

Hundreds of Americans Become Foster Families to Ailing Senior Veterans, Opening Up Their Hearths and Homes

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There are more than 82,000 veterans living in nursing homes across the US. The Medical Foster Home program, launched by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in 2008, subsidizes American families who open their own doors to senior veterans who can't live alone. Both parties benefit and the veterans receive more comfortable and personalized care.

Today in the United States, more than 82,000 veterans live in nursing homes—probably not the kind of conditions or end-of-life care that would warm the hearts of veterans who had served gallantly in Korea and Vietnam.

However, the **Medical Foster Home** program launched by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in 2008 has been providing opportunities for a much more comfortable life to senior veterans who can't live alone by allowing American families to open their own doors to the nation's heroes.

"A Medical Foster Home can serve as an alternative to a nursing home...for veterans who require nursing home care but prefer a non-institutional setting with fewer residents," says the DVA website.

This was certainly the case for Korean War veteran Stewart Breeding who resigned himself to spending the remainder of his life alone in a nursing institution after his wife died

in 2016.

Two years later, Donna and Bennie Nolan became a DVA-certified medical foster family, and surprised Breeding on his 86th birthday with a cake, balloons, and a room full of well-wishers who celebrated the news that he could move in with them.

“I want to live here with Donna and Bennie until the day I die,” Breeding told *The Washington Post*. “I love everything about this family. It’s a great place to be.”

According to *The Post*, Donna Nolan, who is part of an Air Force family, knew she wanted to be a part of the program as soon as she heard about it in 2016. Her husband Bennie—a veteran of the Gulf War, former Army blacksmith and railroad engineer who worked as a communications specialist for 20 years—felt exactly the same.

“It’s an honor to have them living with us,” Bennie said. “Nurturing has always been a big part of my life, and Donna’s life too.”

Homes for Heroes

The program, launched in 2008, now has a presence in 44 states, and each family in the program is allowed to take up to three veterans into their homes in order to give them a more comfortable and personalized care environment.

The agreement is a long-term commitment, and according to Cathy Free at *The Post*, the veterans often live in the foster homes for the remainder of their lives.

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