



One-Stop for Veterans & Military

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By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

The Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center team wishes all of our friends and supporters a very Happy New Year! Last year, Colorado Springs veteran and military families were faced with health problems, job loss, schooling and childcare unpredictability, and financial strain. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues into 2022, we expect to see similar struggles in our community. Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center wants to help make our community a place where people are more certain – certain of beneficial Veteran and Family Resources, Transition and Employment help, and Behavioral Health & Wellness services. As we start the new year, we are looking back at our accomplishments and looking forward as we establish new goals.

As we look back at 2021, we celebrate some encouraging achievements. We have served over 10,000 clients through nearly 65,000 client visits. Through our Transition and Employment program, we have helped 3,000 veterans and military family members secure employment. Our Behavioral Health & Wellness program was able to assess over 300 people and provide almost 4,000 counseling and therapy sessions. We were also able to help 369 veterans in crisis through our Veteran and Family Resources program last year. All together, we invested nearly \$1.8 million into program expenses, providing military-affiliated clients with no or low-cost services in the Pikes Peak Region. We are grateful for the



Bob McLaughlin

impact we made in 2021, and are buoyed forward as we strive to make an even greater impact on the military community in 2022.

As Mt. Carmel looks ahead towards 2022, we will remain committed to our mission of providing best practices in service to our military community. Our accessible programs, integrated resources, and collaborative partnerships empower lives and strengthen our community. As we look to the future, Mt. Carmel will:

- Expand services and programs throughout Colorado with national influence on veteran-serving best practices.
- Ensure we are an integral partner in providing housing needs with focus on homelessness prevention and housing options using our Operation Step Up program to garner resources.
- Meet needs of our clients by expanding Community Connection and Veteran Connection programs, ensuring those in need get immediate support while helping to build a stronger community.

(Continued on next page)



TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT:

MARK SMITH

Dir, Transition and Employment

PEER NAVIGATORS:

ELAN RAINFORD

JON DIX

ASHLEY HARDY

NICK WEREMBLEWSKI

SUNNY SHAFFER

VET & FAMILY RESOURCES:

KATIE TRAVIS

Dir, Vet & Family Resources

CASE MANAGERS:

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IT/Facilities Coordinator

LINDA CINK

Volunteer Coordinator

MIRANDA BEDBURDICK

Client Services

- Grow partnerships across the region and the state to improve program integration and resource delivery for those who serve.
- Develop health and wellness offerings to ensure those affected by adversity get the timely support they need.

We are continually grateful for the opportunity to serve our veterans, military family members, and the entire military community. We could not do it without the support of our community partners and volunteers. We are looking forward to making 2022 the best year yet! ■

Bob McLaughlin

Partner Spotlight

Jacobs is making a big impact in the Colorado Springs veteran community!

With just over 1,300 employees and strong partnerships with several local veteran organizations, the company is committed to veteran employment, mentorship, and supporting established veteran resources.

In 2017, the Missile Defense Agency awarded Jacobs the Integrated Research & Development for Enterprise Solutions (IRES) contract to provide integrated solutions to support concurrent test, training and operations as well as execute enterprise communications and information technology services across the agency. Then in 2020, Jacobs was awarded the Integrated Tactical Warning/Attack Assessment (ITW/AA) and Space Support Contract II (NISSC II) that supports classified communications and processing for NORAD's Command and Control (C2) capability.

Jacobs has enthusiastically embraced multiple transitioning military programs, including DOD Skillbridge, Hiring Our Heroes, and Hire Heroes USA. These programs provide service members employment that results not only in well-paying jobs, but careers with competitive benefits and opportunities for advancement.

Jacobs

Jacobs also values the many local veteran organizations that provide much-needed resources throughout the year to service members, veterans and their families. Partnerships with Mt. Carmel, Citizen Soldier Connection, Home Front Military Network, Operation Traumatic Brain Injury Freedom, and Project Healing Waters afford employees opportunities to give back to the community. Over the past year, Jacobs employees have partnered with Mt. Carmel and coached transitioning military members during Prep Connect 360; distributed hundreds of meals to those in need during Patriots Day; assisted with Veteran Recognition events; and collaborated with a network of partners in mentoring veterans with traumatic brain injuries on job searches, resume writing and interviewing, just to name a few.

These activities are all supported through Jacobs VetNet Employee Network, which is an inclusive network providing access to positive mental health initiatives, wellness programs, mentoring, and networking opportunities that utilize members' military knowledge and experience.

Visit www.jacobs.com or www.jacobsmissiledefense.com to see how Jacobs is challenging today to reinvent tomorrow! ■

Volunteer Spotlight

Dr. Dan & Esther Sollee

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is lucky to have the Sollees as volunteers. We are so grateful for their hard work and the countless volunteer hours they've invested in Mt. Carmel. Dan and Esther have been Mt. Carmel Ambassadors for five years and have been active volunteers at Mt. Carmel during that time. They have been dedicated golf tournament volunteers by assembling silent auction items and running payment and donation platforms for the fundraiser. They have also served by packing boxes of essentials for homeless veterans, moving furniture, supporting the food distribution events, serving at Patriot Day, and even making phone calls for donations. No matter how small the task, they always graciously accept the chance to volunteer and complete their service with contagious smiles. We could not do what we do without them! ■



Dr. Dan & Esther Sollee

“As a Vietnam vet I know how hard it can be to transition into civilian society. We volunteer at Mt. Carmel to help make this transition as successful as possible for others.”

— Dan & Esther

Save the Dates

**8/24 – CHARITY
GOLF TOURNAMENT**
Sanctuary Golf Course, Sedalia

9/17 – MISSION TO ZERO
Starts in Green Mountain Falls,
ends at Mt. Carmel

9/2 – PATRIOT DAY
Mt. Carmel's day of giving
for veterans

**11/4 – HOEDOWN
FOR HEROES**
Boot Barn Hall



**More details to follow. Please contact
Melodie Owens with questions –
mowens@mtcarmelcenter.org**

Department Updates



Transition and Employment

Transition and Employment reached a milestone of 3,000 job placements in 2021 and 2022 is already shaping up to be another record year. We've just added another Veterans Integration Program (VIP) Peer Navigator to our team, **Sunny Shaffer!** Sunny is a U.S. Army Veteran with seven years of logistics management experience. She earned her degree at the University of Dubuque in Iowa with a Criminal Justice focus. While transitioning out of the military, she started a vacation rental management business and delivered her son. She is a Colorado native with a love for sunny weather, being outdoors, and a passion for helping other veterans succeed. Welcome to the team, Sunny! ■



Sunny Shaffer



Behavioral Health and Wellness

Behavioral Health experienced an increase in calls during the month of December. The holiday season can intensify many different stressors and that translates to an increase in need for behavioral health services. In December we also hosted a Crisis Counseling training for all Mt. Carmel staff to increase our effectiveness in suicide prevention efforts.

We are currently focusing efforts on analyzing data obtained over the years to assess program effectiveness and to look for

additional grant funding opportunities. We also hosted the second round of C-PTSD training for our team as well. Two of our graduate interns completed their programs and became Licensure Candidates. **We are excited that both interns have decided to stay on as contractors and warmly welcome Tegan and Rodger to our Behavioral Health team.**

We are also excited to have six new interns joining our team in January! ■



Veteran and Family Resources

Last year was a growth year for Veteran Family Resources and for our clients. We are still fighting the uphill battle of the COVID pandemic and we are here to lend our support to the military community. COVID aside, we are also no stranger to the concept that “life happens” and usually not at the most convenient time.

In 2021, we are proud to have assisted over 400 military, veterans, and their families with case management services. Providing over \$300,000 in financial assistance towards homeless prevention, utilities, food, transportation needs to include bus passes, car payments, car repairs, and so much more.

Hail and Farewell

It is with a heavy heart that I say a bittersweet goodbye to Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center this month. I have grown tremendously during my time here - from volunteer to front desk triage staff, to case manager, and finally, program director. I’ve had the privilege of watching the Veteran and Family Resources department grow with love, support, and knowledge of the Mt. Carmel team, our partners, and our clients. I started here while I completed my undergraduate degree in Social Work, not knowing quite where it would

lead, but knowing I wanted to help the military community. Now, with a master’s degree in hand, I am making my way to the sunny shores of Florida to continue my journey supporting the military, veterans, and their families. There are not enough adequate words to express my gratitude. I’m sure this isn’t a forever goodbye, as I know I will continue to support Mt. Carmel in any way I can. I will continue to keep Mt. Carmel in my thoughts always. Please let me know when we can discuss the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center Florida location! - Katie Travis, outgoing Director of Veteran and Family Resources

Now, a message from our newest Director of Veteran and Family Resources, Madison Bell:

Friends and clients, I am extremely excited to be taking on the new role of Director of Veteran and Family Resources. I am a military spouse and have been in Colorado for almost two years. I have been with Mt. Carmel for about nine months as I started as an intern last May and began serving as a case manager in Veteran and Family Resources last June. I look forward to working with my team, as well as all of the other Mt. Carmel team members, to further the Veteran and Family Resource program and support our veteran community. ■

Pueblo Community Reception

DECEMBER 13, 2021
CENTER FOR AMERICAN VALUES

**Celebrating
the opening
of our new
Pueblo Veterans
Service Office.**

