by chance, was seeking a wounded warrior family who



needed a home. We teamed with them and Azalea Charities to provide a home that will ease some of the very physical care giving demands they face every day. A home with an accessible bathroom for easy showering, wide doorways and hallways to allow for easy transport, a master suite with sufficient space for the veteran's life sustaining medical equipment and therapy exercises, and a second master suite proximate to his so his parents can once again share a bedroom. We are approaching local businesses and individuals who would like to support this project by making financial or in-kind contributions. **Visit our website** to see how you can help this family have the home they deserve by Summer 2011.

A Community Gives Back to a Wounded Marine Family



Photo courtesy of Trish Hamilton

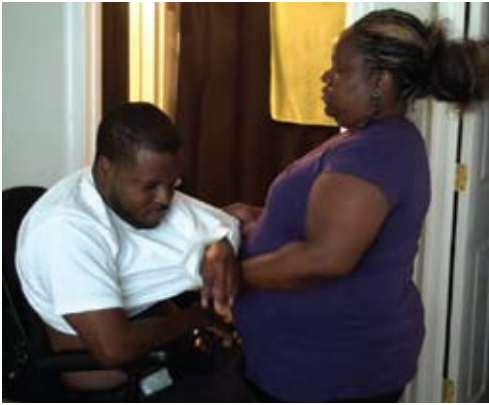
A **VA/DoD Federal Recovery Coordinator** for the family of a Marine wounded in Afghanistan contacted us to see if we might help them find a resource to solve a housing issue. This Marine was soon to leave Walter Reed to continue his recovery at his parent's home. His injuries left him with quadriplegia and his parent's multi-level home was neither accessible nor safe for his return.

Because the VA Specially Adapted Housing Grant has a lifetime ceiling of \$63,780, his parents wanted to reserve the entire amount so when their son is able to live independently, he can use it toward the purchase of his own home. We turned again to the **Northern Virginia Fuller Center for Housing**,

knowing that their network of local construction contacts would want to give back to a wounded Marine from their own community. We were right – in just 90 days – **No VA FCH**, teaming with **Azalea Charities** and the **Quality of Life Foundation**, secured funding and completed construction on a home addition that provided accessible entry, a bedroom and bathroom for the Marine, an expanded kitchen and family area to accommodate wheelchair access, and a large back deck.

Azalea Charities kicked off the project with a \$10,000 donation – then **No VA FCH** reached out to **Caulkins Construction Company** and over 60
(Continued on next page)

And Baby Makes 3!



It was a hot summer day when we first met an Army Reservist and his wife at their small apartment near the **Richmond VA Medical Center**. They had relocated from New York to allow the soldier to receive care at the highly acclaimed Spinal Cord Injury Unit. He had been shot in the back of the neck while serving in Iraq and is paralyzed from the chest down. His wife, who was pregnant with their first child, has been by his side the whole time.

Their news was great this day. They told us they had just learned that the accessible home being built for them by **Homes for our Troops** would be ready within a few months. As we sat together at their kitchen table, the spouse said she was anxious about having her first child with no friends or family nearby. She worried about how

local businesses who came together to make the project a success. When cash funding was needed, we reached out to the **Yellow Ribbon Fund** and **Helping a Hero** – both responded immediately with \$10,000 and \$20,000 donations, respectively. We also coordinated support from the **Residence Inn by Marriott** which provided a \$5,000 discount on lodging for the family during construction. Thanks to this amazing collaborative effort and community response, this Marine has an accessible home to begin his next phase of recovery. We stand ready to assist his family with other quality of life issues that may arise once everyone is home together again.

she would get to the hospital if she went into labor at home and was unable to drive.

When we asked if there were other concerns, they both responded that they would like to find work-from-home jobs. Money was tight and they knew their expenses would increase with a new home and baby. They also shared concerns about getting their apartment ready for move-out and their house ready for move-in. (The spouse would be in her last trimester at move time.)

The soldier added one more concern – his fitness. He had participated in a study at the **Richmond VAMC** involving an exercise cycle that uses electrical current to move legs and arms to simulate riding a bike. He said the VA had stopped regular rehabilitative therapy, and he believed this equipment would allow him to maintain core strength and avoid muscle atrophy. He wanted to stay strong for his family. The equipment is expensive and not covered by insurance. We made a note.

After the meeting, it was time to get to work. A little internet research and a phone call connected the family with a local doula, Leila Ballard, of **Belly Blessings**. Leila provided 4 weeks of pre-delivery care, was on call 24-7 to respond to any urgent situations, accompanied the family to the delivery, and provided 4 weeks of post-partum care. She charged only enough to cover her costs. We funded this service through our partnership with **Azalea Charities** – a priceless contribution to the family's well being.

Next, we contacted the **Military Spouse Corporate Career Network** regarding work-from-home jobs. MSCCN is a national non-profit that helps military spouses and war-wounded family members find careers to fit their life styles. This referral led to a part-time work-from-home job for the spouse.

Knowing that move-out cleaning was the last thing this

couple needed to worry about during the last trimester of pregnancy, we contacted **Cleaning for Heroes**, a national non-profit that provides house cleaning for veterans who are 100% disabled. They immediately responded with the pre-move cleanings, as well as bi-monthly cleanings for four months at a discounted rate. **Azalea Charities** funded the additional cleanings.

Now came the hard part, the exercise cycle. Our research revealed that many recommended it, insurance seldom paid for it, a prescription was required, and the price tag was around \$24,000. We turned to the veteran's **Army Wounded Warrior Program** case manager and asked her who we could talk to. She provided us with contact information for the Chief of the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at the **Richmond VAMC**. We sent an e-mail to ask him whether the equipment was beneficial – and if so – would he write a prescription and advocate its coverage by insurance. We planned to pay the co-pay. This wonderful doctor responded within two hours stating that our client was eligible to participate in a new research study that provided this very equipment, at no cost to the veteran, in the veteran's home. What a difference an e-mail can make! The veteran was ecstatic about this news.

We have two things to work out for this incredibly positive couple. The veteran is very interested in getting back to work. We also need a local contact to cut their grass at a discount. If you can help with either of these issues, see our website at www.qolfoundation.org and click on the "Help Families" tab to volunteer or make a donation!



Helping Restore Order and Family Time

Since 2004, the family of a severely wounded Marine has faced various deployment-related issues, including multiple changes of station. Now, they have made what they hope is their final move to Texas and are working hard to rebuild a quality life. Their Marine has PTSD, a traumatic brain injury, and severe facial injuries after multiple deployments to Iraq. While all three of their children have faced difficult emotional challenges as they have adapted to their new home and the changes in their father, the two youngest fell behind grade level and required tutoring to catch up. With funding from **Azalea Charities**, our funding partner, we were able to connect them with a local **Sylvan Learning Center** that could provide that support. Sylvan extended a 10% discount to the family.

As is often the case with brain injury, the Marine has short term memory and cognitive deficits which make managing routine household chores complex. His spouse shared with us that one of his physicians suggested a professional organizer might be able to help them develop a system that the Marine could follow. This could increase his independence and also prove helpful to the whole family. We reached out to a local expert, Linda Durham, of **Organizing Matters**. Linda generously offered to work with this family pro bono to meet their organizing needs. This connection will help the family streamline their daily lives and maintain order in their household (no small task with three

school age children) and leave more time for just being a family again.

This Marine's wife was compelled to leave her full-time job in order to care for her husband; doing so meant leaving behind her salary and benefits, cutting their family income by more than half. As a result, finances became very tight. While she has recently hired a full time caregiver and returned to work, the family still faces tough financial challenges. She shared that the family could really use a weekend getaway from their very busy everyday life and just focus on being together, relaxing and having fun. We posted this need on our website and Rosie Babin from **Help Our Wounded** saw it. She happened to know someone at **The Cabins in Broken Bow** and made a call. Thanks to this connection and the generosity of The Cabins, the family is now looking forward to a 4 day retreat at a beautiful lake cabin.

We are thankful for this military family and honored to connect them with others who also want to show their gratitude for the family's service to country.



Everyone Can Do Something

Do you cut hair, prepare income tax returns, fix cars, or provide lawn service?

These are all examples of services that many of our client families need but simply do not have the time or money to do themselves or hire to have it done. If you are a business owner or professional service provider who wants to give back to wounded warrior families – visit our website now and click on the **Help Families** tab to be included in our database of providers. Then, when we have a client family in your area – who needs your service – we will contact you. We will not provide your contact information to anyone without your express permission.

Do you have a Facebook page? Find us on **Facebook** and "Like" our page. This action will spread the news to your friends about how to support Wounded Warrior Families!

Do you have a few dollars? We always accept, and deeply appreciate, cash donations. Any amount helps – you can donate by mail or make a **secure online donation**.

Quality of Life Foundation

**The Wounded Warrior
Family Care Program**

**Helping Families Who Care for
Catastrophically Wounded Warriors**

2750 Killarney Drive
Suite 100
Woodbridge, VA 22192
Phone: 703-496-9050

E-mail: qol@qolfoundation.org



WWW.QOLFOUNDATION.ORG

*I am only one,
but I am one.
I cannot do
everything, but
I can do something.*

*Edward Everett Hale
Author*