



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
April 20, 2011

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**HELPINGAHERO.ORG WILL HOLD A GROUNDBREAKING  
FOR A SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOME IN THE  
FRISCO RANCH COMMUNITY FOR WOUNDED HERO AND  
SILVER STAR RECIPIENT, SFC JOHN WAYNE WALDING, USA**

**WHEN:** Monday, April 25, 2011  
11:00 a.m.

**WHERE:** 14610 Riverside Drive  
Frisco Ranch Community  
FMR 423 off Frisco Ranch Drive (follow signs to Lot)  
(Going North on I-35, Exit Hwy 121 East. Travel to North Dallas Parkway exit and travel north. From North Dallas Parkway exit Panther Creek Parkway. Turn West and Travel to FM-423. Turn North on FM-423 and Travel approximately ½ mile to Frisco Ranch Drive (Also the main Entrance to the FRISCO RANCH sub-division then Follow the HelpingaHero.org Signs)

**WHO:** SFC John Wayne Walding, USA, wife Amy and their 3 kids  
Meredith Iler, Chairman, HelpingaHero.org  
Brad Biber, Operation Forever Free—Frisco Ranch/Siena Homes (donated the lot)  
Captain Scott O'Grady, USAF (Ret.)  
Collin County Judge Keith Self, Mentor through Sentinels of Freedom

On Monday, April 25th, HelpingaHero.org will break ground on a brand new adapted home for SFC John Wayne Walding and his family. Thanks to the **HelpingaHero.org Home Program**, You are invited to join SFC Walding for this official groundbreaking for his new handicapped accessible home.

SFC Walding grew up in Texas and was raised by his grandparents. He played baseball, football and helped his grandfather on the farm. He graduated from high school in 1999 and joined the Army in 2001. He was involved in the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003 and joined Special Forces in 2005. He deployed for a second tour to Afghanistan in 2007-2008.

Being born on the fourth of July with a name like John Wayne, arguably few people could be called more American. But for this young Special Forces communications sergeant, the price of freedom was realized April 6, 2008, when he lost the lower half of his right leg to sniper fire during an operation in the Shok Valley of Afghanistan.

That day Walding and his team ventured into territory previously untouched by coalition forces to capture several high-value targets. The mountain village where the insurgents were hiding had been used to stockpile weapons since the time of the Russian invasion in the 1980s. With no roads leading into the valley, Operational Detachment-Alpha 3336, along with their Afghan commando counterparts, flew in by helicopter. Upon reaching the infiltration point, the team made a 10-foot jump out of the birds, as the pilots were unable to land. Many of them landed in a waist-deep, icy river, and with the temperatures already around 30 degrees Fahrenheit, the climate began to take its toll. In order to reach their target, the group made its way up a

treacherous mountainside to the fortress-like village, which rested on a hill at about 10,000 feet.

When the lead element came to within a few hundred meters of the compound, they began to receive heavy fire from all directions. What ensued was a six-and-a-half-hour firefight, during which the team called in Air Force F-15s for danger-close air support 70 times. More than 150 insurgents were killed in the fight. But due to approaching weather, rising casualties for the team, and nearly 200 insurgents closing in on their position, they were forced to withdraw.

Unfortunately, the approach route the team used to reach the village had been cut off. Stuck between a hail of gunfire and the edge of a cliff, their only option was to go down the cliff face. With intense firing still coming upon them, the team quickly scaled the mountain using rocks and branches growing out of the cliff. Every member of the team had sustained some form of injury, so the less injured helped the more critical casualties down the sheer face. Walding, having been shot near the knee by a sniper, tied his nearly severed leg to his thigh and began his descent. In order to reach the solid ground below, once he reached the bottom of the climb he, along with the others, had to make a 20-foot drop.

For his service in Afghanistan, SFC Walding was awarded the Purple Heart for his sacrifice for our freedom and received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star for his valor and courage in the midst of life threatening enemy gunfire.

Due to the great support of the Special Operations Command Care Coalition, he healed from his amputation and then decided he wanted to attend Sniper School...which he did and graduated at the top of his class. And during the Sniper School certification, many in his class were unaware that he was an amputee as he never asked for any special treatment or waivers. He does wear a prosthetic leg and is able to walk normally when he is on his leg. Unfortunately, he is limited in the use of his leg and needs to spend the remaining time at home in a wheelchair so he can still get around.

This beautiful 4 bedroom, 2 1/2 bath home will be located in the Frisco Ranch community and will feature wider doors, a roll in shower, a roll under sink, flush thresholds, and many other safety features that will enable John to have a firm foundation as he rebuilds his life. Frisco Ranch is located on the border of Frisco, in the City of Little Elm with acclaimed Frisco schools. It offers many amenities for the Walding family to enjoy including a Community Pool, Hike and Bike Trails, a beautiful fountain Pond, Soccer field and a Volley ball court.

SFC Walding is very excited to move to Frisco and begin his journey back into civilian life. Thanks to Sentinels of Freedom, he will participate in a four year mentorship program that will provide John with mentors in education, financial planning, career planning, etc... HelpingaHero.org is very proud to partner with Sentinels of Freedom to meet the housing component of their program and help this precious wounded hero and his family on their road to recovery!

“When I first met SFC John Wayne Walding, USA, I was very impressed. He is a leader, humble and a true American patriot. When I learned he was actually born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I thought to myself...what a fitting birthday for someone who truly represents the best that this nation has to offer. He has battled back from a near fatal firefight and has endured so much on his road to recovery. We count it an honor to help this young hero begin a new life in a brand new home where his ability to live independently will be maximized.” Meredith Iler, National Chairman, HelpingaHero.org.

Texas based, Helping a Hero is a 501(c)(3) non profit, non-partisan organization providing support for military personnel, severely injured in the war on terror. Our principal activity is to provide specially adapted homes for qualifying service members as well as engaging the community to provide services and resources for our wounded heroes and their families. HelpingaHero.org is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest homebuilding organization in the nation and #1 in Texas for OEF/OIF wounded veterans. HelpingaHero.org has completed 24 homes to date and have 6 homes under construction, including one in Fort Worth for double amputee, Cpl Zach Briseno, USMC (Ret.). Our home recipients include paraplegics, quadriplegics, double amputees, triple amputees, severe TBI, Blind, Burn victims, severe PTSD, and a double arm amputee.

Another 15 homes will be awarded to wounded heroes later this year. Applications are available online and are still being accepted from severely wounded heroes for these 2011 homes.

For more information on the HelpingaHero.org's Home Program, visit the website at [www.helpingahero.org](http://www.helpingahero.org).

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