



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Media Alert**

From the Office of Maxim Creative Group

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**WOUNDED VETERAN WAR HERO WHO WAS TOLD HE WOULD NEVER WALK AGAIN TO  
TACKLE 150 MILE BIKE MS CHARITY EVENT**

*Veteran Homestead Resident Jeff Matthew Wray Shares His Inspiring Recovery*

Saturday, 28 June 2014

Bike MS: Cape Cod Getaway 2014

UMass Boston

5:30am registration – 7:00am lineup – 7:30am start

**Gardner, Mass., (25 June 2014)** – Over 2,000 riders will pedal from UMass Boston through the coastal towns of Massachusetts' South Shore to Providencetown in the National Multiple Sclerosis Society 150 mile charity bike event. One of those riders is Jeff Matthew Wray, a wounded veteran war hero who almost lost his leg by 25mm machine gunfire while deployed in Iraq.

Wray served our country first as a Marine then in the Army and saw combat in three deployments to Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. His last deployment ended his military career when he received life-threatening injuries to his leg and abdomen including severe organ damage. He fought for his life for two years and during that time he almost lost his leg to amputation and was told he would never walk again.

That news was not going to stop Wray from a full recovery and after several months of research he found Dr. Robert Gaines who reconstructs the limbs of soldiers as chief of Orthopedic Trauma at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Virginia. Dr. Gaines reconstructed Wray's leg and with extensive rehab, Wray was not only able to walk again, he is healthy and physically active.

However, before the surgery, the transition from soldier to civilian was a difficult one for Wray. Not only did he have physical injuries, he suffers from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from combat. He became addicted to alcohol to ease his physical and emotional pain that added to his severe depression and lead him to an attempt to take his own life.

Today, Wray is a happy and healthy man thanks to Veteran Homestead Inc., an independent, non-profit organization that provides housing and care to U.S. Armed Services veterans who are elderly, disabled or diagnosed with a terminal illness. Wray resides at the Northeast Veteran Training and Rehabilitation Center (NVTRC) in Gardner, Mass. The NVTRC, specific to veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan wars, is one of six facilities that Veteran Homestead created and oversees in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Puerto Rico to serve veterans needing medical, psychological, and spiritual care.

The NVTRC facility focuses on Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are suffering from TBI and PTSD, two of the most common maladies suffered by veterans of these wars. It is the only facility of its kind in the United States that serves these afflicted veterans and their families by offering housing, physical therapy, counseling and college courses. The facility can also accommodate amputees and burn patients. There is a therapy dog-training program, as well. Veteran Homestead hopes to replicate this type of facility across the U.S.

Wray has been at the NVTRC since May 2013 and attributes his success and healing to the programs offered there. "Life is really good today, I didn't think I could be happy again. Veteran Homestead saved my life. If it wasn't for this place I'd be dead or in prison," said Wray.

Wray currently helps struggling veterans by speaking at the local VA hospital. He currently studies at Mount Wachusett Community College and after graduation plans to attend bible college to become a minister to serve and give spiritual guidance to his community.

#### **About Veteran Homestead, Inc.**

Created by Vietnam veteran Leslie Lightfoot, Veteran Homestead raises funds through its own efforts and receives some state and federal support. The organization directs 90% of funding to the veterans in its direct care and 10% to grant writing and fund raising. Other Veteran Homestead facilities include:

- *The Veteran Homestead Hospice - Fitchburg, Mass.*: The only privately run, veteran-specific hospice in the country.

- *The Veteran Victory Farm - Fitzwilliam, N.H.*: A working organic farm and permanent housing for veterans with substance abuse issues, mild TBI and in need of supportive services -- the first one in the country.
- *La Hacienda de Veteranos - Caguas, P.R.*: The only facility of its kind in Puerto Rico, it serves homeless veterans, focusing on restoring a sense of self-worth.
- *The Hero Homestead - Leominster, Mass.*: For elderly homeless veterans.
- *The Armistice Homestead - Leominster, Mass.*: Assisted living in place for the elderly or medically frail.

## **Veterans In Need**

- The Veterans Administration estimates that, as of September 30, 2011, there were 212,337 homeless veterans aged 18-30, with 144,842 of those in shelters. Homelessness among women veterans increased 141% between 2006 and 2010. By their own admission the VA is only seeing 1/3 of returned veterans.
- Approximately 22 veterans a day take their own life, according to Veteran Affairs department estimates.
- Families of service men and women are subject to severe emotional and financial strain associated with the disruption caused by multiple tours of duty. The divorce rate among returning wounded veterans is 84%, and it is not uncommon for a veteran to return to an empty bank account, a home foreclosure and a family in crisis.
- The Veterans Administration is treating more than 210,000 service men and women from Iraq and Afghanistan for PTSD; more than 67,000 are classified as disabled.
- The Department of Defense estimates that 360,000 service men and women have some type of blast-related brain injury, however, many returning veterans don't even realize they have a traumatic brain injury.

Interviews can be scheduled and photos are available upon request.

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