



A Beacon of Support

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By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

As we enter the season of giving, the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center Team and I remain committed to our military, veterans and their families.

This fall has been especially rewarding as we executed the 26th annual El Paso County Veteran Homeless Stand Down collaborating with numerous community partners. And during the event, Mt. Carmel and our partners helped 126 homeless veterans prepare for the winter and gain access to other critical services.

In conjunction with the Stand Down, we also hosted the Transitional Housing Initiative (THI) where nine homeless veterans received 30 days of housing and intensive job counseling and support. Of those veterans, eight gained employment and now have permanent housing, and one veteran decided to reconnect with his family out of state.

Prior to Thanksgiving, we also conducted our annual Turkeys for Troops. Thanks to our donors and efforts of the Mt. Carmel staff, 1,200 active-duty families on the area's military installations received a turkey for their Thanksgiving meals. We also distributed 250 Safeway food cards to veteran families to celebrate the holidays.

Through our UCHealth partnership with Next Chapter, nearly 700 veterans have received behavioral health support, surpassing the state's required three-year goal in just 18 months — proving a clear need for the program and its goal of preventing veteran suicide in Southern Colorado.

As veterans come to our offices in need of transition assistance to leave the military and find their next career, their next purpose, we can see the importance of our work. Veterans and family members have obtained more than 4,000 jobs, thanks to our Transition and Employment Team.



Bob McLaughlin

We are changing lives. Here's just one of many examples. The Chau family came to us. Gabrielle has cancer and the medical bills were overwhelming. They were on the verge of homelessness. Today, the Chau's own their home and have a stable life for their four kids.

Every staff member here is dedicated to supporting military members, veterans, and their families; however, we can't do it without support from the community or financial support from businesses, corporations, and individuals. With the community rallying behind Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, we can prevent many who live without hope from being hungry, unhoused, and unemployed.

We thank each of you for your continued support, and we humbly request including Mt. Carmel in your end-of-year giving. For every dollar you invest in Mt. Carmel, we double its value in services to the veteran community. It's an impactful investment for our community, for those who served, and for those who need our help. ■

Bob McLaughlin



Office Updates

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Pueblo



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Southern/Rural Colorado

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center supported 268 veterans and family members during the past month. Our core programs provided vital assistance for transition and employment, as well as military and family services. Veterans and family members received additional therapeutic help through withdrawal programs like Acudetox, and others attended art classes and equine therapy. Our partners, through Helping Hands Pueblo Community Coalition, gave essential food and basic need assistance to 463 people in our community.

Our vision of expanding services to Southern Colorado is a reality. Since March, we have served 2,201 community members, veterans, and families in Southern Colorado.

We rely on our partners for continued success. We collaborated with Care and Share Food Bank of Southern Colorado to provide 800 food boxes across 12 rural counties. We hosted a veterans connection gathering in Westcliffe and partnered with the Sons of Italy to provide two veteran families with a Christmas meal and gifts. Partners provided

an eight-week equine therapy program that helped seven veterans, and nearly 100 joined our arts therapy program. We also supported The Shrine of St. Therese of Pueblo and helped provide gifts to 20 children in Pueblo.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic about developing veteran connection programs in rural Colorado during the coming year. We have initiated discussions with the Pueblo County Board of Commissioners and the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to designate our Pueblo location as a one-source center for all of Southern Colorado and then add more therapeutic resources.

Save the date for Jan. 18, 2024, where we will host the Pueblo Salute to Heroes Reception, dedicated to raising money to aid veterans and family members in Pueblo.

These achievements underscore our dedication to providing comprehensive services, establishing new partnerships and programs, and delivering more veteran benefits. Together, we make communities stronger. ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

Mt. Carmel had the honor of hosting the El Paso County Stand Down, a community event that assists local homeless veterans with clothing for the winter months, new haircuts, and access to services to assist veterans who are unhoused. It was the first time Mt. Carmel hosted the event and partnered with Hire Heroes USA, with support from many other community partners.

Additionally, in October, we oversaw the Transitional Housing Initiative, where the veterans received intensive case management and immersive classes with other partner agencies such as Peer Connect, the Department of Veterans Affairs' HUDVash, and Rocky Mountain Human Services. They participated in

resumé building and job application classes with our transition and employment department as well. The intention behind this program is to get unhoused veterans into stable housing, placed in employment, and given any necessary support to develop ongoing stability. We then work with them for at least a year to ensure that they remain stable and have our assistance as needed.

Our department is also planning to provide additional meal support for the holiday season and will once again host an Angel Tree to provide gifts for the children and families of local veterans. Recipients are selected from our active caseload. ■



Transition and Employment

As the snowy weather starts to roll in, the Transition and Employment Team continues to set the standard.

We have achieved more than 4,000 job placements for the life of the program! Transitioning military members, veterans from all eras and their spouses received a hand up in gaining employment.

I would like to give a shout out to Jon, Nick, Justin, and Blair for their hard work, along with past directors and peer navigators. Without everyone who contributed to our efforts, this feat would not be possible.

The Veteran Service to Career Program has been leading the charge. Nick graduated from the Myers Briggs Certification program to assist with the LINK two-day interview workshop.

We are also in the process of working with the state of Colorado to revive and renew the Veteran Service to Career Program funding. With the support of our local legislature, we will continue this program to serve our clients. ■



Health and Wellness

Our Behavioral Health program was awarded a special grant by the Colorado Springs Health Foundation (CSHF) to evaluate our program and identify strengths, gaps, and ensure effectiveness. We have been working closely with the Medamorphosis team to complete this third-party evaluation and are excited to learn the results — and make a good thing better.

CSHF also chose to highlight our program in an upcoming nonprofit spotlight article on their website. We are grateful for their support over the years, as our clients and their needs continue to grow.

We continue to explore community partnerships to better serve our clients and are excited to bring in a new cohort of interns in January.

Our Welcome Home Warrior retreat is scheduled for April 2024.

Our partnership with Next Chapter and UHealth has supported nearly 700 clients in only 18 months — exceeding the state's timeline of three years — demonstrating deep need for the program in Southern Colorado. ■