

A MESSAGE OF HOPE FROM A WOUNDED WARRIOR'S WIFE

Dear Friends,

In this epoch of "Go Green" campaigns, heated political elections, a failing economy, global unrest, and a man dying in a Wal-Mart parking lot at the hands of television-crazed customers, it seems WE are a forgotten entity. I speak, of course, of those amongst us who are the men, women and children who love, live with, or are a Wounded Warrior. It's not very often of late that you see a newspaper article or human interest story on the 6pm news about the life of an injured soldier. The media believes it has pulled the emotional heart strings of the public long enough in this regard. It has moved on and taken the "public" with it. Does that mean, though, that our struggles are any less? Our hardships unimportant? That we should quietly become the war's best kept secret?

I could sight one struggle and hardship after another of my own, but I suspect there would only be two basic reactions: Those nodding "yes" thinking to yourselves, "been there, done that, got the T-Shirt (and the PTSD) to prove it..." I chose to not torture you with tales of my woes. You have your own! For the other group of you who would shake your heads with mixed emotions of anger and disbelief, just know that the families of the wounded suffer unimaginably at times. The mere fact that you are reading this speaks volumes! We know you are striving to acknowledge the sacrifices we have made.

I write today to encourage you "been there, done that's" to persevere. There truly is light at the end of this long, often dark and desolate tunnel. For my family, it has been in the form of a chain of events that many in my circle of friends, family and followers

of this tale have come to believe is a modern day miracle.

The story begins about a year ago. It was the holiday season. Finances were tight. Money became a growing obstacle, as we were ordered to take a trip to a VA facility 350 miles away, pay all lodging and food expenses out of pocket and hope for a timely reimbursement. As many of you know, "timely reimbursement" is almost an oxymoron when it pertains to a government agency. At any rate, we were contacted by a representative of Operation First Response after they heard about us from our AW2 advocate. In addition to offering assistance in our time of need, they contacted a Delegate from the northern part of our state who had asked to be informed of any soldier who was struggling. Delegate Yost, now Senate-elect, went to work contacting charitable organizations in his area. On Christmas day, all those efforts converged at our home, when Delegate Yost and his wife traveled several hours to deliver a car full of food, supplies, gift cards, toys, etc. Our gratitude was immense. It didn't end there, though. One of the organizations who had assisted the Delegate, the Wheeling Park High School Habitat for Humanity, had him come after the holidays to speak to the students who had contributed. A newspaper article was written about the event and an unknown source within the Patriot Guard Riders (PGR) forwarded it to individuals within the organization in our local area. Eventually, those individuals contacted Delegate Yost to find us. Over the months that followed, the PGR became an extended family to us. It started in small increments: offers to take my husband to appointments and to take the children for respite. Then, taking my husband for an evening, leaving me with bubble bath and bath salts. For Easter, it was a food basket from an organization called the Dream Catchers. By

Mother's Day, it was flowers and a catered meal for my family. In early summer, after some "safety issues" threatened my husband's safety at home, it was efforts to reinforce our unstable exterior stairs and add a much-needed second handrail. In September, paving of our driveway; October installing exterior lighting so my husband was not imprisoned in our home after sunset; days later, it was a group of Coal Miners, UMWA Local 1473 who built a deck and stairs in 2 days. In the end, I felt in some way I had come full-circle, as the miners are from Delegate Yost's district. In November, when a clerical error interrupted my husband's pay, the PGR, UMWA 1473 and the Red Cross stepped up to the challenge and helped us in our time of need. Not to be cliché, "but wait...there's more!" When our new AW2 advocate heard of our dilemma, he called me with an 11th hour bailout (no act of congress required). Once I answered the phone, he informed me he and I were on the line with a third-party. It went something like this, "...I have Peggy with Operation First Response on the line and..." I rudely interrupted him with laughter, as, once again, I had the sense that I had come full circle. A year ago, it had been through my AW2 advocate that I had spoken with the ladies of OFR and they had helped to meet our need. When the latest issue arose, I knew that I could call OFR, but felt they had done enough. I wanted to allow their resources to assist other families in need. Isn't it amazing how divine intervention supersedes logic when we are foolishly standing in our own way?

In closing, I would like to say that we are not any more deserving of such acts of kindness than any of you! We did not ask to be the family who has captured hearts of a growing number of people all over the Nation! We really didn't ask for much of anything and what we did ask for was to satisfy basic needs. Despite the message the world around us

seems to be sending, there still are people who have not forgotten us! There are still flags flying high! There are still prayers being lifted! There are organizations and individuals determined to make our lives a little sweeter, one soldier at a time.

With every blessing, we have given thanks, not only to those who have bestowed such gifts, but to our Creator. With each thanksgiving, we have strived to "pay-it-forward" to others in need. We are always watchful for someone who may need an extra measure of generosity, kindness or encouragement. We never forget that our worst day is someone's best. I know the road will be long for us and for many of you. We have been given, perhaps, the toughest mission this side of Iraq and Afghanistan but I take great consolation in knowing that there ARE angels among us! To those of you who have in any way been an angel in our time of need, thank you.

Keeping the faith,

SGT. & Mrs. Brett Chevalier,
Kami, Kayley, & Alex