

# Helping a Hero and Bass Pro Shops Founder Partner to Build Home for Aberdeen Veteran

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Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris presented the key to the first adapted home funded through the Johnny Morris and Bass Pro Shops donations to Sgt. Bartel and his family (left) in front of a national TV audience in July. SSgt. Daniel Barnes and his family (right) were also in attendance.

Noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris has joined with Helping a Hero to award a home to Sergeant Joe Bartel and his family.

A groundbreaking ceremony will be held Monday, Aug. 16, at 11 a.m., at 700 Winds Way in Aberdeen. Special guests include American country singer-songwriter Lee Greenwood, SSgt. (ret.) Shilo Harris, and Meredith Iler, founder of Helping a Hero.

Bartel, the oldest of seven children, grew up in Alaska where he enjoyed hunting and fishing. In 2000, he enlisted in the Marines and served a nine-month deployment during the initial invasion of Iraq.

When he returned home, he struggled with survivors' guilt, and still felt the call to serve and to protect the freedom he wanted for his family. Bartel joined the Army and once again deployed to Iraq as part of the surge.

He was a dismounted team leader in the 3rd ID of the Bradley unit. A man of strong faith, on the day he was injured Bartel felt God tell him to put on his gear..now! He told his team to gear up and within seconds, they hit an anti-tank mine.

When Bartel woke up in the hospital, he learned he had lost his leg and was forced to medically retire. He credits God with saving his life and giving him a second chance with his family.

Bartel and his wife, Christine, have four children.

The 5-bedroom Helping a Hero home in the Winds Way Farm development will be constructed by Caviness Land Development. It is designed to restore Bartel's daily independence with wider doors, adapted restroom facilities, and other safety features throughout.

"Receiving this home is like a dream come true," Bartel said. "As an amputee I have struggled to do daily tasks including taking a shower independently. Having a home with wider doors, a roll in shower and other features will change my life. I will finally have complete independence through this Helping a Hero home and it will give my wife peace of mind when she isn't there to help me."

Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris has a lifelong respect and gratitude to servicemen and women shaped by his father, John A. Morris, a decorated World War II veteran who proudly served his country in the Battle of the Bulge.

Morris originally pledged 10 new specially adapted homes through the Helping a Hero organization. In May, he announced Bass Pro Shops will cover 25 percent of funding for the next 100 donated homes to encourage more Americans to get involved in Helping a Hero's Wounded Hero Home program.

The Bartel family was surprised earlier this spring with the news that they have been selected to receive the first home through this partnership. In addition to paying off the mortgage for Army Staff Sergeant Daniel Barnes of Waynesville, Missouri.

“Helping a Hero is an awesome organization,” said Morris. “When I hear the words to Helping a Hero’s national ambassador Lee Greenwood’s ‘God Bless the USA,’ every word of that song hits home and reminds us how lucky we are to be able to call America our home.”

“We’re coming up on our 50th anniversary at Bass Pro Shops, and it wouldn’t be possible if it weren’t for those who have defended our freedoms and those who support conservation,” he added. “We can never do enough to thank these families and all of our veterans who defend our freedoms. They mean everything to us and we’re very grateful.”

“Helping a Hero exists to serve our wounded warriors,” echoed Meredith Iler, chairman emeritus of Helping a Hero and the founder of its home program. “When patriots like Johnny step up and commit to change over 100 wounded warriors’ lives, it is inspiring. Leadership and generosity like this reminds us that patriotism is alive and well. This is also a lesson that we need to share with the next generation.”

Helping a Hero is a nonprofit organization that provides support for military personnel severely injured in the Global War on Terror. Helping a Hero’s primary mission is to provide specially adapted homes for qualifying service members through partnerships made with the builders, developers, communities and the veteran. It strives to engage the community in providing services and resources for our wounded heroes and their families.

Helping a Hero launched its Nominate a Wounded Hero program in May and accepts nominations of deserving wounded heroes whose injuries require an adapted home to regain their daily independence. Individuals and businesses can get involved by visiting [HelpingaHero.org](http://HelpingaHero.org).