



A Beacon of Support

September 2023 | Issue #45

JAY CIMINO
Founder and Chairman
of the Board of Trustees

GINA CIMINO
Vice Chair and Trustee

BOARD OF MANAGERS:

JIM HANNON
Chair

CHUCK MURPHY
Vice Chair

LESLIE ABRAMS
Secretary

MARCIA MITCHELL
Treasurer

CHUCK ANDERSON

PETER BUCKLES, JR.

MICHAEL CAFASSO

LONGINOS GONZALEZ, JR.

PAULETTE GREENBERG

TERRANCE McWILLIAMS

DONNA NELSON

MICHELLE RUEHL

KEVIN SHAUGHNESSY

MARK WALLER

ROSS WHITE

BARBARA WINTER

ANGELA ANN CESARIO

Admin. Advisor

STAFF:

COL (R) ROBERT McLAUGHLIN
Executive Director

PAUL PRICE
Director of Operations

LESLIE ABRAMS
Executive Assistant

MARCIA MITCHELL
Controller

CHRISTIE ROBINSON

APRIL KANE
JOAN BURGAR
Accountants

RANDY GRADISHAR
Outreach Coordinator

ANGI BAKER
Veteran Voice Coordinator

TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT:

MARK SMITH
Dir, Transition and Employment

PEER NAVIGATORS:

JON DIX
NICK WEREMBLEWSKI
JUSTIN VERHULST
BLAIR ERATO

**MILITARY, VETERAN,
& FAMILY SERVICES:**

SHANNON OLIN
Dir, MVFS

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

At the start of autumn, Mt. Carmel is preparing for the Colorado Springs Stand Down to address the needs of homeless vets — and getting ready for a 30-day program to move selected veterans to transitional housing that has a proven track record of success.

In addition, a few weeks after the Oct. 17 Stand Down, Mt. Carmel will host two events Nov. 3 — a wellness and resiliency workshop at The Antlers from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Hoedown for Heroes at Boot Barn Hall that night.

Each of these events is designed to meet specific veteran needs: housing and food assistance, wellness, mental health — with the final event geared to talk about success in 2023 and prepare for an outstanding 2024.

The Stand Down is a one-stop shop for homeless veterans seeking service, support, and supplies to be ready for winter months — and to find housing, benefits, and resources. In 2022, the Stand Down helped 123 veterans. In 2021, 90 veterans received assistance.

Veterans receive breakfast and lunch. They have access to haircuts, vaccinations, VA benefit discussions, medical benefits, as well as mental health, employment, and housing programs. Mt. Carmel supplies jeans, boots, coats, shirts, undergarments, socks, hygiene kits, backpacks, sleeping bags and tents for homeless veterans to make it through Colorado's cold winter months. With the goal of meeting every need of the homeless vets, the Stand Down will also host mental health providers, chaplains, and case managers, as well as SNAP and TAFT benefit providers.

Because military members never leave a comrade behind, each veteran will be placed with an active-duty service member escort for the day to connect to needed services.

The Transitional Housing Initiative starts the night of the Stand Down. At least 10 veterans and their families are taken to temporary lodging at a local hotel and spend 30 days working intensively



Bob McLaughlin

with case management and partners for housing, jobs and other services. Veterans chosen for the program are vetted through background checks during the Stand Down and the staff members select the participants for the program.

Even after the 30 days are over, clients will be active with case managers for up to a year. They attend mandatory resumé classes, jobs fairs and counseling during the 30 days.

In the last two years, the transition initiative has had a success rate of between 85 and 90 percent. Nine months later, the success rate is 75 percent — meaning the program keeps veterans and their family members housed, employed, and fed at the cost of \$35,000 last year.

Mt. Carmel is dedicated to meeting veterans where they are in life, and in giving them a hand up in their situation. Most of our staff are veterans or family members, and we understand the challenges and obstacles homeless veterans face. Join us in helping those who served — and to whom we owe a great debt for that service. ■

Bob McLaughlin



CASE MANAGERS:

GLEN COOPER

Client Care Coordinator

KILEEN BARKER

KYSSA BELKER

MIK SPILLANE

JONATHAN HELM

Financial Coach

HEALTH & WELLNESS:

KIRSTEN BELAIRE

Dir, Health & Wellness

VIVIENNE BELAIRE

Gateway Coordinator

ZACHARIAH GARNEY

Behavioral Health Clinician

JACQUIE WARMBIR

Behavioral Health Administrator

RODGER JOHNSON

Next Chapter Program Manager

JASMINE BARRY

Next Chapter Intake Specialist

DEV & FUNDRAISING:

DENISE BRILL

Director

LYNDA CINK

Resource Dev & Events Mgr.

CHARISSA THAYER

Fundraising and Sustainability Coordinator

JUSTINA BAKER

Community Outreach Volunteer Coordinator

LAURA MARTH

Partner Relations Coordinator

ALISHA HALL

DENISE PATRICK

GRANT WRITERS

GREET AND CONNECT:

JULIE MCKEE

Operations Manager

RUSSELL POUSSON

IT/Facilities Coordinator

REBECCA WEREMBLEWSKI

Client Services

PUEBLO:

SAL KATZ

Director, Rural Colorado Services

LAURIE COLLINS

Client Services

JOSHUA WILLS

Peer Navigator

TAMIECA TRUJILLO

Case Manager

REINA ESPINOZA

Next Chapter Navigator

TRINIDAD:

PRECIOUS REED

Veteran Resources & Community Development Coordinator

AJ BREED

WESTCLIFFE:

CHRISTY SCHRAM



Partner Spotlight



Our tenured partnership with Comcast continues to mirror the growth Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is witnessing as their recent donation of 35 new laptops will help offset the costs of expansion into new geographical areas, while greatly boosting the productivity of current staff utilizing recycled computers.

“Reliable technology and connectivity is no longer a luxury – it’s a necessity,” said J.D. Keller, Senior Vice President Comcast Mountain West Region. “Having places to go with access to the right tools, like laptops, are critical for people who are looking for jobs, doing their homework, getting healthcare, or even just finding directions. Mt. Carmel is a leader in providing the care, connection, and community to members of our military and their families, and we are proud to partner with them to ensure more people in our community have access to technology that can keep them connected.”

In addition to donating laptops, Comcast Business was instrumental in bringing veteran, philanthropist, and celebrity chef Robert Irvine to our 8th annual Patriot Day Give Back event where he was the keynote speaker at the Opening Ceremony and volunteered alongside others as he filled vehicles with produce, non-

perishables and essential hygiene products. He also participated in a segment on the Veteran Voice podcast. His foundation, the Robert Irvine Foundation, also focuses on diminishing the gap to food insecurity and increased physical and mental health awareness among military-connected and first-responder communities.

As always, a pillar of Comcast’s services is to keep more Coloradans connected to what matters most to them. Through Comcast’s low-cost internet service, Internet Essentials, Veterans and those who are income-eligible could receive high speed, reliable internet service for \$10 per month. When paired with the federal Affordable Connectivity Program benefit, those who are eligible could also receive discounted Xfinity mobile service.

Finally, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center in Colorado Springs continues to host a Comcast Lift Zone, which provides free high-speed WiFi connectivity for military members and their families. As our service footprint grows, we are partnering with Comcast to evaluate the feasibility of creating Lift Zones in these new service territories.

*Comcast NBCUniversal is a financial sponsor of Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center ■



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 we head deeper into the summer and leaning toward the fall, **The Homeless Veterans Stand Down for El Paso county has officially been passed down to the Mt. Carmel Team!** We have been working efforts with MVFS planning and Orchestrating this great event which will be held October 17th at City Auditorium. With that comes more outreach on the

installations and community. Maintaining office space on Ft. Carson and planning to attend the Soldier Recovery Unit (SRU) event and the Retirement Council meetings. LINK Interview workshop wrapped up during this time with 6 Grads, with 2 gaining employment already! We are heading into the busiest time of year for our department, but as a team we will make it happen! ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS has taken on several new projects lately! **MVFS received a sizable Food Pantry grant that has allowed us to build up new pantries in Trinidad and Westcliffe and reinforcing pantries in Pueblo and Colorado Springs.** We have new shelving in Colorado Springs for the pantry that will allow us to stay more organized and accessible to clients. We have started actively participating in the Rapid Rehousing program with our Emergency Solutions Grant that allows us to more readily move identified clients from

homelessness into housing. In conjunction with our partnership with Interquest Ridge Apartments we have successfully moved in 2 clients in August and have 2 more ready to move in in September. MVFS hosted our quarterly Partner Meeting with 30 partners in attendance. MVFS welcomes new team members Kileen, Kyssa, and Mik! MVFS is spearheading the 25th annual Stand Down in El Paso County and with the support of some terrific partners we will be able to continue the Transitional Housing Initiative as well. ■



Greet and Connect

We have been working on all inventories to include, electronics, keys, FOB keys, and furniture. Currently reviewing our turnover folders, emergency management procedures,

along with procedures for Greet and Connect in processing. Still inputting past intakes for accountability. We will be conducting Apricot refresher training for all employees. ■



Community Outreach, Events and Volunteerism

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center's critical programs, services and community resources ensure our military, Veterans and their families survive and thrive throughout the Pikes Peak region.

Our partner, Never Summer, (NeverSummer.com) designed a very special limited edition "Brothers in Arms" snowboard. Proceeds of these boards are generously donated through 9/30 and have reached \$11,500 this month. Visit veteranscenter.org for our community and fundraising events, or sign up to volunteer. ■



Health and Wellness

We welcomed our new fall interns who are now in full swing. We are also planning our Welcome Home Warrior family retreat and are accepting applicants for families.

Vivienne has been working hard to increase and enhance our community partnerships. We have partnered with Brush Crazy and Collective Health Partners (IOP).

BH held their quarterly partner meeting. The MAC (Military Arts Connection) program is back! ■

Department Updates



Communications

Our efforts in communication have been centered around an array of initiatives that have had a profound impact on the community. One such initiative was the launch of the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC), a groundbreaking venture that aims to support and empower veteran entrepreneurs and small business owners throughout Colorado. Through strategic messaging and targeted outreach, we have set a strong foundation to build upon to spread awareness of this transformative project, shedding light on the exceptional work being carried out by the dedicated team at Mt. Carmel.

As we eagerly anticipate the arrival of fall, a very busy season for Mt. Carmel, we are planning a new marketing campaign. **Using a combination of strategic storytelling, captivating visuals, and targeted messaging, our goal is to not only bring attention to**

the vital services and programs we offer, but also to inspire individuals, businesses, and organizations to join us in our mission.

With this marketing campaign, we aim to increase awareness of the challenges faced by our veterans, while highlighting their resilience and strength. By showcasing their stories of triumph and perseverance, we hope to ignite empathy and foster a deeper understanding of the unique needs of our veterans.

Additionally, the campaign will serve as a rallying cry for increased support. By illustrating the tangible impact we have on the lives of veterans, we will inspire individuals, businesses, and organizations to stand alongside us in our mission. ■



Next Chapter

Within two months of the expansion into Pueblo, Next Chapter has served over 500 Veterans and family members between both communities! Next Chapter teammates attended the QPR training offered through the Mt. Carmel Veteran Service Center Behavioral Health Department. This training provided vital information that will allow our team to further serve our Veteran community.

With the help of the Home Depot Foundation, the Montessori school is making great progress. At this event, Home Depot and the volunteer teams built benches and pergolas for the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center campus. The teams also constructed dog houses for

our new partners Victory Service Dogs. This new partnership will allow our Veteran community to get paired with a service dog and/or training for a dog to help them complete their daily routines.

Next Chapter attended the Patriot Day event with Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. During this event, Next Chapter presented a bag of swag and information to our community members as they drove through the event. In the coming month, Next Chapter will be attending a variety of events throughout both Colorado Springs and Pueblo communities. ■



VBOC

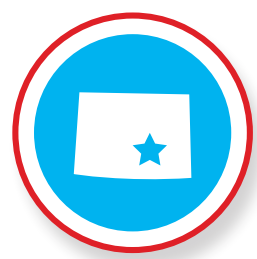
As the Colorado Veterans Business Outreach Center at Mt. Carmel heads into its first Fall season, the active client roster resides at 96. With 286 counseling sessions and 81.88 contact hours, the Colorado VBOC will continue to provide business counseling sessions during regular business hours and on nights and weekends. **The VBOC Podcast has officially launched in collaboration with The Veterans Voice Podcast.** Guests such as Eric Phillips, Veterans Business Development & Economic Development Officer, Colorado District Office, Lauren Shakes, Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center, Lisa Gustafson, The Entrepreneur's Source, and Melba Robinson-Santa, Colorado Enterprise Fund, have joined in the conversation to discuss various aspects of entrepreneurship. The Colorado VBOC has embedded itself in the Colorado District ecosystem and attended the SBA 70th Anniversary Celebration at the SBA District Office in Denver. The Colorado VBOC partnered with SBA partner Institute for Veteran and Military Families to provide a program briefing during their Veterans Entrepreneurial Boot Camp at Wounded Warrior Project.

Colorado VBOC has completed six Boots to Business classes since May 1, 2023. Class Quality Surveys collected by the SBA on Boots to Business in the state of Colorado were completed by 46 participants. Prior to their attending Boots to Business 80% were likely to start a business. Upon completion of the Boots to Business this number increased to 98%.

Colorado VBOC is building a network of lenders, beginning with the SBA District Lender Relations Specialists. Our goal is to increase funding streams to assist in sponsorship of training events, entrepreneurial conferences, and supporting sponsorship of Colorado VBOC clients to attend national entrepreneurship conferences and summits.

Colorado VBOC staff is attending a minimum of 3 outreach events per month to educate community organizations, businesses, networking groups, and others of VBOC programs and services. ■

Office Updates



Southern Colorado

VSC Mission: To provide best practices for our military, veterans, and their families through accessible programs, integrated resources, and collaborative partnerships that empower lives and strengthen our community.

Job Description: Client Services Specialist

Division/Department: Pueblo Office

Direct Supervisor: Director of Rural Colorado Services

Position Description: Support Operations Manager in the daily operation of the Front Desk in support of Greet & Connect, Integrated Services, and Information and Facilities Management. Ensure best practices are captured. The most important thing is Exceptional Customer Service. This is a full-time, non-exempt position.

Main Responsibilities:

- Greet & Connect, connect clients to services and appointments in all MCVSC wrap around services.
 - Assist in maintaining appointments for:
 - VSO clients that walk-in calendar
 - Acudetox
 - Arts program
 - Quine Therapy
 - Partner schedule
 - Track Volunteers
 - Customer Service, set the standard in proper customer care to include in-person, telephonic, and web- based interactions
 - Client Management System (Apricot Database): add new clients and update case notes. Maintain database for:
 - Pueblo
 - Monte Vista
 - Trinidad
 - Westcliffe
 - General Support, customer surveys, accept donations, updating phone and contact lists.
 - Assist in all capacities directed by the Operations Manager, and in support of other team members.
1. Assist in all capacities directed by Operations Manager
 - a. Stats gathering; Ensure appropriate data is collected, entered into Apricot and reported weekly
 - b. Support Programs and Partners with room set up and payments.
 - c. Identify integration opportunities and streamline processes.
 - d. Support all Departments and Partners with client walk-ins as needed.
 - e. Assist with Volunteers
 - f. Support all events, activities and efforts as identified by Director of Rural Colorado Services
 - g. Ensure high level of customer service and satisfaction in all areas of VSC: clients, guests, partners, volunteers, work studies, interns, board members, funders, and staff members Ensure a healthy work environment
 - h. Takes monthly minutes at the Military Affairs Committee meeting
 - i. Supports outreach events in providing wrap around services to the Pueblo Community.
 - j. Assists in fundraising opportunities in Pueblo Community.

Essential Aptitude & qualifications:

- Experience working in a fast-paced, client-facing receptionist position (HD)
- Detail oriented and works with a high degree of accuracy.
- Highly organized and flexible
- Clerical skills to keep accurate records and find important information.
- Patience and listening skills to respond appropriately and interact positively with clients.
- Computer experience to include word and excel.
- Understanding of military culture and associated support programs
- Interpersonal skills to create a pleasant experience for clients, partners and staff while maintaining confidentiality.





The Veterans Voice Project

A new day and a new team for the Veterans Voice project.

Ted Robertson's last day as a member of the Mt. Carmel team and leading Veterans Voice was September 1. He will remain in the communications and outreach field, supporting a long-standing military-connected service organization who are entrusting Ted with leading their first-time foray in to the podcasting space.

The new team taking over includes Mr. Brian McCain, COO of the Action 22 Network and creator and host of the Making Action Happen podcast. He becomes the Veterans Voice Program Manager. Assisting Brian is Ms. Angi Baker, formerly of AdPro, now assuming the role of Veterans Voice Program Coordinator. Their producer, Mr. Stephen Prejean (PRAY-jawn), is an Army Veteran and student of Pikes Peak State College in media and broadcasting. They will be joined by volunteer and Army Veteran, Renee Battle, also a PPSC student and a colleague of Stephen's.

Under the leadership of the new team, by combining Action 22/ Making Action Happen and Vets Voice resources, sharing channels for

distribution and leveraging a vastly expanded network, Mt. Carmel's message of help and hope for the military connected community will be carried farther and to new places.

Ted has shared that his time with Mt. Carmel leading the Veterans Voice Project has been the best of his professional life, owing much of that positive experience to the support and encouragement provided by Bob McLaughlin and Paul Price along the way. He was especially enthusiastic in noting that were it not for the entire Mt. Carmel team embracing Veterans Voice the way they have, their participation, contributions and affirmation, Veterans Voice would not be what it is today.

Please wish the new team well and support them in every way you can. That will help to keep them energized as they work to take Veterans Voice and Mt. Carmel to new heights! ■



Colorado Springs



Pueblo



Trinidad

