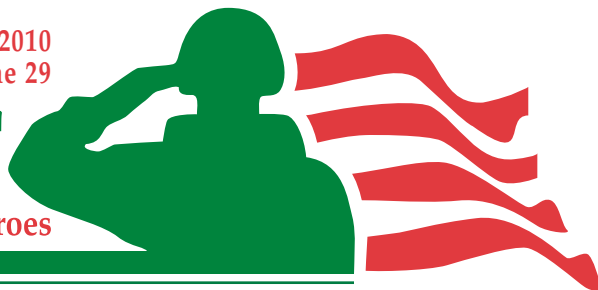


THE ROAD TO RECOVERY REPORT

December 2010
Volume 29



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

Emergency aid requests peaking during Christmas Season



Providing
Emergency Aid
to Severely
Wounded Troops
and Their Families
in Crisis

KEY PROGRAMS:

Emergency
Financial Aid

Family Support
Network

Career Network

Road to Recovery
Conference & Tribute

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Special Hero.....4

An increase in severely wounded soldiers returning from action overseas and an overwhelmed VA benefits system have combined to push requests for emergency aid up dramatically, reports Coalition Case Manager, Neida Sotomayor.

"Our phones are ringing off the hook," Neida says. "So many severely wounded troops and their families have reached the end of their financial rope, and they turn to us when they are faced with a foreclosure or having the heat turned off."

The influx of emergency aid requests is jeopardizing the Coalition's Secret Santa Project. The 2010 Emergency Secret Santa Project aims to provide a \$500 gift card to families of severely wounded troops to buy Christmas presents for their children.

The Coalition started the Secret Santa Project in 2005 and has already handed out 3,270 gift cards to families at Christmastime.

These families can also use the card to buy groceries or other necessities like diapers or baby formula to get them through the holiday season.

A family like the Easterling family.

Patrick Easterling was wounded multiple times while serving in Iraq. He took shrapnel in his right thigh, was shot in the shoulder and right foot and suffered brain injuries from bomb blasts.

The myriad of medical issues Patrick has as a result of his service means he is unable to work and must be monitored on a weekly basis by doctors.

Patrick's wife Leticia must care for him and the couple's six kids as well as worry about bills.

"The kids eat a loaf of bread at every meal," says Easterling. "Just buying them

food or clothes that fit properly is tough. They grow like weeds."

Coalition donors rushed emergency aid to the Easterling family and "without this financial support, we would probably be without energy and even worse, homeless," Patrick Easterling recalls.



Many wounded GIs like this one, who lost both legs serving his country, are unable to afford Christmas gifts from Santa. As a result their children may be heartbroken on Christmas morning.

"All my family and I would like to thank the Lord above for letting us see yet another day here on Earth and to thank Him for the wonderful gift of relief that we received from the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. We feel so touched and blessed. This has brought tears to our eyes, love to our hearts, food on our table, power to our home. We can never thank you enough."

"You can see how close to the edge many of the families of severely wounded troops live," says Case Manager Sotomayor.

"A family like the Easterlings are stretching every dollar just to keep their heads above water. Even after a financial crisis has passed, budgets are tight and it's tough for them to give their six children a Merry Christmas."

Coalition National Spokesman Jorge DeLeon recently wrote to Coalition members with the grim news about the Emergency Secret Santa Project for 2010.

"I don't want my fellow wounded GIs to have to choose between paying the bills OR buying Christmas presents for their children," DeLeon wrote.

The Coalition's Emergency Secret Santa Project lets these heroes know their country has not forgotten them, and will make hundreds of little faces light up again with the magic of the Christmas Season. ■

Providing Emergency Aid to Severely Wounded Troops and Their Families in Crisis

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THE COALITION AT WORK



By the numbers: Your generosity at work



Here's a brief sampling of severely wounded troops who have been helped by your generous donations to the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. These and other U.S. servicemen and women have fallen into desperate circumstances and need more assistance than we've been able to provide thus far.

- Sergeant Johnny W. of Mansfield, Texas lost his left foot while serving in Iraq. He needed \$2,400 to catch up on overdue rent.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,400.00**
- Specialist Joshua W. of Crittenden, Kentucky found himself behind on rent, car and utility payments after returning hurt from a tour in Afghanistan. He needed \$2,255.13 to get caught up.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,255.13**
- Sergeant Justin A. of Waterloo, Iowa was facing foreclosure on his home if he couldn't make an immediate payment of \$3,305.49.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$3,305.49**
- Sergeant Phillip B. of Summerville, South Carolina shattered his leg while on duty in Iraq. He requested \$738.02 to make an overdue rent payment.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$738.02**
- Senior Master Sergeant Robert K. of Montgomery, Alabama is living with severe pain in his back from action while serving in Iraq. He contacted the Coalition because he needed \$1,621.23 for back rent and overdue car payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,621.23**
- Foot and back injuries from a tour in Iraq put Specialist Larry B. of Cheyenne, Wyoming behind on rent and car payments. He needed \$1,471.34 to get his bills current.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,471.34**
- Marine Corporal Adlee M. of Maple Hill, North Carolina couldn't afford to move into a new dwelling. He needed \$3,090.00 for his deposit and first month's rent.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$3,090.00**
- Army Specialist Jacob W. left a limb on the battlefield in Afghanistan. He needed \$1,100.00 to keep his vehicle on the road.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,100.00**
- Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Adam B. of Grand Junction, Colorado had overdue car, electricity and water bills. It would take \$919.13 to pay off all his overdue bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$919.13**

More creative ways you can help our troops severely wounded in Afghanistan or Iraq

Volunteer at a Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center near you. Your skilled hands and warm heart are needed by our patients to heal, progress and be comfortable. Hospital employees will also be grateful for your assistance and will pay careful attention to finding tasks to match your skills and abilities.

Other ways to volunteer include: Volunteering your time as a caregiver for a few hours to give the spouse of a severely disabled GI a much-needed break; offering to run errands for a wounded soldier or his/her spouse; or mentoring or tutoring wounded troops who need to develop new skills for job training.

Take a wounded serviceman or woman out to a movie, sporting event or other activity. You can help a seriously injured GI forget about their pain for awhile, and perhaps even help in their mental and emotional recovery, by getting them out of their home or hospital for an afternoon or evening.





IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Thank you letters from our severely wounded troops



Charles Reed has had 6 spinal surgeries since he was severely injured while serving in Iraq. Today, his painful injuries make work almost impossible and he is battling sky-high electric bills as he tries to provide for his family.

through for us. Thanks to the Coalition, I can stand a little straighter because much of my burden has been shared by their generosity, kindness and most of all their love and prayers.

– *Charles Reed, Shreveport, Louisiana*

Coalition staffers were very thorough and very patient as they assisted me with a partial payment to my mortgage company that allowed me to get caught up.

This has made a big difference for my family. Through the assistance provided by Coalition donors I am able to keep my home and have a place for my family and friends. We are forever grateful and hope they can continue bringing help to other soldiers and their families.

– *Thomas A., San Antonio, Texas*

I was in the Connecticut Army National Guard for 22 years. My unit spent a year in Baghdad where I suffered from respiratory problems.

When I returned, I was the victim of a scam and lost \$3,000. I couldn't make my May car payment and I didn't know what I was going to do about June's rent, cable and phone bills.

The Coalition was there just when I needed them. I would tell any other soldier they should come to you guys. Thank you for your help.

– *Jacqueline Milhomme, Broad Brook, Connecticut*

A roadside bomb left me in a coma for 6 weeks, 15% of my body was burned, 15 broken bones and my right hand was amputated.

I am able to sleep at night now from the help I received. It meant the world to me. Bills are/were tight after the bad divorce. Thanks to Coalition donors, I was able to put food on the table. I really don't have words to say or describe the feeling.

– *Bradley G., Palestine, Texas*



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **SALUTE TO A SPECIAL HERO** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Coalition donors help retired Marine rebuild life



On October 12, 2004, Cpl. Donny Daughenbaugh of Echo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Marines was on night foot patrol in the village of Mahmoudiva just south of Baghdad, Iraq.

Suddenly, a car screeched to a stop near the patrol and opened fire. Cpl. Daughenbaugh was hit. A bullet ripped through his left cheekbone, shattering his jaw and lodging between the base of his skull and the top of his spine. Doctors later said the bullet missed vital nerves and the brain by mere millimeters.

"I felt my face get hot," he later recalled. "There was so much blood. I knew I was shot. I'm trying to radio in, tell them I'm hit. But I can't hear myself. It doesn't sound like me at all."

Daughenbaugh gave himself a morphine injection and stayed with his comrades in the firefight.

Doctors rebuilt his jaw with a metal plate and he underwent 30 reconstructive surgeries and intensive physical therapy to learn to speak again. The .30 caliber bullet remains lodged in his head because doctors say it would be too dangerous to remove.

As a result, Daughenbaugh still suffers from severe headaches and seizures.

Despite his injuries, Donny acts as a national spokesman for the Coalition, traveling around the country to raise awareness of the financial crises faced by thousands of severely wounded servicemen and women.

Recently, Donny traveled from his Texas home to Washington, DC where he met with hospitalized troops at Walter Reed Hospital and laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, VA.

It was something of a homecoming for Donny. He spent time at nearby Bethesda Naval Hospital, where he recuperated from his combat injuries.

Donny told the wounded troops he visited he was "very familiar with how the physical challenges of overcoming one's injuries can often be made even more difficult by the financial pressures that many service members and their families feel during their recovery."

He also distributed a total of \$6,600 in emergency financial aid from Coalition donors to 22 wounded troops at the hospital who were having trouble meeting basic needs for their families. Donny remembered his own days as a struggling wounded family man and told the troops how much the Coalition's aid meant to him.

"I am thankful to be here, to see my children grow up and to help other seriously injured veterans like myself and to raise awareness for an organization like the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. I want to thank you and tell you this program has the potential to change lives. Thank you and God Bless," he concluded. ■

Retired Marine and current Coalition spokesman Donny Daughenbaugh was shot in the face during a firefight in Iraq. Coalition donors helped Donny and his family as they struggled through his rehabilitation.



Today, Donny is working with the Coalition to aid even more seriously wounded troops and their families, and is pictured at a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

