Congressman Hastings honored Mr. Roy Foster by giving the following speech on December 10, 2009:

Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a courageous veteran turned social activist, Mr. Roy Foster. Mr. Foster is the founder of Stand Down House, an organization in South Florida that has been providing veterans with life-changing assistance since 2000. His hard work and dedication has earned him the esteemed distinction of 2009 Top 10 CNN Hero. CNN Heroes is an annual awards ceremony that recognizes “everyday people changing the world.” Mr. Foster was one of ten CNN Heroes chosen by a blue-ribbon panel of distinguished leaders and humanitarians, including Retired General Colin Powell, Whoopi Goldberg, and Sir Elton John, from an initial pool of more than 9,000 viewer nominations.

Mr. Foster knows all too well how hard it is to find programs that help veterans deal with addiction and homelessness because he used to be one of them. Born in rural Georgia, Mr. Foster joined the Army right after high school. Throughout his six years in the military, he drank alcohol and experimented with drugs. By the time he left the Army in 1980, Mr. Foster was an alcoholic and his drug use had begun to escalate as he struggled to deal with life after the Army. Like many people dealing with addiction, Mr. Foster spent nights sleeping on the streets as he battled his disease for many years.

After starting a life of sobriety in the early 1990s, Mr. Foster used his experiences to become an effective substance abuse counselor. Acknowledging the problems that veterans dealing with substance abuse face, Mr. Foster and another veteran, the late Don Reed, established the non-profit Faith*Hope*Love*Charity, Inc. so that veterans would no longer fall through the cracks of an imperfect system.

After six years of work, Mr. Foster founded Stand Down House to help fellow veterans who are struggling and have lost their homes, dignity, and the ability to lead productive lives. Through referral by the Veterans Administration (VA) and with help from their funding, Stand Down House provides transitional housing and support services to 45 veterans in different stages of recovery. This support includes housing, clothing, counseling, life skills classes for up to two years, and transportation to the VA hospital for medical and mental health care. The goal is to not only assist veterans in their recovery process, but give them the tools to find employment or attend school after their recovery process is over.

At Stand Down House, veterans realize that they are not alone in their struggles after returning home, which allows for veterans of all ages to become a support system for one another. This often leads to veterans becoming informal counselors to each other and making sure that one another stay on track. Many graduates of the program find the bond of friendship and support so beneficial that they return as volunteers to give back to others in need, especially with many veterans now returning home from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I truly admire the work that Mr. Roy Foster has done, and continues to do, for our nation's veterans each and every single day. After serving our country so valiantly, no veteran should ever have to face the future alone.

- **ARCHIVED HEROES**