

Over \$10,000 Raised for Injured Veteran Home

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Scores of community members came out to support the Homes for Our Troops fundraiser for the Alex Jauregui Home on July 31, 2014. (Staff Photo)

At 84, local farmer and Korean War Veteran, Vern Ornbau took flight into Colusa County skies during a fundraising event for a local injured veteran.

"I heard about the opportunity to support a great cause and thought it would be a wonderful surprise for my dad," said Vern's daughter, Carolee Ornbau.

As part of a special fundraising event, the Citizens for a Better Williams raised more than \$10,000 to assist with the Homes for Our Troops, the Alex Jauregui home.

In April of 2012, Army SSG Alex Jauregui lost both legs, the hearing in both ears and suffered extensive injuries to his right hand and forearm when he stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED) in Sangsar, Afghanistan.

Today, Jauregui is an inspiration to many; proving that anyone could overcome his or her disability if he or she put their minds to it.

"Alex is an amazing young man," said Colusa County Veteran Services Officer, Don Parsons.

Due to Jauregui's injuries, his home was no longer adaptable; thus forcing Jauregui, his wife, and three children to find a new home.

With the help of Homes for our Troops (HFOT), a home is being built to meet the needs of Jauregui.

HFOT is a non-profit organization that is committed to building adapted homes for servicemembers who've returned home with life-altering injuries post 9/11. The organization raises money and provides building materials and professional labor to coordinate the construction of a home that provides maximum freedom of movement and the ability to live more independently, and mortgage-free.

When friends of Alex Jauregui heard about the opportunity, they approached the Citizens for a Better Williams to assist with fundraising efforts – giving back to the community.

The idea started off with a special fundraising effort with a Concert in the Park; as word quickly spread others joined on board.

"I would like to thank Sylvia Spyres who helped introduce us to Michael Haus with the 25th Infantry Division LLC out of Concord," said Pat Ash.

Spyres works for Pacific Valley Aviation where the 25th Infantry Division LLC has their Vietnam UH-1H Huey serviced.

Without hesitation, owner Michael Haus graciously donated the use of the Huey for the event. Pacific Valley Aviation owner, Jim Miller provided the fuel and piloted the flights during the event.

Tickets were sold, and over 78 individuals were given the opportunity to ride in the Huey.

“We had individuals from all around the state,” said Ash, “we had a couple from San Francisco participate; they read about the event, and wanted to support the cause.”

At 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 31, the UH-1H Huey landed at the Jones Aviation landing strip on Hankins Road.

Despite the high temperatures, everyone came out and waited for his or her ride.

Each group of nine, received a fifteen-minute trip around Williams.

“It was amazing!” said Williams resident, Krissy Robledo, “I did not want to get out, I could have done that again!”

While Vern Ornbaun commented, “the ride was incredible, it is so beautiful up in the air.”

Later that evening, a crowd formed at Venice Park as community came out to show their support for SSG Alex Jauregui.

Bertel Freed, 94 of Williams, made sure she attended the event, and her family came along too.

“Bertel is the oldest living graduate of Williams High School,” said Williams Community Member, Barbara Mayberry, “she wanted to show her support, and called out her family to join her.”

During the concert held at 6:00 p.m., various groups and organizations provided food, snacks and beverages; with 100% of all the proceeds benefiting Homes for Our Troops, the Alex Jauregui home.

Contributing to the food vendors were: the Friends of Alejandro Jauregui, Fastenal, Colusa Ruggers, Jerry and Sherry Maltby, and the Sacramento Valley Museum, NorCal Swat Basketball Team, Patty An-gus, the Rollen Family, and Bertha Franco.

Bill Green from the Vietnam Veterans of Diablo Valley presented a \$500 check to be contributed to Jauregui’s home project.

Additionally several items were auctioned off, with Jerry Maltby serving as the auctioneer.

Auction donors included: Marilyn Wishnewitz, the Schaffer Family, Yocha Dehe Golf Club, Bill and Merri Donnelly, and 2nQue BBQ.

In addition to the Road Crew performing for the evening festivities, a special appearance from SSG Nathan Fair performed an original song, ‘All the things I’ve done.’

SSG Nathan Fair, of Alexandria, VA, served with Jauregui and wrote the song shortly after Jauregui was injured.

“I am pleased on how everything came together so well,” said Citizens for a Better Williams President, Andi Armstrong, “I am thankful for the outpouring of support from our community.”

The Citizens for a Better Williams would like to thank Michael Haus and Chris Miller with the 25th Infantry Division, LLC for donating the Huey; Jim Miller of Pacific Valley Aviation for donating the fuel and piloting for the event; and Jones Aviation for allowing the Huey rides to be hosted at their facility.

With special thanks given to the Colusa Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 2441 and Maxwell American Legion Post No. 218.

“We have an amazing community, and it shows,” said Armstrong.



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