

Making a Difference

Team Depot

An Interview with Gaven Gregory,
Executive Director, The Home Depot Foundation



Team Depot volunteers created an outdoor patio for an Atlanta-based Vietnam Army veteran, one of 500 veterans to receive home repairs from The Home Depot on a single day in September 2014.

EDITORS' NOTE Gaven Gregory served for four years as an Infantry Officer in the United States Army, including leading troops in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom. During his service, he received awards including the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with Valor, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Prior to joining The Home Depot Foundation, Gregory spent 10 years with The Home Depot in various leadership positions including Store Manager, Director of



Gaven Gregory

Tool and Equipment Rental, Director of Financial Services for the company's international credit and interchange department and, most recently, Director of Strategic Business Development. He is a member of Will's Club supporting Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Emory Wise Heart Society. He received a B.S. in Business Administration from University of Southern California and an M.B.A. from Emory University.

FOUNDATION BRIEF The Home Depot Foundation (homedepotfoundation.org) serves as the philanthropic arm of The Home Depot and has invested more than \$380 million in local communities since it was established in 2002. The foundation manages the company's grants initiatives and disaster relief activities as well as Team Depot, their associate-led volunteer force. The mission of The Home Depot Foundation is to improve the homes and lives of U.S. military veterans and their families. Through partnerships with local nonprofits and the volunteer efforts of Team Depot, they focus on addressing the critical housing needs of U.S. veterans. Since 2011, The Home Depot Foundation has invested more than \$80 million to address these needs.

Would you provide an overview of the history of The Home Depot Foundation and its mission?

Giving back has been a part of Home Depot's fabric since our first store opened. In 2002, we launched The Home Depot Foundation and since then, our focus has been on improving the communities where our associates live and work.

We do this through financial donations to nonprofit organizations and Team Depot, our associate-led volunteer force. Since 2011, we've focused our efforts on improving the homes and lives of U.S. military veterans and their families.

We also mobilize in communities impacted by natural disasters to help them rebuild.

The Home Depot Foundation has placed a major emphasis on helping veterans. Would you highlight the foundation's programs in this area and their impact?

Helping veterans is personal to us because we have more than 35,000 associates who are veterans, so when we switched our focus to helping them in 2011, our associates really rallied around it. We know housing pretty well, and this

is an area where veterans face unique challenges, so it was a natural fit for us. Over the past four years, we've touched more than 15,000 homes for veterans across the country.

Through donations to our nonprofit partners and the sweat equity of our Team Depot volunteers, we've made accessibility modifications to the homes of injured veterans and critical home repairs for senior veterans so they can safely remain in their homes. We've also helped to improve transitional housing facilities so homeless veterans have a place to go, and transformed permanent supportive housing facilities to provide veterans a safe place to live and access to the services they need.

We recognize the importance of community, so we've transformed countless American Legion and VFW Posts, and helped to improve on-campus meeting spaces for student veterans. We have also worked with our nonprofit partners like Team Rubicon and Student Veterans of America to find opportunities for veterans to continue to lead and give back through volunteerism.

How critical is it to place metrics around the foundation's work and to track the impact of your programs?

It is critical that not-for-profit organizations apply metrics and financial rigor around their programs. A big difference exists between successful for-profit and not-for-profit organizations: for-profit organizations must deliver a strong bottom line; not-for-profit organizations must make the greatest impact as efficiently as possible. By placing metrics around the foundation's work, we can closely track the impact of our programs on local communities across the country.

Would you highlight your efforts in engaging The Home Depot's employees in the foundation's work and Team Depot, the company's associate-led volunteer program?

Our Team Depot volunteers are where our foundation's commitment really comes to life and where you see the passion behind our core value of giving back. Each year, more than 25,000 of our associates volunteer on their days off. They complete thousands of volunteer projects annually to improve housing for veterans in their communities, help neighbors recover from natural disasters, and address other needs specific to their communities. Each store has a Team Depot Captain, which is a volunteer position, who organizes volunteer projects for their associates. It's really a grassroots effort, driven by passion at the local level, which ends up making an immeasurable impact nationwide.

The Home Depot Foundation has built strong partnerships. Would you highlight these partnerships and how critical are they to your efforts?

Our efforts are only as strong as the nonprofit partners we work with, and we're very lucky to work with some incredible organizations. At the national and local level, we work with leaders in the veteran housing space to identify the veterans and communities most in need and target our support to assist them in any way we can.

How special is it for you to lead The Home Depot Foundation in its support of veterans given your past service in the United States Army?

It's very special to me. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lead a corporate foundation with a mission that impacts veterans, associates, and customers every day – all while delivering tangible results. I feel fortunate to work alongside a great team that is committed to improving the lives of veterans and their families.

What are your key priorities for The Home Depot Foundation as you look to the future?

In addition to continuing our overall mission of improving and providing veteran housing, I foresee three key priorities for The Home Depot Foundation: first, it's important to be the best-in-class when it comes to grant funding. We want to provide nonprofit partners with the resources needed to truly make a difference. Second, we will continue to leverage our volunteer efforts at the local level to ensure every dollar goes further. By tapping into the passion of our associate-led volunteer force, we can certainly take action to make a difference. Third, the foundation will continue to serve underserved veteran populations, including the catastrophically wounded, women, and senior veterans who live in substandard housing. ●