

FEATURE STORIES

HEADLINING STORIES FOR ROOFERS AND WATERPROOFERS ACROSS THE NATION

Bipartisan Sponsors and Union Volunteers Build Homes for Disabled War Veterans

Nonprofit *Homes for Our Troops* Has Completed 28 Homes Across the Country

Army Staff Sgt. Travis Strong, 29, was serving his second tour in Iraq when the Stryker armored combat vehicle he was patrolling in was hit by a roadside bomb called an explosively formed penetrator. He lost both of his legs in that explosion and went through months of rehabilitation to learn how to use his new prosthetics. His wife, Misty, and two children, Sean and Brianna, have been at his side during this long journey of healing.

They moved into a home provided by the military, but the accommodations were rough on a family just beginning to live with injury and recovery. "The military doesn't have many homes with handicap access," Misty Strong said.

Then one day, the family got a call. Homes for Our Troops, a non-profit organization that builds and renovates homes for severely injured service members, told the Strongs it would build them a new home in Golden, Colorado.

An Organization Brings Hope

Homes for Our Troops, founded in 2004, is strongly committed to helping those who have selflessly given to their country and have returned home with serious disabilities and injuries. The organization assists these veterans by raising donations of money, building materials and professional labor, and coordinating the process of building a new home or adapting an existing home for handicapped accessibility. All services are at no cost to the veterans they serve.

The Strongs' project was supported by the Credit Union Association of Colorado and National Journal Group and built with help from the Democratic National Convention Committee. A similar project took place in Minneapolis-St. Paul, sponsored by the Republican National Convention. Roofers from Local 58, Colorado Springs, CO, and Local 96, Minneapolis, MN, were proud volunteers on the respective projects.

Roofers Step Up

Local 58, Colorado Springs, CO, Organizer Darren Bautista heard about the three-day "Build Brigade" at a building trades meeting in April. He contacted Homes for Our Troops to



The crew that worked on Travis Strong's home in Golden, CO, from left: George Bautista, Local 58 members Michael Gallegos, Miguel Estrada, Travis Bautista, Morris Martinez, Rino Roussel, Leonard Zabor, Adrian Sosa, Robert Tafoya, Vietnam veteran Fred Solano, Darren Bautista, Wade Mills and SSG Travis Strong. Volunteers not pictured include Iraq veteran Jayson Norman, Ed Staggs and Obie Carlson.

see if they needed a roofing contractor for the project. They did, and Local 58 signatory contractor Central States Roofing stepped up to donate equipment, trucks and labor for the Strong project. Local 58 JATC donated money for rooms and food needed to sustain the roofers over the weekend. Fifteen union roofers volunteered their time and labor. The plan was to build the exterior of the home in three days.

On June 21, the roofers showed up ready to work. They were promised the plywood would be on and they could start roofing that morning. When they showed up, none of the plywood was installed or inspected, so they helped the other union tradesmen start sheathing so they could get started on the roof.

The roofers installed most of the plywood deck and roofed the home, which was roughly 38 squares at 8/12 pitch, in 1 ½ days. Said Brother Bautista: "I'm going to brag. Roofers Local 58 tore it up. We were the biggest and fastest by far, we were the number one outfit there on the project for those one-and-a-half days."



Ed Staggs, fastest shingler in the west, throws down some squares on the Strong home.

Our Whole Life Will Be Easier

“I’m just amazed how people have pulled together for us,” Travis Strong said during the groundbreaking ceremony in April. “I just really don’t know what to say.”

Since then, much progress has been made on the house, which is specially designed to provide wheelchair access throughout, from outside ramps and widened doorframes to roomier bathrooms and more accessible showers.

Travis Strong received his flag, deed and keys in late August during the Democratic National Convention, when delegates were invited to tour his new accessible and green home. The home is expected to be completed in October.

For Misty Strong, the new dwelling will bring stability the family hasn’t experienced since her husband began serving in the Army. As a true military family, the Strongs were constantly moving, settling into new neighborhoods and meeting new neighbors.

“Our whole life will be easier,” she said.

A Home in Minnesota

Meantime, in middle America, a similar project was underway for Army Sergeant Marcus Kuboy, who was wounded in a humvee explosion in March 2007 while serving in Iraq. He suffered multiple wounds, and both of his legs are damaged to the point where he can walk only for short periods of time and only with assistance of a walker. The rest of the time, he relies on a wheelchair.



Iraq veteran Jayson Norman, Morris Martinez, Adrian Sosa and Wade Mills install underlayment to start pushing the plywood crew.



Fred Solano, a Vietnam veteran, does his part to help Homes for Our Troops.

Roofers from Local 96, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN, who work for Atlast Roofing and Kremer Davis contributed to the effort in St. Paul for Sgt. Kuboy. The home, which is specially adapted for his needs, is a joint project of Homes for Our Troops, the Republican National Convention, America’s Credit Unions and National Journal Group, and was presented to him in conjunction with the Republican National Convention in September.

It’s an American Issue

Maria Cino, President and CEO of the Republican National Convention, said, “We are committed to giving something back to the community hosting our convention, and there are no people we owe more to than those who have served in defense of our nation and freedom. Taking care of our veterans is not a Republican issue, it’s not a Democratic issue, it’s an American issue.”

Altogether, Homes for Our Troops has finished 28 homes for wounded vets throughout the country and is in the process of completing 26 more. The incredible generosity of the organization and its many contributors and volunteers has made it possible to give back a small piece of what Travis Strong and Marcus Kuboy have sacrificed in serving our country. They are true American heroes who deserve nothing less.

To make a donation to Homes for Our Troops or to get more information, visit www.homesforourtroops.org



Roofers from Local 96, Minneapolis, MN, who built the roof on Marcus Kuboy’s home included Business Agents Gene Harris and Pete Jaworski, Organizer Jose Navejas, and the crew from Atlast Roofing: Danny Endres, Ryan Endres, Duane Nesselth, Beau Stock and Kevin Landsberger. A crew from Kremer Davis, not pictured, also donated labor and materials for the waterproofing.