



## Help us Meet the Challenges of the Future

If you want to ensure that the National Home can meet the future needs of veterans' families and children, please consider a planned gift.

Nancy Archambeau, Assistant Development Director, can help find the option that's right for you – whether it's an estate gift, a gift annuity, or an investment in our Army Ross Endowment Fund. To get started, simply use the enclosed reply form to request our brochure, or contact Nancy directly. Call toll-free 866-483-9642, or reach her by email at [info@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:info@vfwnationalhome.org).

### Calendar of Events

- August 9 • Ohio Day • NH Campus
- August 10 • Michigan Day • NH Campus
- September 28 • Indiana Day • NH Campus
- October 4 • Illinois Day • NH Campus
- October 24 • Trustees Board Meeting • NH Campus
- October 25 • Annual meeting of Life Members • NH Campus
- October 25 • WJ/MO Fall Festival • NH Campus
- December 6 • Cootie Christmas Party • NH Campus

## National Home Work Crew Teaches Young People Work Skills, Pride

Summertime means sunshine, warm days, and the work season for the National Home's Work Crew.

The Work Crew consists of National Home young people ages 14 through 18 working together on a variety of maintenance and cleaning jobs throughout the summer months of June, July, and August.

"The Work Crew provides teens a unique environment to come together as a group," said Brian Lorente, Life Skills Coordinator. "I have seen several examples of shy young men and women come in on day one not speaking to anyone and leave at the end of the summer with a huge smile on their faces; completely changed individuals." It's designed to teach National Home young people good employment, time



management, and money management skills. The teens learn how to keep a job, such as the need to get to work on time and communicate if they will be late or miss a day of work. They learn to save a percentage of their money earned during the summer months.

And they're a big help to us! The teens work at a variety of jobs, including painting needed areas throughout the National Home community, such as street curbs, fire hydrants, and picnic tables; planting flowers; cleaning and

maintaining playgrounds and areas within the Community Center; and many other types of work.

And what does the Work Crew mean to the young people?

"The members talk about their pride of seeing the fruits of their labor," Lorente said. "It's visible in the flower gardens that have bloomed, the clean play areas that young children are enjoying, and the appreciation that visitors show to them for their efforts."

# THE Home Front

NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN

A Special Report for Friends of the VFW National Home for Children • Summer 2014

## Tragedy and Recovery: The Nowak Family Remembers

Everything changed for the Nowak family on February 1, 1963.

made the courageous decision to move us to the National Home."



*Tim and Robert Nowak revisit their past, and our campus, with Executive Director Patricia Green*

It was that unfortunate February night when Mary Ann Nowak lost her husband Thaddeus and her only brother Leo during a tragic, small candy store robbery in their Detroit neighborhood.

Thaddeus was a proud Navy veteran who served during World War II and was a member of the local VFW Post. That night, Mary Ann became a widow with four small boys.

Members of the local VFW Post 4553 of Detroit stepped in to help wife Mary Ann Nowak and her sons Tim, Robert, Thad and Larry. As Tim recalls, "The commander of the post said, 'Mary Ann, you need to get the boys out of Detroit and I know just the place to take them.' Soon after, my mom

Upon arriving, the four boys walked around and took everything in. They soon knew they were home.

Now a quiet, unassuming man, Tim remembers that for him and his brothers, life at the National Home became filled with all the joys and wonders of a simple country childhood. There was the yearly carnival, "the most

awaited event of the year." Both National Home and

Eaton Rapids residents mingled in an atmosphere ripe with ice cream, cotton candy, and the slow twirl of the Ferris wheel.

The rest of the days were filled with baseball games, track, and lots of friends. There were trips to the roller rink and the movie theater, ice cream and pop at Vic & Billie's, and more. Tim entered the sixth grade at the Union Street School that first year. He still remembers his teachers and how the kids in Eaton Rapids welcomed him with "open arms."

And he remembers the National Home as a safe haven from the turbulent streets of Detroit of the 1960s and 1970s. As he says with gratitude, "For the tragedy we went through, there's no better happy ending."

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### Did you know...

Military spouses are twice as likely to have completed their high school graduation than their civilian counterparts?

## THE HOME FRONT

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## Congratulations, Graduates!

A resident of the VFW National Home for Children since 2010, Alex is one of two National Home kids who recently graduated from Eaton Rapids High School. He took all college-level and Advanced Placement courses in his senior year, and maintained a 3.8 grade point average – while also volunteering frequently at the VA Hospital!

Next on his to-do list: getting an Associate's Degree in Biology at Lansing Community College. A lover of all animals and nature, Alex then hopes to transfer to Michigan State University to become a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Our other graduate, Gabriela, has also been a frequent volunteer at the VA Hospital as well as an active participant in our work program.

Gabriela's impressive presentation on bullying was featured in the Winter issue of *The Home Front*. This fall, she will be attending Grand Rapids Community College.

Please join us in congratulating our graduates on their achievements. And also, please accept our thanks for supporting Alex, Gabriela and all our National Home students!

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

I want to thank you for the generous support you have provided to the National Home.

You have chosen to partner with us, honoring the service veterans and active military by helping their families. And that makes me both proud and grateful. Without your support, these families might not have the chance to get back on their feet after a crisis.

In fact, when it became obvious that National Home children needed computers and high-speed internet access to succeed in school and that computers were needed campus wide, it was friends like you who stepped up to the challenge.

Your support allowed us to put a computer and printer in each house on campus, install high-speed broadband and equip our offices with computers to operate more efficiently. You brought our kids and entire organization into the 21st century!

But that was five years ago. And those computers and printers are starting to break down.



Worse, the computers just don't have enough memory or capabilities to handle the new programs – not to mention the huge quantity of images and video – that are processed today.

Fortunately, the cost of computing power continues to drop. So it's actually cheaper to replace our hardware – especially at nonprofit rates – than to upgrade and repair it.

But it's still a sizable expense: \$78,000 to replace all the

computers and printers on our campus. That's why I'm hoping that you will step up again, with a special gift for our **Technology Fund**.

You can make a real difference for veterans' children and families by helping us provide access to up-to-date computers and printers all across our campus. This is a difference that our families will feel every single day.

But it can't happen without you. Please let me hear from you very soon.

*Patrice Green*



**YOU**  
 Make It Happen



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT Richard Slowe

Richard Slowe is "all in" for the National Home, and we couldn't be happier about that.

Not only does Richard declare us to be his favorite charity on a personal level, he also led his VFW Post to achieve 100% Life Membership in the National Home. After investigating the matter, he convinced his fellow leaders at Whitman, MA Post 697 to subsidize new Life Members in both the Post and the Ladies Auxiliary until the full 100% goal was achieved. By the following year, it was done.

Why make such a commitment to our work? Richard says, quite simply, "I believe your organization is better than any other to assist veteran families who are in desperate need for help."

As the youngest child among eight growing up in the Great Depression, he understands how overwhelming that kind of need can be.

And as a veteran, he appreciates – and honors – the specific challenges of military families.

## Richard Slowe

Richard enlisted in the Air Force right out of high school, serving four years, including two years in the Pacific during the Korean War with a B29 Squadron. He had three brothers who served in the Army and a brother-in-law in the Army Air Force during WWII. His oldest son also served, following his dad's footsteps into the USAF.

Richard and his late wife enjoyed 56 years of wedded bliss, building a large family of six children and seven grandchildren.

He is justifiably proud of those children – but not only of them. Richard is also proud of his extended family: the children of the VFW National Home that he has met at National Conventions. As Richard says, he "was most impressed with their demeanor and ability to represent themselves for the home."

Feeling the nourishment of that extended family, Richard encourages others to also go "all in" for the National Home. "Give until it hurts a little bit," he says. "You'll feel better if you do."



*Korean War veteran Richard Slowe is a widower with six children and seven grandchildren.*

## 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

## Why our Technology Fund Deserves Your Support

Today, access to a fast computer is as necessary as pencils, paper and typewriters were when we were schoolchildren.

From middle school on, assignments must be typewritten rather than handwritten. To complete homework, students are directed to websites where answers and information can be found. Assignments are posted on school websites so that both parents and students can stay informed on

all homework needs. Grade school students exchange email addresses so they can work on group assignments. Resident parents take entire courses online.

In addition to school needs, National Home staff use their computers to communicate with residents and to keep track of their needs and progress.

And don't forget that the Internet is the main way that families communicate with a spouse or parent who is serving overseas. With webcam video, our active military families can stay close even when separated by thousands of miles – and what a wonderful gift that is!

For all these purposes and many more, we really must replace our outdated computers as quickly as possible.



Please help the National Home families and children by contributing to the Technology Fund today.

**How to help:**  
 To support the replacement of the National Home's computers, please write "Technology Fund" in the memo section of your check and use the enclosed pre-addressed envelope to mail in your donation. Thank you!