



# A Beacon of Support

February - March 2026 | Issue #58

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Founder

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Accountants

**TAYLOR CHAPMAN**  
**JENNA CALDWELL**  
The Vantage Point

**TRANSITION & EMPLOYMENT:**

**JON DIX**  
Dir, Transition and Employment

**PEER NAVIGATORS:**

**NICK WEREMBLEWSKI**  
**DANNY MILLER**  
**JENNI TRYON**  
**ANA GOMEZ**

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

**SHANNON OLIN**  
Dir, MVFS

**TAMEICA TRUJILLO**  
Client Care Coordinator

**NICK ELLIOTT**  
Financial Coach

**VETERANS CLIMB:**

**CHRISTIAN KEYS**  
**PAUL COOKE 3RD**  
**BOBBY GRIEGO JR**

*By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director*

2026 officially marks the tenth anniversary for Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center. What started as a creative vision has not only established deep roots in Colorado Springs but has grown to a level of providing services throughout the State of Colorado. Since inception, there have been well over 38,000 clients served to include military members, veterans, and their family members across Colorado.

During our first decade of service, the Mt. Carmel team including Transition and Employment, Behavioral Health, Support Services, Greet and Connect, and Veterans Business Outreach Center have established best practices ensuring excellence in customer service for those who served and sacrificed, focusing on suicide prevention, homeless prevention, self-sufficiency, and effective transitions. It has been our honor to do this work with our many partners.

Our Transition and Employment team has provided career support resulting in filling over 5,000 jobs and training positions. These jobs carried with them a current average of \$37 an hour while boasting an impressive 94% six-month retention rate. There were well more than 650 clients who received support through 4,000 therapy and screening sessions. 3,734 suicide-prevention screenings were completed, and 437 individuals connected to immediate care. 97% of those who sought services reported improved well-being. 723 veterans and families received housing, case management, and emergency financial assistance, providing a much-needed hand-up to regain long-term stability.

Mt. Carmel has provided consistent food assistance through our on-site pantry and community partners, with bi-weekly distributions in Colorado Springs and monthly events in Pueblo and Trinidad — delivering more than 20,000 meals and food boxes to veterans and families each year in a service that grew out of the need shown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A special thanks to our partners and volunteers. 127 volunteers gave back over 1,173 hours of service to others at Mt. Carmel. Our 600-plus community partner agencies statewide deliver coordinated, wraparound services — not just at



Bob McLaughlin

our Colorado Springs campus, but at our outreach offices in Pueblo, Trinidad, and Alamosa as our footprint has continued to grow. All with the mindset of letting no service member face the numerous life challenges alone.

As our founder, the late Jay Cimino envisioned, the Veterans Service Center has become a force multiplier across the state. Every dollar donated to us is doubled in the impact that we make supporting the brave men and women who have served, along with the family members who have made just as many sacrifices in the name of our great nation.

As we embark on this next stage in our mission, we remain steadfast in our mission to be an open door and shining beacon offering a hand up to make a positive impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters in arms — today, tomorrow, and for decades to come.

Thank you for being part of our team.

Bob McLaughlin ■



# Partner Spotlight

## CASE MANAGERS:

**KILEEN BARKER**  
**JOHN TIMMINS**  
**SHANTEL WARE**  
**MEGAN HARRISON**  
**INEZ JACKSON**

## HEALTH & WELLNESS:

**KIRSTEN BELAIRE**  
Dir, Health & Wellness  
**VIVIENNE BELAIRE**  
BH Ops & Gateway Manager  
**AARON VITONE**  
Behavioral Health Counselor  
**NIKKI HAMILTON**  
Behavioral Health Auditing & Info Specialist  
**RODGER JOHNSON**  
Next Chapter Program Manager  
**DR. ELINAH RUSSELL**  
SSG FOX SPGP

## DEV & FUNDRAISING:

**JAMES HERRINGTON**  
Director, Fundraising & Development  
**ALEX MCCABE**  
Donor and Partner Specialist  
**DENISE PATRICK**  
Grant Writer

## GREET AND CONNECT:

**REBECCA WEREMBLEWSKI**  
**CHRISTIE ROBINSON**  
Client Services  
**RUSSELL POUSSON**  
IT/Facilities Coordinator

## VBOC:

**JOE REAGAN**  
Director  
**AARON GROZIAK**  
**NATHANIEL HAMILTON-THOMPSON**  
**KEITH HENDRIX**

## PUEBLO:

**SAL KATZ JR**  
Director, Rural Colorado Services  
**DAIJAH ANDREWS**  
Client Services

## MIA ALI

Peer Navigator

## LAURIE COLLINS

Case Manager

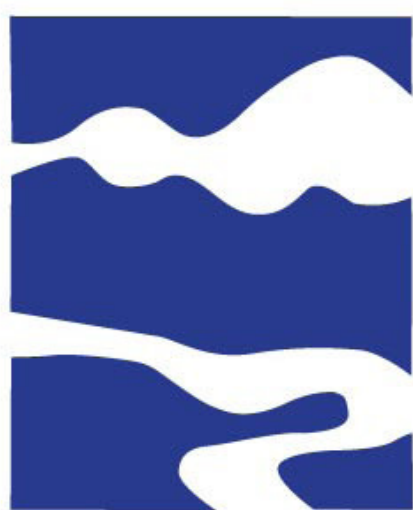
Veteran Resources & Community  
Development Coordinators

## TRINIDAD:

**DAVID SAMPSON**

## ALAMOSA:

**ALEX KAMRUD**



# CEDAR SPRINGS HOSPITAL



Cedar Springs has been a long-time partner of Mt. Carmel's. Throughout the years they have not only supported events financially but they volunteer at most events that we host.

Cedar Springs was crucial for the Patriot Day give back and Homeless Veteran

Stand down. They have provided services to many Mt. Carmel clients for years.

Veterans United is one of our great partners and we are very proud that they continue to support our mission and look forward to what the future brings ■

# Department Updates



## Transition and Employment

Mt. Carmel Transition and Employment had our 5,175th placement as of 17 March. We are pleased to note hiring has recovered post Government shutdown and the annual end of year/holiday slowdown.

Our hiring event on January 28 saw 181 job seekers through the door, which was our largest hiring event. That was followed up by the Veterans Beer Club networking event held at Gunslinger Brewing.

We also supported two hiring events on Fort Carson with 220 attending the January hiring event and 450 attending the February hiring event. This month we also held our inaugural job fair in Pueblo. Mt. Carmel also hosted the Commander of the 302nd Airlift Wing for a meeting and tour of our facility in Colorado Springs. ■



## Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS wrapped up the holiday season by providing gifts to 16 military/veteran kids (6 families total). It was incredible to see the community come together to provide such a great holiday season for these kids!

In addition, MVFS was able to provide holiday gifts to 12 Senior Veterans at Mountain View Independent Living. They were a hoot and really seemed to enjoy this experience!

MFVS hosted our first partner meeting in January and held our first community Stand Down planning meeting in March. We anticipate more partners wanting to participate in Stand Down 2026 and making

accommodations to squeeze everyone in for the event! Date of the event is set for October 20th.

Tamieca and Shannon were invited to participate on the Advisory Council for B-Cos We Care COS. A lot of great ideas were brainstormed with community partners and we are excited to see how they are rolled out.

Dillan Anderson has started as our intern/work study. We only have him for a semester, but he's an incredible asset to have while we have him! ■



## Greet & Connect

The Mt. Carmel Greet & Connect team is proud to be your initial resource, dedicated to ensuring every visitor finds the help they need. As the first point of contact for military members, veterans and their families, we are ready to guide you to resources both in our building and through our extensive community network.

Along with our core mission areas and the respective teams, we remind you that dedicated lobby partners hold regular outreach hours right here augmenting our services and programs, and you are always welcome to stop by for support.

Now in the new year, tax season is in full swing and our AARP partners are working with clients every Wednesday. We're glad to announce our friends at the Rocky Mountain Veterans Advocacy Project will be returning to Mt. Carmel on Fridays helping with legal questions/issues. Also, in 2026 we're working with UCCS on a client survey enhancement

review and also looking at doing an update to our social return impact to our community. We also have several politicians during this period to include Sen. Bennet, Sen. Hickenlooper, Rep. Crank, Rep. Hurd, and other candidates seeking offices.

Additionally, the Greet & Connect team is excited to support upcoming fundraising events while also helping with everything from welcoming guests to providing crucial behind-the-scenes assistance to ensure Mt. Carmel continues to provide a "hand up" to clients and partners.

Finally, as a reminder, event space is available for rent at Mt. Carmel for all occasions, including birthday parties, holiday parties, baby showers, office gatherings and graduation celebrations. For availability, bookings, or a facility tour, please contact our front desk at 719-772-7000. ■

# Department Updates



## Health and Wellness

We recently ran statistics on the individuals that go through our no cost screening processes. Results indicate that approximately 50% of individuals have experienced past and/or present suicide ideation. Our Director and 3 of our licensure candidates completed a Cognitive Behavior Therapy-Suicide Prevention (CBT-SP) training. This specific modality is evidence based and has been proven highly effective in reducing suicide ideation and attempts. The portion of our team that received the training will also be engaging in 6 months of consultation calls to become certified in providing CBT-SP.

With the generous funding from the Arts in Society grant, we will host a Military and Veterans Art Exhibit for Pueblo and Southern Colorado

artists and the community, running from March 20th to April 3rd at the Sangre de Cristo Arts & Conference Center in Pueblo. Creating art can be an extremely effective way of processing life's challenges and sharing ourselves with the rest of the world.

Some of our clients experience a gap in care when waiting for insurance authorizations. Our program continues to support clients who fall into these gaps to ensure they are receiving care when it is needed.

In addition, our very own Don Spano is making positive waves in the community enhancing spiritual wellness through partnerships, advocacy, and direct care! ■



## Next Chapter

Next Chapter received Region 16 Opioid Addiction Council (ROAC) funding on February 1, 2026 to support the program's relaunch. Next Chapter met with Julie Hurlbert, VA Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator, on February 10, 2026 to explore collaborative opportunities. Next Chapter met with Kristy and Brooke from Signal BAHSO on February 23, 2026 to discuss future partnership efforts. Next Chapter had COMCAST Business installed on February 23, 2026

to strengthen building connectivity. Next Chapter partnered with AdPro on February 24, 2026 for social media photography announcing the program relaunch. Next Chapter will host its Military Veterans Cultural Competency Training on March 18-19, 2026. Next Chapter will conduct internal strategy meetings on March 23 and March 31, 2026 to plan future partnerships and operations. Next Chapter will attend Honoring Our Veterans on March 27, 2026. ■



## VBOC

In February, the Colorado VBOC had 50 new sign-ups, conducted 68 counseling sessions, and increased its LinkedIn profile to over 1155 followers. Also, we attended the PPSBA bi-monthly meetings, presented at Pikes Peak College, attended the SCORE Colorado funding class, recorded a podcast on Vantage Point, attended Congressman Lopez's Veterans Policy Rollout, met with Shannon Johnson, a social worker with UCCS, attended the Four Lenses training, attended the Military and Veteran Recognition Day, met Christopher Burns with Peaks Recovery, met Beth Taylor with Colorado Apex Accelerator, met Sherry Hoffman with the Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC, attended the monthly ACHIEVE meeting, attended the Community Information Exchange (Carson's Best Kept Secrets), met Bernardo with the Colorado Enterprise Fund, attended Stop Marketing (for now), Start Branding! Workshop

with Suzanne Tulien, Brand Clarity Expert, hosted Boots to Business at Buckley SFB, a Boots to Business on Fort Carson, and a Boots to Business | Reboot in Ft Collins.

In addition, by the end of February, we surpassed 1,290 clients served, a milestone that reflects the continued demand for veteran-focused business support across the state. Our outreach and programming remain strong.

In March, the Colorado VBOC will co-host Mission Colorado, SaaS, two Real Estate for Veterans workshops, a Pathways class, host Boots to Business on Schriever SFB, attend the Space & Cyber Summit at the ENT Center for the Arts, and meet with Apex Accelerator and PPSBA. ■



## SSG FOX GRANT

As we roll into this new Grant Program, we have hired and welcome Dr. Elinah Russell. She comes to us with a wealth of experience and knowledge. Recently back from a new grantee briefing in Nashville, Tennessee, she has hit the ground running.

We are in the process of hiring an outreach coordinator to fill the second position. Stay tuned for some great things coming! ■



## Southern Colorado

Over the past two months, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has continued serving veterans and families across Southern Colorado with steady momentum and meaningful impact. In Pueblo, we supported 314 individuals through Helping Hands services during the holiday season while remaining actively engaged in coalitions focused on homelessness, military affairs, and community wellness. January's Salute to Heroes event welcomed more than 320 guests for an evening dedicated to honoring service and strengthening our shared commitment to those who have served. We also met with federal leaders to advocate for local veteran priorities, ensuring Southern Colorado voices remain part of broader conversations.

In Trinidad and throughout Las Animas County, awareness of our services continues to grow through consistent community presence and strong partnerships with the County Veteran Service Officer and American Legion Post 11. Our Helping Hands mobile food pantry assisted 44 families—representing 101 individuals—during our February distribution alone, with strong volunteer support and positive

community response. Additionally, our veterans arts and cooking classes are fostering connection, skill-building, and wellness, with plans to expand programming in the coming year.

In the San Luis Valley, we have walked alongside veteran families during times of loss, assisting with cremation coordination, benefits navigation, and ensuring loved ones are honored with dignity and respect. We also launched regular office hours at the Alamosa County VSO office, increasing accessibility and strengthening collaboration throughout the region. Across all three communities, our focus remains clear: building durable systems of support, addressing housing and food security needs, and ensuring veterans and their families receive consistent, compassionate care throughout every season of life.

This is what community looks like: neighbors standing beside veterans, partnerships turning into action, and compassion transforming into impact. Across Southern Colorado, we are stronger together — and together, we will continue honoring service with service. ■





## Alamosa – San Luis Valley



Over the past two months, we have continued standing alongside veteran families in the San Luis Valley during some of their most difficult moments. We have assisted multiple families who recently lost loved ones, helping coordinate cremation services, navigate benefits, and ensure their veterans were honored with dignity and respect. Supporting families through end-of-life processes remains one of the most meaningful responsibilities we carry, and we are committed to easing that burden whenever possible.

We were also honored to take part in a bell tolling ceremony in partnership with the Honor Bell Society, recognizing the service and sacrifice of a fallen veteran. The ceremony brought together community

members, veterans, and supporters in a powerful tribute that reflected the unity and respect our Valley holds for those who served.

Additionally, we have officially begun holding regular office hours at the Alamosa County VSO office. This partnership strengthens collaboration, improves accessibility for veterans and their families, and expands outreach efforts throughout Alamosa and surrounding communities. Through this presence, we are increasing awareness of available resources and ensuring veterans have consistent, local support. We remain committed to serving those who have served and their families across the Valley. ■



## Trinidad - Las Animas County



Over the past few months, incredible progress has been made in strengthening the foundation of support for veterans and their families in Las Animas County, progress that will continue to grow for years to come. At a time when many organizations are facing cuts, the Las Animas County Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center remains steadfast in serving our community through our food pantry, trusted partnerships, and a growing network of resources.

Each month, we see a steady flow of families relying on our services, while also welcoming new faces through intakes. Awareness of Trinidad's Mt. Carmel office is expanding rapidly thanks to our regular presence at city council meetings, network council meetings, monthly Care and Share food distributions, and American Legion gatherings. Our strong partnerships with the County Veteran Service Officer and American Legion Post 11 have been instrumental in connecting more veterans to the care they deserve.

Our veterans arts and cooking classes, in collaboration with Mt. Carmel Wellness & Community Center, has been a resounding success. We're thrilled that this partnership will continue into the next year, with even bigger plans to expand programming that builds skills, wellness and community.

Helping Hands mobile food pantry continues to have a tremendous response to our first distribution of the new year in February by assisting 44 families that included 101 individuals. The positive feedback and

great support from wonderful volunteers. We are expecting similar numbers in March and it is a privilege to be able to offer this wonderful resource to the residents of Las Animas County.



### Trinidad's Monthly Helping Hands

Together, with our partners, supporters and community, we are not only sustaining services, but expanding opportunities for veterans and families in Las Animas County to thrive. ■

## Pueblo – Pueblo County

**NEWS UPDATE** - As we closed out 2025 and stepped into the new year, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center continued to show up where it matters most — alongside veterans and families navigating real-life challenges and new beginnings. In December alone, we supported 314 community members through Helping Hands services while remaining actively engaged with local coalitions to ensure veterans' voices were represented in community decision-making. Recognizing that the holidays can be especially isolating, we prioritized continuity of care and individualized case management. We also incorporated wellness-focused services, including 15-minute veteran chair massages, to promote dignity, stress relief, and meaningful connection during a busy and often difficult season.

That momentum carried directly into January with Salute to Heroes, which welcomed more than 320 guests for an evening dedicated to honoring service and strengthening our shared commitment to those who have served. The energy and unity from that event are already fueling expanded programming, deeper partnerships, and greater impact as we move further into 2026. Service does not pause — and neither does our commitment to Pueblo's veteran community.

Over the past two months, our Pueblo office strengthened relationships with coalitions addressing homelessness, military affairs, and community wellness. We participated in systems-level conversations to ensure veterans remain represented in critical discussions, while continuing to provide direct wellness services, advocacy support, and resource navigation focused on stability and long-term success. By maintaining engagement through the holidays, commission meetings, and collaborative initiatives, we are building a reliable safety net that veterans can depend on — not just in moments of crisis, but throughout every season of life.

In January, we also had the opportunity to meet with Senator Hickenlooper and Congressman Hurd, providing updates on veteran affairs and highlighting the impact of our programs in the community. These meetings reinforced the importance of local and federal collaboration in supporting veterans and their families.



*Senator Hickenlooper Round Table with Pueblo Veteran advocates.*

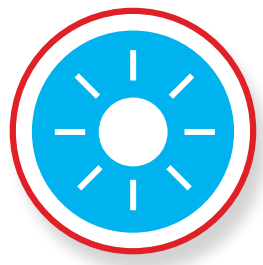
One powerful example of our impact involved a surviving spouse of a U.S. Army veteran who experienced sudden financial hardship following the loss of her husband. After reaching out for assistance with housing stability and basic needs, she was connected to survivor benefit guidance, provided food assistance, and linked to essential community resources. Through coordinated efforts with local partners, short-term rental assistance was secured, preventing housing instability while longer-term supports continue to be pursued. This outcome highlights the importance of timely intervention, strong partnerships, and compassionate advocacy when veteran families face vulnerable moments.

As we move into early 2026, February brings both opportunity and responsibility. Our team is actively re-engaging veterans following the holiday season, addressing winter-related housing and transportation barriers, and responding to increased seasonal needs. At the same time, we are refining and launching

2026 program priorities while strengthening partnerships to meet growing demand. The challenge ahead lies in sustaining momentum while building durable systems that support veterans not just today, but throughout the entire year. Through collaboration, adaptability, and shared purpose, we are prepared to meet that challenge head-on.



*Mia Ali Khan, Transition and Employment Peer Navigator, engaging with and providing services to our veteran community during the Pueblo Veterans Stand Down.*



## Pueblo – Pueblo County (Continued)

### Engagements & Community Presence

#### March

- 2nd..... United Heroes League Grant Application Opens
- 4th ..... Pueblo Helping Hands Community Coalition
- 13th..... Military Affairs Committee Meeting
- 16th..... Living Valor at Center for American Values (1:25 PM)
- 17th..... Mini Pueblo Veterans Hiring Fair

#### April

- 1st ..... Pueblo Helping Hands Community Coalition
- 3rd ..... Pueblo Homeless Coalition
- 10th..... Military Affairs Committee Meeting
- 17th..... Job Fair
- 18th..... Wings & Wheels Car Show at Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum
- 28th..... The Place Community Block Party

*Note: The Pueblo Helping Hands Community Coalition with Care and Share meets the first Wednesday of each month from 10–11 AM. ■*

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## Partner Relations

Positive impact abounds thanks to Mt. Carmel’s amazing partners. Recent support for the veteran community from partners of all kinds has been truly inspiring. Local companies, schools and individuals stepped up to keep our pantry stocked, restaurants supported the mission with gift cards and donations from proceeds, hundreds rallied around Mt.

Carmel’s. In January and February, four new partners joined the mission to support local heroes and their families in critical services. If you are interested in partnering with Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center to support military members, veterans and their families, reach out to James Herrington at [Jherrington@mtcarmelcenter.org](mailto:Jherrington@mtcarmelcenter.org). ■

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## Community Outreach

- **St. Patrick’s Day Grand Marshal Reception and Parade- March 14, 2026**
- **Honoring our Veterans Community Event - March 27, 2026**

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## Volunteer Spotlight: SSG Alvarado



SSG Alvarado works at 1st Space Brigade in the S6 shop and works on information technology. He volunteers for Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center for their ruck marches. In his spare time he continuously challenges himself to feats of endurance. He has participated in Spartan races, local 5, 10K races which support worthy causes in the community. He is looking forward to participating in the Colorado Challenge Series 2026. ■



## The Vantage Point

# THE VANTAGE POINT

Over the past two months, The Vantage Point has had the rare privilege of documenting stories that are quickly becoming living history. In two powerful conversations, Vietnam veterans Ted Severn and Jay Maloney offered reflections shaped by experience under the most demanding circumstances imaginable — the Vietnam War. Ted Severn, who served as an infantry officer, shared what it meant to lead young soldiers through unforgiving terrain and impossible decisions. His story reminds us that resilience is not always something that can be taught, it is something that must be endured. Through his reflections on leadership, sacrifice, and perspective earned at great cost, Ted's conversation stands as a lasting record of a generation whose character was tested in ways most will never fully understand.

In a similarly profound episode, former combat medic Jay Maloney explored a question rarely considered before service: what is the true cost of answering the call to serve? Drawing from his experiences caring for the wounded in Vietnam, Jay speaks candidly about the invisible weight carried long after the war ends. Jay describes how confronting humanity at its worst led him to develop a philosophical lens through which suffering can refine clarity and deepen wisdom. Together, these episodes preserve more than stories—they preserve perspective. As time moves forward and the voices of the Vietnam generation grow fewer, conversations like these ensure their experiences remain part of our shared understanding of courage, sacrifice, and the enduring search for meaning. ■



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