



One-Stop for Veterans & Military

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By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

We've had another unprecedented few months locally, nationally, and more recently, internationally. As always, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is here through it all, supporting veterans in any way we can. With recent events across Eastern Europe, you may be wondering how it will impact the local community and how Mt. Carmel is uniquely poised to help.

You can be confident that we will remain vigilant as old wounds become fresh again. Our Department of Behavioral Health has seen a rise in intakes, and we are grateful that we are in a position to provide resources and care to veterans who may be feeling the impact of another conflict. To this end, we are pleased to announce that we are available to serve a larger footprint in Southern Colorado, including the areas of Trinidad, Fountain, and Pueblo. One of our most important goals is to remove barriers that prevent veterans from leading a life full of success and happiness. We are increasingly able to meet more of that need due, in part, to amazing partners, personnel, and donors like you. Rest assured, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the needs of the community no matter what the future brings.

Building on community awareness, February and March gave us the opportunity to reflect on Black History Month and Women's History Month.



Bob McLaughlin

During February we celebrated Black History Month at Mt. Carmel by highlighting some of our extraordinary staff whose unique perspective helps drive our commitment to veterans of color. We realize that diversity strengthens us far more than it divides, and we are grateful for the tireless contributions of these team members. In March, we were able to shine a light on women throughout history whose contributions have shaped the modern military. As with Black History, Women's History is interwoven in the fabric of our nation, running in parallel but often hidden and overlooked. We're proud to serve these demographics and lead the charge on diversity and inclusion. As always, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is committed to the community no matter the background our veterans come from.

We are grateful to our partners, now more than ever, as we expand our commitment to more areas in Southern Colorado. In February, we were able to gather to thank over 75 of our partners and celebrate the contributions they

(Continued on next page)



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Dir, Transition and Employment

PEER NAVIGATORS:

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JON DIX

ASHLEY HARDY

NICK WEREMBLEWSKI

SUNNY SHAFFER

MILITARY, VETERAN, & FAMILY SERVICES:

MADISON BELL

Dir, MVFS

CASE MANAGERS:

ANDREA SINGLETON

DON MAINARD

ALICE MILES

MIKE BAKER

HEALTH & WELLNESS:

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Dir, Health & Wellness

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Gateway Coordinator

ZACHARIAH GARNEY

Behavioral Health Clinician

HEATHER BAYNE

Intake Specialist

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GREET AND CONNECT:

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IT/Facilities Coordinator

LYNDA CINK

Volunteer Coordinator

MIRANDA BEDBURDICK

Client Services

PUEBLO LOCATION:

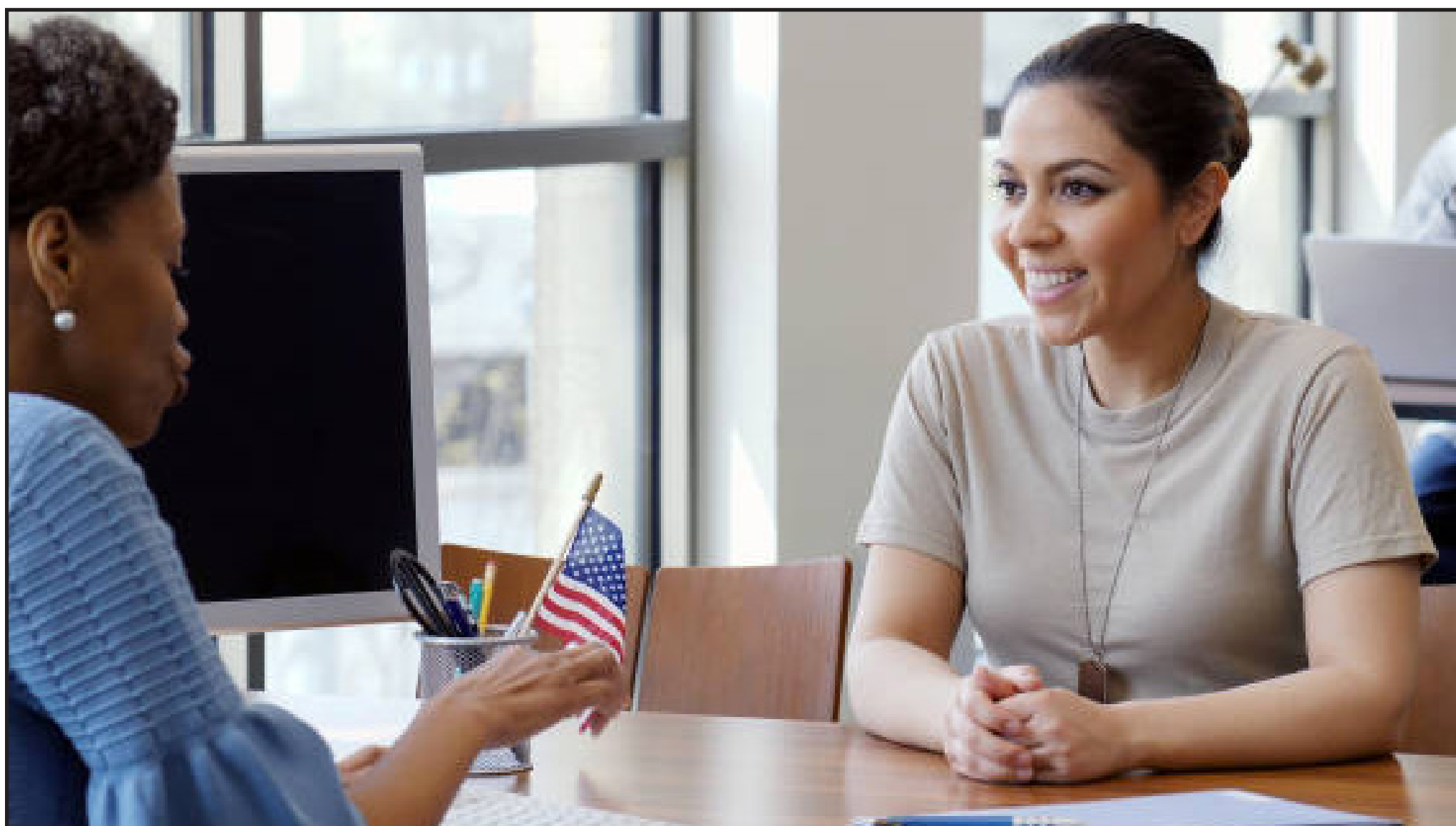
DOUG FITZGERALD

Community Outreach

have made to veterans. We wouldn't be where we are without the gracious support of these wonderful partners who enable us to improve the lives of those who have

served. We are poised to take on new challenges in the upcoming months and are grateful to have you alongside us for the journey. ■

Bob McLaughlin



Partner Spotlight



As we near the end of tax season, we are honored to once again host AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide service, which offers free tax preparation to low-and mid-income tax payers. Since 2019, certified tax preparers have processed 300 tax returns for military and veteran clients at Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center alone. With the cost of tax preparation ranging from \$100-\$400, depending on complexity, this free service has helped our military community save hundreds of dollars.

Air Force veteran and finance-career retiree Bob Stadjuhar has spent the past 15 tax seasons volunteering with AARP Foundation Tax-Aide service and has been the site coordinator at Mt. Carmel. Stadjuhar is honored to serve fellow taxpayers and enjoys his volunteer role at Mt. Carmel. "By expanding our Tax-Aide program to Mt.

Carmel, we are able to specifically serve both veterans and active-duty military. Many of our local Tax-Aide volunteers are military veterans, and we all feel privileged to partner with Mt. Carmel to provide these services to veterans in Colorado Springs.

The power of our partnership with AARP Foundation is a seasonal example of Mt. Carmel VSC offering a hub of resources year-round. Whether it's free tax assistance in the spring, community outreach in the summer, or holiday meals in the fall and winter, Mt. Carmel VSC is committed to ensuring no veteran falls through the crack. If you'd like to get your taxes prepared by Bob and his team at Mt. Carmel before April 13, call 719-772-7000 to schedule an appointment. ■

Volunteer Spotlight

Darcia Kunkel

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is proud to spotlight and welcome Darcia Kunkel. Darcia began her journey with Mt. Carmel as a volunteer in November of 2021. She is passionate about volunteering and supporting veterans because of her husband, who served in the United States Army for over 21 years. Her countless hours and dedication have not gone unnoticed, as Darcia, who is a military spouse, has recently accepted a role as VCSP Intern at AdPro, our partner marketing agency. Darcia has three children, a dog, and enjoys skiing with her husband. ■



Darcia Kunkel and her husband

Save the Dates

5/15 – 719 BATTLE OF THE FOOD TRUCKS

Mt. Carmel main campus

5/20 – PUEBLO CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Walking Stick Golf Course, Pueblo

8/24 – CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Sanctuary Golf Course, Sedalia

9/2 – PATRIOT DAY

Mt. Carmel's day of giving for the military community

9/3 – MISSION TO ZERO

Annual motorcycle ride fundraiser to support Suicide Prevention

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

As we continue to move through the snow and colder months, Transition and Employment continues to drive forward! Our team's outreach has increased as more things are opening up around the state. The Veterans Integration Program (VIP) has reached its placement goals, and the Military Spouse Program is on track to meet theirs as well. **We continue to maintain office hours on Fort Carson and plan to work out of the Pueblo office very soon!** We have amazing partners who are willing to give their time to teach LinkedIn, the civilian resume and federal resume workshops! Prep Connect 360 has had 862 graduates from the start of the program, and most are still involved! We expect a great number of our clients, veterans, transitioning service members, spouses and dependants attending the upcoming Job Fair/Hiring Event on April 12th! We are ready for the spring and summer months! ■



Health and Wellness

Heather Bayne was hired as our new Intake Specialist and Charissa moved into the Gateway Coordinator position. We have seen increases in the need for our gateway program over the past six months, so the increased support was needed. We are excited to be in the process of hiring a Suicide Prevention Coordinator to begin the Senate Bill 129 Suicide Prevention Initiative in partnership with UC Health.

We engaged in our first Arts in Society (AiS) collaborative, which provided us an overview of the amazing programs that AiS is funding. One of the events they are funding is the Mt. Carmel Veterans Art Exhibition. AiS was gracious in granting us \$15,000 to continue our weekly Art Expressions classes and host the art exhibit.

We are also very grateful to the Moniker Foundation for their \$10,000 grant that was awarded to Mt. Carmel Behavioral Health program.

Our Health and Wellness Team has completed numerous trainings since the beginning of the year, and we look forward to more. These trainings build skills and effectiveness for our clinicians.

We are currently building the roster for our first Welcome Home Warrior family retreat through partnership with Regis University. The retreat will be held May 20-22, 2022 at the Golden Bell Ranch in Divide, CO. ■



Military, Veteran and Family Services

Our team started the year off with many changes to the program, one of the biggest being the official name change from Veteran and Family Resources to Military, Veteran and Family Services (MVFS). This change was made to better represent the population we serve and the services provided. The team has also changed structurally as we have a **new Director, Madison Bell, a new financial coach, Jonathan Helm, and two new case managers, Alice Miles and Michael Baker.**

Additionally, we are looking to grow our team even more moving forward as we focus on our Operation Step-Up program and will be looking to add a Housing Coordinator position to the team. We are focusing on training within the team, such as 7 Habits of Highly Effective People as well as establishing life skills classes for clients such as Center on Fathering. MVFS is also focusing on establishing new partnerships as well as fostering previous relationships and was excited to attend the Partner Recognition Event at MCVSC. ■