

INSPIRING HOPE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



CREATING HOPE



Bob McLaughlin

Mt. Carmel Supporters and Friends,

From April 2020 to March 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe, creating a worldwide public health crisis. Veteran and military families in Colorado Springs struggled with health impacts, job loss, school interruptions, and decreased savings when uncertainty became the “new norm.” During this time, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center (MCVSC) remained a Beacon of Support for veterans.

Although the pace of daily life slowed for many, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center never missed a beat. The increased need for financial support, career opportunities, and counseling services resulted in a full lobby and frenzied phone lines. We needed to not only continue our full slate of integrated services, but we needed to expand. Flexibility and adaptability were our keys to success.

In order to keep our doors open, we adopted the “Safer at Home” workplace response to COVID-19. We reformatted our programming, offering telehealth services to clients. We also introduced alternative therapies in a remote format and provided art, music and mindfulness training to vulnerable clients.

Mt. Carmel focused on fully integrating all the resources we had to offer. Many times, a veteran or family member isn’t in need of a single, isolated service. Clients often need more than counseling or help finding a suitable career. They also need legal, food, utilities, and a variety of other assistance.

Samantha Aitken, whom you will read more about later, was struggling through a violent relationship and left with her five children and only 24 cents in her bank account. This courageous woman knew she needed to do something for herself and her family. Sam’s interactions with Mt. Carmel, which prompted changes in her own life, also inspired her spouse to seek assistance and take positive steps forward. Today, she is running her own incredibly successful painting business and employing fellow veterans. Her children now benefit from having two parents who are self-aware and are committed to improving their quality of life, while also paying it forward by helping others.

Although it’s difficult to quantify the impact we’re making in the community, a recent study by the Colorado Institute for Social Impact revealed that for every \$1 donated to MCVSC, almost \$2 in services are given back to the community. That just proves to us even more that any amount donated to Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center goes much further than what we see on the surface. The ripples in the pond continue to spread outward. We have you to thank for this support.

This past year we overcame. We moved quickly to expand our services, form new partnerships, and serve more military and veteran families than ever before. We could not have done this without your help. Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

Sincerely,

Robert F. McLaughlin
COL, US Army (Ret.), Executive Director

CUMULATIVE STATS:

MT. CARMEL HAS SERVED
OVER 10,000 UNIQUE CLIENTS
IN NEARLY 65,000 CLIENT VISITS

10,945
CLIENTS

63,573
VISITS

“The Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center serves as a national model for best practices in serving military, veterans, and their families.” — Senator Michael Bennet

“The team at Mt. Carmel helps make our city one of the most popular places in the country – a place where veterans live and flourish.” — Mayor John Suthers

“I am grateful that Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center calls Colorado’s 5th Congressional District home. Mt. Carmel enriches the lives of our military, veterans, and their families every day, allowing them to thrive.” — Congressman Doug Lamborn

“Mt. Carmel is a great fit as a partner organization in the Gazette Charities Foundation’s Empty Stocking Fund. When it comes to serving veterans, this team is best-in-class!” — Deb Mahan, Executive Director, Gazette Charities Foundation

“My VSO team is proud to be partnered with the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. Together we are stronger. We’ve created a model in terms of public-private partnerships.” — Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veteran Service Officer



DID YOU KNOW? FOR EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN HELPING VETERANS, MT. CARMEL **DOUBLES ITS VALUE** IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

102
VOLUNTEERS

37,538
LBS OF FOOD

376
FAMILIES

PATRIOT DAY STATS: MT. CARMEL
USED OVER 100 VOLUNTEERS,
DISTRIBUTED NEARLY 40,000 LBS OF
FOOD, AND FED NEARLY 400 FAMILIES

Mt. Carmel hosted the Patriot Day Give Back event for veterans and their families on September 3rd. This was a community event to provide free food, necessities, and gifts for military families and the larger Colorado Springs community.

Mt. Carmel recently received results from an independent study conducted by the National Institute for Social Impact (NI4SI). This study reveals that for every dollar Mt. Carmel invests in programs, two dollars in services are returned to the community.



Social Return on Investment (SROI) is the measurement of the value of efforts of an organization to alleviate a social, environmental or community issue. This study documented:

- Significant increases in veteran job placements
- Substantial reductions in unemployment and turnover
- Marked expansion in behavioral health counseling, wellness programs, support, and treatments
- Documented growth in military, veteran and family resources and support services
- Remarkable decline in homelessness, veteran arrests, and incarcerations

LIVING HOPE



Samantha Aitken's Story

MT. CARMEL VETERANS SERVICE CENTER TURNED HER WORLD AROUND

Samantha Aitken's world today is a far cry from where it stood just five years ago.

Working customer service phone calls from home, with young children to care for—including a baby in diapers—Samantha fell victim to abuse at the hands of the one she counted on the most, her husband.

"He was disruptive and would rage in the background, yelling at me while I was on the phone with customers."

Both veterans with varying degrees of PTSD, Samantha's husband had been self-medicating with alcohol and had spiraled into domestic violence. He lost his job after being arrested.

"Self-medicating is very real and it happens in lots of homes. My husband had a lot of trauma," Samantha said.

"They wouldn't give me leave for being a victim of domestic violence."

With home no longer a safe space, Samantha loaded her kids in the car and left, taking all the paid time off she had. She stayed with friends for a month and lost her job as a result.

When Samantha and the children returned to the house, the abuse cycle started all over again. Her husband was arrested four times in two weeks. Adding insult to injury, the landlord gave her an eviction notice for fear of the rent not getting paid.

"I wasn't able to work from home because I didn't know if he was going to break in," Samantha explained. "I was afraid for my kids and didn't want them out of my sight, so working in an office was not an option."

Down on a system that seemed so unfair to victims of abuse, Samantha was at her wit's end.

"As women, it sometimes feels like we're not allowed to have job-induced disabilities. Men can go out, get hurt, self-medicate, abuse, and it's accepted because of their tough circumstance while we women are holding the family together and picking up the broken pieces. And while we're doing that, our broken pieces are falling behind us," she cried. "I felt so alone."

Samantha reached out to the Wounded Warrior Project, who referred her to Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center.

(Sam's story continues on page 6)



Sam Aitken with Madison Bell and Mark Smith

“I met with Supportive Services Case Manager Madison Bell in Veteran & Family Resources, who let me pour my heart out to her and I just fell apart,” recalls Samantha. “She was so kind and calm—just what I needed—not giving me advice or telling me what to do. She just listened and then provided me with resources that could help me.”

Through its partner organizations, Mt. Carmel was able to help pay Samantha’s rent, secure and extend her lease, and put together a sustainability plan to ensure she could manage rent by herself.

“I went to Liz Foster, the Financial Wellness Coordinator, because I felt overwhelmed to be on my own,” Samantha shared. “She laid it out for me—providing a physical budget for me to look at. I’m a visual person, so being able to see it gave me a sense of relief that my problem wasn’t as big as I thought it was.”

Samantha also came to the realization that being a single parent wasn’t the end of the world.

Then, they put a plan in place for employment with the staff at Transition & Employment.

(Sam’s story continues on page 12)

“I can still manage my life if I stick to this guideline. I can still self-sustain.”

Veteran and Family Resources

Our Veteran and Family Resources (VFR) team offers a hand-up to members of the veteran community experiencing crisis. Working with national and community partners, the goal is to assist people stabilizing their lives and allowing them to access other wellness and career services they may need.

During the past year, we saw Coronavirus have a considerable impact on the financial needs within our community. Many members of our military community struggled to make ends meet and stay afloat. People were laid off, businesses closed completely, and parents were faced with the impossible choice of caring for their children, without adequate daycare or school attendance, or working to keep food on the table.

The VFR team worked diligently to stay up to date on the changing regulations surrounding the local and federal resources available to our clients. We also partnered with local agencies to ensure clients were able to receive as much financial assistance as needed. Veteran and Family Resources also assisted in providing food assistance to our entire community. We are proud to have provided perishable and non-perishable food to over 3,500 households in the region.

ANNUAL IMPACT NUMBERS:

Intakes: 369

Appointments/Follow-Ups: 615

Caseload: 148



125
YEARS
STRONG

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA (VOA)

Volunteers of America Colorado is a nonprofit, faith-based organization dedicated to helping those in need transform their lives. Through more than 50 distinct human service programs, Volunteers of America Colorado changes the lives of over 150,000 vulnerable people each year. VOAC’s services include housing and emergency shelters, hunger and nutrition services and many other community support programs. Our work touches the mind, body, and hearts of those we serve by integrating compassion into our highly-effective programs and services that build and strengthen communities. The VOAC’s SSVF team for Colorado Springs works inside Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center assisting veterans find housing and providing wrap-around case management services. During the 2021 Fiscal Year (October 2020 – September 2021), the SSVF team served 100 veteran families.



Every dollar invested in Mt. Carmel **doubles its value** in the community.

Financial Highlights

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF END OF FISCAL YEAR

ASSETS

CASH.....	\$853,654
PLEDGES RECEIVABLE - CURRENT	\$178,150
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	\$47,790
PREPAID EXPENSES	\$27,986
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	\$106,458
PLEDGES RECEIVABLE - LONG-TERM	\$167,661
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,381,699

LIABILITIES

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED EXPENSES	\$149,709
OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$4,513
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$154,222

NET ASSETS

WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	\$617,713
WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS.....	\$609,764
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$1,227,477

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS **\$1,381,699**



During the last fiscal year, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center invested nearly **\$1.8 million** into program expenses providing military-affiliated clients with **no cost/low cost** services in the Pikes Peak Region.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF END OF FISCAL YEAR

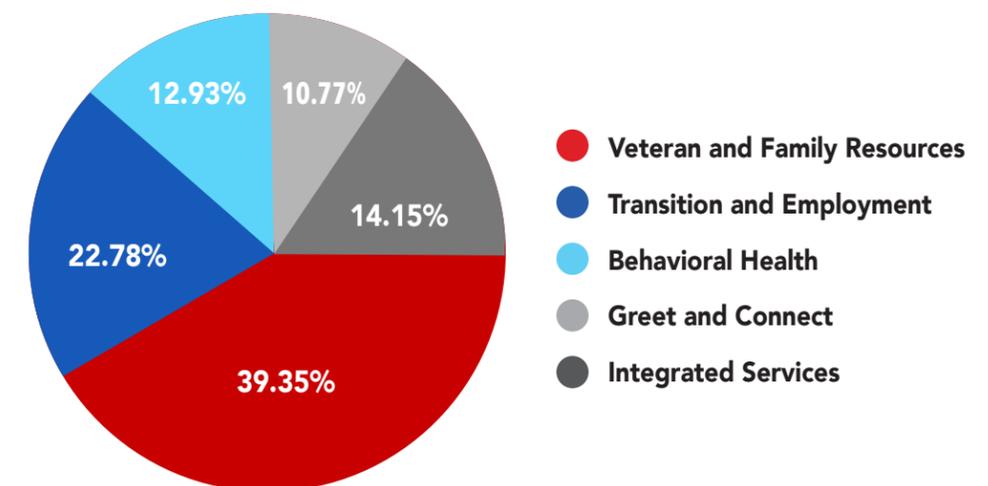
REVENUES

GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS.....	\$2,967,015
EVENT AND SPONSORSHIP INCOME	\$219,784
RENTAL INCOME FROM PARTNERS	\$50,206
OTHER INCOME	\$62,377
TOTAL REVENUES	\$3,299,382

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES	\$1,762,556
FUNDRAISING	\$539,577
MANGEMENT AND GENERAL	\$349,871
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,652,004

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM EXPENSES



TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES **\$1,762,556**



GIVING HOPE

A Veteran Story

JUSTIN HART - KRDO

Justin Hart became a Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center client when he transitioned from life as a decorated active-duty soldier, stationed at Fort Carson, to a new civilian career as a permanent Colorado Springs resident. Justin is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and that is where his passion for media and broadcasting first developed. When he was just 15 years old, he began working as a producer for Denham Springs High School football and basketball games on WBIU radio. Justin also produced LSU women's sports content when WBIU was later sold to Gulfstar Communications and became part of the LSU Sports Network.

“Justin Hart is a key part of the success of KRDO NewsRadio. I liken him to a Swiss Army Knife, as he can truly do just about anything asked of him! His adaptability, and focus on completing any task is a direct response to his military background. He is a true team player and a pleasure to work with.”
— Andrew Rogers, KRDO NewsRadio Program Director/Morning News Anchor

When his time in the military was complete, Justin worked a variety of jobs, but was still drawn to radio. Justin came across an internship opportunity in broadcast journalism through Mt. Carmel. When his first internship offer fell through, staff members from Mt. Carmel were able to help place Justin as an intern at KRDO where he quickly received an offer of employment.

During his career, Justin has interviewed prominent figures such as broadcasting legend Don Criqui, former heavyweight champion boxer Evander Holyfield, and legendary college football coach Eddie Robinson. Justin is passionate about topics affecting the military community and now works on the Veteran's Voice podcast assisting hosts Andrew Rogers and John Register.

Volunteer Impact

A DOUBLE RESCUE

Our Greet and Connect team helps ensure that the military members, veterans, and families who reach out to Mt. Carmel for assistance get connected with the resources and programs they need.

“It certainly wasn't what I expected to find that day”

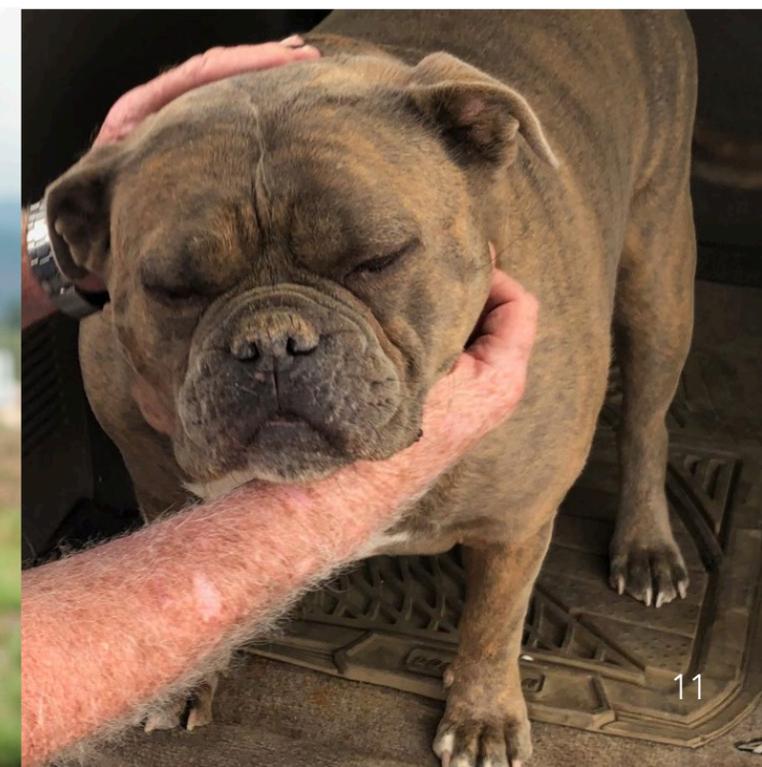
Recently a referral came in from the Veterans Crisis Line directing staff to a veteran requesting help for his dog. Shawna Dusharm, Mt. Carmel Operations Manager, responded to the call. “Something about the question piqued my interest. It's not a typical request. I was curious about the circumstances surrounding the call.” The circumstances, in this case, turned out to be especially dire.

Shawna called Tom Miller, who volunteers with Mt. Carmel, and asked him to stop by the address to check on the dog. When Tom arrived, he found a veteran in his home in the process of committing suicide. The veteran's concerns hadn't been for his own life, but only for the life of his beloved pet. Tom's quick action saved the life of the veteran. He persuaded the veteran to help with Gemma, a loveable 85-pound bulldog mix. Tom was then able to persuade the veteran to visit a local hospital where he received the emergency medical attention he needed.

While her owner was in the hospital, Mt. Carmel Community Connections arranged for Gemma's boarding and eventually helped reunite the dog with the veteran's family. “It certainly wasn't what I expected to find that day,” said Tom, “but I'm proud to be a part of the team that made this rescue possible.”

TO VOLUNTEER, FILL OUT AN APPLICATION AT [VETERANSCENTER.ORG/BE-VOLUNTEER](https://www.veteranscenter.org/be-volunteer)

Tom Miller, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center Volunteer of the Year, and Gemma





“I had 24 cents in my bank account and I had to borrow my sister’s credit card to get \$50. I had to do something. I had kids and I wasn’t willing to look like a loser. I felt like a loser when I went to Mt. Carmel but they kept validating me.”

She credits Transition & Employment Director Mark Smith and Peer Navigator Elan Rainford for helping her get into real estate school. She says she was at the top of her class, earned really good grades and is about to take her final exams.

“Mark checks up on me all the time. He is so supportive,” Samantha said. “He says ‘how’s my favorite person in the world?’ There is so much positivity over there! And when your world is crashing down around you, sometimes you need some positivity to help you grow. I latched on to their positivity and it worked!”

While studying for her real estate license, Samantha got a residential painting job with a contractor on her own. She found that she enjoyed it, found painting quite therapeutic, and helped manage the company. But over time her relationship with the contractor soured and she lost the job.

Samantha benefited from mental health counseling with the Behavioral Health & Wellness team.

“I went twice and felt heard,” she shared. “I vented and cried. It helped to get it out—to be able to walk in to a safe space and let it out. They provided me the ability to be heard.”

“I would have emotional breakdowns, so Madison sent me to Behavioral Health.”

(Sam’s story continues on page 14)

Transition and Employment

The Transition and Employment team directly assists transitioning service members, veterans of all eras, and their family members in gaining meaningful employment and emphasizes support for military spouses. The team collaborates with employers, military installations, and community partners to ensure success in providing resume and interview workshops, transition training, internships, career fairs, and networking events.

As we battled the Coronavirus pandemic worldwide, and veterans in the Pikes Peak region struggled with job loss and impacts to savings, the Transition and Employment department worked hard to provide our clients with the best services. Whether it was in person, virtual, or hybrid, we continued hosting resume workshops, hiring events, job fairs, and even a modified version of PrepConnect 360. When quarantine ended, we reopened the local Ft. Carson office to better assist transitioning service members.

ANNUAL IMPACT NUMBERS:

- Intakes: 621**
- Placements: 421**
- Follow-Ups: 3,767**
- Caseload: 1,817**

PIKES PEAK WORKFORCE CENTER (PPWFC)

Pikes Peak Workforce Center (PPWFC) has been a cornerstone partner since Mt. Carmel opened its doors. This “public-private” partnership has successfully assisted our military community in receiving key services and information regarding transition and employment. A joint effort in working with the State and County, PPWFC and Mt. Carmel manage the Veterans’ Service to Career Program that provides eligible veterans and spouses skills training, apprenticeship and internship placements, opportunities for employment with businesses, and counseling and supportive services.



This is where Samantha’s story took a turn for the better, taking her down a path that would change her life in the best ways possible.

“All of the people at Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center made me feel that I am strong and I am smart and I am exactly who I know I am, and I don’t have to doubt myself,” Samantha stated. “And I knew they wouldn’t doubt my decision to start my own painting company.”

Samantha formed an LLC, named her business Partisan Painting, and in a matter of weeks, it flourished.

“I’d only been in business for 2.5 weeks when I booked my first job,” she explained.

“I used the deposit to pay for my insurance on the project so I was legal by the time I started. Now I’ve written over \$100K in contracts and have completed \$27K!”

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center consistently sends Samantha veterans who are looking for work and she now employs five people—four of them veterans.

Samantha also met some of Mt. Carmel’s Community Ambassadors—people in the community who provide outreach and resource support for Mt. Carmel and its programs—who got her an internship with Real Estate Academy of Colorado. She attends mentorship classes there twice a week until she earns her real estate license.

(Sam’s story continues on page 16)

Behavioral Health & Wellness

Our Behavioral Health and Wellness services include individual, group and couples therapy, no-cost therapeutic retreats, and non-traditional therapies including trauma-focused yoga, PTS-focused art and music therapy, tai-chi and more. Services are confidential and open to veterans of all eras and regardless of discharge status.

Mt. Carmel’s Behavioral Health Program stayed strong through our recent COVID struggles. We completed 3,965 sessions during the time period of this annual report, including telehealth as needed. The Director of Behavioral Health, Kirsten Belaire, has been engaged with two suicide prevention collaboratives during this season.

Mt. Carmel implemented a suicide prevention screening tool for all Mt. Carmel clients, not only those engaging in behavioral health. This screening tool has allowed individuals to be contacted after indicating suicide ideation and for appropriate follow-up as needed.

Our Behavioral Health Gateway Program has served over 300 clients connecting them with either programming here at Mt. Carmel, or community providers based on their clinical needs.

ANNUAL IMPACT NUMBERS

Assessments: 313

Sessions Completed: 3,965

Caseload: 125-150



BREAK THE SILENCE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (BTSADV)

Co-located in the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center and working closely with our Behavioral Health and Veteran & Family Resources teams, BTSADV provides community resources and support services to victims, survivors, and families affected by domestic violence.

Fellow survivors and family members who have lost a loved one understand the unique journey and together they support one another and fight for a world without domestic violence.



"The day I started my painting business, they recruited me to do real estate with them. They got me in contact with a property manager who has 36 houses that need painting. We'll be doing her rentals," she shared. "And, we just partnered with another couple and wrote \$44K in contracts with them!"

A bonus? Samantha's first listing will be a house she is painting. Amazed by how things come together, she attributes her success to having respect and doing quality work. "If you respect people, you're going to give them good quality. Because of our professionalism we are getting more contracts."

This story would not be complete without coming full circle. Samantha's husband Brad is back in her life and working at Partisan Painting with her. After a court-ordered stay at Camp Hope, a PTSD rehabilitation clinic, he is **sober**, attending **mental health counseling**, and is participating in **couples counseling** with Samantha.

"He is on the road to recovery," Samantha said. "We're hoping for the best. It's been five years of abuse and trauma but we are committed to therapy so that we can be strong as individuals and as a couple."

She is hopeful her new painting venture is also the kind of therapy they both can benefit from.

"Painting is therapeutic. You get an instant gratification when you paint something. We get so much positive feedback. It affects the whole team. It gives us all a sense of purpose. That helps our veterans, it helps me and it helps Brad. We give veterans so much hope. Painting is more than just a job. I make sure everyone thinks about that when they paint. Do a good job because you're going to feel good about it when you see the homeowner's reaction."

Since she is working contracts fairly regularly, Samantha went looking for an office. She found the perfect place in Monument.

"It has two windows and a mountain view." She beamed. "I couldn't be happier. And I couldn't have done it without Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center."

"I couldn't be happier. And I couldn't have done it without Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center."

Partners In Action

"We've all heard the term 'game changers,' people that make an enduring impact. 719 Heroes, led by Preston Smith and Carrie Lukins, are those people! Their efforts in giving back to others who sacrifice, educate, heal, and serve our community, are truly life-changing. **Their ongoing generosity and selfless efforts in generating community support to provide housing for homeless veterans are critical.** As a formerly homeless veteran who knows firsthand the dangers of living on the streets and not having any support network to get my life back in order, I applaud the Homes for Heroes project and Operation Step-Up in providing a 'hand up' to needy veterans."

— Amen T., Mt. Carmel Client



Carrie Lukins and Preston Smith
Sell State Alliance Realty

Looking Ahead

We remain committed to building on the principles that have led to our success. Our mission remains to ensure that no military, veteran, or family member falls through the cracks. We will ensure partners know the opportunities regarding integrated services and those who can support us are enabled to do so, and that our staff is well trained and remains focused on maximizing capabilities and services.

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.
- 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.

Visit VeteransCenter.org



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