



A Beacon of Support

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By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

This is the season of giving, filled with appreciation for all we have and share. Everything we have is a result of the choices we have made in life. We have chosen the type of work we do, maintained and invested in our relationships, and pursued the things in life that adhere to our values.

It may not seem like it, but your present moment is crafted from a series of choices you have made. For some, the decisions seemed natural. Those who chose to join the armed services did so because they love their country, they wanted to work to protect our freedoms, and they felt honored to be able to serve. For some, it was the only choice, but it is always good to remember that it was a choice.



November 2022

Issue #40

Our veteran community members and their families chose a life of sacrifice, duty, honor, and discipline. Their choices have given us the freedom to make our own life choices – unparalleled by any other country. I try to remember this sacrifice during this season of giving. The gift of giving up the option to do what we want with our lives. The gift of sharing our lives for those we love. And, the gift of remembering not to take anything for granted.

At Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, we serve those who protect our freedoms daily. For Thanksgiving, we were honored to be able to provide veterans, military, and their families with over 1200 turkeys and 300 grocery gift cards, thanks to our community partner Safeway.

We can support our community of veterans and their families only because of your choice – the choice to give. And, as this season of giving continues, we ask that you participate in Colorado Gives Day on December 6 and support Mt. Carmel and our efforts to give choice and opportunity back to those who sacrificed for our freedoms.

We look forward to working with you to make this season bright and merry for those in need. To support those veterans who were strong for us when being strong was their only choice.

Bob McLaughlin



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Case Manager

Partner Spotlight

Tis the season for Turkeys for Troops!

We are excited to once again team up with Safeway to ensure veteran holiday tables are bountiful this season!

Through the generosity of local customers and Safeway leadership, Safeway continues to donate gift cards to veteran families at Thanksgiving and through the December holidays. In addition, 1200 active-duty service members from our five local military installations received a turkey supplied by Safeway and funded through community donors.

"We are proud to be the conduit of these blessings, and we couldn't do that without the generosity of

Safeway," says Shannon Olin, Director of Military, Veteran & Family Services.

"We are witnessing an increased need among active-duty and veteran families this year and the gift cards provide immediate relief as monthly budgets are stretched thin."

In addition to their yearly seasonal commitments to Mt. Carmel clients, Safeway also supports the annual Patriot Day event, Santa's Stockings, bi-weekly food distributions, and recognizes veteran fathers on Father's Day.

Thank you, Safeway, for once again partnering with us to support veterans this holiday season!



Safeway leaders and Mt. Carmel staff at the Operation Turkeys for Troops distribution

Giving Back

As we look forward to the season of giving, we'd like to thank you for all you've given to Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center throughout the year, whether it's been time, money, or just an encouraging word. We know many of you are putting together a plan for your end-of-year donations and we would appreciate your consideration.

Colorado Gives Day is December 6, 2022. Individual donations make a big difference in the lives of veterans, military, and their families across Colorado. As we continue our expansion into Southern Colorado, your tax-deductible donation will reach more lives than ever before. To make a donation to Mt. Carmel via Colorado Gives, please visit www.veteranscenter.org/coloradogives.

Scheels Giving Campaign - Scheels will donate \$8,000 to selected Colorado Springs nonprofits and this year it's easier than ever to donate. Please visit www.veteranscenter.org/scheels and select Mt. Carmel from the first drop-down menu. Voting ends December 6!



The Veterans Voice Project

The Veterans Voice project is growing and expanding. We now stream three times weekly on Wreaths Across America Radio. And, in direct support of the Pueblo office, we're launching Veterans Voice Pueblo with Cassime Joseph (Army veteran/news director/program host) on CSU Pueblo's KTSC 89.5 FM. The program will air Friday mornings at 9:00 a.m. In early 2023, the program will go to a full hour as part of CSU's Special Programs lineup.

We have aligned closely with the development team, synchronizing our coverage with their promotion of key fundraising activities, events and partners. We hope to soon expand those efforts to include the Community Connections program.

We're working with AdPro and the UCHHealth team to record a series of interviews with veterans who will share their "Next Chapter."

We will soon launch the first of our privately sponsored (revenue-generating) podcasts produced in-house called Above and Beyond. As we begin the new year, our on-air

and podcast hosting team is focusing on our growth and development as podcast presenters, taking a more appealing, conversational approach to engaging with our guests. Finally, we're opening lines of communication with regional media outlet news and program directors and program hosts, seeking opportunities to provide mutual support in our collective work serving and supporting the military connected community in our region.

As always, we are deeply appreciative of this opportunity to support the MCVSC mission and the encouragement we receive along the way.



Department Updates



Transition and Employment

As the Transition and Employment department heads toward the winter months, the mission continues! We are delighted to welcome Josh Wills, the new Peer Navigator to our Pueblo office. He has already started making an impact in the community. We would also like to bid a fond farewell to Maisy Kunytskyy as she is moving on from the team, and we welcome Blair Erato as the new Milspouse Job Coach starting in December. This month has been bittersweet for the Transition & Employment team as the PrepConnect

360 team completed its final class at Mt. Carmel. Nanette Brede and Mark Lilvejen have made a huge impact on the veteran community and the Mt. Carmel team as a whole. This is not a goodbye, but instead, a see you soon! As we prepare for the holiday season, we continue to provide outreach to Fort Carson, the US Air Force Academy, Peterson Space Force Base and Schriever Space Force Base, and we will continue networking events throughout Colorado.



Health and Wellness

As the weather grows colder, the Mt. Carmel Health and Wellness Team is focused on serving clients. Mt. Carmel Behavioral Health recently provided IMAGO relationship therapy couples training to the team. This modality is very powerful, bringing connection and healing to couples.

Arts in Society provided Mt. Carmel Health and Wellness with a grant to increase community access to Art Expressions and Art Experiences. With the graciousness of this grant, Mt. Carmel hosted the Veteran Art Exhibit, which opened at the Warehouse Restaurant and was a smashing success.

Through partnership with Regis University and Donna Finnicle's tireless efforts to fundraise, Mt. Carmel

hosted its first Welcome Home Warrior family retreat with seven families in attendance. Families rated a 90% satisfaction rating and 80% of attendees reported increased connectedness with their families.

Next Chapter had over 130 enrollments by the end of October, and numerous clients have obtained access to services they would not otherwise have been able to utilize.

Kirsten presented for a national webinar with over 300 attendees, speaking on the topic of Trauma and the Brain. She has also been a regular presenter on Fort Carson, providing education on trauma, the brain, and military cultural impacts on trauma recovery.



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

Military, Veteran, and Family Services has been busy serving veteran clients and military families during the holiday season. We bid a sad farewell to Christa Stone and now welcome Tamieca Trujillo in our Pueblo location. Financial Peace University has wrapped up and will start a new round of classes in February. The Center on Fathering and Cooking Matters classes are both going strong! Cooking Matters has planned a break for the holidays. Kelly and Amber have been actively involved with the Transitional Housing Initiative (THI) supporting

seven veterans and their families (17 participants total). At this time, four are housed and one has received a gracious gift in the form of a running car from Ronnie's Automotive. Additionally, we had two clients selected for vehicles through Keys to Progress who received keys to their cars on November 10. We also hosted our annual Thanksgiving Turkey Distribution on November 16, thanks to Safeway's wonderful donation and Melodie's tireless efforts to support our veteran community.

Pueblo

Pueblo Office: The Pueblo office has recently gained an outstanding Peer Navigator/Career Coach, Josh Wills, to assist veterans who are seeking help with employment and the transition process. Josh hit the ground running and has already supported veterans at Pueblo Community College and Colorado State University – Pueblo by providing transition and employment resources and face-to-face support. Our Military Veteran & Family Resource Case Manager, Tamieca Trujillo, is also new and building a platform of partnerships to provide exceptional support to the community through resource navigation and financial wellness assistance. We also have a new Client Service Specialist, Neisha Wright, who assists the Operations Manager in all capacities to provide these services at no cost to our clients throughout Southern Colorado.

Soon we hope to move into a larger suite that will facilitate

more partnerships and provide access for veterans seeking critical resources. We continue to fulfill our partnership with the Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce, providing the Military Affairs Committee (MAC) minutes, a 90-day calendar of events, and access to a communication platform with synchronized events/information.

The Pueblo team is also working diligently with community partners to conduct outreach and events. We continue to collaborate and partner with Care & Share on the first and third Wednesday of every month. During those time, Power the Comeback's Vaccine Mobile Bus will be onsite. Mt. Carmel also attended the City and County of Pueblo's Economic Outlook Forum, Veterans Day Parade, the Pride and Patriotism event at the Center of American Values and the Veterans Day Ceremony, which was held at the Veterans Bridge at the Pueblo Riverwalk.

Trinidad

Trinidad Office: As we are working toward assisting veterans and their families all over Southern Colorado, we would like to welcome Earl Schmidt to the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center family! Earl is stepping into Skylar Spell's position! Earl is the new Veterans Outreach Coordinator with AmeriCorps as a Service Member to assist the Mt. Carmel Veteran Service Center in continuing operations in Trinidad, Colorado and Las Animas County. Earl served over 23 years in the U.S. Army and the U. S. Army National Guard from 1987-2010. He served in Operation Desert Shield/Storm and in Afghanistan, to include many Homeland Security Missions. Earl has numerous decorations, including the Combat Infantry Badge. Earl is a former employee of the American Legion Department of New York, Buffalo Federal Region Office. He oversaw federal benefit claims as an intake officer from over 31 counties and 68 accredited American Legion County Veteran Service Officers. He presided over many veteran

appeals with Veteran Law Judges out of Washington DC. Earl is a former member of New York State Department of Health Traumatic Brain Injury Committee and the New York State Veteran's Policy Making Commission. Earl has been an Accredited Veteran Service Officer since 2012. He was the Director of the Orleans County Veterans Service Agency in Albion, NY. Prior to his director's job, he served as a Niagara County Veterans Service Officer. Earl is currently the American Legion Department of Colorado VA&R Accreditation & Training Officer, District # 8 Jr. Vice Commander, and Trinidad Post # 11 Veteran Service Officer. Earl is an Active life member of the American Legion, VFW, DAV, AMVETS, and Las Animas County Veterans' Council. He is also a member of the Elks and The Forty & Eight La Société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux. Earl currently resides in Trinidad, Colorado, with his wife Catherine. Welcome, Earl and Catherine!