



A Beacon of Support

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TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT:

MARK SMITH

Dir, Transition and Employment

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

March can symbolically mean a time for new-growth and re-birth, and many of us know March as the beginning of Spring. We also know that March in Colorado can mean blizzards, harsh cold, and biting winds. Symbolically, we welcome Spring and the beauty of what's new—but we also prepare for the challenges and realities that we know lie ahead.

Regardless of the weather, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center focuses on bringing hope, healing and new growth to our community. Exciting changes and developments prepare us to meet the year ahead with success.

In February, Mt. Carmel VSC welcomed a few new team members, including Army veteran, Troy Smith, as the new Director of Fundraising and Development. We have also seen some shifts within our core departments and structure, and we are making adjustments to better organize and support our mission. These changes promise new opportunity, and we are invigorated by the possibilities.

Our Colorado Springs location anticipates a lot on the horizon, including a 5k run for Vets and Pets, various annual celebrations and recognition events for our partners and volunteers, and fundraising and partner events. Mt. Carmel's Pueblo location is expanding and growing, plus forming a community coalition that will strengthen Pueblo's Veteran community with a network of resources and services for veterans and their families. Additionally, we are further expanding into Trinidad and the greater Southern Colorado regions. We are determined to bring hope to all of Colorado's veterans across the Front Range. Our mission will only achieve momentum with our concerted efforts.



Bob McLaughlin

We will weather our time within the storms by providing hope and healing. We understand that there can and will be brighter days ahead, made possible by working together and with support from our community. We thank our volunteers, donors, partners and team members who make a lasting difference.

While we celebrate and take joy in the sunshine, we also plan and prepare efforts to weather the storms with our brothers and sisters. We stand proudly within our community to serve and connect our veterans, military, and military families to the resources and benefits due to them. We stand proudly to celebrate and support the victories of our brothers and sisters in achieving and overcoming the worst of the weather and holding out hope to see the brighter days ahead. ■

Bob McLaughlin



PEER NAVIGATORS:

ELAN RAINFORD
JON DIX
NICK WEREMBLEWSKI
JUSTIN VERHULST
BLAIR ERATO

MILITARY, VETERAN, & FAMILY SERVICES:

SHANNON OLIN
Dir, MVFS

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PUEBLO:

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Regional Ops. Mgr. & Community Outreach
LAURIE COLLINS
Client Services
JOSHUA WILLS
Peer Navigator
TAMIECA TRUJILLO
Case Manager

TRINIDAD:

EARL SCHMIDT
Case Manager



Partner Spotlight



We're excited to extend our footprint in Southern Colorado as we serve veterans in Custer County, a rugged and mountainous region southwest of Pueblo. Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has always had a heart for rural communities and overlooked veterans. With the Sangre de Cristo Mountains as a backdrop, Custer County is a rural landscape where veterans may be missing benefits and resources available to their metro-located counterparts. These veterans may face a number of challenges, including limited financial resources. Through a partnership with Kirkpatrick Bank and the Custer County Veteran Services Office, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center provides oversight of restricted donated funds specifically for the care and support of veterans and their families with proof of residency in Custer County.

"The combined partnership with Kirkpatrick Bank and Mt. Carmel has had an undeniable positive impact for veterans and their families within Custer County," says Jared McClain, Custer County Veteran Service Officer.

"The challenges facing veterans in rural communities is significant and without the support of Mt. Carmel these challenges would be much more difficult to address."

"Jared does an amazing job going above and beyond in his job as a VSO to support veterans in Custer County. The funding provided by Kirkpatrick Bank allows him to address the needs of rural veterans that might not otherwise seek nor receive help. Their partnerships with Mt. Carmel is invaluable in addressing veterans' needs in Custer County and we appreciate everything they do that supports our shared mission," says Shannon Olin, Director of Military, Veteran and Family Services.

With a mission to collaborate with partners to provide continuous support following military service, we are always looking for unique opportunities to facilitate resources. If you or your organization would like to positively impact veterans, please give us a call at 719-772-7000 to see how we can partner together. ■



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

Department Updates



Transition and Employment

As March snow starts to roll in, Transition and Employment keeps moving forward! We bid farewell to VSCP Peer Navigator Elan Rainford as she moves to the land of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas! Good Luck Elan and **thank you** so much for everything! With that being said, we are in search of our next Peer Navigator.

Upcoming events include our new interview class, LINK, kicking off in April. Plus, our next hiring event is April 26th at the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. We are hoping for a great turn out. With spring around the corner, we continue with outreach and assisting all the departments here to make it another amazing year! ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

The Military, Veteran, and Family Services department has onboarded new interns, Amanda and Quinn. We are excited to have them and value the experiences they bring.

Financial Peace University recently kicked off with a new round of classes! Now we are considering options to bring on financial/home buying classes with new partners.

We continue to expand our services and partnerships to better address

the needs of justice-involved Veterans and continue to explore funding opportunities to support this population.

Our department is also focusing on a continued effort to support the needs of our shared populations. Moving forward, we hope to be better help address homelessness prevention and homeless population housing needs as we search out and onboard new funding opportunities and revamp our program and process. ■



Greet & Connect

Please welcome our newest members to the team! Vivienne Belaire is our new Greet and Connect Consultant, and Russel Pousson is our new Facilities Resource Coordinator. Some March and April goals include transitioning in these new roles and developing

a helpful format for standard operating procedures (SOPs). We are focused on making Mt. Carmel a warm and welcoming environment and look forward to greeting new and existing Veterans who visit Mt. Carmel. ■



Health and Wellness

We have been focusing on increasing competence within our behavioral team by completing trainings, and providing presentations in the community. We are also working hard to assist our Pueblo office as they build their own behavioral health program.

Art Expressions class have resumed with new programming across all areas of focus. We also now offer a Military Spouse Support Group! In addition, we have filled our Bar Ni and Silver Cliff couples' retreats.

We are exploring options to formally evaluate and measure our behavioral health program in the hopes of identifying gaps and addressing opportunities. We feel that it is imperative to provide excellent care to our clients and we welcome the opportunity to identify areas for growth.

We are working diligently to ensure our Next Chapter program is running smoothly and accomplishing the goal of reducing Veteran suicide. The program had over 225 by early March. ■

Pueblo

We are expanding into our new suite at St Mary Corwin Hospital, please stop by and visit us. As we continue to build stronger partners in support of our Veterans. Available services that this expansion will bring to our Veterans include:

- Colorado DMVA Veterans Service Office
- Medicaid Mentors
- Behavioral Health Services
- Southern Colorado Hispanic Nurses Program
- Educational opportunities (Upward Bound CSU-P & PCC)
- Pueblo County Pro Bono Project - free legal services (Partnership)
- Latino Chamber | Profiles in Courage
- Volunteers of America
- Community based Vaccine, Dental and Optometry support ■

Trinidad

Earl M. Schmidt, an AmeriCorps Service Member, is assisting Veterans and their families in Southern Colorado as a Veteran Resource Coordinator. There is a focus on Las Animas County and Trinidad with this expansion, and Earl has been working collaboratively with Las Animas County Veteran Service Officer, Ray Odum. Recent happenings include engaging the community with two educational seminars about PACT Act benefits.

Earl has been engaging local resources to insure that veterans in the area have access to the best education and resources to make educated decisions. The Trinidad Team has developed relationships with many local Veteran organizations. Local organizations include the Trinidad

Post 11 American Legion and its VTF Grant Program. The Las Animas County Veterans' Council and their VAG Grant administered by William Phillips to include the VA Eyeglasses Program. Earl also initiated a Veterans' Cup of Joe Peer-to-Peer Program, where monthly guest speakers offer information and insight on benefits, as well as providing a social opportunity to connect veterans and their spouses for a social gathering.

We're also proud to announce a possible collaboration with the Veteran Voice Project in Southern Colorado—with thanks to Ted Robertson. ■

The Veterans Voice Project

Veterans Voice is proud to announce that USAA is continuing its partnership. Likewise, OPTUM Colorado has committed to year two.

As we work to make a greater impact, our efforts are being rewarded. Veterans Voice is ranked by FeedSpot, a popular on-line podcast blog, number 30 among the top 100 podcasts for Veterans.

With the bringing on of our new Development Director, we're aligning more with Development and more closely coordinating coverage with AdPro, of key fundraising activities, events and partners with their programs and events. In the same vein, we will soon launch a new weekly feature hosted by T&E's Mark Smith highlighting an employer and job seeker. In addition, we've soft launched BH's 2nd Monday

Podcast featuring Kirsten Belaide which offers an inside look at how Mt. Carmel's BH system works and how that benefits VSC BH clients.

In keeping with our charter to raise funds for MCVSC, we're working with Kyle Blakely, husband of Camille Blakely, producing a weekly podcast series on the Mayoral race that is slated to become a permanent weekly community affairs podcast. Partner Medicare Mentor's podcast, Above and Beyond, records its first installment in April of this year. ■

