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Fort Benning, Ga., he had to figure out whether he wanted hardwood floors or carpeting, whether he needed a one-story home, and that he wanted handrails and a seat in the shower.

"I wanted it to be easy to get in and out of everything," he said. "No, the Army didn't help. Then again, I didn't ask."

He said no one informed him of any programs to help soldiers with those modifications.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Metzdorf actively looked for help modifying the home he owns when he returned to Fort Bragg, N.C., after he lost his right leg to a roadside bomb in Iraq.

"On post, they will do anything you need, but off post, it's not in the system yet," he said. "Everyone wants to do it. It just needs to be changed."

When he wanted shower bars installed and railings leading into his garage, the guys in his 82nd Airborne unit offered to do it. He turned them down.

"We need to do this the right way, or we'll keep getting turned down," he said. "Some changes will come when they see the influx of soldiers wounded in action staying on active duty."

He talked up and down his chain of command, and said his wife had lunch with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's wife to talk about the issue. "Next thing I knew, two guys from Homes for our Troops were flying in," he said.

That time, he accepted the help.

Tom Benoit, chief operating officer for Homes for our Troops, said his organization "just helped Dan out with some handrails."

"It had been going on for months, apparently," he said, referring to Metzdorf's quest for help. "We just sent someone down with a hammer who took care of it."

Normally, Homes for our Troops has a waiting list as it looks for funds and volunteers, but Benoit said they took on Metzdorf's case "for a friend."

Juanita Wilson also sought help outside the Army.

TJ Cantwell, program director for Serving Those Who Serve, said his organization installed everything from doorknobs to a security system at Wilson's home in Rosedale, Md.

Serving Those Who Serve began in September 2005 to help service members who were severely injured in Iraq or Afghanistan — usually veterans who chose to medically retire after they were hurt. The group, funded by Countrywide Financial Corp., helps modify troops' homes, as well as their caregivers'.

Cantwell said he met with the communications director from the Wounded Warrior program

Aug. 8 to talk about what his organization can do for soldiers.

Wilson said they, and Baltimore radio station 98 Rock, changed her life.

When she returned home from Walter Reed Medical Center, she and her 7-year-old daughter, Kenyah, slept on an air mattress in the living room of her two-story home because she feared a burglar

might break into the house.

"I felt disadvantaged because of my one hand," she said. "I couldn't hear what was going on downstairs."

The radio station had a security system installed.

"We're in our beds now," she said.

As Serving Those Who Serve employees looked around her

house, they made more improvements: a new shed with a better organization system; new gutters because her basement was flooded; and a gas fireplace because Wilson was carrying wood into the house with one hand.

"If you're not used to not having a hand, you don't even know what you need," she said. "They're an organization that

## HOME HELP

Nonprofit organizations offering housing modification help for severely wounded soldiers: [www.homesforourtroops.org](http://www.homesforourtroops.org) [www.servingthosewhoserve.org](http://www.servingthosewhoserve.org)

was ready and willing to help. But I had to do a lot of fighting to stay here in my house." □



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