



A Beacon of Support

February - March 2025 | Issue #53

IN MEMORY OF
JAY CIMINO
Founder

GINA CIMINO
Chair and Trustee

BOARD OF MANAGERS:

JIM HANNON
Chair

CHUCK MURPHY
Vice Chair

YVONNE ROBINSON
Secretary

CHUCK ANDERSON
PETER BUCKLES, JR.
MICHAEL CAFASSO
LONGINOS GONZALEZ, JR.
PAULETTE GREENBERG
LAURIE LONG
DONNA NELSON
MICHELLE RUEHL
KEVIN SHAUGHNESSY
MARK WALLER
ROSS WHITE
BARBARA WINTER

STAFF:

COL (R) ROBERT McLAUGHLIN
Executive Director

PAUL PRICE
Director of Operations

MARK SMITH
Director, Programs & Evaluations

YVONNE ROBINSON
Executive Assistant

MARCIA MITCHELL
Comptroller

APRIL KANE
Accountants

RANDY GRADISHAR
Outreach Coordinator

TAYLOR CHAPMAN
JENNA CALDWELL
Veterans Voice

TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT:

JON DIX
Dir, Transition and Employment

PEER NAVIGATORS:

NICK WEREMBLEWSKI
DANNY MILLER
JENNI TRYON
LAUREN WILD

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

SHANNON OLIN
Dir, MVFS

GLEN COOPER
Client Care Coordinator

NICK ELLIOT
Financial Coach

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

As we end the fiscal year here at Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, our team has been reflecting on the impact made throughout the state and how proud we are of our partners, supporters and donors.

Mt. Carmel is entering its 10th year, and for the past decade, we have provided job assistance and support for thousands of veterans, military members and their families. We've helped put food on the table during cash-strapped times and offered mortgage information for those buying their first homes. We have assisted with financial planning for the next generation. We changed lives and futures by providing legal assistance for benefits and upgrades in discharge status. We've provided counseling and alternative therapies for veterans recovering from decades of war. We have met hundreds of individual needs—from acquiring jobs to new car tires to appliance repair. For us, no task is too small when it comes to helping our nation's heroes.

But we can't and don't do this work alone.

We recognize and thank our over 450 partners and supporters who each play a vital role in our enduring success and those who stand with us providing much-needed services. Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado helps with our bimonthly food distributions in Colorado Springs and, along with Amazon, keeps pantries stocked in Pueblo, Westcliffe, Trinidad and Alamosa. Our partnership with UC Health Next Chapter provides behavioral health support to veterans and family members. Operation TBI Freedom offers nonclinical support for veterans coping with traumatic brain injuries. The Remount Foundation helps our veterans with equine therapy. The Veteran Service Officers from El Paso serve as a critical link to benefits and services through the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Rocky Mountain Veterans Advocacy Program (RMVAP) provides legal services ranging from family law to veteran affairs. Several other partners provide art therapy, yoga, acupuncture and much more. In Pueblo, our partnership with Helping Hands Coalition assists hundreds of families and community members with food support, free eye and dental exams, automotive checks, and vaccines.

We deeply appreciate all of you for standing with us in steadfast support to the military members and veterans who enrich our communities!

We are thrilled to welcome Joe Reagan, our new director of the Veterans Business Outreach Center, whose mission is to connect military spouses, veterans and their adult children to resources and classes to grow or start their own businesses. Small business is the backbone of our nation, and veterans are perfectly situated to be successful business



Bob McLaughlin

owners. They have the grit, determination and dedication to thrive as entrepreneurs.

The Mt. Carmel team is honored to continue serving our community and proud to be connected to the military—whether through our own service or by supporting family members who served. We understand the sacrifices necessary for freedom and are committed to offering a hand up to those in need.

During the upcoming year, we remain dedicated to delivering the Mt. Carmel programs and services needed by our communities and look forward to expanding our offerings not just in Colorado Springs and Pueblo, but throughout rural Colorado as well.

Two things that set Mt. Carmel apart from other veteran organizations: We support veterans regardless of their time in service or type of discharge, and thanks to our partners, we can provide wraparound support that truly makes a difference in the lives of military members, veterans and their families.

Your support provides hope, saves lives and creates brighter futures. Thank you all for nearly a decade of partnering as we help those who served our nation. We look forward to continuing our mission for years to come.

Thank you! ■

Bob McLaughlin
Colonel (Ret.), U.S. Army



CASE MANAGERS:

KILEEN BARKER
JOHN TIMMINS
SHANTEL WARE
MEGAN HARRISON

HEALTH & WELLNESS:

KIRSTEN BELAIRE
Dir, Health & Wellness
VIVIENNE BELAIRE
Gateway Coordinator
ZACHARIAH GARNEY
Behavioral Health Clinician
NIKKI HAMILTON
Behavioral Health Auditing & Info Specialist
RODGER JOHNSON
Next Chapter Program Manager
JASMINE BARRY
Next Chapter Intake Specialist

DEV & FUNDRAISING:

JAMES HERRINGTON
Director, Fundraising & Development
CHRISTIAN DELGADO
Fundraising and
Sustainability Coordinator
ABBI GREGORY
Partner Relations Coordinator
JUSTINA BAKER
Community Outreach and
Events Coordinator
LYNDA CINK
Event Coordinator
DENISE PATRICK
Grant Writer

GREET AND CONNECT:

JUSTIN VERHULST
Operations Manager
RUSSELL POUSSON
IT/Facilities Coordinator
REBECCA WEREMBLEWSKI
CHRISTIE ROBINSON
Client Services

VBOC:

JOE REAGAN
Director
AARON GROZIAK
CHUCK HUNDLEY
NATHANIEL HAMILTON-THOMPSON

PUEBLO:

SAL KATZ
Director, Rural Colorado Services
LAURIE COLLINS
Client Services
JOSHUA WILLS
Peer Navigator
TAMIECA TRUJILLO
Case Manager
REINA ESPINOZA
Next Chapter Navigator
Veteran Resources & Community
Development Coordinators

TRINIDAD:

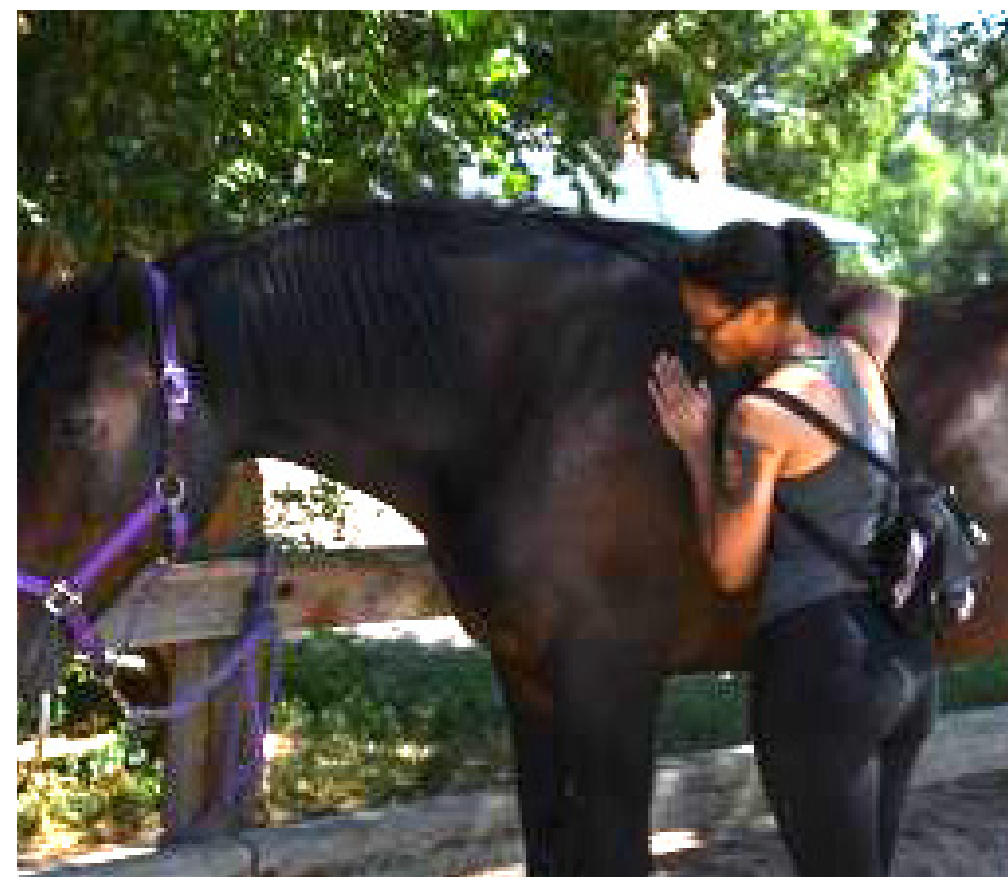
DAVID SAMPSON

WESTCLIFFE:

KEITH HALL

ALAMOSA:

ALEX KAMRUD



Partner Spotlight

Since 2009, Remount Foundation has been a vital lifeline for over 16,000 active-duty military personnel, veterans, and their families. Their mission is clear: to help those who have served recover from trauma and prevent suicide. Many participants arrive seeking a last-chance source of healing and purpose.

Remount Foundation distinguishes itself through its focus on equine-assisted therapy. The profound connection between humans and horses facilitates a unique form of healing, addressing physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Located at the U.S. Air Force Academy Equestrian Center, their 1,000-acre facility in the Colorado foothills provides a serene and natural environment where horses live freely as a herd, creating a therapeutic setting.

The Remount Method incorporates three core modules: Equine-Assisted Philosophy (EAP), Family Play Days, and HeartMath. These techniques foster deep connections between participants and horses, enabling individuals, families, and groups to navigate their healing journey. Remount provides a supportive, peer-driven community



and a comprehensive program designed to facilitate lasting peace and recovery.

Remount Foundation's programs are provided free of charge, ensuring that no one is left behind. This is made possible through the generous support of donors who believe in helping our nation's heroes.

We encourage you to learn more about Remount Foundation and how you can contribute to their vital mission. Together, we can help Remount Foundation continue to heal heroes and restore hope.

Remount Foundation Location: 6035 Erin Park Dr Suite 201, Colorado Springs, CO 80918

Website: <https://remountfoundation.org/> . ■

Department Updates



Transition and Employment

The team has surpassed 4,760 placements as of the end of February, and we predict reaching 5,000 job placements by late July or early August. Our next hiring event will be held on April 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., featuring 33 employers who have signed up to support military community job seekers.

The 302nd Air Wing and Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) have invited some of our employer partners on a Boss Lift on April 16 to showcase the skills our Reserve Component Airmen bring to the civilian workforce. ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS has started planning for the 2025 Stand Down. We've received two Amazon donations, which have helped restock the hygiene products in our closet.

MVFS has been busy organizing files, collaborating with Deloitte for an external evaluation, and engaging in upskill training for case managers.

Megan has officially joined the team as a case manager, transitioning

from her intern role. The team has been actively involved in community outreach, supporting our partners and clients.

We continue to see a rise in requests for food and housing assistance. The team is working closely with partners and stakeholders to address these challenges, and we are deeply grateful for the support we receive both internally and externally. ■



Greet & Connect

Mt. Carmel's Greet & Connect team, in partnership with the AARP Tax Group, has assisted about 400 individuals with filing their taxes this tax season.

Additionally, we are excited to announce the expansion of our VA Work-Study program in partnership with UCCS and Pikes Peak State College, providing even more opportunities for our veterans.

There are currently VA Work-Study students in our Transition and

Employment, VBOC, Health and Wellness, Military Veterans and Family Services and Greet & Connect departments.

Reminder: We have event space available for rent at Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. Whether it's a birthday party, baby shower, graduation celebration, or an office event, our versatile venue is ready to accommodate all needs. For more information, to book one of our rooms or for a walkthrough of our facility, please contact our Front Desk at 719-772-7000. ■

Department Updates



Health and Wellness

Our current Director will be changing roles and we are working to hire a new acting Director for our Behavioral Health department.

Our team has been working hard on data projects to ensure our program runs smoothly. We have welcomed 2 new interns this Spring, and have 5 graduating in May. We have been a successful internship site for 131 interns over the past 8 years. We are grateful for all the students who have served our Military community over the years, and the strong partnerships with Universities.

We have scheduled and filled our Spring Silver Cliff Couples Retreat in May. We are excited for another successful weekend of increasing connection for all the couples who attend.

We have scheduled our annual Veterans Art Exhibition for May 2-7, 2025. More information to come, and we hope you get the chance to see some of the amazing art from our Military community. ■



Next Chapter

Next Chapter has sent out communications to clients and partners regarding the funding pause we are currently navigating. As we await guidance from the state, Next Chapter has transitioned to resource navigation only and continues to support veterans and families in finding community resources to meet their needs.

In February, Next Chapter teammates traveled to Denver to represent Next Chapter and Mt. Carmel Veteran Service Center at

Military Appreciation Day. They had the opportunity to share information about Next Chapter with state professionals. We are also continuing to administer Next Chapter's Military Competency Training throughout the spring.

As Next Chapter moves through its final fiscal year under the pilot program, we are closely monitoring this year's Colorado legislation. We are excited that the Colorado House passed HB25-1132 and are watching to see what happens in the Colorado Senate. ■



VBOC

In January, the Colorado VBOC proudly welcomed its new director, Army Veteran Joe Reagan, and hit the ground running with some incredible achievements! We surpassed the milestone of 750 clients served, including over 225 meaningful client interactions and more than 70 hours of personalized counseling.

Our program offerings have been just as robust — we hosted four Boots to Business sessions, two Boots to Business | Reboots, and an impressive 10 workshops covering a wide array of topics from franchising fundamentals and business planning to access to capital and military spouse pathways to business.

We've also built and strengthened valuable partnerships with resource organizations and subject-matter experts to enhance our ability to

support clients through referrals, collaborative workshops, and tailored guidance. As we look ahead to the next fiscal year beginning May 1, we are already planning a busy travel schedule to meet with partners and experts across the state.

One of our top priorities for the upcoming year is to make sure we're connecting with each of the 13 Colorado Small Business Development Centers quarterly. And that's not all — there are even more Boots to Business sessions, Boots to Business | Reboot events, and other workshops in the works for the remainder of the year. We're thrilled about what's ahead and can't wait to continue empowering veterans, military spouses, and entrepreneurs throughout Colorado on their business journeys. Stay tuned for more updates! ■



Southern Colorado

We are making a profound impact in Southern Colorado by expanding veteran services, strengthening community partnerships, and securing essential resources. Through collaborative efforts with veteran service officers in the San Luis Valley, Las Animas, and Custer counties, veterans and their families have access to vital wraparound services including employment assistance, financial aid, and legal guidance. Our collaboration with United Way expands financial and tax services for veterans; we also assist veterans in transition initiatives and help service members successfully integrate into civilian careers. Additionally, our efforts to secure funding from Southern Colorado communities and advocating for state and federal support demonstrate our commitment to long-term sustainability. Through our partnership with Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado, we have provided food access to thousands of community members, 15% of whom are veterans, ensuring that no one in our community goes hungry.

Beyond direct services, we reach out to the community to discuss best practices for veterans. We hosted roundtables in Trinidad and Westcliffe, bringing together over 30 organizations. In Alamosa, we are preparing for our first fundraiser in the San Luis Valley to strengthen our programs. As we continue to develop local partnerships, we created the Rural Colorado Access to Care flyer, a resource designed to connect veterans with essential services in each area we serve. Additionally, we remain committed to establishing a permanent home in Pueblo for the Southern Colorado Region One Source Center, for long-term, consistent support for the veterans and military families. Whether through free vaccinations at the Helping Hands Community Fair or expanding meat donations and food pantry access, our work is transforming lives in Southern Colorado. ■



Westcliffe - Custer County



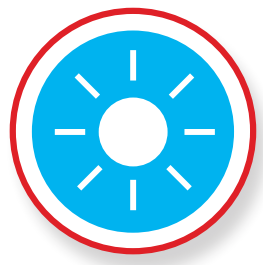
We are currently in a transition period for the veteran's resource and community development coordinator in Custer County. Keith Hall will officially begin his role on April 2, continuing our mission to support veterans in collaboration with the county veteran service officer. His leadership will help enhance services for military members, veterans, and their families and provide access to effective programs, integrated resources, and strong community partnerships. Through this transition, we remain committed to empowering lives and strengthening the veteran community in Custer County. ■

Volunteer Spotlight: Roy Bonin

Is a Colorado native and active real estate agent, proud to serve the community that raised him. His father is an Air Force veteran who later worked as a firefighter and paramedic on the civilian side, and his mother had a long career in corporate America. Roy is fortunate to be married to a wonderful wife who encouraged me to pursue real estate full time. Roy is currently with The PowerHouse Team Brokered by eXp Realty LLC.

Roy enjoys giving back to his community and has volunteered at every event for Mt. Carmel this year. ■





Pueblo – Pueblo County



Strengthening Partnerships for Veterans in Pueblo County

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center continues to collaborate with local organizations to assist and serve veterans and their families. Our partnerships with the 10th Circuit Court, Volunteers of America, and the VA Homeless Liaison have played a key role in helping veterans

transition from instability to self-sufficiency. Success stories—such as helping a Navy veteran obtain a journeyman electrical license or a homeless veteran and his spouse secure permanent housing—demonstrate our unwavering commitment to those who have served.

To enhance these programs, we are engaging in several strategic fundraising and advocacy efforts. The upcoming Pars for Patriots Charity Golf Event is an event that will secure funding for our support services. Simultaneously, we are championing the establishment of a Veterans One Source Center in Pueblo for 2027. The center would be a dedicated space for veterans and military families to access a comprehensive range of services under one roof.

Beyond direct services, our work is about fostering a culture of community support and empowerment for veterans. Through initiatives like community roundtables in Trinidad and Westcliffe, partnerships with local businesses, and the development of the Rural Colorado Access to Care flyer, we are ensuring that even the most remote veteran populations have access to the assistance they deserve. Together, we are creating a future where every veteran in Pueblo County is supported, valued, and empowered to thrive. ■

Pueblo Volunteer Spotlight: Mary Salvatore

Mary Salvatore tirelessly champions Pueblo's veteran community. As a cornerstone of our Helping Hands Community Coalition, she shows up each month, ensuring veterans and their families receive the support, resources, and care they deserve. Her compassion creates a welcoming environment where no veteran is left behind. Beyond her ongoing service, Mary played a critical role in the success of our annual Salute to Heroes Reception and secured Silent Auction items that helped Mt. Carmel raise essential funds for veteran support programs. Her drive, generosity, and passion make a tangible difference, strengthening our mission and ensuring lasting impact. Mary, your dedication is nothing short of extraordinary—thank you for being a relentless advocate and a true hero to those who have served! ■





Trinidad - Las Animas County



At Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center in Trinidad, we recently witnessed the direct impact our services have for veterans in need. Last summer, our coordinator attended an introductory gunsmithing class for veterans at Trinidad State College. During the course, he built strong connections with fellow veterans, including one who was on terminal leave and retiring from the U.S. Army at Fort Bliss, Texas.

In early January, this veteran reached out to let us know he was heading to Trinidad to start the gunsmithing program. However, on his way through New Mexico, he encountered severe winter weather and was involved in an accident that totaled his vehicle. Stranded and unsure of

what to do, he called our office for help. Our coordinator arranged for a local towing company to transport both him and his vehicle to Trinidad. He was able to check into his dorm but still needed to get to Pueblo the next day to pick up a rental car. During that trip, we discussed the services Mt. Carmel offers, and after an interview with our Southern Colorado manager, he was approved as a work-study student in our office.

Since then, we helped him secure a replacement vehicle through a partnership with a local Phil Long dealership. He has also connected with fellow veteran students, bringing them to our monthly veterans' coffee gatherings and our first Veterans Cooking & Social Class. Thanks to his involvement with Mt. Carmel, we will launch a coordinated outreach effort in April with the county veteran service officer to engage the veterans attending Trinidad State College.

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center in Trinidad remains committed to serving veterans in Las Animas County through collaboration with multiple local agencies. Over the past few months, we've provided vital services such as art therapy, assistance with food insecurity, and financial support to veterans in need.

To further strengthen our efforts, we recently hosted a Veterans Community Roundtable, bringing together organizations to share the latest updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. This roundtable helped foster collaborative efforts aimed at supporting veterans and their families in Las Animas County. ■



Alamosa – San Luis Valley



Over the past few months, the Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center of Alamosa has been actively forging relationships with key funding organizations across the San Luis Valley. Generous support from partners such as the LOR Foundation and the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority has been instrumental in promoting our mission.

Their sponsorship of the upcoming veteran-focused casino night fundraiser in April underscores their commitment to strengthening support systems for veterans in rural communities. Thanks to these efforts, those who have served have access to emergency relief, stable housing, and long-term support systems.

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand our community outreach by launching a new initiative in collaboration with Valley Veteran Recreation. As spring approaches, we will introduce off-grid survival and bush crafting classes, offering veterans and community members hands-on training in essential outdoor skills such as fire-starting, shelter-building, and sustainable wilderness practices. Beyond practical survival techniques, these workshops will foster camaraderie and resilience, providing a space for participants to connect, share experiences, and build lasting bonds. Through these ongoing initiatives, we provide the resources, support, and opportunities veterans need to thrive within their communities and in the great outdoors. ■



The Veterans Voice Project



As the voice of “Veterans Voice,” Taylor Chapman is continuing his mission to help fellow veterans access to resources, reduce the stigma of asking for

assistance, and provide a platform for veteran and military stories.

Since Chapman took over the podcast, Veterans Voice has grown its audience exponentially. He oversees a partnership with KOAA that includes airing a video of each podcast on the station’s website and YouTube. He now reaches more than 15,000 people around the world, with an audience concentrated in Colorado.

His international listeners are in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany. Within the U.S., he connects with veterans not only in Denver and Colorado Springs, but also in Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, Reno, and Houston.

He shares stories about veteran programs like those offered at Mt. Carmel, as well as philosophical episodes about peace and war. His

guests include professors at UCCS, behavioral health counselors, veteran organizations, veteran-owned businesses and more.

“I was struggling when I found Mt. Carmel,” he said, “and I found it through Veterans Voice. They asked me to come in and run the soundboard, and I was happy to help. Afterward, they took me to meet Bob and Paul. When I found out what great things Mt. Carmel does to help veterans, I had to be a part of it.”

His favorite stories are those that explore emotions and personal stories, with no set agenda.

“I like just having conversations with people, and seeing where that conversation takes us,” he said. “There are universal themes everyone can understand: loss, grief, love. It helps just to open up to each other, and then people listening understand they aren’t alone. That’s really what I try to create.”

Chapman is a veteran himself, a Special Forces medic who retired recently from the U.S. Army. His military experiences inform his vision for Veterans Voice. ■

Partner Relations

This quarter is off to a strong start, and we couldn’t do it without our amazing partners! Since January, we’ve welcomed 13 new partners and eight new ambassadors to the Mt. Carmel network. It’s exciting to see our partners receiving well-deserved recognition on the Veterans Voice Podcast—we love highlighting the great work you’re doing!

Our quarterly partner meetings have been a huge success! In January, we had a fantastic turnout for our Military, Veterans, and Families Support Program meeting, featuring presentations from Healing Warriors and our new VBOC Director, Joe Reagan. Last month, our Transition & Employment Program meeting brought together an

impressive 27 attendees, with presentations on the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), VBOC, and Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center sponsorship opportunities. Thank you to everyone who participated.

We also enjoyed meeting and mingling with so many partners and friends of Mt. Carmel at the St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Grand Marshal Reception on March 15.

If you’re interested in exploring new ways to collaborate, feel free to reach out to our Partner Relations Coordinator, Abbi Gregory, at agregory@mtcarmelcenter.org. ■

Community Outreach & Events

We have several outreach events coming up:

- **Ambassadors Social @ Blackhat Distillery - March 20, 2025**
- **Tillman Honor Run - April 12, 2025**

- **Ambassadors Social@ Peak Pickleball - April 15, 2025**
- **Norwegian Ruck March - May 10, 2025**