

OP FH HOME FRONT

2022 // SUMMER

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

CONTINUING OUR MISSION: CELEBRATING 200 HOME DEDICATIONS

On July 26, U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Third Class Luisa Velez and her son stepped out of the truck to the cheers and applause of the waiting crowd. Every home dedication is special, but this one carried extra significance as the 200th dedication in Operation Finally Home history.

"I'm super excited and very overwhelmed," Velez said just minutes before pulling up at her new custom-built, mortgage-free home on the day of the dedication. "This is beyond anything that I could have imagined."

The moment was significant for Velez and her son, who had been sharing a room at her mother's house as Velez transitioned to civilian life. Velez served two combat deployments during her Navy career and suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), migraines and more as a result.

The project, made possible by Operation Finally Home partners Winston Custom Homes, the Dallas Builders Association-Dallas Division, the City of Irving and NEC Corporation, is a milestone, says Rusty Carroll, President, Operation Finally Home, but it's also more than that.

"At Operation Finally Home, our focus isn't on achieving a goal of a certain number of projects in a year," Carroll said. "For us, the most important project is the next one. This milestone—and every project—is a further example of the divine intervention that allows us to continue to do this work."

In 2016, Operation Finally Home celebrated its 100th dedication, handing over the keys to U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Jonathan Dowdell in League City, Texas. It took 10 years to reach that milestone; thanks to the support of donors, partners, builders,



Credit: Goodgame Photography

The build team gathers as Luisa Velez and her son cut the ribbon to their new mortgage-free home.

suppliers and more, Operation Finally Home reached 200 dedications in only six years. Additionally, Operation Finally Home has completed 100 home modification projects since 2017.

While the numbers are important, Carroll said, the impact they symbolize is more significant.

"At Operation Finally Home, we want to continue to do all that we can to help veterans, first responders and their families," Carroll said. "This is a significant milestone, but we want to continue to get the message out so we can identify more people and families who need support, bring more communities together to do this important work and continue to serve those who have so faithfully served us."



Local veterans supporting one of their own



Previous recipients Josh Ashby and Eric King join Luisa and Spencer to welcome them home!



Luisa hugs Spencer in his new room.



A FEW WORDS FROM DAN

As summer begins to fade into fall, we've begun to reflect on the many things we're thankful for this year. Every home project we're a part of—from builds to modifications and transitional housing—is a reason to celebrate.

But this summer, we marked a significant milestone when Operation Finally Home celebrated our 200th dedication. It was an unforgettable experience to watch U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Third Class Luisa Velez and her son explore their beautiful new home in Irving, Texas. It's an honor for us to serve America's heroes in this way, and I look forward to building our next 100 homes for veterans, first responders and their families.

This issue of HomeFront celebrates this important milestone. Over the course of this issue, you'll get to know more about Luisa Velez, celebrate significant milestones with members of our Operation Finally Home family and take a look back at our 100th dedication with the recipient, U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Jonathan Dowdell.

More than anything, this issue is a celebration of you, our donors and partners. Without your help, support and generosity, none of these projects would be possible. Your continued support allows us to continue to honor America's heroes with a place to call home—and that's something to celebrate!

God Bless,

Dan Wallrath

Founder of Operation Finally Home

MILESTONE MEMORIES

Two past recipients of custom-built, mortgage-free homes from Operation Finally Home recently shared a few memories with us as they marked milestone anniversaries in their homes.



Credit: PulteGroup Built to Honor

"Thanks to this home, I am able to take my daughter Kayla to school and pick her up every day without problems. I am able to spend time with Aria and Avery at home and play like I never could have in a 600-square-foot apartment. You all are a blessing to the Torres family. We've been home a year and counting and counting many more to come. As of yesterday, Day 365 in our home, we found out we're expecting another child. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to bring another life into this world happily!"

— U.S. Army Sergeant Javier Torres

The Torres family moved into their home in Land O' Lakes, Florida, in July 2021, thanks to Operation Finally Home and PulteGroup's Built to Honor Program.



Credit: Robert Aiken

"We've experienced countless firsts raising our family here. We've enjoyed tears of laughter and soothed those of pain all in what feels to be the blink of an eye. Ten years later, Gina's now entering seventh grade, and Samantha is a senior in high school! I've worked through challenges in my marriage and experienced Jesus' mercy and healing under this roof. The very walls of our home continue to echo a message of faith, hope and love thanks to those who built it with full hearts, dedicated hands and joyful spirits."

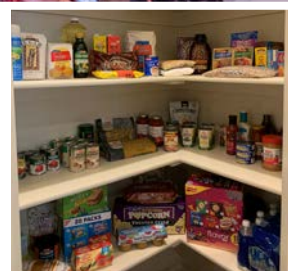
— U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Robert Aiken

The Aiken family moved into their home in Gunter, Texas, in 2012, made possible through a partnership between Smiles Charity and Operation Finally Home.



THANK YOU, H-E-B!

We are grateful for H-E-B Operation Appreciation for filling the pantries of our new home recipients throughout Texas!





U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Brian Cassidy Surprise/Groundbreaking – Inman, South Carolina

Credit: Lennar



U.S. Army Specialist Fernando Del Pozo Jr. Surprise/Groundbreaking – Fulshear, Texas

Credit: Highland Homes



U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Jose Jimenez Surprise/Groundbreaking – Wellington, Florida

Credit: Lennar



U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Daniel Holt Dedication – Melissa, Texas

Credit: Pacesetter Homes

PILLAR EVENTS:
SURPRISES, GROUNDBREAKINGS,
NOTES OF LOVE & DEDICATIONS



May 19	Kingwood Park High School - Tiny Home	Dedication	Humble, TX
May 20	Summer Creek High School	Dedication	Humble, TX
June 22	Fernando DelPozo Jr	Surprise/Groundbreaking	Fulshear, TX
June 25	Richard Stayskal	Housewarming	Aberdeen, NC
June 27	Brian Cassidy	Surprise/Groundbreaking	Inman, SC
July 1	Daniel Holt	Dedication	Melissa, TX
July 21	Jose Jimenez	Suprise/Groundbreaking	Wellington, FL
July 26	Luisa Velez	Dedication	Irving, TX
July 28	Nathan Rodriguez	Dedication	Melissa, TX
Aug. 4	Alvin Jackson	Surprise/Groundbreaking	Cleveland, TN
Aug. 5	Fernando DelPozo Jr.	Notes of Love	Fulshear, TX
Aug. 19	Harold Lincoln	Groundbreaking	Waco, TX
Sept. 4	George Ceja	Surprise	Saganaw, TX
Sept. 5	George Ceja	Groundbreaking	Ft. Worth, TX



U.S. Army Specialist Fernando Del Pozo Jr. Notes of Love – Fulshear, Texas

Credit: Houston Chronicle



U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sergeant Nathan Rodriguez Dedication – Melissa, Texas

Credit: Ashton Woods

SUMMER FUN



Veros Family – Jacksonville, Florida (Pulte Group's Built to Honor)



Kadleck Family – The Woodlands, Texas (Beazer Homes, The Howard Hughes Corporation, Houston Texans)



Hillyer Family – Alvin, Texas (Belleau Wood Homes)



Mikeska Family – Summerville, South Carolina (Lennar)



Howes Family – St. Louis, Missouri (Hibbs Homes)



Sweger Family – Bixby, Oklahoma (Castlerock Builders, New Gulf Resources)

SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE TO DONATE TO OPERATION FINALLY HOME.

REMEMBERING OUR 100TH HOME




"Our Dedication Day was a blur of activity with the Operation Finally Home team and many fellow Marines joining the festivities. Since 2016, our family has been able to focus on our physical and mental healing along with the joys of being homeowners. In 2020, our friends – and now neighbors - the Friesens, received their home from Operation Finally Home. This home is a blessing and I'm honored to be part of the Operation Finally Home family."


– U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Jonathan Dowdell, League City, Texas


HERE TO HELP


Would you or someone you know benefit from a mortgage-free home, transitional housing or a home modification? The Operation Finally Home process begins with our initial contact forms. Please check them out at operationfinallyhome.org/apply.

FOLLOW US!

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Operation Finally Home

This week we handed over the keys to our 200th home! 🏡 We joined Winston Homes, the Dallas Builders Association, City of Irving, Texas - City Hall, and NEC Corporation in welcoming U.S. Navy HM3 Luisa Velez to her new home!

Read her story here: <https://www.operationfinallyhome.org/the-velez-family>



43 Comments 19 Shares

Operation Finally Home

Today we celebrate U.S. Army SSG Tammy Barrett's three year homeiversary! In 2019 we joined Austin Cops for Charities and Herley Homes in handing over the keys to her new home.



2.5K

Operation Finally Home

Happy one year Homeiversary to U.S. Army SSG Stephen Netzeley! Last year we handed over the keys with the help of The Howard Hughes Corporation, Perry Homes, Greater Houston Builders Association (GHBA), Houston Texans, and Bridgeland Community.


Read his story here: <https://bit.ly/3C1t959>



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Operation Finally Home

We are so blessed to be able to provide our heroes with their forever homes. ❤️🏡



OPFH

Operation Finally Home

Flashback Friday: Last July we surprised U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nathan Mikeska with the news that his family would be receiving the gift of a free home thanks to help from Lennar Charleston!

Read his story here: <https://bit.ly/3nL60h5>



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Operation Finally Home

We're proud to have a strong community of supporters who make our work possible. Sending blessings your way! 🙏



OPFH

Craig Morgan and 410 others

14 Comments 7 Shares

Operation Finally Home

Last week we surprised U.S. Army SSG Jose Jimenez with the news that their family will be receiving the life-changing gift of a brand-new home at Arden, Naturally, South Florida's first agrihood community, with the help of Lennar.

Jose enlisted in the U.S. Army in October 2005. In 2010, while serving in Afghanistan, Jose suffered a traumatic brain injury, temporarily losing his sight and the ability to use his legs. Still, he remained dedicated to his platoon and returned to duty one month after the incident. Jose met his wife, Alex, also a veteran, while they were both serving in Afghanistan.

Jose was honorably discharged in 2013 having served nearly eight years, including two combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and receiving countless other military awards, including a Purple Heart, two Army Good Conduct Medals, and Army Achievement Medal, an Afghanistan Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, and a Combat Action Medal.




OPFH

166

11 Comments 21 Shares

Operation Finally Home

What a blessing to be on the receiving end of a surprise! Here's a video from this week at the Grand Ole Opry when our ambassador Craig Morgan surprised us with a check for \$100,000—including his entire \$70,000 won on CBS's #BeyondTheEdge! in addition to a \$30,000 donation from Monster Energy Cares.



OPERATIONFINALLYHOME.ORG

Operation Finally Home

Learn more

FACES, PLACES & SPACES

SUNBELT BUILDERS SHOW

Members of the Operation Finally Home staff attended the Sunbelt Builders Show in Dallas, July 13-15. One of the largest builder industry events in the country, the annual tradeshow brings top manufacturers and suppliers together with a focus on showcasing the latest innovations in homebuilding products, service solutions and up-to-date technology. We had a great time getting to chat with everyone who stopped by!

Trade shows like the Sunbelt Builders Show are important ways for Operation Finally Home to connect with builders, suppliers and others in the industry. We're able to share our story on a larger stage and invite more of the industry into helping us fulfill our mission of providing a place to call home for America's heroes.



Renae Tumbaugh and Laurie Wilson, members of the Greater Houston Builders Association (GHBA), visit with Lee Kirgan, Ronnie Lyles and David Drew at the 2022 Sunbelt Builders Show.



Lee Kirgan, Lisa Clark and Dan Walrath at the 2021 Sunbelt Builders Show.



Tradeshows allow us to connect with individuals across the industry, like Angelica Stehling with the Texas Builders Association, shown at the 2021 Sunbelt Builders Show.



McCoy's with Lee, Ronnie and John Ashby, at the 2021 Sunbelt Builders Show

OPERATION ROCK THE HOUSE CONCERTS

With concerts in August and September, the Operation Rock the House Concert series, held in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, is a way for us to celebrate the builders, sponsors and supporters that allow us to honor our military heroes and first responders with homes and home modifications in the state. The August 18 concert featured local band Rebel Grace, while the Five Card Studs will take the stage on September 16 for the last concert in the series.



David Belman, Molly Halliday, Kris Hillmer and Ray Hoffman enjoying the concert.

CONGRATULATIONS & THANK YOU

The dedication of Luisa Velez's home was one to remember—and the celebration hasn't stopped yet. Craig Morgan, Operation Finally Home Ambassador and a long-time supporter, shared his excitement about Operation Finally Home's 200th home dedication through a video. "Congratulations to everyone at Operation Finally Home," Morgan said in the video from his tour bus. "A special thank you to everyone who has made donations. It's because of you that we continue to be able to build homes for our men and women of the armed forces, our law enforcement officers and our first responders." To watch the entire video, visit Operation Finally Home on Facebook or Instagram!



FINAL THOUGHT

Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead."

— Nelson Mandela

Visit OperationFinallyHome.org or call 615-732-6143 to help a hero!