

Participating Organizations

Army Wounded Warrior
Program

Azalea Charities

Challenge Aspen

Dr. Duane Erickson, DDS

The Federal Recovery
Coordination Program

Freedom Alliance

Kaboodle's Home Gallery

Mattress Discounters

Military to Medicine

Navy Marine Corps
Relief Society

Navy Safe Harbor Program

Operation Homefront

Project Reboot

The Independence Fund

The Retired Enlisted
Association

The SCOOTER Store

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Walter Reed Child
Care Center

Wright's Furniture

Yellow Ribbon Fund, Inc.

Pilot Program Exceeds Expectations

The Quality of Life Foundation's Community Resource Coordinator Program launched on May 20, 2010 with a meeting at the home of a young Army soldier who survived an IED blast that left him with a Traumatic Brain Injury, Spinal Cord Injury, double above-the-knee leg amputation, and PTSD. As we listened to this young man and his mother explain the challenges they faced – we were eager to begin our work on their behalf and find out if the model of care we developed would work as expected.

While you will read more about their specific story, and other pilot families, on the following pages – we are very pleased with the difference we have made in the lives of these families. We are so pleased, that we are using the lessons learned to expand the pilot to other areas by Fall, 2010.

In summary, through a direct service, or a connection with another provider,



A short meeting at the home of a wounded warrior family was the beginning of great things.

we have improved the quality of life for every family in the pilot – six families so far! In addition, we have established relationships with two more families who will soon transition from hospital to home and are prepared to assist them when they call.

Please read on for more good news stories about how the Quality of Life Foundation is helping care giving families.

What's in a Name?

To better reflect the purpose of the Community Resource Coordinator Program, we changed the name to the **Wounded Warrior Family Care Program**. The wounded warrior's injuries affect the whole family, not just the service member, or the caregiver, but also brothers, sisters and minor children. By focusing on sustaining the family, the family can continue to provide the best environment for their wounded warrior. While the old name was about what we do, the new name reflects why we do it. This program is all about caring for, and meeting the needs of, the whole wounded warrior family.

Quality of Life Foundation

2750 Killarney Drive
Suite 100
Woodbridge, VA 22192
Phone: 703-496-9050
E-mail: qol@qolfoundation.org

WWW.QOLFFOUNDATION.ORG



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Something to Smile About



"It would be an honor for me to help out any way I can....I will be happy to provide the finest orthodontic treatment available ... pro bono."

Dr. Duane Erickson, DDS

After receiving a referral from **Operation HomeFront**, we met with our first client family. This young soldier had suffered a TBI, SCI and had lost both legs above the knee as a result of an IED blast. When we asked the family to share their most pressing needs, they responded that they needed a place to stay for six months until their new accessible home was ready (it was being built by **Homes for Our Troops**); a day care program for the 3-year old daughter; and then somewhat reluctantly, the soldier added

that he would really like to have his teeth straightened, but treatment for his orthodontic condition was not covered by the Veterans Affairs Administration.

We researched area apartment complexes with accessible units and found a complex that was willing to provide a six-month reduced rate lease. We also researched local resources for part-time pre-school programs and found a low-cost option for children of wounded warriors at the **Walter Reed Day Care Center**.

Then we turned to the soldier's request. It seemed like such a small thing given the traumatic wounds he suffered and the life long medical, financial, and logistical challenges he and his family now face.

Making a few phone calls to area orthodontists, we found an enthusiastic **Dr. Duane Erickson, DDS of Silver Spring, MD**, who immediately responded with an offer to provide orthodontic treatment at no charge. His response is a powerful testament to the desire of grateful Americans to show their appreciation for the sacrifices our military families make.

Throughout our work with this family, we coordinated care with their Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs Wounded Warrior Programs (**The Army Wounded Warrior Program** and the **Federal Recovery Coordination Program**). This coordination resulted in a heightened awareness of the family's pending transition needs for their short and long-term living arrangements.

This family is now set for the short-term and we stand ready to assist if needed when they make their move to their final permanent home.

Wounded Warrior Family Makes a Fresh Start

After receiving a referral from the **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society** about a wounded warrior family who had just moved into an apartment after living homeless for several months, the Quality of Life Foundation sprang into action. During the intake meeting, it became clear the priority needs were: an income producing job for mom, bedroom furniture and sheets for everyone, towels, hangers and kitchen necessities, help to cover public transportation and communication expenses, and connecting the family with their military service wounded warrior program (**Navy Safe Harbor Program**).

To help the spouse complete online job searches, submit online applications and create a resume – the family's coordinator found **Project Reboot** of the Capital PC Users Group in Rockville, Md. This program provides refurbished desktop computers and printers for a nominal fee. We submitted paper work

and delivered the computer within a week. We then made a call to the non-profit organization **Military to Medicine** which provides on-line job training, as well as job placement, for spouses of wounded warriors to find out if they could help the spouse with her job search. They were in contact with her the very next day.



New bed and dresser—so much better than sleeping on the floor and living out of a suitcase.

We continued our work within this family's local community to find bedroom furnishings. We found **Kaboodle's Home Gallery**, **Wright's Furniture**, and **Mattress Discounters** in Rockville all willing to provide generous discounts. A Target card allowed the family to purchase sheets, hangers, towels, and other necessities. We also provided three months worth of phone and public transportation



Desk top PC and printer for job search and school work.

Texas, That's Close to Northern Virginia, Right?

While our pilot program was not resourced for families outside of the National Capital Area region, we could not ignore an e-mail query we received from the **Navy Safe Harbor Program** regarding a family in Dickinson, TX.

Due to a Humvee Rollover incident, a Navy Medic and single mother of two, is now unable to walk, has partial use of one arm, and is unable to live independently. To complicate matters, a series of unfortunate events resulted in lengthy delays in receiving an accurate VA disability rating. As a result, she, her children, and parent caregivers have been emotionally, financially and physically drained.

A primary concern was that the veteran had only a manual wheelchair, leaving her dependent on others to move around her own home and get to and from her three-times a week VA therapy appointments. A little internet research and a call to **The SCOOTER Store** resulted in a donated, refurbished, Power Chair for this veteran. She is now able to roam freely about her home, and with the help of a



*Wounded Warrior Family gets a big relief thanks to a Power Chair from **The SCOOTER Store***

transportation service, attend therapy appointments without a caregiver.

While we were not in Texas, we knew someone who was; a mother caregiver with 7 years of experience working within the DoD and VA systems on behalf of her son who was severely wounded in 2003. She said it would

be an honor to reach out to this family and called them that very day. That outreach resulted in the family opening up to share more challenges they faced – many of them aggravated by the inaccurate disability rating and the parents inability to work due to care giving responsibilities for their daughter and her children.

Those challenges included: the lack of some home health supplies, a mounting debt of VA co-pays, the inability to pay for college expenses for the oldest son, the lack of an adaptive vehicle or transportation services, the absence of respite or relaxation opportunities for the parent caregivers, and in general a strained financial position that left the family worrying about the expense of uniforms and school supplies for the youngest child who was getting ready to start kindergarten.

Thanks to the following organizations, immediate/urgent needs were met within two weeks of contact: Home health supplies from **The Independence Fund**, a financial grant from **The Retired Enlisted Association**, school supplies and an invitation to apply for a college scholarship from **Freedom Alliance**, transportation service from **Vets Van**, a connection to **Challenge Aspen** for a winter retreat for the whole family, payment to the VA for outstanding co-pays and a laptop and software for the son's freshman year in college from **Azalea Charities**, and an introduction to the Galveston County **Veterans of Foreign Wars** National Service Officer to assist with obtaining the VA benefits and services this veteran earned in service to country.

While this family's most pressing needs have been addressed, they will continue to face challenges until the appropriate VA disability rating is assigned. We will continue, along with their new found advocate in Texas, to work to ensure this family has the tools and resources needed to live a quality life.

cards to ensure potential employers will be able to contact the spouse, she will have transportation to attend job interviews, and the children will have uninterrupted transportation to a Walter Reed-sponsored Summer Program. The funding for the furniture and gift cards came from **Azalea Charities**, a non-profit organization that has established an Emergency and Unmet Needs Fund for families enrolled in the QoLF Wounded Warrior Family Care Program.

At the end of the day, this quote from an e-mail the spouse sent says it all:

"I am so thankful and just want to say thank you so very much... it helps when you have people who care....it is a great feeling to rebuild...we now can sleep well and enjoy our new life."



New beds and dressers for the kids— what a difference a good night's rest makes in the life of a child

The Wounded Warrior Family Care Program

Helping Families Who Care for Catastrophically Wounded Warriors

Grandparents Become Parents All Over Again

Another referral from the **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society** put us in touch with the family of a quadriplegic Marine in Brandywine, MD. This young man had been home on mid-tour leave from Iraq and on his way to a school ceremony

for his younger brother when he was injured in a car accident that left him paralyzed and suffering from Traumatic Brain Injury.

Sadly, this Marine's mother had died in a car accident when he was nine years old. At that time, his grandparents stepped in to take care of him and his younger brother. Now, 15 years later, they again assumed total care for their beloved grandson. They knew their love and care would be what he needed and would not even consider any other option.

We met with his grandmother in their home to learn more about this family's situation and listen to her concerns and struggles as a caregiver. She shared that while they currently receive in-home help for their Marine every weekday morning – that care will end when his rehabilitative outpatient therapy from the VA Medical Center ends. She and her husband have been managing his personal care every evening and on weekends and it is beginning to take a toll on their health, finances, and well being. They are also worried that their Marine is feeling isolated, with little opportunity to socialize with fellow vets his own age.

During our visit, we were struck by how fatigued this young man's grandmother seemed. It was clear that a few hours of respite care and help with house-keeping would go a long way toward relieving some pressure. Some peer support for her grandson would also relieve a worry she was carrying around.



After an initial conversation with the family's **VA OEF/OIF Care Manager**, the CRC went to work locating possible resources to meet those needs. We called the **Yellow Ribbon Fund**, a local non-profit with a significant volunteer network of folks who want to give back to severely wounded warriors. Within a few hours, over 20 volunteers stepped forward with offers to help. Retired Marines offered to visit the young Marine and provide peer support; other volunteers gave cash donations to pay for a housekeeping service for the family.

The family is currently working with the VA to set a plan for modifying their home to meet their Marine's needs. Once that plan is approved and finalized, they may need some assistance to meet the difference between the funding VA provides and the cost of the modification. We will certainly engage at the appropriate time to help. While this family's needs will be ongoing, for now, we are happy to report that they have supports in place to grant some relief with peer support for their Marine, respite care for Grandma and Grandpa, and house-keeping services.

Participating Organizations

The front page lists organizations and individuals who provided support to the families enrolled in the pilot of the Wounded Warrior Family Care Program.

We listed these organizations to recognize their good work, but also as a demonstration that there are plenty of wonderful organizations, and individuals, who want to show their appreciation for the sacrifices care-giving families and their warriors have made in service to Country.

A basic tenant of the Wounded Warrior Family Care Program is to leverage this "sea of goodwill" (as Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has called it) to help families rebuild a quality life in spite of the lifelong challenges that catastrophic injury brings.

If you are a non-profit organization, a business, or individual that would like to join this effort to honor, thank, and help care-giving families, please visit our website at **WWW.QOLFOUNDATION.ORG** and click on the **HOW TO HELP** button. There you can register as a resource in your local community or make a donation. It takes all of us, working together, to make a difference in the quality of life of a Wounded Warrior Family.

"Our wounded, ill, and injured service members and their families merit a continuum of care that lasts a lifetime.

We in the military cannot do this ourselves. We must do this through the whole of government ... along with private business and with the tremendous number of nonprofit organizations, as well as ordinary citizens throughout the country.

There is a "sea of goodwill" out there of people and groups who desperately want to help, and it's vital we figure out how to make those connections."

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
USO On Patrol magazine, Spring 2009