

## Grabbing a Lifeline



Coming home after three tours in Iraq, Shawn Hoskins had a hard time leaving his wartime experiences behind.

"I still smell the gunpowder...the jet fuel...the blood...every day," he says. "Things that I saw, things I had to do there, I don't like to talk about. There's nothing that will take it away."

Wife Melinda adds, "When he has a rough night, like in a storm, he sometimes doesn't know where he is. It takes him back to something."

Unfortunately, Shawn came home to financial difficulties that he was in no state to overcome, difficulties that quickly began to spiral and ultimately resulted in the family of six being evicted from their home.

That's when they heard about the VFW National Home for Children. After an interview, they came here to live and to put their lives back together.

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"It still makes me cry when I think about it," Shawn says. "This place is a godsend." Melinda adds, "It was like a TV show – the quiet, the serenity."

Shawn was assigned a caseworker who patiently helped him to heal.

Daycare was provided for the youngest girls, while both Shawn and Melinda worked and began restoring their finances.

With the family stress relieved, all the kids relaxed and enjoyed each other as well as their idyllic new community.

And now, after two years at the National Home, the family has been able to return to their hometown, ready to build a life on their own.

"Words cannot describe my gratitude for the VFW National Home," Melinda says. "They gave us hopefulness, they gave us peace, at a time when we were still at war in our house."

The family smiles more now. The joy is back in Shawn and Melinda's marriage. "And it's all because of the VFW National Home," Shawn says.



**See the video!**

Hear and see the Hoskins tell their heartwarming story more fully in our "Grabbing a Lifeline" video at [www.vfwnationalhome.org/videos](http://www.vfwnationalhome.org/videos)

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## Did you know...

Military families relocate 10 times more often than civilian families — on average, every 2 or 3 years.

## THE HOME FRONT

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for Children**

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

Many of the children on the National Home campus handle responsibility so well that it's easy to forget just how young they really are.

Some kids have had to step up and take over extra family duties because of separations from a parent serving overseas, others because of family struggles with divorce or financial problems. And sometimes, their added stress is due to the lingering impact of post-combat trauma, as with the Hoskins family, whose story is featured in this newsletter.

Here at the National Home, we help our kids grow and thrive in every possible way. Of course, we provide counseling and therapy for those who need it. And of course, we also support our kids' educational needs with tutoring, a library, on-campus learning events, science and computer lab – and now, new

and up-to-date computers in each family's home, thanks to the support of friends like you!

But we also help our kids to be kids – to relax and play, to engage in a genuinely varied menu of activities designed to capture their imaginations and develop their interests. To have fun.

These activities are a major strain on our budget, so we need your support to keep them

going. I hope you will consider making a special gift for our Activity Fund – because for the children, these activities are more than just fun. Truly, these are the childhood memories that our kids will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

And I'm sure you agree: they deserve good memories, as they have already sacrificed so much.

*Patrice Green*



### Check out our new website at [vfwnationalhome.org](http://vfwnationalhome.org)

The National Home has launched a brand new website designed to make it easier for families to find the help they need and for you to find information. New features of the website include photo galleries, an integrated campus blog, and more video. We're now mobile-friendly, too! Visit [vfwnationalhome.org](http://vfwnationalhome.org) to explore all the new features.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# Brandon Hadley

For Brandon Hadley, it's all about family.

His beloved grandmother grew up at the National Home, and he is certain that her experiences here helped to shape her into the amazing woman she is. As his grandmother has recently become ill, Brandon has deepened his involvement with the Home to honor her. In fact, he is hoping to visit the campus this summer!

Fortunately for us, Brandon's definition of family includes the extended family of VFW members and military families in general, and he has strong feelings about their treatment.

"First," he says, "it is normal for people to struggle with the aftermath of war. Families must be cared for in a manner that doesn't stigmatize them. Second, healing from war is a family problem. Families should be treated as a unit, as opposed to simply treating the veteran...to have a place that can help to keep families together while they deal with the struggles of war is important to me."

And Brandon continues, "I also believe that the brotherhood developed during

wartime should extend to our families. If veterans do not stand up to support one another's families, then I feel we have really let our battle buddies down."

Such deep concerns about the family of veterans are no surprise considering his own family's commitment to service. In addition to Brandon's service in Iraq, his great-grandfather was a World War I veteran, his grandfather was a veteran of World War II, and his father also served in the U.S. Army.

Currently a member of VFW Post #1089, Brandon is also a member of Canton #60 Free and Accepted Masons, and is very involved with his lodge. He loves to fish. He loves to spend time with family and friends. And he loves Michigan Football on Saturdays and Cleveland Browns football on Sundays.

But above all else, he definitely wants to encourage others to donate to the National Home, and to get involved.

As he explains, "I realize that complaining about things will never change the world. Real world-changing comes from the folks that are willing to give of themselves and their resources.



*Long-time donor Brandon Hadley is an Iraqi Freedom veteran, an 18-year member of the Ohio Army National Guard, VFW Life Member, and in his words, "just a normal down-to-earth guy."*

The people who get their hands dirty are the ones who change the world. Even if that change is just one family at a time."

### 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)

## Popular Activities Include Expanded 4-H Program

Thanks to the support of friends like you, we were able to expand our 4-H program this year, giving more kids the opportunity to learn responsibility, feel a sense of accomplishment and just have fun raising farm animals.

In preparation for livestock judging and auctions at this fall's county fair, we've got 16 kids raising pigs and 5 kids raising rabbits. Plus, there is now also a 4-H Cloverbud program for our 5 to 8 year olds. Activities include making no-sew blankets, drawing, gardening, scrapbooking, photography, and cooking.

And 4-H is just one of the activities our recreation department plans and organizes – activities that many of the kids would

never experience if it weren't for the National Home.

We have birthday parties, visits to the zoo, fishing expeditions...and of course, since these are kids with a family tradition of service, we give them lots of opportunities to learn and volunteer. Some children volunteer at the local animal shelter. Others participate in a service program at the VA hospital in Battle Creek, MI, spending a day each week with the veterans. Our kids have really enjoyed this time, and the visits gave them a genuine appreciation for the sacrifices these veterans made to serve our country.

During winter break, going on field trips is always a treat. For most of the kids, it's their first chance to try downhill skiing,

roller skating, or ice skating.

Throughout the year, our Community Center is a great place to play basketball, air hockey, ping pong or just hang out with friends.

But it's only the support of friends like you that makes these activities possible. Will you come to the aid of our kids – and our Activity Fund – with a special gift today?

#### How to help:

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

# Can a Charitable Gift Annuity Benefit You...AND Veterans?

There are very good reasons why charitable gift annuities have been around – and remained popular – for more than 100 years. An annuity not only helps your favorite charity, it can bring you important benefits as well, such as:

- providing a guaranteed, fixed income for life (some of which will be tax-free).
- possibly saving tax on Social Security benefits.
- supplementing your retirement income.
- reducing capital gains taxes, and saving on estate taxes.
- offering an alternative to CDs and money market funds.

If you want to ensure that the National Home can meet the future needs of veterans' families and children, establishing a charitable gift annuity may be the perfect option for you. And it's easy!

Nancy Archambeau, Assistant Development Director, can help you learn more about charitable gift annuities and how they might meet both your personal and your charitable goals. To get started, simply use the enclosed reply form to request our brochure, contact Nancy toll-free at 866-483-9642 or use our interactive tools at [vfnationalhome.org/annuity](http://vfnationalhome.org/annuity) to explore the benefits of different scenarios.

## Calendar of Events

**August 8** • Ohio Day • NH Campus

**August 9** • Michigan Day  
• NH Campus

**September 26** • Illinois Day  
• NH Campus

**September 27** • Indiana Day  
• NH Campus

**October 23** • Trustees Board Meeting  
• NH Campus

**October 24** • Annual meeting of Life Members • NH Campus

**October 24** • WI/MO Fall Festival  
• NH Campus

**December 5** • Cootie Christmas Party  
• NH Campus

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## New Computers Arrive on Campus!

The entire National Home campus is filled with gratitude toward all who contributed to our Technology Fund. Finally, each family house and all staff have brand new, up-to-date computers with high-speed internet access. Thank you for bringing us into the 21st century!

Our old computers and printers got a lot of use, and were starting to break down. They ran very slowly, and about

half of them relied on an operating system (Windows XP) that is no longer serviced or supported.

Worse, the computers were simply outdated. They just didn'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 was cheaper to replace our hardware – especially at nonprofit rates – than to upgrade and repair it.

And friends like you helped us to do just that, understanding that up-to-date computers aren't a luxury anymore. They're genuinely essential, especially for our school-age kids.

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!

So again, thank you – and please know that every person at the National Home is grateful – for this crucial improvement in our technological status.

