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House of Heroes Connecticut, PCX Aerosystems to Provide No-Cost Home Repairs for Widow of Recently Deceased Vietnam Veteran

Berlin Marine Corps Vet Mike Sztaba, who Fought During the Tet Offensive, Passed Away Three Weeks Ago while this Saturday's Project was Being Planned

Berlin, Conn., September 24, 2020 – As Mike Sztaba's health declined in recent years, hampering the proud Marine's ability to tend to the many chores around their Berlin home, Mike's wife, Karen, took it upon herself late last year to seek help from [House of Heroes Connecticut](http://houseofheroesct.org), which provides no-cost home repairs to veterans in need.

"I saw the House of Heroes lawn signs at another project last fall in Berlin, and it looked like just the kind of help we needed," says Karen Sztaba.

But earlier this month, just as House of Heroes prepared for a visit to inspect the Sztaba home, Karen called with the unsettling news that Mike had died the night before the visit. "We felt so badly for Karen. It made our resolve to help that much stronger," said House of Heroes Chairman Carol May.

That help will come this Saturday as dozens of volunteers, most of them employees of long-time House of Heroes Connecticut Project Partner [PCX Aerosystems](http://pcxaerosystems.com) of Newington, will honor Mike's service to our nation by descending upon the Sztaba home to lend a helping hand.

"Mike was a proud Marine, and he would never ask anybody for anything," says Karen. "But he knew I was struggling with the yard work and keeping up the house. When I saw that House of Heroes lawn sign last year, I said, 'Mike, we have to do something. We have to call.'

"He would be so grateful, so appreciative for this help if he was here with us."

Saturday's project, which begins at 8 a.m. at the Sztaba home at 52 Anton Lane, Berlin, is the non-profit veteran service organization's 136th since its founding in 2012. Upwards of 40 PCX employee volunteers will handle the bulk of work to include power washing, tree trimming, fence painting and yard cleanup. House of Heroes will also repair the home's chimney cap and install a bathroom grab bar, smoke detectors and a new kitchen light fixture.

Sztaba, who died at age 73 on September 8, was a New Britain native and proud American. He served in the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve from 1966-1972 and fought during the Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968. Honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant, Mike earned the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device and Purple Heart.

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HOHCT/Sztaba Project

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Following his service, Mike went on to attend then-Central Connecticut State College and the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford. He became an accomplished musician, widely known and loved for his Polka music with his band, The Jolly Nutmeggers, which played numerous weddings and special events over the years and recorded an album, Polka-Motion.

A long-time and well-liked mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service, Mike was active with a variety of veterans organizations in the greater New Britain area, including the VFW, Marine Corps League and American Legion. He was a past commander of VFW Post 511 in New Britain. Throughout his post-service life, Mike was fond of sharing with the younger generation that he “fought for our freedom so you could be anything you want to be.”

On Saturday, the day’s work will be briefly halted at 12 noon for House of Heroes’ traditional flag presentation ceremony. The ceremony will include the Pledge of Allegiance and presentation to Karen of an encased American flag honoring Mike. COVID-19 safety protocols will be in force the entire day.

House of Heroes Connecticut recognizes, honors and serves military and public safety veterans and/or their surviving spouses for their sacrificial service to America. The organization “Makes a Difference in a Day” by providing one-day, no-cost home improvements with a priority placed on safety and accessibility. The Connecticut Chapter is part of a national organization, founded in Columbus, Georgia in 2000, that has served more than 1,000 veterans nationwide.

For more information about House of Heroes Connecticut, to nominate a veteran, volunteer for a project or simply donate to the cause, visit www.hohct.org.

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