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
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

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.

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.
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.

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.

(See Samoa’s story continues on page 6)
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

"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.

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

(Sam’s story continues on page 12)
## 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

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**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
- Management and General: $349,871
- **Total Expenses**: $2,652,004

**INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM EXPENSES**
- Veteran and Family Resources: 39.35%
- Transition and Employment: 22.78%
- Behavioral Health: 14.15%
- Greet and Connect: 12.93%
- Integrated Services: 10.77%

**Total Program Expenses**: $1,762,556

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Source: Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center audited financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2021

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.

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

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 lovable 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

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

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.
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

“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)
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

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.

“I went from not being able to sustain my own household to being able to sustain six households!”

(Sam’s story continues on page 16)
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

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.