



# OPERATION REVELLE

SHIP was a key ingredient in this community-based partnership to honor Hillsborough County residents who served our country.

Operation Reveille formally started with a trumpet blast in front of the Port Tampa Bay building on Veterans Day 2014. Airforce Veteran Antoinette Hayes Triplett, who became CEO of the Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative in August 2014 brought the idea of Operation Reveille to the City SHIP office. In her previous position as head of the City of St. Louis, MO's Homeless Services Division, Triplett had spearheaded an Operation Reveille event. This initiative, rooted firmly in the "Housing First" philosophy of homeless assistance, helped 50 homeless veterans move straight into housing. It was made possible by federal homeless assistance programs, including the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as willing landlords, private donors, and public and nonprofit agencies.

City of Tampa SHIP administrator Vanessa McCleary urged her to organize a similar event in Tampa for the upcoming Veterans Day—a mere two months away. The City of Tampa made plans to rehabilitate 11 veterans' homes and Paula Harvey, Hillsborough County's Affordable Housing Services Director, also used county SHIP funds to rehab another 11 veterans' homes. With the help of the Tampa Bay affiliate of Rebuilding Together, Inc., a national nonprofit network that helps low- and moderate-income homeowners make repairs and retrofits, the Operation Reveille team was able to complete the 22 home rehabilitations within two months.

Leading up to the event, when Operation Reveille's leaders called on community members for support, they en-

countered a fair amount of skepticism about the short time-frame. But one after another, local and national stakeholders stepped up and said "YES," they wanted to honor Hillsborough County's veterans. The Home Depot Foundation did not believe that the home repairs could be completed within two months, but they provided vital support nonetheless. Operation Reveille's organizers provided the Home Depot Foundation's Joe Wimberley with regular updates as they as-

sembled more and more resources—including a massive in-kind donation from Ashley Furniture, ensuring that the homeless vets assisted during the event would come home to fully furnished apartments. When Veterans Day 2014 finally came, Wimberley flew in to Tampa to see Operation Reveille first-hand and said, "This is even more incredible than I thought!"

**By the end of the day at Operation Reveille, 53 formerly homeless veterans had the keys to their new apartments in hand. Another 26 homeless vets were connected to ser-**

**vice providers so that they could be quickly housed when new vacancies opened up. Of these 79 vets, 67 were in permanent housing as of May 2015. In addition, a veteran family on the verge of homelessness came to Operation Reveille, and received Hardest Hit assistance to save their home from foreclosure. Overall, with SHIP dollars and the many other resources marshalled from the community, Operation Reveille provided a full spectrum of housing assistance for Hillsborough County vets—from ending homelessness to allowing veteran homeowners to live in safety and comfort.**

