



NEWS RELEASE
Fort Riley, Kansas
Home of the 1st Infantry Division

Public Affairs Office
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Fort Riley excess housing donated to Kansas Kickapoo Nation



(Courtesy photo by Jasmine Crosby, Corvias)

The first of 10 houses to be donated to the [Kickapoo Nation](#) tribe is loaded onto a semi-trailer May 23 during a formal ceremony at Fort Riley, Kansas. Riley's, LLC, the privatized partnership between the U.S. Army and [Corvias Military Living](#), donated the houses through coordination with California-based "Operation Walking Shield."

The homes—which were identified by Fort Riley and Corvias as excess units—were initially slated for demolition. But coordination between the Department of the Army, [Operation Walking Shield](#) and the Kickapoo Nation Housing Authority, gave them new life.

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Operation Walking Shield was started in 1986 and seeks to improve the quality of life for Native Americans by coordinating programs that provide shelter, health care, community development support, education assistance and humanitarian aid.

Fort Riley is the first active-duty Army installation to donate houses through Operation Walking Shield.



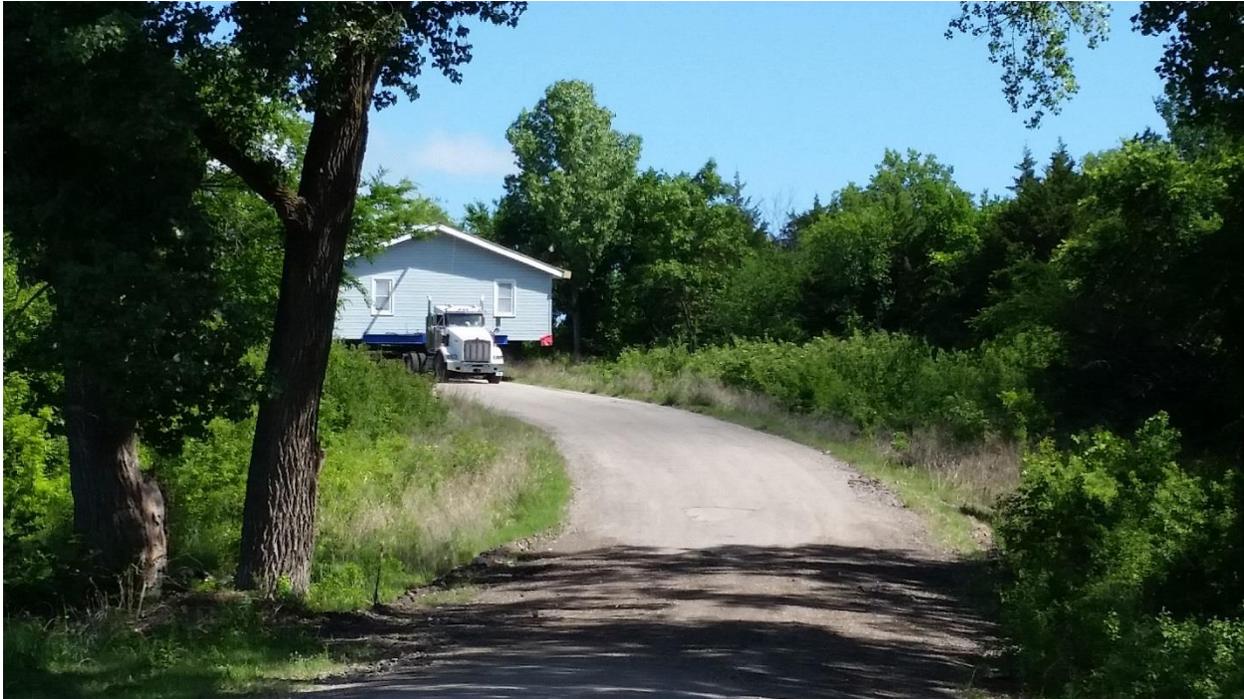
(Courtesy photo by Kelly Karl, Corvias)

Following the ceremony, the first donated house made its way slowly through Fort Riley and traveled northeast to the Kansas Kickapoo Tribe. According to Corvias Housing Business Director Jim Champagne, there are more than 250 homes at Fort Riley slated for demolition that could potentially be donated, and the Army has approved another 335 homes as excess. “So as long as there’s a need in the Kickapoo Tribe, we’re going to accommodate them so they can take the homes,” he said.

The next two donated houses are scheduled to be transported in mid-June and six more in the October to November timeframe.

“We’re totally excited about this because we get to work with Fort Riley and Operation Walking Shield,” said Kickapoo Tribal Council Chairman Lester Randall. “What this does for us is it gives our reservation members living in multi-family households an opportunity to have their own home, whether it’s rented or owned, and that will help economically, help the tribe and allow members to move back to the reservation.”

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(Courtesy photo by Kelly Karl, Corvias)

The donated house continues its journey, which could be the most difficult part of the new regional partnership.

The donation effort was facilitated by Marvin Thurman, executive director of Operation Walking Shield, whose role is to communicate the availability of homes to Native American tribes from the Armed Services. Thurman informed Bernadette Thomas, the Kickapoo Housing Authority tribal council liaison, about the availability of the Fort Riley houses and coordinated initial discussions to start the transfer process.

Funding for the transfer comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Kickapoo Housing Authority is a tribally designated housing entity and, as such, receives from HUD an Indian Housing Block Grant under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act.

It is hoped by leaders from both the 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley and the Kickapoo Nation that more such support is forthcoming. This effort has proven that, once approved, moving a house isn't that difficult.

"We still need a lot more houses," said Peggy Houston, executive director of the Kickapoo Housing Authority. "This is a good start."

She added that since October 2015 there have been at least 10 people on a waiting list for three and four bedroom houses. "We have multi-generational families in a given house and it's not out of the ordinary to have at least three grandchildren in the home with the grandmother and the parents right there. So we're trying to help them become independent and self-sufficient."

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(U.S. Army photo by Andy Massanet, Fort Riley Public Affairs)

Following the May 23 ceremony, Fort Riley Garrison Commander Col. John Lawrence (left) talked with Kickapoo Tribal Council Chairman Lester Randall and 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley Acting Senior Commander Brig. Gen. Patrick Frank. The ceremony formally established a partnership between the 1st Infantry Division, Corvias Housing, Fort Riley and the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas.

Frank expressed his personal satisfaction and pride for the development of the partnership. “Just talking to the leadership of the Kickapoo Tribe and how much they appreciate Fort Riley and the 1st Infantry Division contributing these homes to their tribe (shows) that’s in alignment with Army values, it’s in alignment with the values of our Kansas natives in the Flint Hills and it shows exactly what the Division has done over its 100 years—and that’s to continue to live our Army values,” he said. “So we’re very proud of what occurred here today, and look forward to seeing this partnership continue to grow with the Kickapoo Tribe.”

The partnership falls in line, too, with Corvias’ commitment to making a real difference in the world. According to their website, the word Corvias is rooted in the Latin phrase “by way of the heart” and their vision is to “pursue long-term relationships that substantially improve the quality of life for people.”

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NOTE: Andy Massanet, Fort Riley Public Affairs Office, contributed content for this release.

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