

# The Maui News

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## Veterans council welcomes Wounded Warriors and their families to island



Master Sgt. Angela K. Morales-Biggs (center), along with husband, Ralph (right), and 6-year-old daughter, Alessandra, are greeted by Maui County Council Member Yuki Lei Sugimura (from left) and Mayor Alan Arakawa on May 2 at Kahului Airport. -- Maui County / RYAN PIROS photo

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The Maui County Veterans Council has been welcoming “*Wounded Warriors*,” or those injured in combat, to Maui County in the past

months.

On March 29, the group welcomed Staff Sgt. Army Ranger Nicholas Kruthoff, along with wife, Kasia, and daughters, Emma, 11 and Ella, 4. The family lives in Henderson, Nev.

And on May 2, the group welcomed Master Sgt. Angela K. Morales-Biggs, along with her husband, Ralph, and 6-year-old daughter, Alessandra, from Springfield, Va.

The Maui County Veterans Council meets the warriors and their families at Kahului Airport and provides them with a bag of Hawaii treats. The organization also sets up dinners and excursions, all donated by Maui vendors.

The veterans are being brought to Maui by the nonprofit organization Vacations for Warriors, based in Colorado. Since 2014, the organization has been sending wounded warriors on once-in-a-lifetime dream vacations to various destinations including Hawaii. Travel, lodging, activities and even spending money are included, according to the organization's website.



Staff Sgt. Army Ranger Nicholas Kruthoff (center), along with wife Kasia (far left) and daughters Emma, 11 and Ella, 4, are shown at Kahului Airport on March 29. -- Maui County / RYAN PIROS photo

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Recipients must have served honorable and their injuries sustained during military service.

Kruthoff did two tours in Iraq, in 2003 and 2005. In the last tour, he was severely injured by an improvised explosive device. As a result, he is blind in one eye and he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, according to Vacations for Warriors.

Kruthoff has received the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. His father served in Vietnam and he had a younger brother, Paul, who was in the Army. Kruthoff's brother took his own life in November 2016 as a result of PTSD, the organization said.

Morales-Biggs was a combat medic in the U.S. Air Force. She was injured in Afghanistan during a complex attack on Aug. 28, 2011. She

suffered three severe brain injuries and had to have facial reconstructive surgery due to shrapnel wounds from an improvised explosive device/suicide bomber, according to Vacations for Warriors.

She is also credited with saving more than a dozen lives while providing combat lifesaver care during mass casualties.

Among the awards she received were a Purple Heart, Army Combat Medic Badge, Army Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal and Air Force Commendation.

She currently works with the Air Force Wounded Warrior Program and was involved in the development of the Air Force Invisible Wounds Policy Initiative.

She continues her rehabilitation at Walter Reed Hospital and works at the Department of Health and Human Services as an Operation Warfighter Intern.

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