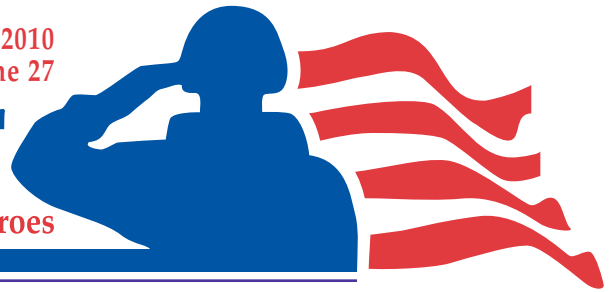


THE ROAD TO RECOVERY REPORT

July 2010
Volume 27



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

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

INSIDE:

The Coalition
at Work.....2

In Their Own Words:
Thank you letters from
our severely wounded
troops.....3

Making a
Difference.....4

Wounded GIs forced to wait months for disability checks become desperate for food as Fourth of July approaches



Ryan S.'s story is like so many other wounded troops in America today.

While deployed to Iraq, the Humvee he was riding in was bombed by Iraqi insurgents. Ryan was severely burned and suffered multiple shrapnel wounds.

He returned home and retired from the Army. Quickly, he found his wounds made it impossible for him to work at a regular job. Ryan was totally dependant on his disability benefits to feed his family, including his 3-year-old son.

However, problems processing his disability claim left him without income but with a growing stack of unpaid bills.

"We get calls all the time from severely wounded servicemen and women who are waiting for their disability claim to be processed and have no way to feed or clothe their families in the meanwhile," said Coalition General Manager Patrick Norberto.

In testimony before Congress, Veterans Affairs Chief Technology Officer Peter Levin said, "In my judgment, it [the benefit system] cannot be fixed."

The figures are staggering. Right now, the VA has a backlog of more than 1.1 million disability claims. Veterans wait on average 6 months for a decision on their claim and can wait for years if they file an appeal.

In addition, between 17 percent and 25 percent of all claims are found to contain errors resulting in additional wait time. Veterans Committee Chairman Rep. Bob Filner summed it up during the hearing by say-

ing, "People die before their claim is adjudicated. They lose their home."

Recently, Coalition spokesman Jorge DeLeon wrote to CSAH supporters about this growing problem.

"This is an insult to my fellow troops who have lost an arm or leg, or have been brain-damaged, burned, blinded or paralyzed while serving in Afghanistan or Iraq," writes DeLeon.

"It's obvious they can't count on the government to help them – at least not very quickly. And that's exactly why the emergency financial aid provided by you and other patriotic Americans is so important."

The Coalition's Fourth of July Emergency Food Drive has set a goal of rushing emergency financial aid within 10 days to every severely wounded GI who contacts us asking for help to feed their family over this patriotic holiday.

Coalition donors were able to help Ryan S. pay overdue utility, rent and car payments as well as provide groceries for his family for two months.

As Ryan recently wrote: "The help CSAH gave to me got me together for a good while. Thanks so much and my family thanks you, too."

"For every successful emergency aid request like Ryan S., there are many more severely wounded troops and their families waiting for disability benefits and wondering how they are going to pay the bills this month," said Norberto.

"Hopefully Coalition donors will let these brave troops and their families know they appreciate their sacrifice and will give them much-deserved emergency aid," he concluded. ■



Coalition spokesman Jorge DeLeon knows how difficult it is for severely wounded troops to get by while waiting for disability benefits. DeLeon received emergency financial aid from the Coalition after he lost his leg in Afghanistan and now he is helping raise awareness of this problem nationwide.

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

Coalition to Salute America's Heroes ★ PO Box 96440 ★ Washington, DC 20090-6440 ★ www.saluteheroesproject.org



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 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, so please send a special Fourth of July donation to help them and their families if you can.

- Army Sgt. Scott O. of Hiawatha, Iowa faced foreclosure on his home unless he paid \$1,498.49 in overdue mortgage payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,498.49**
- Marine Lance Cpl. Dustin H. of Brookville, Indiana faced a \$2,540.46 bill to get his vehicle back on the road.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,540.46**
- Facing imminent foreclosure, Sgt. Joshua S. of Forest Grove, Oregon contacted the Coalition. He needed \$2,543.80 to save his home.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,543.80**
- Army Sgt. Adam P. of Arlington, Texas contacted the Coalition because he found himself \$2,536.85 behind on rent, utilities and car payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,536.85**
- Marine SSgt. Charles M. of Northglenn, Colorado was behind on his mortgage and utility bills. He needed \$1,619.58 to get back on his feet.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,619.58**
- Army Sgt. Gerald G. of Hibbing, Minnesota had an overdue rent payment of \$1,548.72.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,548.72**
- Army SPC William M. of Silver Spring, Maryland had an unexpected vehicle bill of \$1,621.05
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,621.05**
- Army Sgt. Joel L. of Colorado Springs, Colorado had fallen behind on his mortgage payments. He called the Coalition and requested \$1,447.23 to get caught up.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,447.23**
- Army SSgt. Bruce F. of Winder, Georgia suffered a severe spinal injury while serving in Afghanistan. He needed \$836.67 for auto insurance and utility bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$836.67**
- While recovering from wounds suffered while serving in Afghanistan, Victor A. of San Antonio, Texas needed \$1,753.80 to repair his vehicle.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,753.80**
- Navy Petty Officer Orlando M. of Fort Myers, Florida let the Coalition know he had \$799.37 in overdue medical and utility bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$799.37**
- Army Sgt. Randy M. of Culpeper, Virginia was \$1,400 behind in his rent payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,400.00**
- Army Sgt. Twyla G. of Webb City, Missouri needed a hip transplant after serving in Iraq and contacted the Coalition about \$510.19 in overdue utility bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$510.19**
- Army SPC Damaon D. of Watertown, New York lost his right eye while serving in Iraq. He had \$1,204.49 in overdue utility bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,204.49**
- Army Cpl. James K. of San Antonio, Texas needed \$7,630 for urgent home repairs.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$7,630.00**
- Marine Sgt. Mark G. of Georgetown, Texas owed back rent, utility and car payments. He needed \$1,853.03 to get caught up.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,853.03**
- Army Sgt. James M. of Lakewood, New Jersey had an overdue mortgage payment of \$2,269.69 looming.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,269.69**





Thank you letters from our severely wounded troops



'On behalf of all veterans – Thank you, thank you, thank you'

"People like you [Coalition donors] gave us back the hope we were starting to lose in this country my husband fought for."

– Amber Hardy (wife of a wounded soldier)

▶ Thank God for you, Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, for helping me and my family through a very difficult time. Recently, I blacked out while driving due to a heart condition. Both the kids and myself suffered no injuries but I was employed as a commercial truck driver and am no longer allowed to drive. You blessed me by providing financial assistance with my home mortgage, utilities and medical bills from the emergency room visit after the accident. May God continue to bless you as you help those in need. On behalf of all veterans – thank you, thank you, thank you.

– Wade P., Jackson, Tennessee

▶ I have been medically retired by the Army. Our income level dropped significantly and we've exhausted our savings. During our worst month, CSAH paid our rent and gave us a \$500 gift card for food, gas and necessities. I have never been so broke and stressed about my financial situation before. It was humiliating and difficult. I am so thankful CSAH helped me and my wife hold on. I am even more thankful for the way they did it . . . kindly and respectfully. It's hard enough to ask for help, it's even harder if people treat you bad when you're already at your lowest. CSAH helped financially and thanked me for my service to our country. You rock!

– Delano Smith, Fort Knox, Kentucky

▶ The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes is a lifesaver. They are by far the best assistance out there for soldiers in need.

– Yenifer Martinus, Clarksville, Tennessee

▶ As I returned home to my family, my pay went down 50%. My bills were too much for us to handle. The Coalition has really changed our lives and have given us the help and support we needed to pull through the rough time. My medical problems will always be there, but CSAH lifted a great burden from our shoulders by saving our home and restoring our lives.

– Roger Moore, Maysel, West Virginia

▶ There are no words to accurately describe our gratitude to the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. There have been times we thought we would not make it. He has never been the same as he was before he went overseas. Sometimes we wonder if anyone really cares about the sacrifices these soldiers have made for our freedom. People like you [Coalition donors] gave us back the hope we were starting to lose in this country my husband fought for.

– Jeremy Hardy's wife, Amber, Mobile, Alabama

▶ There are many organizations out there that help vets and most can only do so much but CSAH pulled through for me like no other. I never thought I would be in this position in my life barely getting by, my life crumbling down and I couldn't stop it. I thought I would end up on the streets but with CSAH's help, I am able to focus on my kids and other life goals and move on to bigger and better things. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

– Paul DeLaCerde, Kingwood, Texas





Wounded GI facing foreclosure says, 'I was worth more dead than alive!'



SPC Robert Harr spent almost a year rooting out insurgents in Baghdad as a communications advisor to the Iraqi army.

During one mission near the end of his tour of duty, Harr found his small detachment pinned down by deadly small arms fire coming from tall reed grass along the banks of the Tigris River.

Harr took up his position, and when he heard a burst of gunfire coming from the grass, he fired. Almost immediately he was hit.

As he later described the experience, "It felt like someone had hit me on the right ear with a baseball bat."

With the help of an Iraqi private, Harr managed to reach a field medic team, where an experienced medic recognized the gunshot wound and immediately staunched the blood flow.

"The whole right side of my face was paralyzed," Harr said. "The bullet entered underneath my left eye and exited just below my right ear. The bullet took out several teeth, shattered my right facial nerve and severed the main artery in my neck.

"I told my doctor I'm OK; my team needs me. The doctor gave me a mirror and said, 'You are going home.'"

Harr retired from the service and moved to Georgia.

However, the fallout from the sniper's bullet followed him and his family.

Harr lost one job after having terrifying flashbacks, and lost another after he suffered extreme anxiety in large crowds.

"I am no longer the Robert Harr who enjoyed life, saw humor in everything and who lived each day like there is no tomorrow," he said.

Bills piled up and foreclosure became a real possibility for Harr and his wife, Lucy, who have two small children. The financial burden weighed heavily on the wounded hero's mind.

"I was worth more dead than alive," he remembers. "My family could pay off the house and all the loans."

Just as Harr reached the end of his rope, a friend recommended he contact the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes.

Coalition staffers quickly responded to Harr's emergency request for aid by paying several months of their mortgage, allowing the young family to remain in their home.

"[The Coalition] truly listened and were understanding and compassionate," he said. "They are St. Michael's shield to protect the wounded soldiers from after

combat threats."

Today, the Harr family is able to keep up with their mortgage, but there are many severely wounded soldiers who find themselves in the same situation.

"Not every severely wounded GI who contacts the Coalition is as desperate as Robert Harr," says Coalition General Manager Patrick Norberto. "But some are. And it is a testament to the thousands of Coalition donors all across the country that when a seriously injured serviceman or woman finds himself in a financial jam, they can turn to the Coalition and know America appreciates their sacrifice and will take care of them." ■



Robert Harr was shot in the face by an Iraqi sniper. As he struggled to adjust to civilian life with his wound, he nearly lost his home. Coalition donors came to the rescue and now he has a place to live with his wife Lucy and their two children.



Robert Harr's young sons missed playing with their Daddy after a severe wound from an Iraqi sniper nearly ended their father's life. Coalition donors helped save the Harrs' home.