

## A Brave Soldier Returns Home —To The National Home

A previous National Home resident and Iraq war veteran, Brian is an American hero for many reasons.



Brian grew up at the National Home. Motivated by the events of 9/11 and inspired by the honor and faith of those who made his life at the Home possible, he chose to serve his country in Iraq.

“I knew that I wanted to defend my country, so 9/11 reaffirmed my belief that going into the military was what I should do.”

But when Brian’s unit was north of Baghdad on a routine clearance patrol, a bomb landed on their Humvee.

“When they picked me up, my foot swung past me and it was attached by the Achilles tendon and it was still in the boot. When I woke up 16 hours later, I asked where everyone else is and they told me that I was the only one who lived.”

It took twelve surgeries to reattach and restore functionality to Brian’s foot, but chronic pain and the memories of the friends he lost that day still trouble him. Today, Brian struggles with PTSD continually, yet he is still proud of his decision to serve.

When he was only seven years old, life had been chaotic. His divorced mother and three sisters found themselves destitute after his mother lost her job.



*Your generosity helped Iraq war veteran Brian when his family needed it most.*

But then his family learned about the National Home. Brian’s grandfather had served in WWII, and so his family was overjoyed to learn that they qualified to live at the National Home campus.

The family moved into one of the spacious single-family homes on campus, where they paid no rent or utility bills, and they were assigned a case manager to help them get back on their feet.

“It was a stability that I hadn’t known in years, really,” Brian recalls fondly. “I came from a violent household, and suddenly I was in a place where that didn’t exist.”

Today, Brian has moved on with his life, but he will never forget the support he received from the National Home.

Just as we were there for Brian when he needed us most, we will continue to be here for military and veteran families in crisis thanks to the generosity of dedicated supporters like you. *Thank you!*

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### *Did you know...*

The unemployment rate among military spouses increased by 33% from 2016 to 2017.\*

\* Blue Star Families' 2017 Military Family Lifestyle Survey

## THE HOME FRONT

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**VFW National Home  
for Children**

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## A Word from... Patrice Green, Executive Director

When I reviewed the stories for the Winter 2019 edition of *The Home Front*, I couldn't help but appreciate how our network of kindness and support spans generations.

In one article, we see how Korean War veteran Robert Johnson is sacrificing his time and energy to cook dinners that benefit the National Home. In another, we see how his efforts are being fulfilled through our educational programs for children and their parents.



As these stories and the bright smiles on our children's faces demonstrate, you are part of an incredible legacy of support that has the power to heal the wounds of war and make the family circle stronger for generations to come.

In this newsletter, you'll also read the inspiring story of Iraq war veteran Brian, whose path in life and on the battlefield was shaped by his years living on the National Home campus with his family. Brian's story is a poignant reminder of the incredible sacrifices that our nation's

heroes have made for our freedoms, and why it is our duty as Americans to do all we can to help their families and children in their time of need.

Thank you for your continued support, your patriotism and your generosity.

*Patrice Green*

## Did you know...

The first "little patriots" to live at the National Home in 1925 were six children and their mother who were left destitute when their father, Sgt. Edward Pollett, was hit by a car.

## Do you know a military or veteran family in need?

Encourage them to call our Military and Veteran Family Helpline at **800-313-4200** or email [help@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:help@vfwnationalhome.org)



Military & Veteran Family Helpline

A service of the VFW National Home for Children

Read further and you'll see how the forever young Military Order of the Cooties and VFW Department of Michigan District 8 are taking the time and extraordinary effort to stage an incredible Christmas weekend, and then deliver presents to many children who are barely old enough to tug on Santa's beard.

## Meet the 2018-2019 Buddy Poppy Child!

Last summer, the National Home named its 2018-2019 Buddy Poppy Child...Chloe!

Chloe is seven years old and lives in the Kansas house with her mother, Brandy, father, Bobby, and two brothers, Caleb and Chase. Last Fall, Chloe started the second grade and her favorite subjects in school are writing and math. Chloe loves being a part of Girl Scouts, cheerleading, and playing softball with her friends. When she grows up, Chloe wants to be a veterinarian.

"We do lots of fun things at the National Home. I am thankful for living there because we have a nice house and I have made lots of friends to play with," says Chloe.

Chloe's father Bobby is in the Army National Guard and has done tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Later this year he will be going to Kuwait. "My mom says living at the National Home will make things much easier for us while he is gone. There will be State Days and lots of fun things to do until my daddy comes home."



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# Robert Johnson

A proud Army veteran, Robert Johnson has been cooking up support for the VFW National Home for Children for years now.

Robert joined the Army at age 16 during the Korean War and was enlisted for two years. He rose to the rank of staff sergeant during that time. When Robert was up for re-enlistment, he joined the Air Force where he resumed his rank of staff sergeant and served for 12 years. For eight of those years, Robert was a personal cook for a three-star general.

Robert visited the National Home for the first time in 2015 and immediately fell in love with our cause and our campus. That was when he decided to put his cooking skills into action for a good cause. Upon his return to Harrisonville, Missouri, Robert began staging charity dinners at VFW Post #4409 to raise money for the National Home. To date, he has staged four charity dinners on our behalf, with more to come.

**Robert buys everything out of his own pocket for his charity dinners, and he cooks everything by himself!**

"I feel that it's a very worthwhile cause, and it helps bring awareness to veterans and their families," says Robert. "I believe in what you are doing. The National Home helps people down on their luck, and it helps them keep their self-respect."

When asked about his unique...and delicious...method for raising funds for the National Home, Robert responds, "Cooking is the only way I know to help raise money for you, and every drop in the bucket helps fill the need."

Robert wishes that he would have known about the National Home when he was raising his four children. His wife died at the age of 37 of pneumonia and once he left the military life, he earned a living as a cross-country truck driver to support his kids. He is especially enamored with the National Home's education programs and expansive campus.

"It is a great campus. It's setup as a small city with all that is necessary to support Veterans and their families in a comfortable setting. The educational programs help Veterans get back on their feet and the National Home provides fully furnished homes until they do."

Thank you, Robert, for being such a patriotic and loyal donor, and thank



you to the members of VFW Post #4409 for contributing to Robert's charity dinners. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

*Would you like to stage a charitable event to benefit the VFW National Home for Children? Call Sue Alverson at 517-663-7983 to explore your options.*

## 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@vfnationalhome.org](mailto:info@vfnationalhome.org)

## An Inside Look At The National Home's Child Care Center

If you've ever wondered what our "little patriots" are up to at our Child Care and Early Education Center, the answer is "A LOT!"

A beehive of activity here on the National Home campus, our Child Care and Early Education Center provides age-specific developmental and educational programs and activities for infants, toddlers and preschoolers alike.

Infants benefit from socialization, communication, color awareness and motor skill development, as well as a set schedule for feeding, sleeping, and diapering.

Toddlers benefit from potty-training (when ready), daily outdoor play, and set meal

and nap times. Their developmental activities focus on interactive social skills, physical coordination and fine motor skills. They also start learning to read, listen to stories, identify pictures and prepare for preschool.

Preschoolers' days are much more scheduled and education focused in preparation for kindergarten. They learn to write letters, learn about time, the weather and even the arts through music, art and nature.

On top of all that, throughout the year the



children get to go on field trips to exciting places like Potter Park Zoo, Andy T's Farm and the MSU 4-H Children's Garden. With all these activities going on, you can understand why nap time is a very popular time of day!

# It Was A Holly, Jolly Christmas For Children At The National Home!

For almost 90 years, The Military Order of the Cootie has been spreading Christmas cheer to the children of the National Home! Every year on the first weekend in December, they travel from far and wide to share the holiday spirit at the National Home.

Friday evening, members of the VFW Department of Michigan District 8 organized the delivery of presents to the children living on campus. Fire trucks rolled through the neighborhood, transporting Santa and Mrs. Claus from house to house to deliver gifts to the eagerly awaiting children. Little faces peeked out of windows and doors and lit up with the innocent joy that only the magic of the holiday season can inspire.

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 Snow (lunch) put together by Cooties from Florida. 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!

Among the Cooties in attendance were Supreme Commander, Emil Soltesz, and Supreme President, Pat Potter.

Thank you, Cooties and VFW Department of Michigan District 8!



## National Home Campus Calendar of Events

**Feb 6** • Trustee Board Meeting

**Mar 12-13** • Easter Treat  
Weekend

**May 16-18** • Department Junior  
Vice Commanders and Presidents  
Orientation

**Jun 5** • Trustee Board Meeting



## Knowledge Is Power — Give to the National Home's 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 YOU CAN HELP:**

**You can donate specifically for education expenses by writing "Education Fund" in the memo line on your check, and return your gift in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. *Thank you!***

