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Holiday 2017

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HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

“Some people live an entire lifetime and wonder if they have made a difference. A veteran doesn’t have that problem.”

—Ronald Reagan

And so it is with the families who make up our United States Armed Forces. Whether serving our country on the front lines in the face of life-threatening dangers or raising a family at home while a spouse is assigned overseas, the American military family is the heart and soul of America's defenses contributing their skills, their strengths, and their courage to lead in protecting our homeland.

One of the great military families whom I've ever had the honor of meeting is Travis and Krista Stoufer and their sons Aaron (13) and Wyatt (8). Both Krista and Travis received the Purple Heart as a result of their service in Iraq, and their story reminds me of how blessed we are to have courageous husband and wives—and moms and dads—like Krista and Travis who are willing to sacrifice so much for their country and for our families.

Spc. Krista Stoufer served in Iraq with the 1139th Military Police based out of Harrisonville, Missouri. On the night of June 30, 2003, Krista was among a group of Guardsmen who was attacked while on patrol in Baghdad enforcing a curfew and protecting the area from insurgents.



Please send donations to:

Combat Soldiers Recovery Fund
3804 Williams Lane
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

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Her group was less than a mile away from their compound near the Baghdad International Airport when the vehicle was hit by a white phosphorous mortar shell that causes severe burns and even melts helmets. All four Soldiers in the unarmored vehicle were wounded.

Shrapnel from the blast cut the driver's face, temporarily blinding him, and the Humvee rolled into a curb. As soon as the vehicle stopped, another soldier jumped out and made his way into the driver's seat and got everyone back to the compound for treatment.

Krista was honored to receive the Purple Heart for her sacrifices that day for her nation, and you can see in the photograph how proud her family is of their brave wife and mom!

It was February 13, 2010 when Sgt. First Class Travis Stoufer suffered his injury—also from a mortar, an unguided missile launched by Hezbollah special forces training insurgents in Iraq.

The rocket struck Travis's base camp where he was serving as the platoon leader, and it exploded a mere 10 feet away from him. Miraculously, he was not killed but he was bleeding from his ears and nose when his fellow soldiers finally got to him.

The explosion caused traumatic head injuries, but the effects of such injuries for Travis—and for so many of our wounded soldiers—don't show up for three to five years. The Stoufer family has worked as a team on this long and complex road to recovery, and the Combat Soldiers Recovery Fund was proud to help with some of the medical copays that add up for his brain treatments.

Travis and Krista grew up together in Harrisonville, Missouri. They married there in 2002 and spent that Christmas together with family and friends at their home in Missouri. The next time that they celebrated Christmas together at home was in 2012.

As we approach this blessed season when families gather in their homes across America to celebrate and love and laugh together, let us remember the fathers and mothers, the sisters and brothers, the moms and dads—all of those who because of the sacrifice that they made to protect our country, will spend this holiday not at home but rather overseas in combat or in a hospital ward or a rehabilitation center recovering from severe wounds and injuries.

Let's invite them into our home for the holidays—no, not the physical structure that we live in—but rather into the home that's in each one of our hearts—that place in our hearts that's reserved for those whom we most love and most appreciate.

By remembering our wounded soldiers at this precious time of the year with a gift of thanks, they will know that they have come home to and endure with warmth and appreciation in America's Heart no matter where they may find themselves recovering from their injuries.

And isn't that exactly the kind of love for our fellow man and woman that we celebrate during this holy season.

Thank you so much for your gift.

