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Virginia Department of Housing
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Multi-agency Effort Brings New Home to Wounded Veteran

– Jarred Lucas suffered a traumatic brain injury while serving overseas –

RICHMOND – A ribbon cutting ceremony took place today in Petersburg, VA at the new home of Army-vet and wounded soldier Jarred Lucas and his family, all in part to a multi-agency effort including the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program and Homes for Hearts Inc.

Lucas was serving overseas when he was injured by an explosive device, resulting in a traumatic brain injury that has caused him to lose his sight and have daily seizures. Lucas and his wife Marie have a one-year-old son and have resided in his parent's mobile home since they moved back from Hawaii where he was receiving treatment.

"I am so pleased that the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program was able to help connect this family to Homes for Hearts Inc and its H.O.M.E.D. (Housing Our Military Elderly and Disabled) Project," said Catherine Wilson, deputy commissioner of DVS. "These types of partnerships are essential to ensuring we are doing everything we can to assist our veterans."

Governor McDonnell has been an advocate for improving and increasing housing options for Virginia's veterans. Recognizing this vital need for housing for veterans, DVS recently appointed a director of housing development for veterans to focus on proactively pursuing housing opportunities for veterans and their families and making those critical connections. The housing development program will help communities leverage resources to serve the housing needs of veterans and their families. In addition, DVS helps operate the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP), which was created by the 2008 Virginia General Assembly to ensure that services to veterans and their families are readily available in all areas of the state.

DVS' Housing Development Director Brandi Jancaitis said, "The Lucas family now has a home of their own thanks to the dedication and perseverance of our local nonprofit, Homes for Hearts Inc. who operates the the H.O.M.E.D. Project, Region IV (Central Virginia) of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development."

Homes for Hearts Inc. builds new homes or modifies an existing home to meet the needs of the disabled veteran. "We are very excited to be part of such a great effort for a very deserving veteran family," said Karen Carter Easley, president of Homes for Hearts Inc. "By providing accessible housing for our disabled veterans and their families, we are striving to encourage self-sufficiency, develop pride in homeownership and overall improve their quality of life."

The home was made available by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. The Virginia NSP received \$38.7 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2008 to acquire, rehab and resell foreclosed homes in areas hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis, including in Petersburg.

“DHCD is very pleased to be a part of this remarkable collaborative effort,” said Bill Shelton, director of DHCD. “By working together to utilize resources across multiple agencies and nonprofits, we were able to provide an accessible home for this family and well-deserving veteran.”

Pathways received an NSP grant allocation of funding in 2009, and to date has acquired, rehabbed and resold five foreclosed homes in Petersburg, including this one for the Lucas family. The Lucas home was rehabilitated by AmeriCorps members and YouthBuild students.

“Pathways is honored to give what we can to support the Lucas family who has given so much to support our country,” said Dwala J. Ferrell, chief executive officer of Pathways.

In addition to receiving the home, the Lucas family received donations from the community including furniture, household items and baby items that make their home complete.

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