

OP FH HOME FRONT

2025 // WINTER

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

FAMILY MAN: RUSTY CARROLL'S LEGACY

Rusty Carroll had a way of making people feel like family from the first moment he met them.

"Rusty profoundly touched the lives of everyone he met," said Dan Wallrath, founder of Operation Finally Home. "He was deeply devoted to the mission of Operation Finally Home and committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of veterans, first responders and their families. His legacy will live on for generations."

Rusty, Operation Finally Home President, passed away on Dec. 30, 2024, after a hard-fought battle with cancer. He leaves behind his loving wife of 31 years, Deedra; their sons, Cameron (Alyssa) and Carson (Leslie); his parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephew and in-laws, as well as his Operation Finally Home family.

Rusty began his career at Louisiana-Pacific (now LP Building Solutions), where he held several sales and marketing leadership positions. His 20-year journey with LP began in Conroe, Texas, and took his family to Montreal, Quebec, and eventually to Nashville and Spring Hill, where he and Deedra raised their sons.

He joined Operation Finally Home in 2013 and played a key role in growing the nonprofit. Under his leadership, the organization expanded from providing mortgage-free homes for veterans to include assistance for first responders, home modifications, and transitional housing.

A natural-born leader, Rusty's life was centered around his faith, family, friends, and serving others. He poured his energy into coaching baseball, serving as president of the Rotary Club, contributing to various community organizations and enjoying the outdoors—whether on his boat, *It's About Time*, in a kayak, camping, golfing, hunting or fishing.



Kristen Bryan, Southern Living Marketing Director, surprised Molly Halliday and Operation Finally Home with a check for \$19,000 in memory of Rusty Carroll at the 2025 Southern Living Home Summit.

Rusty never met a stranger. From Operation Finally Home recipients to industry partners and neighbors and friends, he had an extraordinary gift for finding a connection with everyone he encountered, always discovering the common thread that tied them together. His kindness, leadership, and unwavering support will be deeply missed—but his legacy will live on in the lives of those he touched.



U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Matthew Weise and his family were surprised Dec. 31, 2018, on "FOX & Friends" with the news he and his family were getting a new mortgage-free Lennar home in Charleston, South Carolina.

"Rusty and OFH helped our family in ways that we will never be able to repay," said Andrea Barreiro, wife of U.S. Army Sergeant Major Jose Barreiro. "But we'll work every day to help others."

A celebration of life service was held in Rusty's honor on January 18 in Franklin, Tennessee. Guests were invited to leave Notes of Love for Rusty's family, a small way to pay tribute to a man who ensured others felt loved and cared for. To honor Rusty's memory, the family kindly requests memorial contributions be made to Operation Finally Home at www.OperationFinallyHome.org/donate.



Rusty Carroll with Arin and U.S. Army Sergeant Ethan LaBerge, Molly Halliday and Matt Rogers at the LaBerge family's Dedication in August 2021.

Credit: FoxFuel



A FEW WORDS FROM DAN

When I began Operation Finally Home in 2005, our mission was much the same as it is today: to provide safe homes for America's heroes. Over the years, that mission has expanded to include custom-built, mortgage-free homes, home modifications and transitional housing for our country's veterans, first responders and their families.

By 2013, God had blessed Operation Finally Home in so many ways, and I desperately needed help. God, in his infinite wisdom, placed Rusty Carroll in my path when I needed him most.

In the eight years before Rusty came on board, we had provided 36 mortgage-free homes and one home modification. In the 11 and a half years of Rusty's tenure, we have completed an additional 236 custom homes, more than 100 home modifications and built 15 tiny homes. This is undoubtedly a testament to God placing Rusty in this position and calling him to this work.

Beyond the bricks and mortar, Rusty built lasting relationships with everyone he met. In the days after his death, Operation Finally Home recipients and their families, builders and those within the building industry left message after message on social media detailing how Rusty had touched their lives, making an impact in a conversation, an action or a laugh. Rusty paid attention to the people around him, and he made us all feel seen, loved and respected.

Rusty regarded his work at Operation Finally Home as a divine calling. He was a man of deep faith in God, whose direction and leadership he sought daily. For me, watching Rusty accomplish what he was called to do was a blessing and an honor.

Rusty's legacy will live on in the lives he touched. Let us continue to work and honor his life by embracing one another with the same compassion and love he showed us. In the words of Matthew 25, words I'm sure Rusty heard: "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Well done, Rusty.

God Bless,

Dan Wallrath

Founder of Operation Finally Home

REMEMBERING RUSTY GENEROUS. LOVING. KIND.

Builders, industry partners and Operation Finally Home recipients alike have shared such kind words about Rusty. Here are just a few of the things people had to say about the impact Rusty had on their lives.



Credit: Miller & Smith

The Goodrich family at their Dedication in 2017, Stafford, Virginia

"Rusty was such a kind and loving person. We treasure every moment with him but I can honestly say seeing the way he jumped in to help our youngest avoid an autism meltdown at a concert will always be my favorite because it was just so like him."

—Jacqueline Goodrich



Credit: Southern Living

The Hixson family was surprised with the news they were receiving a mortgage-free home at the Southern Living Home Summit in 2020.

"Rusty will forever carry a special spot in our hearts. Our family is heartbroken, such a great loss to this world. Lots of love to his family and OFH."

—Shala Hixson, wife of U.S. Marine Corps Lance Corporal Cory Hixson



Credit: Spinmaker Photography

The Cappel family at their Dedication in 2020, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin.

"I don't think I ever saw him without a smile. He welcomed us with open arms and made us family immediately. The world is dimmer without him."

—Jamie Cappel, wife of U.S. Army Sergeant Daniel Cappel



Credit: BAM Builders

BAM Builders at the Lincoln Dedication, Waco, Texas

"From the BAM Builders team in Waco TX, we express our sincere condolences for his family. Everyone from Operation Finally Home is FAMILY to us."

—Derek Rebber, BAM Builders



U.S. Army Sergeant First Class Samasoni Lelea Dedication, Irving, Texas

Credit: Dallas Builders Association



U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant Christopher Weichman Notes of Love, Spokane, Wash.

Credit: Lemar



Kingwood Park High School Tiny Homes Notes of Love, Houston, Texas.

Credit: Humble ISD/Kingwood Park HS



U.S. Army Specialist Jakob Spraggins, Waco, Texas

Credit: BAM Builders/Rechel Thomas Photography

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



| | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| June 18 | Semeli Toilolo | Surprise/Groundbreaking | Lavon, Texas |
| Nov. 13 | Samasoni Lelea | Dedication | Irving, Texas |
| Dec. 11 | Kingwood Park HS | Notes of Love | Houston, Texas |
| Dec. 11 | Summer Creek HS | Notes of Love | Houston, Texas |
| Dec. 19 | Christopher Weichman | Notes of Love | Spokane, Wash. |
| Dec. 20 | Jakob Spraggins | Surprise/Groundbreaking | Menomonee Falls, Wisc. |
| Jan. 31 | Nathan Tomshack | Dedication | Fresno, Calif. |



Summer Creek High School Tiny Homes Notes of Love, Houston, Texas

Credit: Humble ISD/Summer Creek HS

CELEBRATING THE SEASON



Children of U.S. Army Sergeant Travis Jantz, Watauga, Texas



Home of U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant David Veros, Jacksonville, Florida



Home of U.S. Army Sgt. Matthew Hutcheson, Ball Ground, Georgia



Home of U.S. Army Sergeant Major Jose Barreiro, Bartow, Florida

LIVING A LEGACY

No one loved a Surprise (or Groundbreaking, Notes of Love or Dedication) quite like Rusty. From breaking the news to handing over the keys — and holding a few babies — Rusty loved celebrating milestone moments with Operation Finally Home recipients!



CREATING A CHRISTMAS VILLAGE

U.S. Army Sgt. Timothy Michael Goodrich and his wife, Jacqueline, began creating a Christmas village in their front yard in 2018. Since then, the display has grown to include a miniature Christmas tree farm, a hot cocoa stand, Santa's workshop, Mrs. Claus' Sweet Shop and more. A huge hit with neighbors, Jacqueline wanted to find a way to give back to the community, especially after the grief and devastation the family endured during the pandemic. The family began giving out candy canes and small toys to visitors on a particular night each year. More than 160 kids stopped by this past Christmas for a treat and toy. "One of the best things now is that we're part of peoples' traditions," Jacqueline said. "If you can help make the season special for someone else, that's the gift."





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





Visit OperationFinallyHome.org or call 512-329-2661 to help a hero!

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Operation Finally Home

Happy two-year homeversary to U.S. Army SSG Jose Jimenez and family! Thank you to **Arden**, **Naturally**, and **Lennar** for making it possible! Happy homeversary! Read his story here: <https://bit.ly/3UdPyVh>



Operation Finally Home

We're so grateful for every person who makes our heroes feel welcomed home.



Operation Finally Home

While Santa might not be the one giving homes to our heroes (YOU do that!) we do love when he shows up at our holiday events. 🎅🏻👶🏻 Help us build more homes for heroes this season: <https://bit.ly/3cPTgnw>




Operation Finally Home

Thank you to the builder of all things. 🙏



Operation Finally Home

November is Veterans and Military Family Month! We'll be celebrating all month like by highlighting our families. Today we're featuring U.S. Marine Cpl Neftali Mendoza. We handed over the keys to his mortgage-free home back in January with the help of **Normandy Homes!** Read his story: <https://bit.ly/47ho1Zl>




Operation Finally Home

Today the students at Kingwood Park High School, Humble ISD (Students Helping Veterans: Big Heroes, Tiny Homes) and Summer Creek High School, Humble ISD, part of the Humble Independent School District, held their Notes of Love event! Thank you for your work building transitional housing for veterans!



Operation Finally Home

Today marks three years since we joined **Lennar** and **Lennar Charleston** in handing over the keys to a new home to U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Nathan Mikeska and family! Happy homeversary! Read his story here: <https://bit.ly/3nL60h5>



Operation Finally Home

There's nothing like the moment when our families see their new homes for the first time, you for making it possible! Featured here: U.S. Marine Corps Sgt Aaron Zurn's family. Read their story here: <https://bit.ly/3EoVfho>

Operation Finally Home

Today marks eight years since we handed over the keys to U.S. Army SFC Izzy Hillier with the help of Safeau Wood Homes. Happy homeversary! Read his story here: <https://bit.ly/3HXY9D9>




FACES, PLACES & SPACES

MAKING THE MOMENTS MATTER

Each year, we strive to continue our mission to build hope and honor those who have served our country. Since 2005, we've completed or are in planning on more than 540 home projects in more than 32 states. We're devoted to making all the moments – and projects – matter.



INTRODUCING SHEENA BEAVER

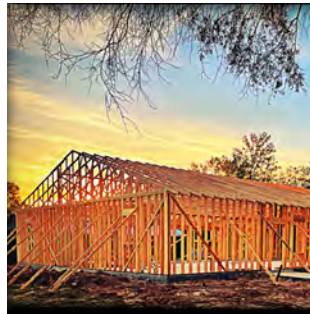


Sheena Beaver has joined the Operation Finally Home team as the Vice President of Operations. In this role, Beaver will work closely with David Drew, Executive Director,

Operation Finally Home, to help lead, manage and resource Operation Finally Home projects. This will include developing and managing project budgets, managing builder and contract selection, onboarding and providing support before, during and post-project. Beaver will also help refine processes for identifying, vetting and approving project applicants. We're excited to welcome Sheena to the Operation Finally Home family!

BUILDING HOPE AND COMMUNITY

Through our partnership with Lowe's Home Improvement and the Big Heroes, Tiny Homes project of the Humble Independent School District in Houston, Texas, Operation Finally Home has played a part in planning more than 35 tiny homes for veterans. Operation Finally Home, in partnership with the Structural Building Components Association (SBCA), is helping to construct a community center in Liberty, Texas, creating a gathering space for veterans living there.



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.

NOTES OF LOVE



At Rusty's celebration of life, guests were invited to write short notes of love, sharing about Rusty's impact on their lives. If you'd like to share a memory, a Scripture verse, a word of encouragement or a prayer with his family, please send your note to: Operation Finally Home, 12600 Hill Country Blvd., Suite R-275, Austin, TX 78738

FINAL THOUGHT

If you filter all your decisions through truthfulness and integrity and follow God's will, you will always find the right answer.

– Rusty Carroll,
Operation Finally Home president

Visit OperationFinallyHome.org or call 512-329-2661 to help a hero!