

News Release



For Immediate Release

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Gilbert Veteran Receives New Air Conditioning Unit As Summer Heat Approaches

Arizona Coalition for Military Families Teams with Operation Homefront, AAA Cooling Specialists

Phoenix, Ariz. (Jun. 4, 2021) – Just in time for the soaring summer temperatures, Gilbert veteran Derek Tope and his family received a brand new air conditioning unit valued at more than \$3,700. The unit was donated through a partnership between the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, Operation Homefront and AAA Cooling Specialists. Installation of the system took place on June 4 at the Gilbert home that Tope shares with his family.

Tope, 34, is a U.S. Army veteran who served as a medic and infantry sergeant. During his service to our country, Tope was deployed on three tours that took him to Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of his service, Tope has become disabled and now relies on his mother, Sharon Grassi, for his daily needs and medical care.

“As the parent-caregiver to my disabled military son, we don't look like the standard military family, but we are. My son's disabilities impact our finances, home life, work, and friendships,” said Grassi. “Last year, our nearly 30-year-old AC unit died. We patched it up and have been hoping it would last. We juggle what we can afford to fix, so the news that we were selected by AAA Cooling to receive a new AC was a Godsend.”

The Tope-Grassi family was selected to receive the air conditioning unit through a partnership between the Arizona Coalition for Military Families and Operation Homefront. When AAA Cooling Specialists learned of the need, they eagerly joined in the effort that falls in line with their commitment to corporate responsibility.

“As a company, we believe it is important to give back to our community,” said Erin Robert, owner of AAA Cooling Specialists. “We are especially grateful for our veterans and for caregivers who are so selfless in putting others before themselves. We are excited to be able to help both and relieve some of the family's stress by replacing their broken AC unit.”

“We want to ensure that every Arizona service member, Guard and Reserve members, veterans, their families and their caregivers know that support is available for them,” said Thomas Winkel, Director, Arizona Coalition for Military Families. “We work very closely with benefit counselors, Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers and Campuses, faith-based organizations and hundreds of partners. If anyone who is now serving or has served in the military has a need, we urge them to call 866-4AZ-VETS so we can get them plugged in to the help and support that is available.”

For more information on the programs and employment services offered to Arizona service members, veterans and their families through the Arizona Coalition for Military Families' Be Connected program, visit www.ConnectVeterans.org or call 866-4AZ-VETS (866-429-8387).

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About Operation Homefront

Founded in 2002, Operation Homefront is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to build strong, stable, and secure military families so that they can thrive – not simply struggle to get by – in the communities they have worked so hard to protect. Recognized for superior performance by leading independent charity oversight groups, over 90 percent of Operation Homefront expenditures go directly to programs that support tens of thousands of military families each year. Operation Homefront provides critical financial assistance, transitional and permanent housing and family support services to prevent short-term needs from turning into chronic, long-term struggles. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the support from thousands of volunteers, Operation Homefront proudly serves America’s military families. For more information, visit OperationHomefront.org.

About AAA Cooling Specialists

AAA Cooling Specialists is the local leading expert in heating and cooling with an emphasis on energy efficiency. It has been in business since 1979 and under the same family-owned management since 1985. Based in Scottsdale, AAA Cooling Specialists provides the highest level of service and quality workmanship for its customers. Its goal is to establish long-lasting relationships with its customers by exceeding expectations and by gaining their trust through exceptional performance. For more information, visit aaacoolingaz.com.

About the Arizona Coalition for Military Families

The mission of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families is to connect the 500,000+ military members, veterans and their families in Arizona to the right resources at the right time through the [Be Connected](#) program. The Coalition is [recognized as a national leader](#) for its ability to bring together Arizona’s public and private sector partners in a unified effort. Launched in 2009, the Coalition works nationally and locally to advocate for service members, veterans and their families. The Coalition works collaboratively to build and sustain an [Ecosystem of Support](#) needed to sustain Arizona’s statewide capacity to care for, serve and support service members, veterans and their families. The Coalition’s membership extends across all levels of local, county, state and federal government as well as a vast network of private companies, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, higher education institutions and non-profit partners. To learn more about the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, visit www.ArizonaCoalition.org.

About the Be Connected® Program

[Be Connected](#) is the program of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families that links Arizona service members, veterans, families and community helpers to information, support and resources for employment, healthcare, wellness benefits and more. Be Connected includes a support line, a resource matching website, a statewide team of community-based navigators and no-cost training. Launched with the help, support and guidance of the late Senator John McCain, and now operated with support from the Governor’s Office, the Arizona Department of Veterans’ Services and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other partners, Be Connected is available to any member of the military, any veteran and their family members regardless of era or length of service, discharge status or disability status. Anyone who served or anyone supporting those who served can call 866-4AZ-VETS (866-429-8387) for support. Organizations that want to support and join our efforts should begin by [completing an application](#). For more information, to find support and learn more, visit www.ConnectVeterans.org.