

# WISH #11 - HOME OR NO HOME, SOLDIER REPORTS TO DUTY



January 8, 2010



SGT Jerald Hammond joined the military directly out of high school, and served six years at Fort Stewart, GA, where he met his future wife, Crystal. They were friends for a few years, and Jerald got to know both Crystal and her son, Brandon. As time went on, Jerald and Crystal began dating and just before Christmas of 2000, Jerald asked Crystal to marry him.

In June 2001, Jerald started the process of getting out of the military, but after the events of 9-11, he was transferred to the National Guard. He wasn't sure if getting out was what he truly wanted, but at the time, Crystal was not big on being a "military wife". Soon after, Crystal and Jerald found out they were expecting, and on September 02, 2002, Crystal gave birth to a precious baby girl, Lexus.

Engaged, not quite married, the new parents did not have a place of their own. Crystal lived with her mother (her father passed when she was only 7), so after Lexus was born, Jerald moved in and began looking for work. He got a job at a nearby hospital in the Critical Care Unit, and Crystal was an Administrative Assistant at a nursing home. Jerald and Crystal were later married on February 14, 2003. They had some struggles starting out, as they had their own family, but not their own home.

Near the end of 2003, Jerald found out he would be deploying to Iraq with the National Guard for 12 months. Crystal was devastated.

The deployment was a huge strain for the young couple. The marriage was rocky and they had to do a lot of soul searching to realize how much they meant to one another. In that time, Jerald also realized how much he had missed serving his country, and he had to make a decision that would either make or break his marriage – he needed to re-enlist.

Crystal did not handle the re-enlistment well, especially when she found out they would have to move to Fort Bragg, NC. She was very close to her mother and sister and she had never been away from them. She eventually decided to move with Jerald, but went down-hill quickly. She had a few nervous breakdowns and had to be put on anti-depressants. After a long struggle and counseling, she warmed up to North Carolina.

In 2008, Jerald once again deployed and re-enlisted. During the deployment, Crystal had to go through several deaths and illnesses in the family. She didn't expect the next illness would involve her husband. Jerald returned in June 2009, and started noticing lumps on his body. He went to the ER and found out they would have to operate on two of them. After 4 days in the hospital, they found out Jerald, while serving as a medic, had come into contact with MRSA during his deployment. He treated so many with MRSA, it wasn't surprising that he contracted it.

After Jerald was released from the hospital, Crystal received a call that her grandmother, to whom she was very close, was dying. Jerald explained, "We did not have the money to get Crystal there, but seeing her cry and wanting to see her grandmother so much before she passed, I did the only thing I knew to do. I let bills go to get her there. On her way, she received a reckless driving ticket in Virginia, but made it there in time to see her grandmother before she passed. I was so thankful for that."

*"I want to thank you for helping us and GOD BLESS you and the organization. It is so nice to know there are still people out there that truly remember what we do and thank us for doing it."*

**-SGT Jerald Hammond**



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It seemed like things were coming at the couple left and right. Bill collectors were calling, the holidays were approaching, and once again, they received PCS (Permanent Change of Station) papers to Fort Stewart, GA. The one saving grace was they would be closer to Crystal's family, but one more change was not going to be easy on Crystal and the kids, now 7 (Lexus) and 15 (Brandon).

The family realized they could not apply for housing on base until they got to Fort Stewart, and it would be 2-3 weeks before anything would be available. How would they afford a hotel, food, boarding for their dogs, and juggle Christmas gifts for the kids? If that wasn't enough, Jerald's MRSA was spreading more each day, and he again had to go in for surgery to remove some of the masses.

Crystal and Jerald explained, "We try our best and sometimes it seems our best is not enough. We can get an advance pay of one month to help with the move, but we are just so worried we will not have the funds cover a motel and food for that long."

## THE WISH

Wish For Our Heroes reserved a two-week stay the Quality Inn at Fort Stewart for the Hammond's. The hotel allowed pets for an additional fee, so the Hammond's were able to keep their dogs with them, rather than board them in a kennel.

Jerald, Crystal, Brandon and Lexus will be there until the end of this week, and will then be able to move into their new home.

Jerald plans on staying in the military until retirement. He is currently taking college classes for his RN degree, and Crystal is slowly adjusting to the military life. "I love the military and serving my country. I love what I do and helping others."



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**-SGT Jerald Hammond**

