

THE NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN

THE Home Front

A Special Report for Friends of the VFW National Home for Children • Winter 2017

Basic Training for Leaving A Legacy — Our “Ways To Give Smarter Boot Camp”

- Looking for ways to expand your commitment to the National Home and the families of our nation's war heroes? Recently we created a “Ways To Give Smarter Boot Camp” handbook that outlines smarter options for giving and creating your personal legacy to the National Home.
- The handbook provides concrete examples of how giving smarter can improve your financial outlook and establish your legacy to our nation's heroes, their families and their children. You'll get the basic training you need to understand giving options like Gifts By Will, Life Income Gifts, Donating Appreciated Assets and more, that can help you:
- Reduce your taxes
 - Ensure a guaranteed, fixed income for your lifetime
 - Save on capital gains
 - Have the personal satisfaction of helping military and veteran families



Request our free “Ways to Give Smarter Boot Camp” handbook today at givematerial@vfwnationalhome.org or call 517-663-7931 to talk about ways to give smarter to meet your personal, charitable, and financial goals.

A Very Cootie Christmas for the Children of the National Home



Florida Cooties. Everyone enjoyed a meal and decorated cookies together at the Guest Lodge!

Friday evening, members of the VFW Department of Michigan District 8 organized the delivery of presents to the children living on campus. Fire trucks, transporting Santa and Mrs. Claus from house to house, delivered gifts to the children eagerly waiting.

The fun culminated in a Christmas Party on Saturday. Cooties and resident families gathered at the Community Center for a morning of fun and entertainment, followed by the Florida Picnic in the Show. There was a craft sale and magic act, a performance by the Capitol City Chorus, and at noon, the big man himself arrived for a special visit with the children at the party — bearing gifts, of course!

National Home Campus Calendar of Events
Feb 8 • Trustees Board Meeting
Mar 19-25 • National Home Awareness Week
Apr 7-9 • Easter Treat Weekend
May 18-20 • Department Jr. Vice Commanders and Presidents Orientation
June 7 • Trustees Board Meeting

Please Support the Education Fund

The National Home empowers both children and adult residents with a range of educational programs and resources to help them succeed in the classroom, the workplace, and in life.

Our Education Fund covers all expenses associated with education, training and mentoring of residents. These include tutoring, life skills, computer and science labs, library, parenting skills, community service and more.

But it's only through the support of friends like you that these programs are possible. Will you help give our residents the power of an education?

How to help:

You can donate specifically for our educational programs by writing “Education Fund” in the memo line on your check, and return your gift in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope.

Thank you!

MILITARY & VETERAN FAMILY HELPLINE

800-313-4200

A service of the VFW National Home for Children

help@vfnationalhome.org

Life skills classes help residents build brighter futures

Residents of the National Home come from all over the country, with different life experiences and different needs. When they leave, they will continue to face daily life challenges, including decision-making, setting goals, problem-solving, personal finances, household management and more.

Thanks to our patriotic supporters, we are able to provide residents with Life Skills classes to help them make a brighter start.

Class offerings are both practical and fun, ranging from financial planning, parenting, and other life skills to making holiday treats, square-foot gardening and relaxation techniques.

Financial class participants learn about setting realistic goals, writing their personal financial plan and making it work in the real world, the basics of credit scores, reaching long-term financial goals and more.

Parenting classes cover a range of topics like setting appropriate limits, finding discipline techniques that work and other common

YOU

Make It Happen

parenting challenges. Parents say that they enjoy the chance to share their parenting highs and lows within the group and to learn from one another's experiences.

These workshops give residents the opportunity to learn how to tackle common household tasks themselves instead of relying on store-bought products or purchased services. Topics have included meal prepping, basic sewing and gardening. These fun, practical workshops have been a hit with residents, who say they can't wait to see what new topics the instructors will come up with each month.



A resident cooks up some fun during one of our Life Skills classes.

Our life skills programs and workshops aren't limited to parents, either. Our Teen Life Skills Program provides education, mentoring, and hands-on experiences for children aged 12-19. The program helps provide a solid foundation for teens as they continue on their path toward adulthood.

It's clear our families gain a great deal from our Life Skills programs, all of which will serve them well beyond their days of living at the National Home.

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Did you know...

The unemployment rate among military spouses is more than three times the national average.

THE HOME FRONT

A publication of:
**VFW National Home
for Children**
3573 South Waverly Road
Easton Rapids, MI 48827
Phone: 866-483-9642
www.vfwnationalhome.org

Staff:
Patrice Green, *Executive Director*
Molly Studinger, *Program Director*
Tim Smith, *Operations Director*
Sue Alverson, *Development Director*
Todd Marriott, *Facilities Director*

Did you know...

There are roughly 84,000 military couples with both parents deployed, and about 36,000 of them have kids.



National Home Achieves Accreditation from BBB Wise Giving Alliance

The VFW National Home for Children is proud to have recently achieved accreditation by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, a distinction that highlights excellence in leadership and finances and signifies that the National Home is deserving of donor trust as a well-run nonprofit organization.

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance is the nation's only comprehensive charity evaluator, assisting donors in making sound giving decisions. Their broad standards go beyond what the law requires and dive deeper than other charity monitoring organizations. Each BBB WGA charity report process involves a rigorous review using 20 holistic BBB Charity Standards, in conjunction with charity officials about corrective actions needed to address deficiencies, and quality control measures to assure report accuracy.

"By achieving accreditation, the VFW National Home for Children has earned public trust having demonstrated its commitment to sound governance, transparency and achieving its mission," says Art Taylor, president and CEO of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. All of the Wise Giving Alliance charity reports can be viewed online at give.org.

A Word from... Patrice Green, Executive Director

The icy winds of winter are whipping through the streets of our campus here in Easton Rapids this time of year, but we're not going to let a little cold weather get in the way of our efforts to assist the children and families of our nation's war heroes.



In fact, as you'll see in this issue of *The Home Front*, winter is a time when we're focusing on the needs of our residents more than ever - helping parents gain the life skills to support themselves and their families; helping our children achieve educational milestones; and staging joyful activities that strengthen the family ties and allow children to experience the special moments that they deserve. It's your patriotic support of the National Home that makes all of this possible!

I hope you'll take a moment to read about the latest study from Blue Star Families, which reinforces the growing challenges that so many spouses of our active-duty service members and

veterans face. These challenges are often connected and include issues such as unemployment, rising costs of living, the demands of raising children alone, and the struggle to pursue educational opportunities.

It's hard enough for spouses to cope with one of these issues while a loved one is deployed, but the convergence of so many challenges can be devastating. This is why, in addition to our housing, case management and basic needs services, the National Home continues to provide effective programs like our Life Skills Classes, which you'll learn about in this issue of *The Home Front* as well.

On a closing note, make sure you read about the selfless dedication of Life Member Al Cantu in our Donor Spotlight section. Like so many of our heroes who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, his story is an inspiration to us all!

Patrice Green

DONOR SPOTLIGHT Eliseo "Al" Cantu

After 20 years of service in the Army during Vietnam and with roles as both a VFW Department of Texas State Commander and a National Home trustee, you would have thought that Eliseo "Al" Cantu had done more than his share for our nation and its veterans.

But when Al visited the National Home in the late 80s, it was an eye-opening experience for him; one that sparked a decades-long commitment to becoming more deeply engaged with our cause.

"On that visit, I learned what a jewel we have in the National Home. But I also quickly learned what serious challenges we had. I made it my mission to volunteer, advocate, donate and work to provide help, hope and honor to those children and families who seek and need assistance. I knew that it was the right thing to do, and I think I'm a better person today for doing that."

As Al devoted more of his time and energy to the Home, he gained insights about the incredible personal growth that the children and families experience here. "I've seen shy children grow into confident, appreciative and responsible members of their family. Their

involvement in projects such as 4H, visiting veterans in hospitals, honoring students in school and earning scholarships to colleges and institutes of higher learning are all made possible by the National Home volunteers, leadership and the staff."

The graduation programs held at the Home each year have been especially memorable for Al. He recalls, "I've experienced moments where the moon says that she never in her life believed that she would graduate from high school... but because of the National Home, she made it. What a powerful moment that is and it speaks volumes for our volunteers who help make those moments possible."

In his free time, Al enjoys golf, reading and going on sea cruises with his family and friends. But there's a special place in his heart for helping others. He offers these encouraging words to those who are considering volunteering:

"If you're a person with the very best intentions, then the National Home welcomes your desire to get involved and make a difference," says Al. "You'll gain the personal rewards of seeing a child and family in a happy, safe environment, working to make a go of it...all because you cared."



As a retired Vietnam Veteran and Life Member, Al wants to help others appreciate what a jewel we all have in the National Home.

Al has never looked back since making his decision to help the National Home so many years ago.

"The National Home is a cause where you can see positive results and provide a solid foundation for the future of our country. I am and will always be a strong advocate for our heroes and their families who served or are serving in our Armed Forces."

Where should we shine the Spotlight next?

If you would like to nominate another member of our community - or volunteer yourself - for a future Donor Spotlight, please contact Nancy Archambeau at (866) 483-9642, or by e-mail to: info@vfwnationalhome.org

New Survey Reveals Continued Strain On Military Families

According to a recently released 2016 Blue Star Families Military Family Lifestyle Survey, military families continue to experience the stress and strain of deployments despite drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The survey of 8,390 active-duty service members, veterans and spouses revealed that a high operational tempo is still tearing at the fabric of families in a number of areas, including family stability, quality of life, spouse employment and more.

The survey results indicate that extended family separations, frequent moves and outdated expectations of military spouses



More than 7 in 10 respondents said they felt unmet stress levels, while 42 percent said they experienced more than six months of family separation in the last 18 months.

Most concerning, the impact of deployment has substantially increased stress in children. The study showed that 66 percent of families surveyed can't get reliable child care, while 83 percent of spouses said that lack of child care has affected their ability to pursue employment or education.

From the survey's findings, it's clear that there continues to be an urgent need for the programs and services of the National Home. But rest assured, and with the continued support of our donors like you, we will work to reduce these statistics and remain constant in our mission to support the families and children of those who serve.