



# A Beacon of Support

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By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

May is the month we celebrate our military members and recognize that mental health is a vital part of their wellbeing and success. Together, Military Appreciation Month and Mental Health Awareness Month exemplify the hard work that Mt. Carmel does on behalf of military members, veterans, and their families. Good news is on the horizon: We're growing; we're expanding programs to help veteran entrepreneurs and we are celebrating the life of service and support that veterans give their nation and their communities.

To begin, our growth continues to serve veteran and military populations across the state. Our Pueblo service center location quadrupled in size, and we welcomed Mary Hiney as our new VSC representative to support and lead further expansion in Trinidad and Las Animas Country.

During May, we recognize the persisting challenges that our veterans and military members face in both accessing available mental health treatment and addressing the unfortunate stigma around the topic of behavioral health. Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center offers support services and resources to our military, veteran, spouse/partners, and family populations. We develop valuable programs, support groups, and partnerships centered around improving and healing the veteran community. Additionally, the UCHHealth initiative, Next Chapter, has grown with over 350 clients since July 2022. To help more veterans in Colorado, Next Chapter is expanding to Pueblo, and we are thrilled to see what this amazing program dedicated to military mental health will do for our military and veteran community in the Steel City.

One facet of mental health is finding purpose and place, finding a new community, a new brother- or sisterhood. The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) grant provides a sense of belonging for veterans and family members across the state. The center is a resource to create businesses and build entrepreneurs from the skills



Bob McLaughlin

and lessons learned during military service. The VBOC provides access to business resources, advice, and other information together in a single place to aid veterans. The only program in the state designed to build businesses for veterans, the VBOC will help create financial stability for communities and military families.

The spirit of the entrepreneurial veteran is formed by the values and lessons learned in military service. As veterans find their footing in their post-military lives, forging a path of their own can be a vital part of that path. As we celebrate Military Appreciation Month, we celebrate the entrepreneurial opportunities that offer our veterans the potential for outstanding outcomes and continued success.

Remember to thank your military and veteran neighbors and consider supporting small businesses that are veteran owned or operated. Your support is critical, and we thank you for joining the effort to help our mission. ■

Bob McLaughlin



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Client Services

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Peer Navigator

**TAMIECA TRUJILLO**  
Case Manager

#### TRINIDAD:

**MARY HINEY**  
Case Manager



## Partner Spotlight

As we recognize May as Mental Health Awareness Month, we want to spotlight one of our most tenured and creative partners: Bemis School of Art.

As the concept of Mt. Carmel was forming, we needed to bring in community partners to supplement our services. Offering an art expression experience for active-duty military, veterans, and their families was one of the first alternative therapies at Mt. Carmel. The program continues to grow.

Art Expressions is held on most Monday evenings at Mt. Carmel and provides a safe environment for participants to relieve stress and explore emotions without words. The group provides emotional support and the opportunity to process emotions related to past trauma or

current emotional distress in a non-threatening way.

“Through our partnership, we have been able to provide expressive arts to more veterans who are dealing with stress, anxiety, and frustrations with the world around them,” says Tara Thomas, Bemis School of Art director. “The participants are given the opportunity to explore their creativity and gain greater self-awareness in a non-judgmental setting. Together we provide an option that they might not seek out on their own.”

Everyone is welcome, but please email [cthayer@mtcarmelcenter.org](mailto:cthayer@mtcarmelcenter.org) ahead of time to ensure you are on our roster and have the most up-to-date schedule.



**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 spring arrives, the Transition and Employment Department welcomes Adrian Sanchez as the new VSCP Peer Navigator! We completed the first LINK Transition/Interview workshop and received high praise from participants. **The job fair in April also saw a great turnout, and we are now planning for the next job fair in June with the Veterans Beer Club.**

Mark and Josh held a federal resumé workshop at the Pueblo

Chemical Depot and had great attendance. As we move into summer, we are adding more outreach events all over Colorado.

May is both Military Appreciation Month and the Month of the Military Spouse. In support and appreciation of our military spouse community, we have organized a Military Spouse Appreciation event to be hosted at the Mt. Carmel VSC in Colorado Springs on May 10, 2023. ■



## Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS has recently been able to tour the developing InterQuest Ridge apartments as a part of our partnership to help house our military/veteran community.

**To continue our mission, we've added a new position: the Mission Outreach Specialist. This job combines community-based services and case management responsibilities.**

We were recently awarded the Emergency Services

Grant, which allows us to help more clients who are facing eviction or experiencing homelessness.

MVFS has received great community support to help fill our food pantry and hope closet. Our Pueblo location food pantry is developing great partnerships to help fill their food pantry as well! We are exploring ways to stand up and support a food pantry in Trinidad to help meet the needs of the veteran population there. ■



## Greet & Connect

We have been working on new client intakes. We are also conducting complete inventories on electronics, keys, fob keys, and furniture for accountability and depreciation. This process informs our long-term planning and protects budgets. We continue to oversee the sustainable income for room rentals and encourage ongoing staff training as necessary to ensure uniformity throughout our facilities.

**Communications transparency is extremely important, and so we have been creating Standard Operating Procedures for all Greet & Connect positions to include turnover folders.** Our department continues to work on the electronic invoice and budget by fiscal year, reporting quarterly updates for historical tracking. Our monthly stats now have tracking databases for all departments and locations. ■

# Department Updates



## Health and Wellness

Complex PTSD training is specific, focused, and integral to our efforts in helping patients. Our team has completed additional Complex PTSD training to increase the staff and interns' understanding of the neurology, history, and treatment of Complex PTSD.

The Behavioral Health Team also participated in "Glider Day" with the Soaring Eagle Foundation to better understand their therapeutic services. We look forward to connecting clients to this opportunity.

Colorado Springs Health Foundation graciously awarded us a grant for another year, and we are incredibly grateful. This organization has provided essential support since

Mt. Carmel's grand opening in Colorado Springs.

**Our Behavioral Health Department also hosted a couples' retreat at Silver Cliff Ranch.** We received positive feedback from all nine couples who attended. We look forward to future opportunities to host more retreats at Silver Cliff Ranch, and we are grateful for this new partnership.

Finally, Stable Strides visited with their mini horses in mid-May. This stable is training these mini horses to become certified therapy horses, and we'll look forward to partnership opportunities with this project. ■



## Communications

Our communications efforts included building channels and campaign efforts around the Pueblo and Trinidad expansions. We are excited to see initiatives like Pueblo's Helping Hands rise from Mt. Carmel's efforts to support the community, and we continue to assist those efforts.

**We have also created marketing materials for events to drive internal communication tools.** We created an editable version of operations' strategic document and

worked to evolve our team's approach to social media.

In coming weeks, we look forward to driving a story-driven marketing campaign to showcase important developments like the Veterans Business Operations Outreach Center and other opportunities for veterans, highlight military appreciation and efforts around mental health, and emphasize programs and events at Mt. Carmel VSC. ■



Colorado Springs



Pueblo



Trinidad

# Office Updates



We are expanding into our new suite at St. Mary Corwin Hospital, so 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 ■



**Mary Hiney is the new Veterans Resource and Development Coordinator for the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center in Trinidad. She is an Army Veteran and continues to serve in the Army Reserve as a human resource supervisor.** She moved from Anadarko, Oklahoma, to Trinidad to raise her daughter in an area that has endless outdoor activities.

Because she is new to the community, Mary has been working closely with Ray Odum, the Las Animas County Veterans Service Officer, to learn and acclimate to Trinidad. Mary was featured on the Veterans Voice Podcast with Ted Roberston and

has been featured on KCRT with Eli DeBono, Ray Odum, and Linda Barron. Mary is excited to start a support group and monthly get together for the Women Veterans of Trinidad.

Mary is just starting to understand the needs of the Trinidad community and hopes to bring more support to local veterans. She is a member of the American Legion Post 11 and is focused on bringing in resources for veterans to access care in a rural environment. The veterans and family members of the Trinidad community can expect Mary to be the support they need so no one falls through the cracks. ■



With last quarter's focus on building partnerships and expanding community outreach in Pueblo, our data reflects that we supported 239 unique clients. We provided the Pueblo community with wrap-around services that enabled them to lead healthier, happier lives. We strive to serve everyone who walks through our doors and welcome our community to visit.

**We continue to exceed expectations in meeting our goals to connect our veteran community to services and resources that ensure the health, safety, and quality of life that every human deserves.** As a community advocate, we are accomplishing our mission through the hard work and dedication of our team who work

to generate support, secure resources, and coordinate services.

Our continued services include transition & employment, financial assistance case management, food pantry, acupuncture, legal pro-bono relationships, optometry, dental partnerships, veterans service-connected disability partnership with the Colorado DMVA and more.

Please visit our new office space at St. Mary Corwin Hospital. We believe you will be impressed!

On May 24, Mt. Carmel Veterans Services Center will provide the Pueblo Mayor with a veterans' community update and on June 2, our Pars for Patriots Golf Charity kicks off. ■



## The Veterans Voice Project

As we work to make a greater impact, we're taking on new volunteer staff. One of those new team members is a seasoned TV reporter who will assist with video production and hosting. We are also seeking an additional work-study individual to provide social media support.

We have an agreement in principle with a partner who will both fund and host our new podcast, Warrior Stories. We have launched the Medicare Mentor's new podcast, "Above and Beyond," and we have meetings scheduled with a prospective partner who has expressed an interest in funding our expansion to Trinidad. Additionally, two more organizations are interested in working with Veterans Voice and Mt. Carmel to deliver news and information to

three main area military bases via multiple channels and platforms.

Veterans Voice is beginning to field requests from national brands to appear on our podcast. We are working with the VA to deliver PACT Act and other relevant messaging. To keep pace with increasing production requests and content creation, our studio has been enlarged and we will be adding a third day each week for recording and production. ■



## OPS

*By Paul, the Director of Operations* —————

On May 1, the Small Business Administration announced their selection of Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center as Colorado's Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC). Prior to this announcement, transitioning military members, veterans, and their family members interested in entrepreneurship were serviced by the VBOC in New Mexico due to Colorado lacking a designated VBOC. **The SBA recently added six more VBOCs (the first additions since 2018) and now have 28 VBOCs throughout the U.S. participating in this cooperative agreement.**

The VBOC program is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services to transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard & Reserve members, and military spouses interested in

starting or growing a small business. VBOC locations offer workshops, training, counseling, and mentorship. The local VBOC organization can also help clients navigate Mt. Carmel and SBA's extensive resource partner networks and available resources and programs.

Mt. Carmel's four person VBOC team is led by Kia Palmer, who possesses a wealth of military-affiliated nonprofit and small business experience. She also has an extensive training background and has worked in defense contracting. Our instructor is Gary Peterson, who has been involved in teaching the associated classes for several years. He is a veteran and small business owner as well. The other two positions are the business counselor and operations specialist, and we are still vetting candidates for these roles. ■