

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

EMPOWERING VETERANS



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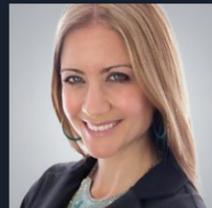
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To Our Community:

Serving as the Chairman of the Board of Managers for Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is an honor and a privilege. As a veteran myself, I understand the challenges many service members face as they recover from deployments, search for meaningful employment after transitioning from the military, and work toward creating a new life for themselves and their families.

Being a part of this organization means listening to veterans' stories – those of triumph and tragedies, of overcoming obstacles and facing down challenges. Since 2016, Mt. Carmel has provided a hand-up to service members, veterans, and their families.

We are at a pivotal time in Mt. Carmel's history. We've proven there is a need for our services; we've demonstrated our success. And thanks to our collaborative community and hundreds of partners, we're poised for continued growth throughout the state.

The past fiscal year brought expansions in Pueblo (growing the footprint there many times beyond our initial vision), and we've also developed offices in Trinidad and Westcliffe. We also expanded the successful Next Chapter program to veterans in Teller and Pueblo Counties.

We couldn't do this without our community, without donors, supporters, volunteers, and ambassadors. You make it work – and you make a difference in the lives of hundreds of veterans every day.

At our recent Patriot Day event, 150 volunteers handed out food packages for hours to more than 400 families. One of those families was a veteran who served 24 years in our military. He was in line for food because his wife was out of work, and they needed a hand in the moment. That veteran exemplifies why we do what we do.

Next Chapter recently saw client number 518. Each of those clients, each visit, represents a life saved. By addressing not just mental health, but the variety of concerns and issues of local veterans - from finances to family to jobs - we save lives. You help us save lives.

As we look ahead to the future, our path is clear. We will continue to support our brothers and sisters in arms, and we'll continue to aid their families. We'll expand programs throughout Colorado and serve those who served our nation - ensuring no one falls through the cracks.

Thank you for being a part of Mt. Carmel.

Jim Hannon, Col., USAF (Ret.)
Chairman of the Board of Managers
Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center

STRONGER TOGETHER, EMPOWERING VETERANS



Bob McLaughlin

Mt. Carmel Supporters and Friends,

Thank you for continuing to believe in Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center and its mission to reach military members, veterans, and their families with services needed to lead a better, more fulfilling life in and out of military service.

Mt. Carmel has continued to expand its mission and its physical presence throughout Colorado. We've expanded into Pueblo and Trinidad, which joined offices in Colorado Springs, Fountain, and Westcliffe. As our military continue to deploy to hot spots around the world, and more people seek to transition from military service, Mt. Carmel remains a haven for employment and job services, behavioral health and wellness, as well as other support services such as food, housing, and clothing.

Since 2022, we have began having in-person meetings after years of remote activity because of the pandemic. We are continuing to see the impact of the care we provide. In the past fiscal year, we had more than 20,000 client visitors. With the expansion into new areas, our volunteer opportunities have also increased, and Mt. Carmel volunteers have donated more than 2,000 volunteer hours since our inception.

Our expanded opportunities for military, veterans, and families would not be possible without Mt. Carmel's partnerships and ambassadors. As Colorado continues to outpace the national average for veteran and military suicide, we collaborated with UHealth, Colorado Behavioral Health Administration, and NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to bring veterans Next Chapter. Next Chapter tells veterans and military members that their next chapter in life can be better than their current chapter and focuses on health and wellness for the entire family. Next Chapter helps veterans in crisis through providing a holistic approach to address underlying stress and concerns.

Giving veterans a place to rely on, whether they are in crisis or in need of transitional support, is necessary to reduce the stigma about seeking outside assistance. Mt. Carmel pledges to be there to assist every step of the way. Our enduring, nonjudgmental support empowers our veteran and military community to begin their new chapter.

In a year of growth, Mt. Carmel expanded its community outreach, partnerships, and increased client visitation. We have provided new tools for veterans to begin a new chapter in their lives through family support, work and volunteering opportunities, counseling services, and physical wellness programs. None of this would be possible without the consistent and dedicated foundation of our partners, employees, volunteers, and donors. Thank you for your continued commitment, generosity, and support.

Sincerely,

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



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

At no cost to the clients, these services range from supportive services like financial assistance and financial coaching to food security and mortgage education.

The goal is to provide case management, help finding resources, and aiding with financial wellness to help clients gain a sustainable footing during challenging life transitions.

Our supportive services team provides financial assistance with essential needs like rent, mortgage, and utilities; food security; and connection to partners in education, the legal profession, and others as needed.

Financial coaching helps people change behaviors to achieve personal financial goals, help creating budgets, and provides information that allows people to manage their personal finances.

The Veterans' Climb program is operated in partnership with El Pomar Foundation and is designed to deliver long-term and intensive assistance to at-risk veterans: case management, supportive services, personalized mentorship, career and technology education, employment preparation, and health and wellness coaching. This program is available to all veterans but is tailored for those who are justice-involved, dealing with an unexpected separation from active duty or facing homelessness. ■



Transition and Employment

Mt. Carmel's services in this field are nationally recognized for their successes in this area. The Veterans Integration Program, known as VIP, provides customized employment help for all transitioning service members.

The Veterans Service to Career program focuses on individuals who have already separated from service, and there is also the military spouse career program that specifically works with family members.

Those programs are run by peer navigators – themselves military veterans – who can help ease the transition from military service to civilian life. They connect job seekers to community employers and partners through employment-focused events, training seminars, and networking opportunities.



“VIP provides customized employment help for all transitioning service members.”

The Military Community Career Development program promotes skills training and education to continue to grow job skills and obtain better employment. This program is open to service members, veterans, military spouses, caregivers, and dependents.

Mt. Carmel also connects employers to transitioning military members. We can help companies hire a veteran or mentor a transitioning veteran through networking and mock interview events. We also ask employers to join our internship program to provide hands-on experience in offices and industries. Spouses of military members find themselves chronically unemployed or under-employed because of frequent moves and family disruptions. Having an internship can ease transition anxieties and employment gaps for both military members and their spouses.

For any employer who needs to fill a wide array of positions, Mt. Carmel hosts job fairs with multiple employers and also holds employer days – a one-of-a-kind job fair, just for a single employer. ■





Health and Wellness

Life is about more than jobs and money. At Mt. Carmel, we work with veterans and families for health and wellness concerns as well.

Our counseling center can support treatment services for depression, anxiety, trauma, relationship struggles, PTSD, and life transitions. The services are based on donations and no referral or insurance is needed.

In addition to individual counseling, Mt. Carmel offers group counseling by licensed professionals, post-grad therapists, and graduate interns supervised by a licensed professional counselor. Interns come from Denver University, the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, University of Northern Colorado, Regis University, Denver Seminary, and Colorado Christian University.

Through a partnership with Guiding Light Coaching, Monica Griffith provides support to people who need to make significant life changes. She helps individuals explore what they want in life and develops action plans to achieve their goals.



Mt. Carmel also focuses on physical health – combining mind, body, and spirit through yoga classes every week, as well as tai chi boxing and energetics. Art expressions is another opportunity for veterans and family members to explore their creative sides. ■

“The services are based on donations and no referral or insurance is needed.”



Colorado VBOC Finds Home at Mt. Carmel

Colorado’s veterans now have an in-state assistance center for small-business creation, growth, and development.

The Veterans Business Outreach Center opened in May 2023, but the groundwork for the VBOC was laid in 2022 and was the result of efforts of many Colorado Springs veterans organizations, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. It currently serves nearly 100 veterans as they create and grow businesses after leaving military service.

The Colorado VBOC at Mt.Carmel provides counseling, training, technical skill development, comprehensive business assessments, and mentoring services to aspiring and existing veteran, active duty, Reserve, National Guard, and military spouse small business owners. Colorado has 48,803 veteran-owned small businesses that provide \$23 billion to the state economy and employ about 96,373 people.

“This is a major win for the state of Colorado, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, and especially the military-connected, small business owners in the state,” said Kia Palmer, director of Colorado VBOC at Mt. Carmel. “We look forward to reaching deep into Colorado communities to provide veteran-owned small businesses this network of resources they may not realize is available to them.”

VBOCs provide services that include business planning, assistance accessing capital, marketing, outreach, and transition to business ownership through the Boots to Business and Boots to Business Reboot programs.

“This is a big step forward for Colorado veterans,” Mt. Carmel Executive Director Bob McLaughlin said. “The skills learned in military service are well-suited for small business ownership. We’re proud we can help veterans, create jobs, and support the Colorado economy. ■





HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE (FY22-23)

VETERAN POPULATION



5.4% vs. **27.7%**
National Average vs. Pikes Peak Regional Average

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center's main campus is located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. El Paso County and the surrounding communities of Pueblo, Trinidad, and Fountain, Colorado, have the highest **concentration of veterans** by population of anywhere in the United States, **four times larger than the national average***

720,403

TOTAL POPULATION
El Paso County

92,891

TOTAL VETERAN POPULATION
El Paso County

20,412

TOTAL CLIENT VISITS
FY22-23



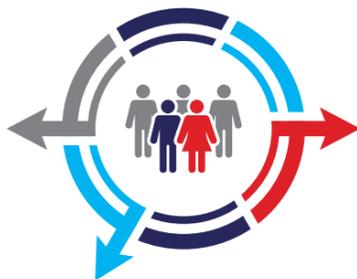
MISSION OUTREACH

We accomplish our goals through partnerships and community outreach. More than just a way of operating, this is our philosophy. Our partners help support the military community with everything from monetary assistance to program sponsorship.

Community Partners	336
Total Volunteer Hours	2,040
Veterans Impacted	33,158

TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT

Clients Served
1,052



MILITARY, VETERAN, AND FAMILY SERVICES

Clients Served
1,017

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Clients Served
933

*Based on 2020 US Census data.





Military Experience Informs Business Decisions

Enrique Camacho knows coffee, and thanks to the Army, he also knows discipline, how to work hard, and how to run a team to get his business off the ground.

Camacho is the owner of Model Citizen Coffee Co., but he doesn't make lattes or espressos. Instead, he owns and operates a wholesale and retail coffee-roasting business that sources specialty coffee beans from around the world.

"We have 21 single-origin locations, ranging from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil, and South Central America," he said. "We also have Rwanda, Kenyan, Ethiopian, Tanzanian, and Yemen coffees. They have

exceptional coffee in Yemen. The Java Mocha is the most well-known coffee blend, and it comes from the Port of Mocha in Yemen."

“My wife was like, ‘What are you gonna do now?’”

After 30 years in the Army, Comacho got started in coffee roasting as a hobby during the last years of his career in Washington, D.C.

"I knew two things," he says. "I knew that I wasn't going to be a government contractor, because I have no interest in doing that.

And I knew I didn't want to be a government civilian doing the same thing I had been doing for 30 years. My wife was like, 'What are you gonna do now?'"

Camacho considered a bike shop or an AirBnB, but coffee roasting appealed to his adventurous side.

"Coffee grows in inhospitable places, which, for the adventurous side of me, makes perfect sense. To get to coffee plantations, you have to land in a major airport, then you have to drive for hours into the wilderness. You are away from major cities."

He says the lessons learned over his three-decade career informed his business decisions.

"Small business ownership is hard," he said. "It's far harder than I imagined. And what military service does is it provides you perseverance because when you start, you're all excited. You have to have determination and perseverance because there will come times where it's just a beat down."

Camacho tells other potential business owners to look at their business as if there's no other option.

"For instance, I'm an Army Ranger," he said. "When you go to Ranger school, if you have the slightest hint that your ability isn't good enough or you are uncertain you want to be a Ranger, you'll never succeed. Business is the same way. There is no Plan B. This is it."

Camacho is excited about the options available at Mt. Carmel now through the Veteran Business Outreach Center because he wants to obtain government contracts for his coffee - and he isn't sure how.

"I want to sit across the table from someone and have them say, 'Enrique, right now you are not discoverable in the government contracting system,' or 'Enrique, you are, but you could strengthen your position this way.' I have no idea how to get there. Now, I think the VBOC can help me get there. I'm very excited because the VBOC is right here." ■ 11



Financial Highlights

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF END OF FISCAL YEAR

ASSETS

CASH	\$1,177,318
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE AND ACCRUED REVENUE	\$221,301
PLEDGES RECEIVABLE	\$207,190
PREPAID EXPENSES	\$36,400
INVESTMENTS	\$107,343
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	\$64,255
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,813,807

LIABILITIES

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND ACCRUED EXPENSES	\$191,461
OTHER CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$1,916
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$193,377
NET ASSETS	\$1,620,430

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS **\$1,813,807**



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

REVENUES

GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS	\$3,200,140
EVENT AND SPONSORSHIP INCOME	\$394,756
RENTAL INCOME FROM PARTNERS	\$60,815
OTHER INCOME	\$195,583
TOTAL REVENUES	\$3,851,294

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES	\$2,617,751
FUNDRAISING	\$749,126
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL	\$432,212
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$3,799,089

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM EXPENSES

GREET AND CONNECT	\$275,135
PARTNER SPACE	\$304,698
VETERANS AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER	\$678,527
VETERANS CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT CENTER	\$682,404
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH	\$676,987

TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES **\$2,617,751**

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

KOAA Honors Mt. Carmel Volunteer Nanette Brédé Muller

By Grant Burlingame

Army Col. (Ret.) Nanette Brédé Mueller knew she had to help the military community transition from active duty to civilian life. Her own transition left her feeling at sea, uncertain about her identity after decades of military service.

While in the Army, she worked with ammunition management, core logistics, and strategic planning before leading a weapons development project following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. She helped craft the Washington, D.C., safety plan to repel further attacks. It was a big, important job.

And then, after 29 years of service, she found herself a civilian with no one reporting to her, and no one to report back to.

"I knew that I had a place, a job to do," she said. "And that was to help other veterans transition to new opportunities. In 2012, unemployment was high, and service members leaving the military were being left behind. They didn't understand how to translate skills learned in the military to other jobs."

The military programs offered at the time were of little help.

"I attended these programs three times," she said. "I didn't learn much about jobs after the military. They were focused on benefits; I needed more."

Never one to leave a problem unsolved, Brédé Muller stepped up and volunteered. She created Prep Connect 360 with the El Paso County Workforce Center at a time when help for veterans was scarce. When Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center stood up in Colorado Springs, she transferred the program there. In November, with unemployment around three percent, robust transition services and classes in place, and a better plan from the military, the program ended.

Over its 10-year lifespan, the week-long advanced career and transition workshop helped prepare more than 900 veterans and military spouses to thrive in the civilian workforce.

"The all-volunteer staff was comprised of 90 percent past graduates who gave back to help fellow service members", said Brédé Mueller.

"To me, that was the most important thing," she said. "I know 900 people now. I get approached by class members all the time, and those class members help others. It was so important to do, and those people mean so much to me."

Brédé Mueller learned about Mt. Carmel through Army Col. (Ret.) Robert "Bob" McLaughlin, the executive director of Mt. Carmel. She met McLaughlin sitting on a hay bale at the Western Street Breakfast. She credits Mt. Carmel for stepping up and helping create a new home for Prep Connect 360.



“You meet Bob, and you get involved with Mt. Carmel. That’s just the way it is.”

"You meet Bob, and you get involved with Mt. Carmel," she said. "That's just the way it is."

Mt. Carmel recognized the time and effort that Brédé Muller gave to the organization and to local veterans. In July 2023, she received the News5 Jefferson Award for her volunteer efforts over the years. The Jefferson Award is a monthly award given to someone who exemplifies selfless behavior to better their community.

For more than 900 people and their families, for more than 10 years, Bréde Muller made a tremendous difference. ■



Next Chapter Expands in Pueblo

In 2022, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center was integral to the development and launch of Next Chapter, a program led by UHealth and funded by the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). Next Chapter is a community collaborative wellness program designed specifically for veterans and their families. This program was made possible after receiving Colorado Senate Bill 21-129 funding. SB21-129 directed the BHA to develop a veteran suicide prevention pilot program for El Paso County. Leaders at Mt. Carmel and UHealth came together to develop and propose an innovative approach focused on upstream intervention to tackle the problem of veteran suicide. Mt. Carmel's innovative approaches to caring for and aiding the military, veterans, and their families made them a perfect partner to advance the goals of Next Chapter.

Mt. Carmel added additional service capacity to the wraparound veteran services and behavioral health program in Colorado Springs. El Paso County has the highest concentration of veterans and their families, making Next Chapter a natural fit for the community. Veterans often experience complex issues that call for various services. Mt. Carmel partnered with Next Chapter and UHealth to provide wraparound services to address underlying causes of stress and anxiety that could lead a veteran or family member into a crisis.

Building on the success of Next Chapter in 2022, the BHA asked the Next Chapter team to expand the concept to Pueblo County. Pueblo County is the next nearest high-density population of veterans per capita to El Paso County. The BHA wanted to build on the success of the partnership between Next Chapter and community veteran service agencies. Pueblo became an essential addition to the Mt. Carmel service locations in 2021 as services were made available in the Steel City. When Next Chapter

responded to the BHA request, Mt. Carmel was there and ready to expand the access to services across Pueblo County.

The suicide rate in El Paso County is down five percent, year over year. This was an encouraging outcome for Next Chapter and the partners who make up the collaborative.

Pueblo is home to approximately 11,000 veterans, per the 2021 census report. Veterans own 9.3 percent of Pueblo businesses. Providing this community with Next Chapter services could motivate Pueblo veterans to seek assistance, free from worry and stigma. Next Chapter service, combined with core Mt. Carmel services, can address the gaps in community assistance and create a veteran-friendly access point for those who previously would have had difficulty asking for help.

Next Chapter will offer services and collaborate with multiple partners in Pueblo, including Mt. Carmel. More than 30 people representing multiple agencies attended the launch of Next Chapter program services in Pueblo, providing overwhelming support for this community. The BHA has allocated further support with resources for the program to help address veteran suicide risk factors, fund access to behavioral healthcare, and reduce the stigma of getting help.



Mt. Carmel's role in Next Chapter is key to the expansion of services in Pueblo County. Wraparound and direct care services will be made possible with the help of strong partners, including NAMI Southeast Colorado, Friendly Harbor, Posada, Veterans Upward Bound, and with senior veteran support offered through Home Instead. The lives of veterans and their families can be significantly improved through the comprehensive approach of Next Chapter. The strong synergistic effect of combining UHealth-led health and wellness programming with Mt. Carmel's wraparound services positions Mt. Carmel to model innovative veteran service delivery across all regions of Colorado. We hope to continue to see a decline in veteran suicide rates throughout Colorado as we bring resources to support veterans who want to write their Next Chapter. ■



What's Next in 2023-2024

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center experienced a year of tremendous growth in 2023. We helped more veterans receive support and access to resources. We placed spouses in jobs and assisted families dealing with food insecurity. And our next fiscal year is equally promising as we remain dedicated to supporting military members transitioning from service, veterans, and their families. Expect to see more from Mt. Carmel as we continue to focus on the issues that matter to our military families.

The VBOC will grow its statewide presence. Colorado's only VBOC, the center's purpose is to provide resources for entrepreneurs and veteran-owned businesses. The VBOC will work closely with partners who aid transitioning veterans and other programs. It's located at the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center and has a satellite office at the Catalyst Campus for Technology and Innovation.

Mt. Carmel will continually focus on legislative initiatives that support our mission and our military population.



Our Pueblo and Trinidad offices continue to grow. We plan further expansion on the Western Slope to provide resources and assistance to veterans throughout Colorado.

Mt. Carmel received a \$40,000 grant for its food bank from the state of Colorado in the current fiscal year. We'll continue to reach out to veterans and active-duty military families who are struggling with food insecurity in the face of high home prices and inflation.

We also received an \$80,000 grant from the Colorado Springs Health Foundation to continue to support behavioral health initiatives with local veterans and their families.



Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is mission-focused. Providing a better life – and access to tools to get there – for those who served is our goal. We are determined to support our veteran population and their families through increased presence throughout the state, through providing access to food, housing, and behavioral health services, and through continuing to develop partnerships that meet the needs of Colorado's past and present military population. It's an honor to serve those who served.





In Memory of Lou Mellini

Lou Mellini filled a room with his presence, booming voice, and infectious laugh. But he did it without making anyone feel smaller, and he left an indelible impression on every single person he met.

Mellini, who served on Mt. Carmel's Board of Trustees and was the first chairman of the board of managers for the nonprofit, loved Colorado Springs. He loved community, and he loved our men and women in uniform. As a Fort Carson Good Neighbor and an honorary member of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Lou traveled to Afghanistan to visit the troops in 2010.

Nearly 70 at the time, Lou spent more than a week and experienced what troops were doing in Afghanistan. The trip made a lasting impression on him, and he wore his Fort Carson Good Neighbor green sports jacket with pride. He was changed by the experience of seeing firsthand the dedication, devotion, and commitment of America's military.

So when Jay Cimino called his longtime friend about standing up Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, Mellini answered. The two of them brainstormed and came up with a plan for Mt. Carmel, after enlisting then Col. Bob McLaughlin to lead the newly formed nonprofit.

After a brief illness, our beloved Lou passed away in June at the age of 82. He left behind his wife Laura Muir, his children Julian and Peter, and a host of well-loved grandkids. He also created a legacy of community service, mentorship, jokes, love, and laughter that those who knew him will never forget.

Lou was a consummate businessman and a brilliant strategist; he had a deft knowledge of sales, marketing, and above all else, people. He successfully led KILO and RXP radio stations for decades; he was a natural salesperson, and he was generous with his time and talents. He was a leader, a mentor, and a friend to many. His advice was solid; his support of causes he believed in - of people he believed in - was unfaltering.

Here at Mt. Carmel, we'll remember his love of people, his merry countenance, his wit, and his wisdom. And we are grateful for his unending support of our mission and Colorado's veterans. ■



Visit [VeteransCenter.org](https://www.VeteransCenter.org)

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