

# A Hero's Story: Sergeant Kirstie Ennis

U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Kirstie Ennis nearly died when the CH-53D helicopter she was flying in as an aerial gunner crash-landed in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan in June of 2012.

The accident broke her left ankle and caused severe damage to her leg, tore her rotator cuff and labrum, injured the cervical discs of her spine, shattered her jaw, and caused severe facial lacerations, a traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder. Ennis was combat meritoriously promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Ennis, who was 17 when she enlisted out of Florida in 2008, thus began her long, debilitating road to recovery, enduring more than three dozen surgeries as she learned how to walk and talk again. In November of 2015, her left leg was amputated below the knee. One month later, a serious infection required an additional surgery, and Sergeant Ennis is now an above the knee amputee.

***But Ennis's story has been defined not by her injuries, but her heroic spirit and determination to overcome them.***

Ennis took up snowboarding and quickly excelled, taking fifth in the world in women's snowboard cross by the International Paralympic Committee. She also completed a 72-day, 1,000-mile walk across mainland Britain, from Scotland to Buckingham Palace, honoring 25 of her fallen soldiers.

More recently, Ennis has her sights set on a new mission: to climb the world's seven summits. Amazingly, Ennis has now reached the summit of Mount Denali in Alaska (20,310 total feet) and Mount Everest (29,029 feet).

Her achievements have earned her international accolades, including the Pat Tillman Award for Service at the ESPY Awards, the Yolanda King Higher Ground Award at the King Center in Atlanta, GA, an award for individuals who carry on the legacy and values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, and was inducted into the International Sports Hall of Fame.

For her service to her country, Ennis has been awarded the NATO Medal, Combat Action Wings with three gold stars, National Defense Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Letters of Appreciation (2x), Certificate of Commendation and a Certificate of Appreciation.

Ennis was gifted a ground-up, mortgage-free home in 2017 from Building Homes for Heroes in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.







# BUILDING HOMES FOR HEROES



Sphere 1 has partnered with Building Homes for Heroes, a non profit organization that builds or modifies homes, and gifts them, mortgage-free, to injured veterans and their families, while providing support services to enable them to build better and brighter lives and reach new heights. Building Homes for Heroes® is determined and devoted to bringing renewed hope to our nation's injured veterans.

Together, Building Homes for Heroes has grown to become a nationwide partnership of communities and corporations working together to make our country a better place by serving our nation's heroes. With continued support, Building Homes for Heroes hopes to reach its 300th home gift by early 2022, and its milestone 500th home by 2025.