



A Beacon of Support

March 2024 | Issue #48

IN MEMORY OF
JAY CIMINO
Founder

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Vice Chair and Trustee

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MARGIE WATSON

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

Remembering Jay Cimino
We will all miss Jay. He was a great man with incredible vision and passion. Building and delivering services at the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center made him proud. I know, because I was with him from the beginning. He had a tremendous impact on my life while serving and after retiring from the U.S. Army.

To me, Jay was so much more than an iconic figure in Colorado. He was more than the dealerships, more than the playgrounds, and more than all the philanthropy he invested in — he was my friend and mentor. When I first met Jay, I was the garrison commander at Fort Carson and was struggling to work with ranchers and farmers in Southern Colorado, most of whom did not want Fort Carson maneuvers near their land.

I sought his advice in Trinidad, and later, he invited me to his office in Motor City for a conversation. I remember his greeting — and the start of a partnership that created Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. He looked at me and said, “You look more Italian than Irish.” I told him I was part Italian, and that was it — he opened the door to his office.

I took the “hot seat,” as we called it, at the conference table. It was the first of many conversations held in Jay’s office. And those meetings led to Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center.

Since then, thousands of veterans have received help through Mt. Carmel. They’ve found jobs, behavioral health support, and assistance with basic needs. Their spouses and dependents have also received help through Mt. Carmel. Our dedication — just like Jay’s — is unwavering.

Jay started Mt. Carmel, and we pledge to honor his memory by continuing to serve military members, veterans, and their families. We’ve been successful in the years since we opened, and we’re determined to continue progress.

The formula we created will continue to cover Mt. Carmel’s expenses — a mix of grants and donations. We are grateful to our supporters for continuing to see the need and provide the resources to deliver wraparound services for veterans and their families.



Bob McLaughlin

Jay’s particular combination of business acumen and philanthropic giving is rare. His legacy looms large in Colorado, and not just because of Mt. Carmel. Through a partnership with the Broncos, he helped create playgrounds along the Front Range. He created Mt. Carmel Wellness and Community Center in his hometown of Trinidad to provide much-needed health care to residents. He purchased auto dealerships in Trinidad and Raton, New Mexico, to improve economic conditions and provide jobs.

During the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest fires, Jay responded, providing more than 30 cars and trucks, and he kept service bays open around the clock during the fires to fix any emergency vehicles.

Jay’s list of awards is lengthy, and he earned every single recognition and honor. But he will be remembered for decades for his work here at Mt. Carmel and the assistance he gave to so many.

Help us continue Jay’s legacy. Consider a gift to continue to support our work in his name. To donate, go to veteransservicecenter.org. ■

Bob McLaughlin



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Partner Spotlight



Our partnership with Veterans Optometry Partners of America (VOPA) is exactly the symbiotic relationship founder Jay Cimino envisioned when he and Col. (Ret.) Bob McLaughlin established Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center nearly 10 years ago. VOPA is a full-service eye clinic situated in Mt. Carmel's headquarters in Colorado Springs. As VOPA's patients visit Mt. Carmel for the first time, they are introduced to our resources that are available to them, while Mt. Carmel clients are introduced to VOPA's no-cost, preventive annual eye exams and glasses using their VA benefits.

The three-person VOPA team, led by optometrist and former U.S. Army captain

Dr. Caitlin Maciejewski, pride themselves on getting to know veterans and listening to their stories. They go above and beyond to serve patients, even providing eyeglass adjustments at assisted living centers so patients don't have to visit the center.



Since partnering with Mt. Carmel in 2020, VOPA has expanded and opened Eye Love Care clinics

for the communities in schools, mission shelters and pop-up clinics in Southern Colorado. VOPA and Eye Love Care are accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment with VOPA or Eye Love Care, call 719-596-2020 and select option 2. ■

Department Updates



Transition and Employment

Jumping into the new year! We completed the first hiring event of 2024, and 21 partner companies came to Mt.

Carmel to hire veterans and military spouses. We had 60

clients who participated. We would like to welcome Jose

Reveteriano as the newest VIP peer navigator. Jose is a veteran

of the United States Air Force with a background in space and missiles. We have several events coming up — LinkedIn 101 for veterans, LINK, civilian and federal resumé workshops, and our peer navigator networking and social event. ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS has welcomed our newest case manager, Reesa, to the

team. We continue to receive donations from Amazon that

have included much-needed items for our pantries and hope

closets across the various locations. We have been fortunate to

receive several heated jackets and clothing items to support our

upcoming Stand Down later this year. In addition to these amazing

donations, we have set up and are working on receiving DRMO

items from the military surplus to support Stand Down as well. We

have started in-person meetings with identified partners that will

spearhead Built for Zero in El Paso County, with the aim of reaching

functional zero veteran homelessness in three years or less. ■



Greet & Connect

The Greet & Connect Team is trucking along with daily

operations and improvements. We've held internal security

briefings, including presentations by the Colorado Springs

Police Department, reviewed our emergency procedures, and

completed a key inventory. We've placed new signs about safety

and security throughout the building. We continue to support

our AARP partners with their weekly tax filing operations. They

are completely booked out for the year! Additionally, Russell

and Justin have been tracking printer/copier usage system to

help firm up the upcoming fiscal year budget and have started

work to replace our phones and modernize the elevator. ■

Department Updates



Health and Wellness

We welcomed our new behavioral health scheduling and information specialist, **Tori**, and celebrated **Vivienne**, our gateway coordinator, who has been at Mt. Carmel for a year. We provided an ASIST training through a partnership with Ft. Carson to address suicide prevention. Kirsten has been collaborating with MIRECC to formalize lethal-means safety programming at

Mt. Carmel. Our team leads have continued to attend biweekly informational sessions from Lee's & Associates to ensure our program continues to be in compliance with state regulations (especially as they change). We also created new partnerships to increase access to services in the community. In addition, we are finalizing preparations for our couples and family retreats in April. ■



Next Chapter

The beginning of 2024 has been busy for the Next Chapter Team! From January to the first week of March, Next Chapter has completed more than 100 intake appointments for clients seeking services, surpassing 800 clients served after 20 months since inception.

Over the last two months, the Next Chapter Team has facilitated their military competency training at Silver Key Senior Services and to our partners at UHealth. Our teammates also had the opportunity to present Next Chapter services at the winter symposium held in early February. As we move into spring, we are preparing for our busy season. We will kick off

this year's event with a strategy meeting in mid-March.

Pueblo representative, Reina, has returned from maternity leave and picked up right where she left off serving the Pueblo community. Reina has been an integral part in the Next Chapter development in Pueblo and continues to attend the Helping Hands event to connect with veterans and their families. Our Colorado Springs intake specialist, Jasmine, has been balancing an internship for her master's degree and continues to show up for the veterans and families in the Colorado Springs area. We are so proud of our team and their commitment to serving veterans! ■



VBOC

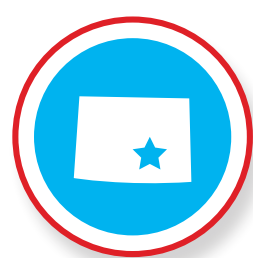
As the Colorado Veterans Business Outreach Center at Mt. Carmel heads into its first winter season, the active client roster resides at 372, with 406 counseling sessions and 26 training events. The Colorado VBOC will continue to provide business counseling sessions during regular business hours and on nights and weekends. The VBOC hosted two Boots to Business, one Boots to Business Reboot, the Equity Symposium for Veterans in Business, and the Access to Capital Workshop Series and Lender Expo.

On February 26, 2024, the Colorado VBOC launched its first Equity Symposium for Veterans in Business. Speakers and exhibitors included the U.S. Small Business Administration Colorado District Office, Colorado Small Business Development Center TechSource,

Native American APEX Accelerator, City of Denver Contracting, El Paso County Financial Services Contracts & Procurement Division, the Governor's Office of Economic Recovery, Colorado APEX Accelerator, Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center, First Bank, CDOR Connect2Dot, OneFunds, and Score Mentors.

The Colorado VBOC staff is regularly attending outreach events to educate the community, organizations, and businesses about Colorado VBOC programs and services. These include VetNet, ACHIEVE, COSSBA, Heartland Connect, and Catalyst Campus networking opportunities. ■

Office Updates



Southern Colorado



Southern Colorado is home to almost 200,000 veterans, and since 2016, the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has been dedicated to supporting them and their families, regardless of discharge type or era of military service.

With offices in Monte Vista, Pueblo, Trinidad, and Westcliffe, as well as their veteran community south of Pueblo, we provide essential services and resources to help military members, veterans, and their families thrive at work and at home. From career programs to homeless prevention and suicide prevention initiatives, our mission is unwavering. We invite you to join us in serving these deserving veterans and their families.

Recently, we've updated the governor of Colorado and the City of Pueblo

leadership, completed our Salute to Heroes annual fundraiser, with more than 350 guests, and have scheduled Pars for Patriots Golf Charity Tournament for June 14, 2024.

Our ongoing operations include programs like Veterans Service to Career, reducing recidivism, homeless prevention, suicide prevention, and improving access to care.

Your donation can truly make a difference in a veteran's life. Please consider contributing through the link provided or using the QR code.

If you are reading this, please help us, and "Be the One" to make a difference in a veteran's life. Donate whatever you can to help. ■

**Thank you for your donation...
it WILL make a huge difference.**



VeteransCenter.org/donate/

For more information about any of these programs and more, visit veteranscenter.org or call Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center Southern Colorado at (719) 309-4719.



The Veterans Voice Project

The Veterans Voice continues to develop and grow as a communications service of Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, highlighting stories, events, and topics that are relevant to the military-connected community. **As we develop our approach to the podcast that is also broadcast across Wreaths Across America and local KRDO News Radio, we are also widening our scope to include video capabilities with an up-and-coming YouTube presence that will feature Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center Good News Stories.**

This effort will see the Fundraising & Development Team collaborating more frequently and closely with the Veterans Voice Project to highlight and honor stories from our volunteers, bring results from community events and partnerships, and to create renewed energy to the Veterans Voice Project.

White labeling services are now being offered, along with a new tiered sponsorship plan that allows for sustainability and growth. These efforts align with our mission and we are

excited to grow existing relationships while forging new partnerships and developing projects that fuel our passion and fund our program.

Our team continues to grow their skills in editing and a better understanding of radio/TV communications, practices, and standards. We are honored for the opportunity to hone our craft while serving such an amazing purpose within our community. ■

