

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center



Flexibility and Adaptability - Our Keys to Success

With Thanksgiving behind us, we are well into the holiday season and bringing 2020 to a close. This year has been unprecedented! The need faced by our veterans and their families, and our community in general, has been tremendous in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. But as expected, the resilience and passion of our board, staff, ambassadors and partners kept our programs moving and growing to serve those most vulnerable. Your hard work and commitment have kept me in awe and full of gratitude to have so many willing to give all they have to support our military community.



One-Stop for Veterans & Military

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Flexibility and adaptability have been the keys to our success. In early spring during the “Safer at Home” response to COVID, we kept our doors open and created a safe environment for our staff, volunteers and clients. We redesigned programming to support safety goals like bringing telehealth capabilities to our behavioral health department so that we could serve our clients remotely. Our interns remained dedicated and steadfast in providing stellar counseling services. Equally, our partners adapted and brought remote therapies such as art and mindfulness training to vulnerable clients.

I also observed this community come together in an important way. Local foundations focused resources on immediate needs allowing nonprofit organizations to provide critical assistance. An example of this included an emergency grant from the Pikes Peak Community Foundation allowing us to purchase the technology to bring remote counseling and case management to our clients. Another important partnership with Care and Share Food Bank and the Colorado Springs Food Rescue was expanded to bring a bi-weekly food distribution to our military community.

Our supporters and funders were all very generous in ensuring that our team had the tools necessary to support the ever-changing needs of our clients as the COVID virus moved through our community. Early on, individual donors reached out to help in record numbers showing their commitment and passion for our military community. Your generosity was pivotal in keeping veterans fed, housed and employed these last months.

Remarkably, even in the chaos of this year, we had a tremendous increase in volunteerism among the veteran population. There are countless cases of veterans and their families coming forward to assist with our mission - helping with food drives, providing program support or volunteering at our record-breaking Patriot Day event. You are the people that set our Colorado Springs military and veteran community apart from all the rest. **YOU SHOW UP!** You help us to provide rent and food support, increase future opportunities with our Level Up Scholarship Program, and support our new and improved Community Connections Program. Thank you for the generosity of your time and talents!

Moving into the new year, the challenges will continue. As rent moratoriums expire, the economy continues to struggle, and vaccine distribution does not reach its peak until late spring, I am confident that all of you will make sure that we are able to continue to take care of those most in need. You give me hope for our future and your passion lifts me up with the knowledge that Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is more than just a place, or a program. It has a heart and a soul bringing meaningful change to veterans and their families when they need it most. It is the gift that each of you brings to make this world a better place. Thank you!

*By Col. Bob McLaughlin, U.S. Army, Retired
Chief Operating Officer*

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With a Little Help from Our Friends

Mt. Carmel is a non-profit organization that provides low/no cost services to ALL veterans, military and their families without restriction or eligibility requirements and without a steady stream of earned revenue such as fees or insurance reimbursements. This means we rely on fundraising to support programs and serve clients. We are very thankful to the generous foundations, government agencies, corporations and individuals who support Mt. Carmel. We couldn't serve clients without your generous and ongoing support! **In the last two months, we have received financial support from:**



And many others who prefer to remain anonymous.
We thank you all for your continued support!

Are You Listening to the Award-Winning Veteran's Voice?

The Mt. Carmel Veteran's Voice Podcast was awarded first place in 2019 at the Colorado Broadcaster Association Awards of Excellence in the Best Use of New Media Category! The bi-monthly radio show is a podcast broadcast on KRDO Radio. Veteran's Voice is hosted by KRDO personality, Ted Robertson, and is presented by USAA.

THE MT. CARMEL VETERANS VOICE PODCAST

PRESENTED BY:

PUBLISHED THE 2ND AND 4TH SATURDAY EACH MONTH
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<https://krdonwsradio.podbean.com/p/the-mt-carmel-veterans-voice-with-mike-lewis/>

Community Connections Program Launches

For over 30 years, our 2020 Volunteer of the Year Mr. Tom Miller has been providing services and outreach to our military and veterans. We are honored to finally make his efforts an official program at Mt. Carmel!

The new program, Community Connections, will be led by Tom Miller and Melodie Owens. This program aims to foster the community relationship with our veteran, military, Gold Star and first responder families.

The Community Connections program assists the local military bases: Ft. Carson, Peterson AFB, Cheyenne Mountain AFS, AFA, Schriever AFB, Space Force, Buckley, Guard/Reserve units and first responders. This outreach provides service members with an additional option for assistance provided by Mt. Carmel, partners and funds raised from donors.



Tom Miller

A few of the services offered through the Community Connections program:

Welcome Home Ceremonies
Org Day/Family Picnics
Retirement Services
Memorial Services
Baby Showers for Single Parents
Single Female Post Deployment (special toiletries upon return to barracks)
Stuff the Bus/School Supplies
Back to School/Backpacks
Easter Egg Hunts
Pumpkin Patch
Turkeys for Troops
Christmas Unlimited/Toys for Tots
Household Goods, Furniture
Repair Services- Home, Auto, Etc.

Operation Turkeys for Troops

Mt. Carmel teamed up with Safeway to bring the blessings of Thanksgiving to 2,160 local military, veterans and families with 1,160 Turkeys and 1,000 Thanksgiving baskets that included a Turkey and the fixings. Operation TURKEYS FOR TROOPS is an annual Mt. Carmel event.

“Mt. Carmel is very proud to help make this important American holiday special for our military, veterans and their families,” said Retired Army Col. Bob McLaughlin, Mt. Carmel Chief Operating Officer. “We’re grateful for the support of our community partners and sponsors who made this effort successful and we wish all military, veterans and their families a Happy Thanksgiving.”

Mt. Carmel’s Operation TURKEYS FOR TROOPS is made possible through the generous support of donations and sponsorships. A huge thank you to Safeway/Albertsons for donating 1,000 turkey meal kits, volunteers, and American Warrior Initiative for donating over 500 \$25 Safeway gift cards.

We would also like to thank our sponsors: Pepsico, Veterans United, Laurie Long, Phil Long Dealerships, Larry H. Miller Dealerships, The Church at Woodmoor, Tire World, Heuser & Heuser, Security Service Federal Credit Union, Carls Jr., Josh Denkins, Colorado Technical University and Certified Hail & Dent.

We are grateful for the support of our community partners and sponsors who made this effort successful and wish all military, veterans and their families a Happy Thanksgiving.



Agility and Innovation

The Transition and Employment (T&E) team continues to work hard to serve the many unemployed and underemployed along the Front Range. We continue, like everyone else, to face COVID-19 restriction challenges and have recently adjusted our on-site work schedule to accommodate state mandated guidelines. Pandemic or not, those in our veteran and military community need us and we have become even more agile and innovative to virtually meet the needs of our clients.

In the past two months, we have held six virtual job skills workshops that have taught our clients how to write effective federal and private industry resumes, how to write code and how to avoid financial pitfalls during transition. We have briefed our services to several career skills programs and transition assistance programs, both on and off the local military installations. Our staff has engaged using our Mt. Carmel VSC voice within our greater community at such events as the Pikes Peak Workforce Center's Military, Veterans and Spouses Coalition, the Colorado Springs Military Spouse Career Coalition, the Abilities Coalition and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Mt. Carmel VSC (and T&E specifically along with Veteran's Climb) were highlighted at the November Workforce Development Board meeting and we participated in a white paper round table discussion hosted by the National Military Spouse Network (NMSN).

In October 2020, we brought three new employees on board to bring the team up to full capacity. Elan Rainford, a VA Work Study who was already on our team, was hired to become a Peer Navigator for the Veterans Service to Career Program (VSCP). Ernest Chamblee, an Air Force veteran and soon to be UCCS MBA recipient, joined the Veterans Integration Program (VIP) team. And last but far from least, Karen Lawrie, an Air Force military spouse who recently relocated to Colorado Springs from Korea was hired to lead up our once again up and running MilSpouse Career Program (MCP). Our team is complete now and we continue to stay abreast of emerging job search trends and career pathway opportunities. To that end, we were visited by Carrie Sigmon, a recruiter for the UCCS Cyber Security Apprentice Program and by Ken Hoerning of ACI Learning who provided professional development updates for the team.

In other T&E updates, we are grateful to the Microsoft Software and Systems Academy (MSSA) for graciously donating \$15K in order for the T&E team and others in the building to purchase new Microsoft laptops. The T&E team frequently assists the MSSA by providing mock interview support to their program cohorts made up of transitioning service members and veterans. It's a great community relationship and just one example of how T&E is actively engaged in our community doing what we do best!

Looking into our crystal ball, we are more than excited about several recent grants received that will allow all of our programs including our newest, the Military Community Career Skills Development program, to offer our clients a greatly expanded ability to enhance their marketability through professional certifications, training and education. Many thanks to USAA for awarding us a \$200K Creating Pathways to Education and Employment for Military Veterans and their Families grant; El Paso County for a \$20K CDBG-CV grant; and William Dean III for a \$15K Transition and Employment program grant to support Prep Connect 360 plus.

Our pandemic times are definitely challenging, but know that T&E is working hard to touch and improve lives where we are needed the most.

Behavioral Health Team Expanding

Rates of suicide and behavioral health struggles are on the rise during the COVID-19 crisis. Our Behavioral Health program has been getting a higher volume of calls in the recent months. It is a great thing that more people in our community are reaching out for support! However, this also means our program and some of our partners have had to implement waitlists. We are excited to complete an expansion that will increase our offices from four to eight, which means we will be able to serve more people! We are continuing to provide assessments and warm handovers to our clients when needed.



Kirsten Belaire
Director of Behavioral Health



Michaela Norve

Kayla Prior, our Intake Specialist, has accepted a wonderful employment opportunity in Woodland Park where she lives. Although we are sad to see her go, we are also excited to welcome Michaela Norve to the team. Michaela holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Colorado Colorado Springs and is passionate about the fields of counseling and human services. While working on her undergraduate degree, she worked in the University's Career Center where she discovered her desire to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds, specifically with military members, veterans and their family members.

Womens Expo 2020



Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, once again, sponsored and promoted the 15th Annual Women's Expo with a Cause on November 7th and 8th at the Norris Penrose Events Center. We were honored to give away FREE tickets to women in the military, veteran women and military spouses. While the highly safe and socially distanced event welcomed women to sample and shop their way through 100 exhibits, special events and entertainment, Mt. Carmel staff worked to spread the word about our services available to the community.

Comcast Offers Support to Those in Need

At Comcast NBCUniversal, military engagement is a year-round commitment, but November is a special time when we celebrate our commitment to building an inclusive workplace for military community employees, while also taking extra care to show our gratitude to military customers and communities. We work to hire members of the military community at all levels. We partner closely with military-serving organizations like Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, and we work to ensure military families are connected to the resources they need.

The pandemic has affected how everyone, including military families, goes to work, attends school, and sees family and friends. Our new virtual world has made it crucial to keep military families connected to resources they count on, like telemedicine, education or access to VA benefits. Our commitment to digital equity this year has been incredibly strong, most notably through our Internet Essentials program, which provides affordable home Internet for eligible families and individuals. The program offers low-cost, high-speed Internet service for \$9.95 a month, provides access to free digital skills training in print and online, and includes the option to purchase a low-cost Internet-ready computer.

The Walkers are one military family in Colorado Springs who have directly benefitted from Internet Essentials this year. Learn more about their story by watching this video: <https://vimeo.com/457000764/9e233f8881>

More details on Internet Essentials can be found at <https://internetessentials.com/> and more information around our military engagement can be found at <https://corporate.comcast.com/values/military>.

Thank you to those who have served. At Comcast, we believe service matters.



Fundraising Goes Virtual



Alicia Grantham
Director of Development
& Fundraising

As 2020 comes to an end, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all of our supporters. Without generous corporate sponsors, individual donors and selfless volunteers, Mt. Carmel would not be able to do the great work we do on a daily basis.

We have all been affected in some way, and many have faced unforeseen circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several organizations, including Mt. Carmel, had to adapt quickly and make changes with regard to fundraising efforts and events. We were very fortunate to be able to host our most successful golf tournament to date at the Sanctuary Golf Course in August.

Our second largest fundraising event, the annual Hoedown for Heroes, was scheduled for November 6th at the Boot Barn Hall. Due to COVID concerns and safety precautions, Mt. Carmel leadership made the decision to host the event in a virtual environment. We were disappointed that we could not gather with our supporters; however, we are pleased to share with you that we had an overwhelming amount of support, not only from our sponsors, but from our community. Our sponsorship participation was not impacted greatly by transitioning from an in-person event to a virtual platform. Additionally, the silent auction was a great success. Thank you to everyone who supported our efforts, whether it was through a financial contribution, a silent auction donation, or if you were the winning bid on one of our great auction items. Every dollar raised goes directly to supporting Mt. Carmel and allowing us to continue to Help Us Help Ours!

Following our Hoedown, Mt. Carmel, in partnership with KOAA, hosted our first annual telethon. "Pledge for Patriots" kicked off on November 10th and continued through Veterans Day. Throughout the day on the 10th, Mt. Carmel was highlighted several times on KOAA. This provided Mt. Carmel an opportunity to educate the community about the vital programs and services provided to our clients every day.

HELP US HELP OURS!

In order to continue providing essential and vital services to our veteran and military community, Mt. Carmel needs your help. Please consider making an end-of-year contribution, which may be given as a general gift or directed to a specific program. The holidays are a wonderful time to honor and remember loved ones, and your gift can be designated as such.

Every dollar counts! **To make a contribution, please visit www.veteranscenter.org and click on "GIVE."** You may also mail your contribution to:

**Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center
530 Communication Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80905**

If a gift of appreciated stock is something you are considering, or if you are considering supporting Mt. Carmel in your estate planning, please contact Alicia Grantham at (719) 309-4774 or agrantham@mtcarmelcenter.org to begin the conversation. And don't forget that you may direct your IRA Required Minimum Distribution to Mt. Carmel to support our work.

**Mt. Carmel deeply appreciates all of your support throughout the year.
Happy Holidays and Thank You!**



Bob McLaughlin, COO, receiving donation from Jason Scott and Paul L'Ecuier of Guaranteed Rate, the 2020 Virtual Hoedown for Heroes Title Sponsor



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FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF
VETERANS, MILITARY AND THEIR FAMILIES!



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Holiday Hope and Giving



Katie Travis

Director of Veteran
and Family Resources

With pandemic fears and losses, financial woes, an economy in distress, devastating wildfires, an apprehensive election and murder hornets, it's easy to speak for everyone by saying, "This has been a challenging year!" However, I want to focus on the beautiful parts and how our community came together to support one another.

Food insecurity will affect 90% of families in the United States at least once in their lifetime. This year, during COVID-19, the numbers of families suffering continued and food insecurity more than doubled.

MCVSC proudly teamed up with Care and Share and Colorado Springs Food Rescue to provide some needed relief on the first and third Friday of every month. Through the Food Friday program, we are able to distribute perishable and non-perishable items to approximately 150 families, twice a month. Through additional programming, we secured a Hunger Relief grant from Safeway and Albertsons that allows us to keep our pantry stocked and provide emergent food services outside of Food Friday.

The holidays can be an especially challenging time, especially for those who are stationed away from their extended family or have a family member who is deployed. Safeway provided us with 1,000 Thanksgiving meal baskets that we provided to our troops, veterans and their families. American Warrior Initiative came alongside us and through their fundraising efforts, we were provided with over 500 grocery gift cards to pass out with meals. These gift cards allowed families to purchase the ingredients to make their family's traditional holiday side or obtain other groceries or necessities for the household. Without community partners like Care and Share, Colorado Springs Food Rescue, Safeway and American Warrior Initiative, we wouldn't be able to do what we do in supporting our military and neighbors in this especially trying time.

In other exciting news, the Veteran & Family Resources (VFR) team is continuing to grow. As we look towards the new year, we have made some staffing shifts and brought on a new Supportive Services Case Manager. We'd like to introduce you to Nichole Twigg. Nichole is passionate about finding resources to help military and their families navigate through difficult circumstances. Nichole comes to Mt. Carmel with a background in corrections, first working as an officer and then later a case manager, where she found she enjoyed helping people who society quite often deemed to be "difficult." Nichole is a registered psychotherapist in the state of Colorado and is in the process of pursuing a level one certification for addiction counseling. She is also pursuing a bachelor's degree in forensic psychology. Nichole's background offers understanding and empathy to clients' situations and their state of mental health. Having lived in Colorado since 2014, Nichole is no stranger to the veteran population, and enjoys friendships with those in active duty and veteran status. We are thrilled to have her on the team. She has already added so much in the little time she has been with us, and we can tell she's going to do great things here at MCVSC.



Nichole Twigg

Looking forward into December, we have selected and placed families on the Angel Tree for holiday gifts. It is important for us to help parents keep the magic of Santa alive, even in difficult times. Christmas Unlimited has selected us as an application agency and we are able to provide 25 families with gifts through this program. Safeway will partner with us again to distribute holiday meals the third week of December. This is a very busy time of the year for us but it is also the most joyful. The whole Mt. Carmel family comes together to assist VFR in the holiday endeavors, and seeing the joy on the families' faces makes everything worth it.

The Veteran and Family Resources team would like to wish everyone a MERRY CHRISTMAS, HANUKKAH SAMEACH, HAPPY KWANZAA, FELIZ NAVIDAD, and HAPPY HOLIDAYS from the bottom of our hearts, and here's to a happier New Year!

King Soopers Community Rewards Help Veterans

SPREAD THE WORD:

Help Veterans just by using your King Soopers or City Market card - after you select us online (in just a few clicks)...and there is no impact to your fuel points.

Visit <https://veteranscenter.org/king-soopers-community-rewards> for details.



Veterans Tribute Walkway



Honor a loved one or show your support of a veteran friend or family member by purchasing a brick or paver, featured as part of our Veterans Tribute Walkway on the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center campus.

The proceeds are used to continue providing our essential veterans services. Bricks range from \$175 - \$200; Pavers from \$750 - \$850. They can even be personalized with military emblems.

To order your brick or paver, or for additional information, visit www.thatsmybrick.com/mtcvsc



Upcoming Events

(All events at Mt. Carmel VSC unless noted – additional events at veteranscenter.org)

Events are subject to change due to COVID-19 restrictions.
Please call to confirm.

MONDAY

10:00-2:00 pm - Mission Medical **POSTPONED**
12:00-2:30 pm - Republican Women's Forum **POSTPONED**
5:30-7:30 pm - Art Therapy (Multipurpose Room, every week)
6:30-8:30 pm - Power Breath (VIRTUAL/PHONE)

TUESDAY

8:00-12:00 pm - Bellevue Chiropractic **POSTPONED**
9:00-3:30 pm - Medicare Mentors (every week)
10:00-2:00 pm - CTU **POSTPONED**
11:00-12:00 pm - Bible Study (Chapel, every week)
12:00-1:00 pm - Spiritual Connection Group (Chapel, every week)
12:00-4:00 pm - CSU Pueblo **POSTPONED**
5:00-6:00 pm - Yoga (Community Hall, every week)

WEDNESDAY

9:00-1:00 pm - loanDepot (every week)
9:00-12:00 pm - United Healthcare (every week starting 14 Oct)
10:00-2:00 pm - Veterans Advocacy Group VIRTUAL/PHONE

THURSDAY

8:00-12:00 pm - Aide to You Home Care **POSTPONED**
9:00-1:00 pm - Veterans Upward Bound (every week)
9:00-3:30 pm - Medicare Mentors (every week)
10:00-11:00 am - PTS Support Group (Multipurpose Room, every week)
4:00-5:00 pm - Substance Abuse Group (Chapel, every week)
5:30-8:30 pm - Mineralogical Society Group **POSTPONED**
6:30-8:30 pm - Mineralogical Society Group **POSTPONED**

FRIDAY

4:00-5:00 pm - Substance Abuse Group (Chapel, every week)

SATURDAY

10:00-11:00 am - Tai Chi

Are you following us online and on social media?

For the latest Mt. Carmel information, events and services, visit veteranscenter.org.
Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter; and listen
to our weekly [Veteran's Voice Podcast](#) at KRDO.com.

