

## THE AMERICAN LEGION

# HEROES TO HOMETOWNS



### Our Pledge

A **Life Long Salute** to the ideals entrusted by our forefathers: to instill our future generations a sense of honor and pride in belonging to The American Legion.

This is the essence of The American Legion, and it is our duty to continue the tradition.

With your help, the Heroes to Hometowns program will assist our nation's young warriors with their family needs and their transition to civilian life.

We need your years of experience, your wealth of knowledge, your vast social network and your dedication to **veterans helping veterans.**

We need your support to carry on the efforts of The American Legion.

### Background

As part of its social contract with servicemembers and their families to care for their quality of life, the Department of Defense established the Military Severely Injured Center (MSIC) in February 2005. This establishment is designed to augment the Severely Injured Support Programs: Army Wounded Warrior, Marine Corps Wounded Marine Regiment, Air Force Palace HART and Navy Safe Harbor. The objective is to ensure seamless care to severely injured personnel and their families *for as long as it takes.*

**Heroes to Hometowns** is one element of the MSIC network that operates at the national, state and the local community levels. Heroes to Hometowns is designed to identify needs and coordinate resources in local communities prior to servicemembers and their families returning home. The American Legion family will work with the community to organize a proper "hero's welcome" for our wounded warriors.

This flyer explains the Heroes to Hometowns program and guides local posts in how to form action teams to coordinate and encompass volunteer efforts. The American Legion encourages posts to take a proactive approach to connect their local volunteers with national, state and local resources to facilitate a smooth transition from military service to civilian life. This builds a vital community network useful to all returning veterans.



### Our Mission

We, The American Legion, dedicate ourselves to encouraging state and local communities to create a positive transition home, and to establish a local support network for returning severely injured servicemembers and their families, so they can lead productive lives.

Because of The American Legion's extended national support network and the family services we provide, we can identify and coordinate resources in local communities to assist severely injured servicemembers and their families before they even return home.

Our post homes and The American Legion families are safe havens for the military members and their loved ones. We provide a place where they can find compassion, understanding and care.

*"I got to be one of those lucky guys who got a hometown hero welcome. I'll never forget it. I felt like the president of the United States that day."*

Army Staff Sgt. Chris Bain

For more program information and promotional tools:

Visit [www.legion.org/h2h](http://www.legion.org/h2h)

(703) 908-6250

[heroestohometowns@legion.org](mailto:heroestohometowns@legion.org)

VA&R (Washington Office)

(202) 263-2983

As a community-based organization, The American Legion pledges our support to build America's future on the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. We are the vision of the past generations helping and inspiring the future, for God and Country.

## Role of the Department: Heroes to Hometowns State Committee

Each department will appoint a Heroes to Hometowns representative to communicate with charter members from the National Guard State Family Program and State Veterans Affairs Office.

The Heroes to Hometowns representative will encourage his or her community to establish a state wide support network that includes:

- Government representatives
- Members of the clergy
- Chambers of commerce
- Military family support units
- State vocational office
- State Transition Assistance Office
- Civic groups
- Adaptive sports clubs
- Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services
- Local media
- Leaders of The American Legion local posts

How to get started:

- Set up an initial meeting
- Create a contact roster for all members
- Discuss anticipated needs
- Identify available resources
- Assign duties according to members' resources and services

All members do not need to coordinate and work together on every issue, but in a cooperative environment, government agencies and communities can work together to assist our servicemembers and their families on a variety of support issues.

Immediate needs may include:

- Housing
- Employment
- Adaptation of a home or vehicle
- Family support
- Claims assistance

By meeting with the State charter members about these expected needs, the entire community can organize a supportive homecoming.

## Role of the Post: Hero Transition Team

### *Whatever it takes*

Your post is the heart and soul of The American Legion. Legionnaires have the experience, knowledge and leadership ability to get things done for our men and women in uniform. By utilizing your military training and civilian experience, our communities can provide a wonderful hero's welcome to our wounded comrades.

As long as we remain a nation at war, The American Legion will be there for our troops. Your relationship with the community can serve as a basis for a public coalition of government, civic and business professionals to respond to any specific need of military families. The American Legion Post Hero Transition Team (HTT) can provide the leadership to coordinate community outreach and support to returning veterans.

Individuals to include in your HTT should be chaplains, vice commanders, post service officers, a public relations officer and representatives from the Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion. Depending on the size and location of your post, your HTT members are encouraged to coordinate their efforts with other posts and meet many of the immediate needs of returning veterans and their families.

Once your HTT is established, notify your department. Your department adjutant can connect your Hero Transition Team with other resources within your state.

### *Post chaplain or mentor*

*Developing a strong family relationship*

Just as many of us can relate to meeting with a chaplain when reporting to a new duty station, your post chaplain can "break the ice" and establish a foundation for long-term care. This individual should be willing to act as resource manager who can intercede with the Heroes to Hometowns committee to help meet the needs of servicemembers and their families.

The resource manager will establish a lifelong relationship and serve as the mentor or primary point of contact to the returning servicemembers. Regular post activities can help sustain the long-term relationships necessary to provide lifelong support.

Suggested post activities:

- Welcome home celebration
- Join and support an adaptive sports club
- Establish a veteran support group for returning servicemembers and their families
- Help with home improvements
- Host a networking luncheon for potential employers and returning veterans

## Role of VA Voluntary Service: Heroes to Hometowns volunteer coordinator

The American Legion Family and VA Voluntary Services are working together to support the VA's new Transition Patient Advocates (TPAs). TPAs help returning servicemembers access VA. The Heroes to Hometowns volunteer coordinator helps these TPAs access community resources for a returning servicemember. Volunteer coordinators will foster community support, offering each VA hospital a complete transition package that goes beyond medical treatment.

Regardless of whether or not your community has a VA medical center, it is our job to identify families within our communities that have been affected by the war on terrorism. While Heroes to Hometowns was created to serve as a safety net for our severely injured servicemembers, we can use these same resources to assist families during deployment and following their return. Visit: [www.legion.org/support](http://www.legion.org/support)