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## Taunton-based group sees need and works to meet it

By CATHERINE BAUM  
Staff Writer

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Thursday, December 10, 2009

The organization Homes for Our Troops reports that hundreds of the estimated 34,000 veterans who have been injured in Iraq and Afghanistan are on its waiting list.

Applicants are selected based on the severity of their condition. Common causes of injuries include roadside bombs and sniper bullets, along with battlefield injuries, according to Vicki Thomas, media relations director for the Taunton-based nonprofit Homes for Our Troops, which builds homes for injured veterans at no cost to the veterans.

Thomas said the average age of wounded soldiers is 22.

In Hampshire County, plumbers, electricians, decorators, suppliers and other tradespeople put on fundraisers throughout the summer to purchase land for Peter Rooney and build his contemporary ranch house, worth approximately \$275,000.

Of the 45 homes to which the nonprofit has given keys since 2004, volunteers raised the most money for Rooney's home in Worthington. Thomas did not return calls last week seeking the cost breakdown.

"Our goal was to pay for the whole project in the western Mass. community," said Worthington contractor Kent Hicks "We're somewhat rural in Worthington, but we're still a populated area. The more we can pay for our project here, the more money that would be left for Homes for Our Troops to pay for projects in very remote areas."

The framing for Rooney's home began in August. The home is modified with special heights for kitchen cabinets and counters, a roll-in shower area, and wide doorways and hallways.

Volunteers came out most weekends and sometimes during the week, and are currently in the finished phase of the home. A 20-year resident of Worthington, Hicks said he's met and formed bonds with people in this project.

"Wonderful friendships are born in this project," Hicks said. "Their hearts are so attached to this and it's just so inspiring. It's been really uplifting to see that side of humanity."

1 2 3 4



CAROL LOLLIS

Peter and Susanne Rooney at the home being built for them in Worthington.



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