

## On the Road Back to Hope and Home

*One family's journey is changed forever for the better, thanks to you.*

Life seemed about as hard as it could get for Brad and Sherry.

The year was 2013. Brad had recently left active military duty, returning home with plenty of post-traumatic stress. The couple were broke, without a home to call their own, ready to split up, and expecting a baby.

Brad's father told the couple about the VFW National Home for Children in nearby Eaton Rapids, MI. Here, generous donors are helping reunite and strengthen families in extraordinary ways.

His dad's description of such long-term, comprehensive assistance seemed too good to be true to Brad. But moving into the National Home, the couple found it was indeed true. Life began to get easier.

Benefiting by full-time childcare, Brad and Sherry both pursued better paying jobs and enrolled in college. The National Home's Early Education Center nurtures little ones' growth with love and care, imparting learning and encouraging each developmental milestone.

There was more. "Brad and I were having marital struggles, and the National Home paid for counseling — it was a huge relief," Sherry recalls of the successful therapy sessions.



*Today, Sherry and Brad stay "busy as bees" raising Max, 8 and Daphne, 5. With her business degree, Sherry serves as a claims specialist for the State of Washington's family leave program. Having finished a second master's degree, Brad works as a mental health counselor in a private practice. The couple own their own home.*

The beauty and serenity of the National Home's campus also eased Brad's PTSD symptoms. "It always felt safe there, peace inducing," Brad says. "Being in the outdoors was a godsend."

No matter the need, the VFW National Home for Children was there with solutions. Life began to look up. Hope restored, and the couple welcomed their second child. Brad and Sherry earned their degrees, moved on to professional jobs, and are raising their family in their own home.

With gratitude to everyone who contributes to the VFW National Home for Children, Sherry says, "I don't think we'd still be married or have our daughter if it weren't for this place. We will spend the rest of our lives giving back. It changed our life trajectory."

## In this Issue:

- *National Home Welcomes Incoming Executive Director*  
page 2
- *"Oh, the Places We'll Go!"*  
page 2
- *Donor Spotlight: Debbie Bodimer-Wilson*  
page 3
- *Serving Those Who've Served Us*  
page 4



## Did you know...

2022 marks the 100th anniversary of the VFW's first poppy distribution. The bright blooms were soon adopted as the organization's official memorial flower and remains so today.

## THE HOME FRONT

A publication of:

### VFW National Home for Children

3573 South Waverly Road

Eaton Rapids, MI 48827

Phone: 866-483-9642

[www.vfwnationalhome.org](http://www.vfwnationalhome.org)

Staff:

Mike Wilson, *Executive Director*

Angie Harkins, *Program Director*

Sue Alverson, *Development Director*

Todd Marriott, *Facilities Director*

Lynn Hagerman, *Finance Director*

## National Home Welcomes Incoming Executive Director



In January, retired Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major Michael Wilson was appointed Executive

Director of the VFW National Home for Children. Michael succeeds Fred Puffenberger, who retired in October 2021.

His experience includes decades of leadership in both civilian and military organizations. A veteran of Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom, Michael has in recent years devoted himself to increasing support for veterans and veteran organizations throughout the state.

"Veterans and their families are often underserved, and the issues they

face while transitioning home can be difficult," says Wilson. "It's been my passion to support them and increase awareness of their needs within our communities."

Michael holds a bachelor's degree in general studies with a focus on business and organizational development from Spring Arbor University. Last year, he was named Trine University's Distinguished Graduate of the Lou Holtz Master of Science in Organizational Leadership. He is also a graduate of the United States Army Sergeant Major Academy.

"It's an honor for me to be selected for this opportunity," Wilson says. "I have worked with the VFW National Home on many occasions and know this place is magical. It has helped so many families over its 97 years, and I am proud to be able to bring my talents to the team."

## Did you know...

There are a total of 1.4 million U.S. active military members. A little over half are married. Nearly 4 in 10 are married with children.

## "OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO!"

It all started when Karen Scheuneman saw a few pictures posted on the VFW National Home for Children Facebook page. Especially one with a preschool teacher sitting on the floor with her students gathered round.

Karen, who serves as 2021-22 Buddy Poppy and the National Home Program Chairman of the VFW Auxiliary

Department of New York, got to thinking. "I wondered whether the National Home might need a better reading space in the Early Education Center."

Scheuneman was inspired to help create a more

comfortable environment for the teachers and students.

She created a Dr. Seuss-themed flyer and approached fellow VFW Auxiliary members across the state to support the initiative. As donations came in, Scheuneman began purchasing books by none other than "Theo LeSieg,"

— Theodore Seuss Geisel, the prolific children's author we know as Dr. Seuss. Soon, other items brought the reading nook to life: bookshelves and floor cushions, toddler sized furniture and teacher sized chairs, children's Kindles with headphones, and more.

The VFW Auxiliary Child Care and Early

**"YOU'RE OFF TO  
GREAT PLACES!  
TODAY IS YOUR DAY!  
YOUR MOUNTAIN IS  
WAITING, SO ...  
GET ON YOUR WAY!"**

— Dr. Seuss, from  
*Oh, the Places You'll Go!*



**Interested in fundraising for current needs at the National Home? Reach Development Director, Sue Alverson, at [salverson@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:salverson@vfwnationalhome.org) or 517-663-7983. Your support is appreciated!**

Education Center preschool teacher Quinn Quainton praised the donation for its impact on the vital story time component of the curriculum. "Promoting brain development, imagination, early literacy skills, and listening skills is a vital part of our

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# Debbie Bodimer-Wilson

Debbie Bodimer-Wilson's brother was a Vietnam veteran.

After he passed away, she learned she could join a VFW Auxiliary in order to help veteran families in need.

"Before joining Auxiliary #3944 here in St. Louis, I had no idea how many veterans and families out there were struggling. I imagine coming out of the service and having nothing would be very hard. Veteran parents gave of themselves for our country, and I believe their children are our future and deserve help. I was determined to do as much as I could."

Debbie remembers her first trip to the VFW National Home for Children more than five years ago. "It was an eye-opening experience for me. I was really moved to see the Missouri house and campus facilities, learning how it all helps children of veterans and their families ...

"The children's nursery was so organized and clean. The beautiful Chapel left me speechless, its stained glass and peaceful setting. The new museum was so inspiring, showing how the campus has improved and grown over the years."

Debbie immediately began to appreciate the challenges of providing such

overarching assistance to veteran families free of charge. Providing a home, parenting classes, job skills assistance, transportation, daycare, and comprehensive case management to dozens of families takes tremendous resources.

"As costs rise, the National Home will, of course, need more funding to maintain these wonderful facilities and services. A great many people do not know about this incredible asset that continues to put veterans, their spouses, and children on a path for success."

Debbie decided she wanted her personal legacy to include a contribution to ensure the National Home would be available for future generations of our nation's war heroes and their families. "I took time to review financial reports to see where the funds go and how they are utilized. That gave me confidence that my legacy gift would truly benefit Veteran families and maintain the campus facilities."

She encourages others who are interested in making a lifelong, positive difference for military families in need to donate to the VFW National Home for Children. "Even the smallest of amounts from many people and organizations can add up to a big impact. I think of my brother who served, my own sons, and my grandchildren — family means so much."



*Debbie Bodimer-Wilson currently serves as Auxiliary President of the Overland-St. Ann Memorial Post #3944 and District 12 President of Missouri.*

## 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: [narchambeau@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:narchambeau@vfwnationalhome.org)

day. So much learning is done through books. Before, our reading area was lacking in comfort, organizational accessories and a colorful, inviting atmosphere. Our teachers and children now have all that.

"From the bottom of our hearts, the kids and staff here thank Karen and so many generous donors for your gifts. You can tell from their happy smiles that the children love the reading nook! This will be a favorite and much appreciated area of our center for years to come."

## DO YOU KNOW A MILITARY OR VETERAN FAMILY IN NEED?

The VFW National Home for Children offers **families of veterans, active-duty military and members of the VFW and its Auxiliary** opportunities for growth and development in a nurturing, residential community.

The National Home focuses its efforts on providing long-term, comprehensive assistance to parent(s)/guardian(s) with dependent children who are facing hardships that jeopardize their family's stability and independence.

Learn more:

- by phone at our Helpline — 800-313-4200 (weekdays 8:00 AM-4:30 PM Eastern)
- by email at [help@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:help@vfwnationalhome.org)
- online at [www.vfwnationalhome.org/get-help](http://www.vfwnationalhome.org/get-help)

# Serving Those Who've Served Us: Smart Giving for Today, Tomorrow

Year after year, generous friends of the VFW National Home for Children support our mission with gifts of every shape and size. Whether the donation is a \$10 check in honor of a loved one or a \$100,000 bequest in a will, the inspiration is always similar. People want to express their love for our country's heroes in the most meaningful way possible.

In recent times, donors have more ways than ever to leverage their giving in order to make the greatest difference possible for themselves and for the National Home.

## For Today: Become a Home Front Hero

Take your place on the front lines of supporting military families with an automatic, monthly contribution to the National Home. As a Home Front Hero, you'll be providing year-round funding for essential programs and services benefitting veterans and active-duty personnel facing family crises of all kinds. Giving monthly is easy and flexible. It saves both you and the National Home time and money, and you can change or stop your giving at any time.

## For Tomorrow: Make a Legacy Gift

More and more supporters are choosing to give to the National Home through a will or trust. In this way, they have the peace of mind knowing their support will have long-term impact, without any upfront cost during their lifetimes.

Making a will allows you to provide for the future of the people and causes you care about most. It is an act of kindness like no other. By setting aside a gift to the VFW National Home for Children in your will or trust, you will build a beautiful legacy of love and support for military families in need. Gifts of all sizes are important, and deeply appreciated, whether you offer \$50 or \$500,000!

To learn more about joining our monthly and/or legacy donors, contact Nancy Archambeau at 517-663-7931 or [narchambeau@vfwnationalhome.org](mailto:narchambeau@vfwnationalhome.org)



**Join Home Front Heroes today with a commitment of as little as \$10 a month!**

Visit [www.vfwnationalhome.org/hero](http://www.vfwnationalhome.org/hero) to get started.



## Creating a Bright Future

In early February, the National Home's Board of Trustees and staff met to plan for the future. Executive Director Mike Wilson led the session aimed at developing priorities and goals to serve the organization's unified vision.

Among the accomplishments leading to a brighter tomorrow was updating the mission statement:

*"The VFW National Home assists military, veterans, and their families with children, by creating a foundation of services and resources to achieve their personal and family goals in order to move forward in a positive, safe and healthy environment."*



**Scan and share with your friends and family at [vfwnationalhome.org](http://vfwnationalhome.org)**