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## **PulteGroup’s Built to Honor Program and Operation FINALLY HOME Surprise Veteran with Mortgage-Free Home in Babcock Ranch**

**FORT MYERS, Fla.** – U.S. Army Sergeant Howard Appleby, his wife, Yoland, and their children received the surprise of a lifetime: As part of [PulteGroup’s Built to Honor program](#), in partnership with Operation FINALLY HOME, they will be the latest recipients of a brand new mortgage-free home in the Babcock Ranch community in Charlotte County.

The Appleby family believed they were going through the preliminary interview process with PulteGroup and Operation FINALLY HOME. When the family arrived at what was thought to be their interview, they were directed to an alternate meeting site where they were intercepted by the Patriot Guard riders and escorted to the site of their new home. Community dignitaries and representatives from both organizations were in attendance at the ground-breaking ceremony.

“The Babcock Ranch community is an excellent place to call home,” said Richard McCormick, president of PulteGroup’s Southwest Florida Division. “We’re thrilled to partner with Operation FINALLY HOME along with Kitson & Partners, and Babcock Ranch to thank such a deserving veteran and his family for their service.”

After multiple deployments to the Middle East, Appleby experienced multiple encounters with IEDs, resulting in cognitive impairment following traumatic brain injury, PTSD, myofascial pain syndrome and migraines. For his service, Appleby received several awards including three Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, two Army Good Conduct Medals, a Combat Action Badge, and many more.

“Howard is a true American hero, and we are humbled and honored to give back to a family who has sacrificed so much for our country,” said Rusty Carroll, Operation FINALLY HOME Executive Director.

The Appleby’s new home will be complete this summer. The family will be moving into Pulte’s popular Summerwood floor plan. The home will easily accommodate the family of six with four bedrooms, two baths and more than 2,100 square feet. The home design features flexible living spaces, a professional-style kitchen, and open gathering and dining areas for entertaining ease. An integrated outdoor living area extends the living space to fully enjoy Babcock Ranch’s stunning natural preserves.



## **U.S. Army Sergeant Howard Appleby**

U.S. Army Sergeant Howard Appleby of Cape Coral, Fla., joined the military in 2004 as a combat engineer initially stationed in Ft. Irwin, California.

One month after basic training, Howard deployed to Afghanistan, and was responsible for conducting route reconnaissance, clearance and security operations during the height of the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) threat. He experienced his first IED blast in August of 2004, which struck his vehicle during a mission. Howard sustained a back injury and returned to Fort Irwin, Calif., where he furthered his combat training. In 2007, he was redeployed to Afghanistan and continued route-clearance missions. During this deployment, he encountered several IED blasts, the worst striking his vehicle. Appleby was transferred to a Warrior Transition Unit, where he completed lengthy medical treatment and counseling.

After multiple encounters with IEDs, Howard was diagnosed with cognitive impairment following traumatic brain injury, PTSD, myofascial pain syndrome and migraines. For his service, Appleby received several awards including three Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals, two Army Good Conduct Medals, a Combat Action Badge, and many more.

Howard was honorably discharged in 2011 and now resides in Cape Coral, Florida with his family. In April of 2017, he married his love Yoland, a former police officer for the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Narcotics Division. Together, they live by the motto “life is not a race – but indeed a journey.”

**About Built to Honor™** | PulteGroup’s Built to Honor program was launched in 2013 to recognize and thank returning military personnel who have been injured during their term of service by providing mortgage-free homes to veterans and their families. Built to Honor works in partnership with nonprofit organizations to select veteran candidates across the country. In the last 5 years, Built to Honor has delivered homes to 50 veterans and their families as they transition out of the military and into a new phase of their lives. As a top homebuilder, providing a home is the best way for PulteGroup to give back to the nation’s service members. Follow Built to Honor @BuiltToHonor or [Facebook.com/BuiltToHonor](https://www.facebook.com/BuiltToHonor).

**About Operation FINALLY HOME** | Based in New Braunfels, Texas, Operation FINALLY HOME was established in 2005 as a nonpartisan/nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of Operation FINALLY HOME is to provide homes and home modifications to America’s military Heroes and the widows of the fallen who have sacrificed so much to defend our freedoms and values. Operation FINALLY HOME partners with corporate sponsors, builder associations, builders, remodelers, developers, individual contributors, and volunteers to help these Heroes and their families by addressing one of their most pressing needs – a place to call home. For more information about Operation FINALLY HOME, visit [OperationFINALLYHOME.org](http://OperationFINALLYHOME.org), follow @OpFINALLYHOME on Twitter and find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/OperationFINALLYHOME).

**About Babcock Ranch** | Babcock Ranch was created by Kitson & Partners with respect for the natural environment and the philosophy that smart growth and sustainability work hand in hand. Half of the town’s 18,000-acre footprint is set aside as greenways, parks and expansive lakes, providing recreation and scenic backdrops for Babcock Ranch’s homes and the Founder’s Square downtown district. Emphasizing a front-porch lifestyle to nurture a sense of community, Babcock Ranch promotes healthy living through a walkable community plan with 50 miles of planned biking and hiking trails, the 4.5-acre Jack Peebles Park with tennis, pickleball and basketball courts, interconnected lakes for paddling enthusiasts, a robust calendar of exercise classes, and the Healthy Life Center managed by Lee Health at Founder’s Square, with health club facilities, nutrition counseling, therapeutic services and medical offices. Babcock Ranch has eight homebuilders offering more than 50 home designs for nearly every lifestyle, from condominiums to villas to single-family estates ranging from 1,107 to 5,000 square feet. For more information, visit [www.babcockranch.com](http://www.babcockranch.com) or follow @babcockranch on Facebook.

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