



A Beacon of Support

**IN MEMORY OF
JAY CIMINO**
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Dir, MVFS

TAMEICA TRUJILLO
Client Care Coordinator

NICK ELLIOTT
Financial Coach

VETERANS CLIMB:

CHRISTIAN KEYS
PAUL COOKE 3RD

August - September 2026 | Issue #61

By Bob McLaughlin, Executive Director

As we reflect on the past several weeks, I am filled with gratitude for the strength of our community and the partnerships that make Mt. Carmel's mission possible.

On September 11, we proudly hosted our annual Patriot Day Giveback, bringing together veterans, service members, first responders, and their families for a day of support, remembrance, and connection. The event served hundreds of military-connected community members and provided an opportunity to honor those who have served while ensuring families had access to critical resources and food assistance. The overwhelming support from our volunteers, donors, and community partners demonstrated the very best of Southern Colorado and reinforced our commitment to standing beside those who have sacrificed so much.

The momentum continued the following day through our partnership with Care and Share Food Bank and Colorado State University Pueblo during the Heroes Helping Heroes food distribution, which served nearly 1,000 families. These efforts are a powerful reminder that when organizations and individuals work together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of military and veteran families.

As we celebrate these successes, we also look ahead to one of our most important upcoming events: the Stand Down. This annual effort brings together service providers, volunteers, and community partners to support veterans



Bob McLaughlin

who may be facing homelessness or other significant challenges. Stand Down embodies our belief that every veteran deserves access to resources, dignity, and hope. We look forward to welcoming veterans and the many organizations that make this event possible.

At Mt. Carmel, we remain focused on building connections, strengthening partnerships, and creating opportunities for veterans, service members, and their families to thrive. Thank you for your continued support and for being part of this mission. Together, we are making a lasting impact across Southern Colorado. ■

With gratitude,

Bob McLaughlin

Executive Director

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center



Partner Spotlight

CASE MANAGERS:

SHANTEL WARE
MEGAN HARRISON
NATHAN GONZALEZ
DARIA KLAUSNER
JAMIE VALDEZ

HEALTH & WELLNESS:

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Dir, Health & Wellness
VIVIENNE BELAIRE
BH Ops & Gateway Manager
NIKKI HAMILTON
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CLINICIANS:

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ANGELA ROBINSON
CHUNG TA
DEANNA GESTES
ALMA MCCASHLAND
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RODGER JOHNSON
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STEVE FUGIEL
TIFFANY NORWOOD
SSG FOX SPGP

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Director, Fundraising & Development
ALEX MCCABE
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Grant Writer

GREET AND CONNECT:

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IT/Facilities Coordinator

VBOC:

JOE REAGAN
Director

AARON GROZIAK
NATHANIEL HAMILTON-THOMPSON
COREY MCFADDEN

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



Rick Good and his team once again stepped up and supported our front range military and veteran community during this period. His sustained efforts were recognized at Patriot Day's Opening Ceremony for providing a "hand up" to those in need of a good meal and a caring smile. His team's generosity and caring of our military and veterans when providing delicious food at events involving deploying, redeploying, at organizational days, and at many other forums. Border Burger Bar has supported thousands of service members and epitomizes true partnership. Mt. Carmel salutes Rick's enduring impact and unwavering advocacy of our Front Range military families. ■



Department Updates



Transition and Employment

Mt Carmel Transition and Employment was the Southern Colorado Business Forum and Digest “Best in Business Silver Award” winner in the Workforce Preparation Service category. We were competing with the other finalists: the Pikes Peak Workforce Center (Gold), and the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (Bronze).

Mt. Carmel Transition and Employment had our 5,378th placement at the end of Aug 2026.

We held our partner meeting , introducing Bluestar families to the employer community and Onward to Opportunity also briefed the employers.

Jon taught the second federal resume class on USAFA as a backfill to the installation losing their instructor to retirement.

We also took part in the Hiring our Heroes Career Summit in Colorado, to include the Buckley SFB Hiring Event, Peterson SFB Networking Event, and the Fort Carson Hiring Event ■



Military, Veteran, and Family Services

MVFS realigned SSG Fox as one of its programs. Dillon moved into the SSG Fox program manager position and we have welcomed Jaime and Tiffany to our collective MVFS team as SSG Fox case managers. Things are in full swing and we are seeing great growth in this program.

MVFS held its last partner meeting of the calendar year and is fully focused on execution of the holiday events. Stand Down partner tables have been solidified, sponsorships have been finalized, and volunteer sign up has hit capacity. We will start planning sign ups for Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday food support as well as Angel Tree and Sr. Angel Tree.

MVFS has been busy supporting our Southern Region veterans in relation to the fires to ensure that they have the resources they need. We have also welcomed 3 new interns that will be us for the remainder of the school year: Trent, Aahyliya, and Kianna. They have been invaluable in supporting our mission to help all of our clients across the regions. In addition, MVFS was able to provide drinks (energy drinks specifically) to the fire fighters and emergency responders supporting efforts in the Southern Region thanks to our partnership with Amazon. As a whole, the MVFS case managers have been doing an amazing job helping out our veterans, partners, and community. ■



Greet & Connect

Mt. Carmel finished up a busy summer season with our Annual Patriot Day as we added 179 new clients. We also facilitated a surge in room rentals and partner usage of the Headquarters building. As part of our energy saving initiative, we began the transition from fluorescent lights to LED bulbs in our hallways. Externally our entire parking lot was resealed by McDonald Paving and looks great.

As we continue to enhance our IT program, our team developed a computer needs assessment and has submitted an order for a new system that will provide much more graphic capability for our in-house program increasing timeliness and quality of related projects.

Our VA work study program is currently at capacity and the next round of applications is scheduled to begin in Jan 2027.

We also conducted our Annual Employee Survey during this period with the Executive Director briefing the Team Leads on the feedback and then with each of the departments individually.

We’re also proud to announce an expanded partnership with Valor Veteran Law who offers veterans specific legal counseling services with face to face and virtual options.

Finally, as a reminder, especially as the holidays approach, event space is available for rent at Mt. Carmel including birthday 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 are continuing the 988 initiative to forward the message of 988 as a resource for anyone experiencing suicide ideation or life struggles. We are excited to begin the process of partnering with Denver University and their Military Family-Focused WeRead programming for families with young children. Our team member Deanne Gestes will be the primary facilitator for the upcoming WeRead Programs. These are currently being scheduled and will be released to the community soon. Vivienne has continued providing monthly briefings to Fort Carson's Psychological Health Intensive

Outpatient Program patients at Evans Army Community Hospital. Kirsten and other Mt. Carmel Leadership completed an introduction to ROMA (Results Oriented Management & Accountability) training. Kirsten will continue providing briefings to the 302nd Airlift Wing about Reintegration of Returning Combat Deployment Units as well as providing quarterly presentations for El Paso County Sheriffs on Crisis Intervention Training. We held another round of ACT training for our clinical team, and we are excited to add Sean McEntee (Veteran) to our clinical team as a counseling intern. ■



VBOC

The Colorado Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) continued to make measurable progress toward program objectives while expanding outreach, strengthening strategic partnerships, and delivering entrepreneurial support services to veterans and military-connected entrepreneurs throughout Colorado.

During this reporting period, we enrolled 66 new clients, bringing the total number of clients served since program inception to more than 1,640. The program conducted 138 individual business counseling sessions and increased its LinkedIn following to 1,323, reflecting continued growth in client engagement, community awareness, and program visibility.

We maintained an active presence throughout Colorado's veteran and small business communities by participating in outreach, networking, educational, and professional development activities. These engagements strengthened relationships with resource partners, expanded opportunities for collaboration, and increased awareness of the program's counseling, training, and technical assistance services.

Key outreach and community engagement activities included participation in the Pikes Peak Small Business Alliance (PPSBA) Monthly Meeting, Financial Foundations for Startups workshop, Raise a Glass. Give Back. Support Homeless Veterans event, FOX21 News Colorado Conversations segment, Department of Veterans Affairs self-employment panels, Latino Chamber's 7th Annual Small Business Resource Summit, VetNet, Salute to American Veterans Rally, The Operator's Guide to AI: Decisions, Systems and Strategy, 2026 State of the Guard, Veterans Beer Club, WareSpace Park Hill Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Colorado's Entrepreneur and Small Business Resource Partners, SoCo Startup Week, BoodleBox: AI Exchange, Credit Card Processing 101, Patriot Day, ACHIEVE Business Resource Fair, and Blaze AI Summit. Additionally, the Colorado VBOC met with representatives from JPMorgan Chase Bank to strengthen relationships within the financial services community and explore opportunities to support veteran entrepreneurs.

A significant focus during this reporting period was our ongoing collaboration with the Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center (PPSBDC) in planning and coordinating the upcoming 19th Annual

Mission: Colorado, formerly known as VetCon, scheduled for November 2026. This event will provide military-connected entrepreneurs, veteran business owners, and community stakeholders with opportunities to connect with resource partners, participate in expert-led educational sessions, and explore opportunities in entrepreneurship, innovation, and government contracting.

Our involvement supports the development of an event designed to equip participants with practical business knowledge, strengthen professional networks, and increase access to resources that support business formation and growth.

We also continued delivering the U.S. Small Business Administration's Boots to Business (B2B) | ReBoot entrepreneurship training program at Schriever Space Force Base, Fort Carson, the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), and at the VBOC office on CCTI.

These training sessions provided transitioning service members and military spouses with foundational knowledge of business ownership, including business planning, market research, financial considerations, and available entrepreneurial resources.

Participants were also introduced to the VBOC's post-training business counseling and technical assistance services to support their continued progress toward business ownership.

Program activity during this reporting period demonstrates continued demand for veteran-focused entrepreneurial assistance throughout Colorado. Growth in client enrollment, sustained counseling activity, continued training delivery, and expanded stakeholder engagement reflect the Colorado VBOC's ongoing commitment to supporting veteran entrepreneurs at every stage of business development.

Through targeted outreach, individualized business counseling, entrepreneurial education, resource coordination, and strategic partnerships, the Colorado VBOC continues to strengthen Colorado's veteran entrepreneurial ecosystem and support the formation, growth, and long-term sustainability of veteran-owned small businesses. ■

Department Updates



SSG FOX GRANT

Client Outreach and Engagement (SSG Fox SPGP)

During this period we promoted Dillon Anderson from Lead Case Manager to Program Manager. Dillon took over the team that is now comprised of outreach coordinators and case managers.

Outreach efforts involved 25 events for this period. Outreach and community engagement events conducted in Aug/Sept across rural and frontier communities, community events, and partner agencies. Engagement specifically with Teller County has been established and is increasing every month. El Paso County Outreach maintained focus on Suicide Prevention Month by attending various prevention events throughout Front Range. Teller County Outreach position is vacant and a replacement is actively being sought. The highest number of referrals are from VSO intakes.

Case Management and Direct Services

SSG Fox Program had a total screened of 27 and enrollment of 16 participants for just Aug/Sept. Which put us at a 59% enrollment rate. Case Managers are continuing appropriate referral pathways for reducing barriers for Enrolled Veterans. The highest number of referrals for SSG Fox enrollees are directed to Mt. Carmel Health and Wellness who has screened and referred eligible Veterans to the SSG Fox program.

Partner Relations and Development

SSG Fox has created referral pathways with Base Camp Eden, Schriever SFB and Aspen Mine Center Cripple Creek. Our key partner, the local VA, has continued support of Mt. Carmel and SSG Fox with the VA's Julie Hurlbert (VA Community Engagement & Partnership Coordinator), co-attending multiple Outreach Events with the Mt Carmel team. Additionally, partnerships are in development with COS Heartbeat, Woodland Park, and CSFD.

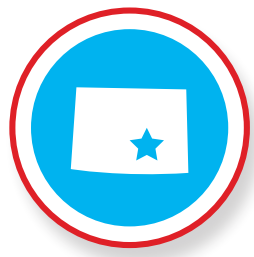
Compliance and Administration

All required VA reports and grant deliverables were submitted within established reporting deadlines. Program documentation continues to be reviewed for compliance with grant requirements, with ongoing quality assurance activities supporting data accuracy, documentation standards, and continuous quality improvement. An internal audit was performed with all case managers passing. SSG Fox SPGP continues to comply with all VA guidance and requirements for the program. ■



Next Chapter

- **August 8, 2026:** Miguel Lopez and Jose Ramirez represented Next Chapter at the Teller County Purple Heart Ceremony, honoring the service and sacrifice of Purple Heart recipients.
- **August 19-20, 2026:** Leah Jackson, Damian McCabe, and Scott LaGrill hosted Next Chapter's Military and Veteran Cultural Responsivity Professional Development training at Mariposa in Pueblo, providing education and resources to enhance veteran-centered care.
- **September 5, 2026:** Jose Ramirez and Rodger Johnson attended the 4th Annual Suicide Memory Walk at Lake Minnequa Veterans Memorial Park in Pueblo, supporting suicide prevention awareness and remembrance efforts.
- **September 11, 2026:** Miguel Lopez and Rodger Johnson participated in Patriot Day events, engaging with veterans, community members, and partner organizations.
- **September 11, 2026:** Leah Jackson and Scott LaGrill attended Warrior Fest at John Venezia Park in Colorado Springs, connecting with veterans and sharing information about Next Chapter services and resources.
- **September 12, 2026:** Jose Ramirez and Miguel Lopez represented Next Chapter at the Heroes Helping Heroes event at CSU Pueblo, strengthening community partnerships and veteran outreach efforts.
- **September 16-17, 2026:** Leah Jackson, Damian McCabe, Jose Ramirez, and Scott LaGrill hosted the Military and Veteran Cultural Responsivity Professional Development training at MSU Denver, equipping providers with tools and strategies to better serve military members, veterans, and their families.
- **September 19, 2026:** Damian McCabe attended the UCHHealth Zero Suicide Prevention Walk at Boulder Park in Colorado Springs, supporting community-wide suicide prevention initiatives and awareness efforts. ■



Southern Colorado

Over the past two months, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has continued to expand its outreach, partnerships, and direct support across Southern Colorado, serving veterans, service members, and their families in communities ranging from Pueblo and Trinidad to the San Luis Valley and Custer County. Our approach continues to focus on meeting veterans where they are, bringing resources closer to rural communities, strengthening local partnerships, and ensuring that veterans have a trusted connection when they need assistance.

Across Southern Colorado, our teams remained actively engaged in food security, veteran wellness, resource navigation, community outreach, veteran camaraderie, and partnership development. Through Helping Hands and other community food initiatives, we helped provide critical food assistance to hundreds of individuals and families. Our regional partnership with Care & Share, community organizations, volunteers, and veteran-serving partners also helped deliver approximately 950 food boxes to veterans throughout Southern Colorado. In Trinidad alone, Helping Hands supported approximately 250 community members, while Heroes Helping Heroes provided food boxes to approximately 150 veteran families.

Our outreach continues to extend beyond providing immediate assistance. Every food distribution, community event, wellness activity, and resource fair provides an opportunity to connect with veterans, listen to their needs, identify challenges, and connect them with additional resources. This was demonstrated through the San Luis Valley Veterans Resource Fair and Food Distribution, continued outreach with the Foxhole Project, participation in Early Iron, and the ongoing development of partnerships throughout the Valley.

Veteran wellness and connection remained an important part of our regional efforts. More than 20 veterans participated in a Cooking Class for Veterans at the Mt. Carmel Wellness Center in Trinidad, creating an opportunity for veterans to learn, connect, and build healthier habits together. Across the region, Mt. Carmel also supported wellness opportunities, community activities, veteran recognition events, and programs designed to create camaraderie and strengthen veterans' connection to their communities.

Community engagement continued throughout Southern Colorado through events such as the Pueblo Chile Festival, Colorado State Fair, Trinidad Fall Festival, TOMCAT Project, CSU Pueblo activities, The P.L.A.C.E. event, Break Your Neck Run, Walk & Crawl, and other community gatherings. These events allowed Mt. Carmel to meet veterans and families where they are, increase awareness of available services, and strengthen relationships with organizations and community leaders.

Veteran recognition and individualized support were also significant components of our work. Through partnerships, we were able to present seven Quilts of Valor to veterans, provide 30 free chair massages to veterans and spouses, assist three blind veterans with Meta AI Ray-Ban glasses, and help additional veterans with grocery needs. These efforts demonstrate that veteran support encompasses more than traditional services—it also means recognizing service, addressing immediate needs, promoting wellness, and helping veterans maintain independence and connection.

Our continued presence in rural Southern Colorado remains a priority. Through bi-monthly outreach in Custer County and Westcliffe, continued engagement in Trinidad, and ongoing outreach throughout the San Luis Valley, Mt. Carmel is working to reduce the barriers created by distance, transportation, limited local resources, and lack of awareness. Rather than expecting veterans to navigate services on their own, we are working to bring relationships and resources closer to the communities where veterans live.

Partnership development remains at the center of this regional effort.

Throughout the past two months, Mt. Carmel has continued working with VSOs, nonprofits, businesses, government agencies, community leaders, chambers of commerce, volunteers, and other veteran-serving organizations. These partnerships allow us to respond more effectively because no single organization can meet every need a veteran or military family may have.

The greatest success of our Southern Colorado outreach is not simply measured by the number of events attended or resources distributed. It is measured by the relationships being built and the connections being created. A veteran who comes to a food distribution may discover a wellness program. A veteran attending a community event may learn about benefits assistance. A conversation in a rural community may identify a housing, employment, financial, or legal need. Each interaction creates another opportunity to ensure a veteran does not fall through the cracks.

As we move forward, Mt. Carmel will continue building a regional network of coordinated support across Southern Colorado, strengthening communication between organizations, expanding rural outreach, and developing partnerships that make it easier for veterans and their families to access the help they need.

Outreach → Connection → Resource Navigation → Partnership → Veteran Support

One Veteran. One Community. One Coordinated System Driven by Collaboration.

No Veteran Should Have to Navigate the System Alone.



Pictured: Pueblo community collaboration during “Heroes Helping Heroes” feeding 950 Veteran families throughout Southern Colorado at CSU-Pueblo.



Alamosa – San Luis Valley



August and September were busy and meaningful months of outreach, relationship-building, and community engagement throughout the San Luis Valley. During these two months, our focus remained on connecting veterans and their families with resources while strengthening the network of organizations, VSOs, community leaders, and partners working together to serve those who served. Much of August was spent following up with veterans and community members we met through previous events, including the Foxhole Project fundraiser. These conversations helped strengthen existing relationships, open the door to new partnerships, and create additional opportunities to connect veterans with resources available throughout the Valley.

A major focus during August was preparing for the Veterans Resource Fair and Food Distribution held on September 12. Planning involved coordinating veteran-service organizations, community partners, food resources, and organizations from outside the immediate Alamosa area. The goal was to bring multiple resources together in one location so veterans would have greater access to assistance without having to navigate numerous organizations on their own. This event was another example of what can happen when community partners come together around a shared commitment to supporting veterans and their families.

Our continued partnership with the Foxhole Project also remained an important part of our work. Through outreach, planning, and participation in Foxhole Project activities, we continued to create opportunities for veterans to build camaraderie, strengthen relationships, and become connected to their communities. Events such as these provide an important opportunity to reach veterans in a more informal setting and remind them that support is available beyond traditional service-provider offices.

September brought many of the partnerships and plans developed during August into action. Participation in Early Iron provided another opportunity to meet veterans and community members, share information about available resources, and strengthen relationships throughout the Valley. The September 12 Veterans Resource Fair and Food Distribution brought together organizations and resources to provide both immediate assistance and meaningful connections for veterans. The event demonstrated the importance of collaboration and the value of having multiple organizations working together to make resources easier for veterans to access.

We also continued supporting the Foxhole Project Waypoint event, providing another opportunity for veteran camaraderie, community involvement, and connection. In addition, participation in the Heroes Helping Heroes food distribution helped provide needed food resources to veterans and their families while creating additional opportunities for outreach and relationship-building. These events are about more than providing a service; they allow us to meet veterans where they are, listen to their needs, and help connect them with additional resources when needed.

Throughout August and September, planning also continued for the upcoming October Veterans Round Table. The goal of the round table is to bring veterans, VSOs, community organizations, and other stakeholders together to have meaningful conversations about the needs of veterans throughout the San Luis Valley. Topics will include service gaps, communication between organizations, resource navigation, collaboration, and opportunities to develop future programs and outreach. The intent is not simply to identify challenges, but to bring the right people together to begin developing solutions.

Community partnership development remained a consistent priority during both months. Conversations with local leadership, the Chamber, VSOs, and other community organizations are helping create a stronger network of support for veterans. These relationships are critical because no single organization can meet every need a veteran may have. By building communication and trust between organizations, we can make it easier to connect veterans to the right resources at the right time.

Overall, August and September demonstrated the importance of relationships, collaboration, and being present in the community. Our work continues to move beyond simply referring veterans to individual programs. Instead, we are working to build a coordinated network where veterans can find connection, resources, and support throughout the San Luis Valley. Every conversation, event, partnership, and resource connection contributes to that larger mission.

As we look toward October and the months ahead, our focus will remain on strengthening these partnerships and continuing to bring the veteran community together. The upcoming Veterans Round Table will provide another opportunity to listen, collaborate, identify gaps, and explore ways we can collectively improve the veteran experience throughout the San Luis Valley.

Outreach → Connection → Resource Navigation → Partnership → Veteran Support

Our continued commitment is simple:
No Veteran Should Have to Navigate the System Alone.



Trinidad - Las Animas County



Over the past two months, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center has continued to strengthen our presence and support for veterans, service members, and their families throughout the Trinidad community.

Our team supported the Helping Hands Food Distribution, assisting approximately 250 community members with access to food and essential resources. Through our Heroes Helping Heroes initiative, we also provided food boxes directly to approximately 150 veteran families, helping ensure that veterans and their families had additional support during a time when many households are facing increased financial pressures.

We also continued to focus on health, wellness, and connection within the veteran community. More than 20 veterans participated in a Cooking Class for Veterans at the Mt. Carmel Wellness Center, providing an opportunity to learn, connect, and build healthy habits together in a supportive environment.

Mt. Carmel also participated in and supported the Trinidad Fall Festival, engaging with veterans and community members and continuing to build awareness of the resources and services available to those who have served.

Overall, the past two months have demonstrated the strength and commitment of the Trinidad community. Through food assistance, wellness activities, community events, and direct engagement, Mt. Carmel continues to work alongside local partners to ensure veterans in Trinidad know that they are not alone and that support is available.

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center remains committed to being a trusted resource and a first call for veterans and their families in Trinidad and throughout the surrounding communities. ■



Picture of MCVSC Wellness Veteran cooking class

Office Updates



Westcliffe – Custer County

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center continues to strengthen its presence in Custer County through bi-monthly outreach, providing veterans, service members, and their families with consistent access to wrap-around services closer to home. Our continued presence in the Westcliffe area allows us to build trusted relationships, better understand local needs, and connect veterans with resources such as employment assistance, legal services, financial counseling, wellness programs, and other critical support. Through continued collaboration with local organizations, community leaders, and partners, we are building a stronger network of services throughout Custer County while ensuring veterans know they have a local connection and someone they can call when they need assistance. Our goal remains simple: meet veterans where they are, connect them to the right resources, and ensure no veteran is left behind. ■

Here are future events and outreach schedule:

CUSTER COUNTY VETERANS OUTREACH

SUPPORT ★ RESOURCES ★ COMMUNITY

WEST CUSTER COUNTY LIBRARY

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is working towards increasing our support and presence in Custer County as we continue strengthening collaboration and coordination efforts in support of our military, veterans, and their families.

Our shared mission remains steadfast: to expand access to best practices, integrated resources, and strong partnerships that empower lives and strengthen communities across Colorado. These efforts are needed now more than ever, and we sincerely believe the strength of our communities grows through cooperative engagement and shared resources.

WHAT WE OFFER

During these monthly outreach sessions, Mt. Carmel representatives will be available to meet in person with veterans and their family members to provide access to wraparound support services, including:

- Legal assistance and guidance
- Employment support and job placement resources
- Financial counseling and stability planning
- Behavioral health and therapeutic resources
- Veteran-specific program navigation
- Referrals to trusted community partner agencies

OUR COMMITMENT

Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is committed to ensuring that every veteran and family member in Custer County has direct access to the support they have earned. Through ongoing collaboration with local partners and community stakeholders, we work to reduce barriers, strengthen coordination, and deliver comprehensive, veteran-centered care. We are honored to serve those who have served.

MONTHLY OUTREACH LOCATION
West Custer County Library
209 Main St., Westcliffe

SCHEDULE
Starting July 13
2nd and 4th Monday of each month
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

FOLLOW-ON DATES

July 13th	October 12th
July 27th	October 26th
August 10th	November 9th
August 24th	November 23rd
September 14th	December 14th
September 28th	December 28th

10 YEARS
Mt. Carmel
VETERANS SERVICE CENTER
SERVING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

CONTACT US
(719) 309-4719 | veteranscenter.org

West Custer County Library

West Custer County Library District
209 Main Street
Westcliffe, Colorado 81252 | (719) 783-9138
<https://www.westcusterlibrary.org/>

LEARN TO PLAY NATIVE AMERICAN FLUTE

for Beginners

★ FOR VETERANS & THEIR SPOUSES ★

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED—JUST COME AS YOU ARE AND LET YOUR MUSIC FLOW!

DISCOVER & PLAY
Learn basic techniques, breathing, fingerings, and simple melodies on the Native American flute.

CONNECT
Build community and share in a relaxed, supportive environment.

RELAX & ENJOY
Music is a powerful way to reduce stress, lift your spirit, and honor tradition.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2026
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

CLASS TO BE HELD AT:
3RD ST. GALLERY
59000 N. HIGHWAY 69
WESTCLIFFE, CO

HANDICAP ACCESS | FLUTES PROVIDED
No experience necessary

Registration Required
Register at www.westcusterlibrary.org or call 719-783-9138

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Mt. Carmel VETERANS SERVICE CENTER | sag | West Custer County Library

719-783-9138 | www.westcusterlibrary.org | Follow us on Facebook

Thank you for your service. You're invited!

ALL VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES ARE Welcome!

CREATE ★ CONNECT ★ RELAX ABSTRACT ART CLASS

for Veterans & Their Spouses

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED—JUST COME AS YOU ARE AND LET YOUR CREATIVITY FLOW!

EXPRESS YOURSELF
Explore color, texture, and abstract techniques in a fun and supportive environment.

CONNECT
Build community and share in a relaxed, encouraging space.

FOCUS & RELAX
Creativity is a powerful way to reduce stress, boost well-being, and lift your spirit.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2026
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

CLASS TO BE HELD AT:
3RD ST. GALLERY
59000 N. HIGHWAY 69
WESTCLIFFE, CO

HANDICAP ACCESS | ALL MATERIALS PROVIDED
No experience necessary

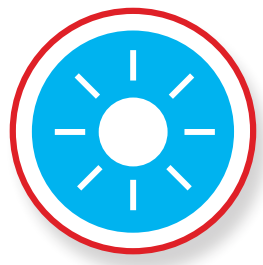
Registration is Required!
Please register by September 29th!
Register at www.westcusterlibrary.org or call 719-783-9138

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Thank you for your service. You're invited!

ALL VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES ARE Welcome!



Pueblo – Pueblo County

The past two months have been filled with meaningful outreach, community engagement, partnerships, and direct support for veterans and their families throughout Pueblo. Our work continues to focus on one simple commitment: making sure no veteran is left behind. Through wrap-around services, community partnerships, resource navigation, and simply being present where veterans and families are, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center continues working toward becoming the first phone call in the community when a veteran or military family needs help.

Our commitment to the communities west of Pueblo has remained strong, including continued support for veterans and families in Custer County and the Westcliffe area. Through our wrap-around services, we continue working with veterans to identify their needs, connect them with appropriate resources, and help navigate the services available to them. This regional approach allows us to reach veterans who may otherwise face challenges accessing services because of distance, transportation, or limited resources in rural communities.

One of the highlights of the past two months was supporting Pueblo Diversified Industries and Dancing with the Pueblo Starz, an event that raises awareness and support for adults, children, and veterans living with disabilities. Mt. Carmel was proud to participate in an event that brings the community together around inclusion, opportunity, and support for individuals and families who deserve every opportunity to thrive.

Our Helping Hands program also continued to make a significant impact. Over the past two months, Helping Hands served more than 500 community members experiencing food insecurity and other challenges, connecting individuals and families with food and additional services. The program continues to demonstrate what can happen when community organizations work together to address immediate needs while also creating pathways to longer-term support.

Collaboration and communication throughout the community have remained a priority. Mt. Carmel continued providing collaborative information and participating in the Pueblo MAC meetings and Pueblo City Council meetings, helping ensure that veteran needs remain part of broader community conversations. We also supported the TOMCAT Project at the Weisbrod Aircraft Museum, attended the Legislative BBQ, and used these opportunities to connect, network, and strengthen relationships with community leaders and organizations.

The Colorado State Fair and the Pueblo Chile Festival provided additional opportunities for direct veteran outreach. Mt. Carmel provided wrap-around services and information at both events, serving every veteran and family member who stopped by seeking information, assistance, or referrals. These community events are important because they allow us to meet veterans where they are, build relationships, listen to their needs, and connect them with resources in a comfortable community environment.

Mt. Carmel also participated in the Break Your Neck Run, Walk & Crawl, an event focused on raising awareness and support for disabled veterans. The event brought together members of the community around

an important cause, and organizers committed to donating \$5,000 to two organizations partnered with Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center, providing additional support for veterans with disabilities.

Another significant effort was our partnership with Care and Share, community organizations, and volunteers to deliver approximately 950 boxes of food to veterans across Southern Colorado. This effort demonstrated the power of collaboration and the importance of bringing resources directly to veterans and their families. For many veterans, food assistance can be an immediate need, and these deliveries provide not only food but also an opportunity for continued connection and outreach.

We were also honored to support veterans through several special community events and initiatives. Mt. Carmel was invited to attend a CSU Pueblo football game supporting veterans, providing another opportunity to celebrate and recognize the veteran community. We also attended the opening of the Legacy of Courage Committee at the El Pueblo History Museum, honoring 59 Hispanic veterans at the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month. Recognizing the service and sacrifices of our veterans is an important part of ensuring their stories continue to be remembered and shared with future generations.

Veteran wellness and connection were also part of our outreach. Through a community partnership, 30 free chair massages were provided to veterans and spouses, offering an opportunity for relaxation, wellness, and connection. We also participated in The P.L.A.C.E. event, providing additional wrap-around services and connecting community members and veterans with available resources.

Technology and innovation provided another opportunity to change lives. Mt. Carmel supported three blind veterans with Meta AI Ray-Ban glasses, providing technology designed to assist them in navigating and interacting with their surroundings. These glasses represent more than a piece of technology; they provide veterans with additional independence and new possibilities in their daily lives.

We were also able to assist two additional veterans through a community partner who provided two grocery-shopping experiences, helping fill their refrigerators with needed groceries. These acts of kindness demonstrate the importance of partnerships that can respond quickly when a veteran has an immediate need.

Our partnership with the Quilts of Valor team provided another meaningful opportunity to honor veterans. Together, we presented seven veterans with handmade Quilts of Valor, thanking them for their service and welcoming them home. These

presentations were powerful reminders that recognition and appreciation can have a lasting impact on veterans and their families.

Community partnership continued through the Bikes & Buggies event, supporting Strictly Powersports and strengthening another relationship that will benefit Mt. Carmel and the veteran community through future proceeds and partnership opportunities. Events like this demonstrate that veteran support does not come from one organization alone—it comes from an entire community willing to work together.

Office Updates

Looking Ahead

The past two months have been filled with a tremendous amount of work, networking, outreach, and partnership. From food insecurity and resource navigation to disability support, veteran recognition, wellness, technology, community events, and rural outreach, the common thread has been our commitment to serving veterans and their families wherever they are.

Every partnership creates another door. Every conversation creates another connection. Every event creates another opportunity to identify a veteran who may need assistance.

As we continue moving forward, our goal remains clear: to build a community where veterans know they have somewhere to turn and where no one is left behind.

Through the continued support of our community partners, VSOs, businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, volunteers, and community members, Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center is working to become the first phone call for veterans and military families in Pueblo and Southern Colorado

One Veteran. One Community.
One Coordinated System Driven by Collaboration.

No Veteran Left Behind ■



Pictured: US ARMY Veteran, Sal Katz and daughter supporting PDI fundraiser.



Pictured: MCVSC supporting Pueblo Chile festival.



Pictured: Pueblos Helping Hands delivering needed groceries to the community.

Partner Relations and Development

The next two months will be exciting, we have many activities, campaigns, and events coming up. All of these are done working with our many community partners. We are working with all of our partners to improve the lives of our service members, veterans, and their families. Look at our

website and see which event you would like to participate in to make an impact. 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. ■

Community Outreach

We have some outreach events coming up!

- **Bataan Death March- October 3, 2026**
- **Homeless Veterans Standdown- October 20, 2026**
- **Hoedown for Heroes- November 13, 2026**
- **Turkey for Troops- November 20, 2026**

Volunteer Spotlight: Wanda Williams



Known for her passion about providing a “hand up” to military, veterans, and their families, Wanda Williams has been a long term supporter of Mt. Carmel and our veteran community. Her enduring support to our temporary veteran housing program is proven by providing household items to stock our designated apartment for those needing a safe place to live. She is also an avid sponsor of the military community food pantry by providing items that are distributed to veterans dealing with food insecurity. Her and her husband Ed’s sponsorship of Campfire Coffee for Patriot Day was just another example of their commitment to helping with the Mt. Carmel mission. Wanda is also one of Mt. Carmel’s Community Ambassadors because of her tireless advocacy of veterans, volunteer participation in outreach events, and knowledge of available Mt. Carmel resources and programs. ■



The Vantage Point

THE VANTAGE POINT

The Vantage Point Podcast continues its mission of exploring the lessons found within lived experience, highlighting two recent conversations that demonstrate how the stories of others can reshape the way we understand our own lives. In one episode, we sat down with Dylan Averack, a 16-year military veteran and longtime childhood friend of host Taylor Chapman. Their shared history created an opportunity to look beyond military service and examine how experience shapes identity, relationships, and perspective over time. Having known one another long before either wore a uniform, Dylan and Taylor reflect on the people they once were, the experiences that changed them, and the value of looking back at our lives with a different vantage point.



That theme takes on a different form in our conversation with Ken White, a husband, father, and friend whose life changed after a devastating accident left him paralyzed. What followed was an extraordinary three-year recovery that eventually took Ken from losing his ability to walk to running 5Ks. His story offers a powerful reminder of how easily we overlook the ordinary gifts of daily life—the ability to stand, walk, run, play with our children, and simply move through the world independently.



Although Dylan and Ken's experiences are vastly different, both conversations illustrate one of the central ideas behind The Vantage Point: we don't have to experience someone else's hardship to benefit from the perspective it gave them. By listening carefully to the stories of others, we can borrow lessons that may have taken them years—and sometimes tremendous adversity—to learn. Their experiences invite us to examine our own identities, relationships, gratitude, and priorities without first having to lose something important ourselves. In that sense, storytelling becomes more than entertainment; it becomes an opportunity for personal growth. Scan the QR code to watch on YouTube! ■



**Scan the QR code
to check us out
on YouTube!**