



A Beacon of Support

June - July 2025 | Issue #55

IN MEMORY OF
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Founder

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CHRISTIAN KEYS
GLEN COOPER

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

Our Mt. Carmel team was at the forefront in supporting our community in several ways during June and July. In June, we hosted the Military Outpost during the US Senior Open at The Broadmoor. Throughout the multi-day event, the outpost, located right off the 18th hole, provided not only complimentary food and drink for local active-duty personnel and veterans, but also a fantastic location for connection and conversation. This was a great opportunity to introduce community members to all the services offered through Mt. Carmel.

Also in early June, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center assumed the mission of Citizen Soldier Connection, a local nonprofit that provided military members, veterans, and their families emergency financial assistance. By absorbing those duties into our existing role, we continue to grow in how we provide wrap-around support to those who served our country in the most efficient way possible.

Our team volunteered time and energy to put on our second annual Benefit & Barbecue on Sunday, July 6 at Cowboys Nightclub, which featured live music by the Jeffrey Alan Band. Additionally, we hosted our annual fundraising golf tournament at the exclusive Sanctuary Golf Course in Sedalia at the end of July, with over 120 golfers participating.

We look ahead to our upcoming schedule of events and joining our volunteers and partners in giving back to the local community, including our work with the Helping Hands Coalition. Together, we partner on the first Wednesday of each month with several other organizations in the Pueblo community to provide a multitude of services at one location.

Mt. Carmel, started by veterans for veterans, is proud to carry on the mission of our founder Jay Cimino, who always sought to champion the success of others. But now more than ever, we rely on our incredible supporters to ensure that no one is left behind.



Bob McLaughlin

This season will be a large lift on our Military Veterans and Family Services Department. With the pull back of grant funds, as well as donations from Amazon and Target that provided much-needed food and hygiene supplies to our pantries, the team is focused on filling the gap to assist those in need.

Some of our largest annual events are also quickly approaching – September’s Patriot Day Give Back, a collaborative event providing food for military members, first-responders, and the general public; along with the Homeless Veteran Stand Down, which will take place in October.

Even with the outside factors coming into question, we remain grateful to our supporters and partners, whose efforts continue to help us carry out our mission of delivering hope and saving lives every day.

Thank you for being part of our team.

Bob McLaughlin ■



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Partner Spotlight



Phil Long Dealerships has been a long-time partner of Mt. Carmel. Their support has allowed Mt. Carmel to expand its capabilities over the years and has directly impacted the lives of thousands of Veterans.

Recently Phil Long gave a check to Mt. Carmel for \$43,500. The money was raised during the month of April in honor Mr. Jay Cimino. This was just one of the many kind acts that this great partner has gifted Mt. Carmel over the years. Thank you for all of your support. ■

Department Updates



Transition and Employment

Our LINK seminar in July had 9 students attend and one of employers was planning on extending an internship based on the mock interviews.

Our VA work study Richard Manriquez will be moving on to an internship with Northwestern Mutual.

Conducted our third hiring event of 2025 on July 30, we have been averaging 33 employers and 120 job seekers through the door, over our last three hiring events. ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS has taken over the Freedom Springs contract as of July 1st. We will be overseeing 25 property-based units and providing case management to those residents. In addition to case management, pro-socials and life-skills classes will be conducted monthly. Our newest addition, Melanie, and Nick E. will be onsite providing these services.

Stand Down and THI remain in full planning stages. We are conducting monthly community meetings to keep partners apprised of progress and plans and to invite them to continue to develop both of these events. We

have asked partners and community members to focus on providing essential civilian gear like socks, underwear, sweatpants/shirts, etc.

MVFS is working in tandem with Greet and Connect to create an engaging, robust Food Pantry/Hope Closet campaign to help stock our shelves. The ask for help is growing rapidly and we are definitely feeling the effects of so many in need. We have been fortunate to have some great partners that have donated items and money to address to cause and hope to continue to feel continued support from our communities. ■



Greet & Connect

The Greet & Connect team at Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has been busy refreshing and revitalizing our space! With the incredible help of volunteers from the Deloitte volunteer group, we replaced all TV screens in our lobby, painted the El Pomar Conference Room, and the T&E office, bringing a renewed sense of warmth and welcome to our veterans and guests. We're grateful for their support in helping us create an environment that reflects the care and respect we have for those we serve.

The Greet and Connect team is also excited to roll up our sleeves to support the Mt. Carmel team as we prepare for a full lineup of end-of-

summer fundraising events. From welcoming guests to providing behind-the-scenes support, we're ready to help make each event a success. These gatherings are a vital part of our mission, and we're proud to play a role in connecting with our community and helping Mt. Carmel finish the summer strong.

Also, as a reminder, event space is available for rent at Mt. Carmel for all occasions—from birthday parties and baby showers to 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

Many on our team completed an Emotion Focused Couples Therapy training to enhance our skills in providing relational therapy. Relationships are a primary source of connection or at times distress. We are here to continue to support couples and families increase the health and connection in their relationships.

We have increased our team and hired Aaron Vitone, combat Veteran, as a full time employee. He is taking new clients!

We provided a QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training for the community. As many of you know, keeping our Military community healthy and safe is our utmost priority. We have increased our no cost screening spots weekly to ensure we can serve those in need quickly. ■



Next Chapter

Next Chapter's pilot phase concluded on June 30. As funding decisions tied to Colorado BHASO's review of proposals and House Bill 25-1132 regulations remain pending, the program has adjusted its daily operations accordingly.

While continuing to refer clients to trusted community partners and operating from the Moreno Building, Next Chapter is currently unable to cover service costs. Despite these limitations, the program remains

active in community engagement, recently participating in the Juneteenth Mental Health Panel and the premiere of Letter From the Battlefield.

Next Chapter continues to collaborate with BHASOs to secure funding and advance its mission. ■



VBOC

This summer has been a season of strong momentum and meaningful connections for the Colorado Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC). In June, we participated in the Achieve | SCORE Business Resource Fair 2025 at Exponential Impact, where we engaged with local entrepreneurs and over 40 community partners—including government agencies, nonprofits, and chambers of commerce. By July, we proudly surpassed 900 clients served, a milestone that reflects the continued demand for veteran-focused business support across the state. In June and July alone, we facilitated more than **150 high-impact client engagements** and delivered over **40 hours of personalized business counseling**.

Our outreach and programming remain strong. Over the past two months, the Colorado VBOC has:

- Hosted **four Boots to Business sessions**
- Delivered targeted workshops in partnership with **Vectra Bank** and the **Colorado Secure Savings Plan (CSSP)**, focusing on **Access to Capital and Business Banking**
- Conducted a **dedicated session for military spouses** exploring entrepreneurship

- Participated in the **D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) Awards Dinner**, where we were honored to support the celebration of veteran entrepreneurship

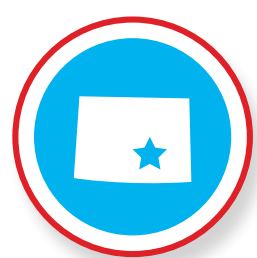
As we continue expanding our impact, **partnerships** remain at the core of our work. Collaborating with resource organizations and subject-matter experts allows us to provide high-quality referrals, co-host workshops, and offer customized support for Colorado's veteran and military-connected business community.

Looking ahead into the second quarter of our fiscal year, our team is on the road—actively meeting with partners and stakeholders across the state. A key priority for the year is to **connect quarterly with all 13 of Colorado's Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)**. We're already off to a strong start, with several productive visits completed on the Western Slope.

We are energized for the months ahead and remain committed to **empowering veterans, military spouses, and entrepreneurs** on their business journeys.

Thank you for being a valued part of our mission.

Stay connected for more updates and opportunities from the Colorado VBOC! ■



Southern Colorado

Southern Colorado Update – A United Front for Veterans and Families

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center continues to lead a united, region-wide effort to serve more than 25,000 veterans and their families across Southern Colorado—including Pueblo, the San Luis Valley, Custer County, and Las Animas County. From food security and behavioral health support to employment assistance and legal guidance, our teams are meeting veterans where they are—whether in rural mountain towns or bustling city centers. This summer, we deepened our reach through educational partnerships, expanded wraparound services, and high-impact community events, remaining a trusted lifeline and hub of empowerment for those who have served. Local partners like the Pueblo City-County Library, Action Center for Pueblo County (ACPC), and the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment—alongside the visible support of Senator John Hickenlooper’s office—have furthered our mission to bring critical care and community connection directly to veterans.

Across the region, our impact is tangible. In Pueblo, we hosted the Pars for Patriots Golf Tournament and honored heroes at the WarDogs Baseball Game, joined by Medal of Honor recipient Drew Dix. We organized resource fairs with on-site vaccinations and wellness support, while community mainstays like Mariposa Coffee and the Pueblo Library stood with us in service. In Alamosa, we anchored the Ski Hi Stampede with veteran outreach and kicked off monthly campus-based

events with Adams State University. Chaffee County is now part of our growing network, and in Trinidad, we’ve experienced a 375% surge in food pantry use—proof that our services are reaching veterans in need. There, the Trinidad office’s visibility continues to expand through engagement at City Council and American Legion Post 11 meetings, and vital outreach through the monthly Care and Share food distributions. With unwavering support from the county VSO and the community, we are building trust and delivering on our promise of consistent support.

These efforts represent more than programming—they mark a transformational movement in how Southern Colorado honors its veterans. In Las Animas County, our coordinator’s recent election as District 8 American Legion Sergeant at Arms and appointment to the Los Animas County Veterans Council further cement Mt. Carmel’s role in shaping veteran-focused policy and stewardship of resources like Fort Wootton. Through cooking classes, art expression programs, and monthly veterans’ coffees, we’re not just responding to needs—we’re building lasting relationships. One such story is of a Marine Corps veteran in Trinidad who, after three years in transitional housing, connected with our team at a food distribution event. Today, he’s on a path to stable housing and long-term wellness—just one example of how our community-first approach is changing lives. Together, with passionate staff, trusted partners, and dedicated leaders, we are ensuring that veterans across Southern Colorado are not only seen and supported—but celebrated. ■



Westcliffe - Custer County



The past two months have been filled with meaningful community engagement and growing momentum for veteran services in Custer County. As the Westcliffe office continues to establish its presence, we’ve proudly participated in several key events that deepen our connection to the local community and raise awareness of Mt. Carmel’s mission.

This summer, we were honored to attend the Westcliffe Stampede Rodeo, Independence Day Celebration, and Memorial Day Recognition Ceremony, all of which provided valuable opportunities to engage with residents, celebrate service, and connect with veterans in the region. These events not only amplify our visibility but also strengthen our commitment to being present and accessible in Custer County.

In addition to these public events, work continues behind the scenes on the Veteran Community Group, a grassroots effort focused on creating a space for veterans to come together, share their experiences, and build lasting connections.

Looking ahead, we’re excited to support two upcoming initiatives: the launch of the Veterans Arts Expression Program in September, designed to promote healing and creativity through artistic engagement, and participation in the highly anticipated Blues, Brues, and BBQ celebration—a vibrant local festival where we will continue building community partnerships and honoring those who served.

The energy and collaboration in Custer County continue to grow, and the Westcliffe office remains focused on delivering impactful, wraparound services that honor our veterans and strengthen the fabric of our community. ■



Alamosa – San Luis Valley



Over the past two months, the Alamosa office of Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has remained deeply engaged in outreach, support, and advocacy for veterans throughout the San Luis Valley and surrounding regions. Our team has worked diligently to expand our network, participate in key community events, and strengthen partnerships to ensure veterans and their families receive the resources they need and deserve.

Our community engagement efforts included a strong presence at several high-impact events. At the Ski Hi Stampede in Monte Vista, we hosted an informational booth to raise awareness about veteran services and connect with the public. While many attendees were not military-affiliated, several expressed interest in sharing our resources with veterans in their networks. We also participated in the SSG Fox Community Resource Fair, which provided a meaningful opportunity to collaborate with fellow veteran service providers and extend our

outreach into Chaffee County. Additionally, our team attended the Care and Share Educational Dinner in Alamosa, a valuable event that deepened our understanding of local food security efforts and reinforced our commitment to addressing hunger among veterans.

Regionally, we have made significant strides in expanding our reach. We successfully established a connection with the Chaffee County Veteran Service Officer, opening the door to increased support for veterans in the Salida area. This collaboration marks an important step toward regional impact, allowing us to better coordinate services and identify unmet needs across county lines.

Overall, the Alamosa office continues to build momentum through sustained public engagement and strategic collaboration. As our visibility grows, we remain committed to demonstrating Mt. Carmel's mission—serving those who served—not just in Alamosa, but throughout Southern Colorado. ■

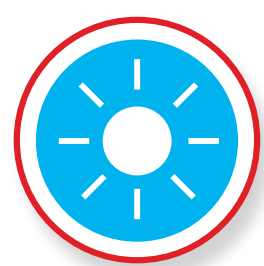


Trinidad - Las Animas County



The past couple of months have been extremely productive and foundations have been laid to provide assistance to veterans and their families in Los Animas County for months and years to come. Although many organizations are seeing cuts in programs, we continue to serve the community with our food pantry and network resources we have developed over time here at the Las Animas Country Mt. Carmel Veteran Service Center. We have had a steady flow of regular families that depend on our services every month as well as adding some brand-new faces with new intakes. Most importantly, we are growing exposure to the Trinidad Mt Carmel office and services we are able to provide in the community through regular attendance at the city council meetings, network council meetings, monthly Care and Share food distribution and monthly American Legion meetings. Our partnership with our county veteran service officer and local American Legion Post 11 continues to grow strong and is resulting in new faces coming to the office for services. Two huge developments have happened to help

develop more credibility and networking possibilities. First, I was elected to District 8 American Legion Sergeant at arms. Being the Mt Carmel veterans' resource and community development coordinator was instrumental in my nomination to be elected for that office. That will enhance relationships not only with the local American Legion, but all of the American Legion's in District 8. The other major development was my nomination to serve on the Los Animas County veterans council. This organization manages the Los Animas County veteran's assistance grant and also is the owner of Fort Wootton. We will be able to continue to provide services to veterans and ensure that the Fort stays with the council and is able to provide all the resources they have in the past to veterans in our community. I look forward to continuing the outreach with the Trinidad State College with our local VSO in the coming months and in leveraging our community events, such as our monthly Veterans coffee and cooking and art classes that are coordinated with the Mt Carmel Wellness Center. ■



Pueblo – Pueblo County



Pueblo Ambassador Meeting

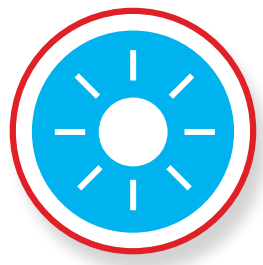
NEW UPDATE: At Mt. Carmel in Pueblo, we're honored to walk alongside the veterans & families who inspire us every day. As we move through the heart of summer & into early fall, we're reminded of the

power of connection, community, and & shared commitment to serving those who have served us. This season, we were proud to attend the WarDogs Baseball Game honoring Pueblo's veterans—highlighted by Medal of Honor recipient Drew Dix throwing out the first pitch, a powerful reminder of the legacy & valor within our community. Our Pars for Patriots Golf Event was also a meaningful success—128 golfers, nearly half veterans, came together to support the vital services we provide across Southern Colorado. Looking ahead, we're proud to collaborate with the Colorado State Fair this August for a heartfelt Veterans Tribute Weekend. We're also anchoring our 2nd Annual Social Networking Event on 5 Sep at Brues Alehouse Brewing Company, designed to connect veterans with employment opportunities and strengthen their pathways to long-term success. And this October, we'll stand with the community at the Centennial High School Veterans Wall Rededication—a moment to reflect and honor. In November, we'll host our 3rd Annual Veterans Community Update and participate in the Veterans Day Parade, continuing to uplift those who served. We're launching a Veterans Music Therapy Program, returning to the Pueblo Chile Festival, and reviving our Ambassador Program with 20+ community leaders to help carry our mission forward. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we're building lasting change for Pueblo's veterans and their families.



Picture of MOH Recipient Drew Dix throwing out the first pitch

MAKING an IMPACT: At Mt. Carmel, we're honored to serve alongside Pueblo's veterans, families, and neighbors—united by a shared commitment to support those who have served and those in need. Through community-driven events like Pars for Patriots, Veterans Tribute Weekend, and the upcoming Centennial High School Veterans Wall Rededication, Pueblo continues to show what it means to honor service and strengthen community bonds. We're also proud to anchor initiatives such as our Social Networking Event, Veterans Music Therapy Program, and the revitalized Ambassador Program, all designed to empower veterans and foster long-term connection. Beyond veteran services, our Helping Hands Food Program continues to meet critical needs across the region. In just the past two months, we've supported over 500 community members facing food insecurity—because service to others extends to everyone who calls Pueblo home. Together, we're transforming lives and shaping a future where veterans, families, and neighbors feel valued, supported, and celebrated. These efforts reflect the strength of Pueblo—where every resident, partner, and leader plays a vital role in building a stronger, more united community.



Pueblo – Pueblo County (Continued)



Matt Dominguez receiving his adaptive Vehicle from Wilcoxon GMC

GOOD NEWS STORY: Recently, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center had the privilege of supporting a local combat veteran, an amputee who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, facing the challenge of regaining mobility and independence for himself and his family. He was awarded a VA Auto Grant along with additional funds to purchase an adaptive

vehicle suited for his wheelchair and daily needs. With determination, he approached a well-known Pueblo dealership to use the grant, only to be turned away due to concerns about VA payment processing delays. Frustrated but not defeated, he returned to Mt. Carmel for help. Our team immediately connected him with one of our trusted partners, who quickly reached out, guided him through the process, and helped him find the perfect adaptive SUV. Today, he is back on the road, regaining independence and improving life for himself and his family. This story highlights what we've always believed: veteran support goes beyond referrals and grants. It requires a community committed to coordination, compassion, and understanding the complexities of programs like the VA Auto Grant. Without partners like GMC Wilcoxon and the dedicated Mt. Carmel team, success stories like this wouldn't be possible. "This is more than just transportation. It's about honoring our promise to stand by those who served. At Mt. Carmel, we don't just offer services—we walk with our veterans," said Sal Katz Jr., Director of Rural Colorado Services. To veterans across Southern Colorado: If you feel stuck, forgotten, or unsure where to turn, come see us. There's a place here for you—we will walk with you every step of the way. Because when one veteran moves forward, an entire family and community moves with them. ■

Partner Relations

June, we hosted the Military Outpost at the US Senior Open. It was a great opportunity that allowed us to work with our partners to ensure that we enhanced the overall experience for every Service member and veteran that attended the event.

We proudly welcomed 10 new partners in June and July, including 2 who will work in our lobby to engage directly with the veteran community.

In July we had 2 booths and ran the volunteer appreciation room at the

Rodeo. We could not have done everything that we needed to do if it was not for the participation of our partners in providing volunteers to help at all our locations.

Thank you to all our partners and ambassadors for your continued dedication and support. Let's keep the momentum going!

If you're interested in exploring new ways to collaborate, feel free to reach out to the Director of Development, James Herrington at jherrington@mtcarmelcenter.org. ■

Community Outreach

We have several outreach events coming up:

- Gold Hill Mesa Concert - August 2, 2025
- Backpack giveaway - Jet Wing YMCA, August 3, 2025
- Salute to American Veterans Rally - Cripple Creek CO. August 15-16, 2025



The Veterans Voice Project



In This Season of Healing on The Veterans Voice: A Journey Through Struggle, Strength, and Newfound Purpose

This past stretch of episodes has taken our podcast community on a transformative journey one marked by courage, vulnerability, and the deep, enduring power of human connection. As our following continues to grow not only across the nation but around the globe, the stories we share are resonating more than ever. Veterans, family members, and non-service members are tuning in and finding pieces of themselves in the voices we amplify.

We began with Dr. Tom Francis, a psychologist and executive coach whose gentle wisdom and sharp intellect bridged the gap between theory and real-world growth. With humor, grace, and a lifetime of service, Dr. Francis invited us to reflect on our own personal and professional development-whether we're navigating the trauma of transition or the complexity of leadership. His unique ability to blend storytelling, psychology, and a deep respect for the veteran journey set the tone for everything that followed.

Then came the rugged, raw honesty of Sam Westfall, a medically retired Army Veteran who found his way back to purpose through the primal rhythm of bowhunting. Sam's recounting of his bear hunt was more than a tale of survival-it was a meditation on choice, morality, and healing. His journey from injury and isolation to quiet strength in the wilderness reminded us that sometimes, the path back to ourselves is found in the unlikeliest places.

Leadership took center stage in our next conversation with Retired Colonel Bob McLaughlin, whose storied military career taught him that true leadership is not about authority-it's about responsibility, empathy, and vision. As former Chief of Staff of US Forces in Afghanistan, Col. McLaughlin offered hard-earned insights on guiding others through chaos, change, and complexity, reinforcing that leadership-whether at home, in uniform, or within-is a daily act of service.

Our fourth episode pulled us into the deeply personal and often painful world of trauma recovery. Nicole Weis, a licensed professional and addiction counselor, opened up about her path into trauma work, inspired by someone she loves. Her commitment to healing, community support, and mental health education through programs like GRIT reminded us that seeking help is not weakness-it's an act of courage. Her voice broke stigma wide open, offering listeners a safe, compassionate space to explore their own pain and possibility.

Finally, we sat down with Dr. Eric Abbott, an Air Force Veteran and family medicine physician, to confront a quieter, deadlier adversary: chronic stress. In a world that rarely slows down, Dr.

Abbott's message rang out loud and clear-mental health is not a luxury; it's a necessity. With empathy and clinical insight, he helped us understand the invisible toll that stress takes on the body, and what we can do-right now-to reclaim our well-being.

As we continue growing this movement of healing and hope, we invite you to stay connected, share the message, and remember: whether you're a veteran, a caregiver, or simply someone trying to live a little better each day, you are not alone. ■



Scan the QR code to check us out on YouTube!

Volunteer Spotlight: Vyschard Graham



This month, we are honored to spotlight Vyschard Graham as our Volunteer of the Month. Vyschard possesses an unwavering dedication to serving his community.

Vyschard is a Staff Sergeant in the US Army, as a member of the Space Brigade on Fort Carson. Although Vyschard is an active-duty Soldier he volunteers most of his available time at Mt. Carmel. He has participated in every event in the last year; his dedication and hard work has made every event a success. ■