

## **Homes for our Troops Volunteer Day**

Sweetie Bev and I were very proud on Saturday as we helped other volunteers on the Homes for our Troops volunteer day. We were proud in several ways; the response from our community to help; Homes for our Troops for building a home for Eric Marts. As you probably already know, Eric was severely injured while serving in Iraq. Two improvised explosive device (IED) blasts during Army MSG Eric Marts' 2006 deployment serving with the 2-136 Combined Arms Battalion, 34th Infantry Division in Fallujah, Iraq took his vision. Shortly after the first blast, he started losing vision in one of his eyes. He continued to serve, but after being in another blast, the condition worsened. The traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused swelling in his optic nerves, resulting in him going blind in both eyes. He has also undergone surgeries for neck and shoulder injuries and experiences balance issues. We are proud of Eric for his service and for his continuing efforts to help service members and Veterans.

We are also very proud of our community for volunteering to help lay sod on Saturday. About 65 people showed up at the Moorhead American Legion, registered and boarded buses going to Eric's new home Perhaps the best volunteer was Eric's granddaughter who jumped on the sod rolls as they were put on the ground and rolled them out. Yes, she got a little bit dirty but was happy to be helping. Women, men and children from the very young to older than I am all helped. Members of the Airbase in Grand Forks drove down to Moorhead to help and all was organized by Mary Espinoza from the national Home for Our Troops organization. Homes for Our Troops mission is to build and donate specially adapted custom homes nationwide for severely injured post-9/11 Veterans, to enable them to rebuild their lives. From their website "These homes restore some of the freedom and independence our Veterans sacrificed while defending our country, and enable them to focus on their family, recovery, and rebuilding their lives."

Moorhead American Legion Post 21 stepped up to help providing registration space with coffee and goodies in the morning. At noon Legion volunteers loaded lunch into a couple pickups, took lunch to the site and served from the tailgates. The result of day was the sodding of about one acre of lawn surrounding Eric's soon to be home. Watch this column for a 'grand opening' event currently scheduled for July. Thank you to Eric for your service, to our community for helping and Post 21 for providing food.