

{readers forum}

MISSION POSSIBLE

To the staff of *Irish America* magazine: I felt compelled to write you and say thank you for unintentionally helping my family. Because you put a group of wonderful people in the same room (for the awards ceremony of your "Top 100 Best & Brightest") our lives have forever been changed. Let me explain:

My husband John is a 15-year Army veteran who was severely injured on January 5, 2006, while on patrol on Taji, Iraq. John was driving an up-armored Humvee when an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) was command detonated (by someone actually pushing a button) directly under him. He sustained multiple life-threatening injuries, but due to the amazing emergency medical care he received from his fellow soldiers, he survived – only to begin an extremely long road of recovery.

Both of John's legs were crushed, his left arm sustained two open fractures, his ring finger was severed, he fractured a vertebra in his neck, had contusions to his lungs, a lacerated liver, shrapnel to his eyes, face and torso, and multiple burns.

John has had approximately fifty surgeries to date and is in need of several more. His right leg has been amputated, and he has been in a constant battle to save his left one.

He was in an external fixator for 10 months but due to the extensive damage he required several more surgeries – all attempting to help him regain use of his foot and ankle.

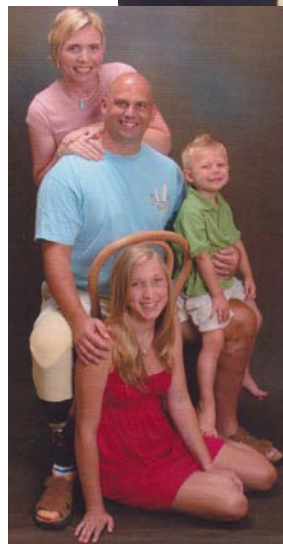
That's where you come in! Because you saw fit to put so many wonderful Irish-Americans together in one room, we are getting the help we have been in dire need of.

Three of your Top 100 who are very dear to us were honored at your Awards ceremony: John Melia, Flip Mullen, and Dr. John Kennedy. John Melia is the Founder of Wounded Warrior Project and he works with Flip Mullen every year for the summer water sports event that takes

place for the Wounded Warriors in Rockaway, New York. As they were all sitting there listening to you talk of Dr. Kennedy's, Flip's, and John's many accomplishments, something magical happened. Through an amazing chain of events, Flip and Dr. Kennedy ended up discussing the care of the Wounded



The Borders family: Mollie, John, Brittany and Xander.



Warriors. You see, we have been at Walter Reed Army Medical Center undergoing care for John's injuries for nearly two years now and our care has been nothing short of excellent. (Just seeing John ride a bike or water skiing tells you all you need to know about the standard of care at this amazing facility.)

But we had hit a plateau with John's improvement and we wanted a "fresh set of eyes" to take a look at his leg because he had been considering amputation. Somehow, through the grapevine, Flip heard of John's difficult decision and called to inform us that he had facilitated a number of second opinions for soldiers in John's predicament with Dr. Kennedy at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. He asked us if we would be interested in getting a second opinion before opting for amputation. Of course we would!

Needless to say, things are going well. We went to New York, stayed with Flip, got a ride to Dr. Kennedy's office from a firehouse on 67th Street (Engine 39 Ladder 16 – thanks, guys!), and saw the amazing Dr. Kennedy! I was so very impressed – and because John has undergone approximately 50 surgeries, it's not easy to impress me! Dr. Kennedy needed some more information to make his final decision so we came back to Walter Reed for more testing. The test results all looked good and we are scheduled for a surgery that should increase John's function and simultaneously decrease his pain! We are more than excited to get this done.

At a time in the world when it seems that so few people care – or even know – about the suffering that is happening to so many of our "war wounded," it was a blessing to meet such a wonderful group of people. We are forever in your debt for putting these amazing people under the same roof, which made this all possible. John is the fourth or fifth soldier Dr. Kennedy had helped and he is doing so out of the kindness of his heart – there is no money in it for him and he's every bit the amazing man you at *Irish America* magazine thought him to be. Flip has been helping Wounded

Warriors for years and will never understand how much what he does means to the lives of the families he touches. Our family will never be able to thank him enough for all he's done. I only hope this letter expresses the deep gratitude John and I feel toward all those involved: John Melia, Flip Mullen, all the guys of Engine 39 Ladder 16 on 67th Street, Dr. Kennedy, and last but definitely not least, *Irish America* magazine! Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

Ssg John, Mollie, Brittany and Xander Borders
Silver Spring, Maryland

Editor's Note: We are delighted to be part of such a wonderful story, and we are sure that the spirit of Mollie's Irish immigrant great-grandmother, Mollie Mullens, is at work here also. As we go to press Dr. Kennedy has just operated on another soldier, 25-year-old Army Capt. Brian Jantzen (his fifth soldier to date). He is hopeful that he can save Capt. Jantzen's right leg which was injured in Iraq.