

# Mt. Carmel Center Beacon



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## Helping Veteran Families in Need

Since opening our doors last March, the team at Mt. Carmel has been at work putting processes and procedures in place, building critical partnerships with other agencies in our great community and growing our passionate team of Peer Navigators, case managers and staff. Through all of that, we have not lost sight of WHY we are here! We have

been able to assist some very deserving families along the way!

Sharita Taylor served our country for seven years as a Logistics Specialist (92A) in the US Army. In 2011, she deployed to Afghanistan. Most importantly, however, Sharita is mother to six beautiful children and is married to her best friend and supporter. In December, the family fell on hard times with challenges related to unemployment, a mix-up with health insurance and the difficult winter weather. Our generalist Peer Navigator, Amber, worked with the family to find the resources necessary to bridge the gap for them during this trying time. Working with a tremendous community partner, *The Home Front Cares*, Amber and the team at THFC were able to provide assistance so that the family could cover their rent in December. The Home Front Cares is a tremendous resource in our area, doing its best to regularly provide financial bridge assistance to our most deserving veterans and their families. We are thrilled to have a strong partnership with them allowing us together to help such deserving families.

After the critical hurdle of paying rent was met, Amber took her service to the family one step further! Through the support of many contributors, Amber coordinated the purchase of Christmas gifts for each member of the family. So, not only was the worry of keeping a roof over their heads gone, but the children, as well as Mom and Dad, were able to wake up to presents under the tree on Christmas morning.

Staff

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Peer Navigators  
**Daniel Martinez**  
**Jennifer Medved**  
**Tony Hoobler**

Generalist Navigator  
**Amber Hargrave**

HB16-1267 Internship  
Program  
**Bruce Bookout**  
Program Manager  
**Chip Underwood**  
Job Coach

Receptionist  
**Juanita Reedy**  
**Hilary Bryant**

Newsletter Publisher  
**Marilyn Twaites**

## "Meet and Greet" Mt. Carmel's New Employees

Mt. Carmel would like to extend a very warm welcome to our newest employees. As a result of our recent state grant for executive leadership training and paid internships (HB 16-1267) we were fortunate enough to use a portion of the grant monies to hire two full-time employees: *Mr. Bruce Bookout (Program Manager)* and *Mr. Tony Hoobler (Job Coach)*. Bruce is an Air Force Veteran and is also an Adjunct Professor at Pikes Peak Community College. Tony recently retired from the US Army at Ft. Carson, where he was Chief Warrant Officer-2. Together they are aggressively recruiting candidates and interested employers, successfully bringing the two together, with some internships already resulting in the full-time hiring of intern candidates. Additionally, we just hired *Mr. Chip Underwood* to serve as a Job Coach for the state grant, allowing us to reassign Tony to a vacant Peer Navigator position within the highly successful Veteran Integration Program. Chip is an Air Force Veteran and comes to us from Edward Jones Investments, where he worked as a financial adviser and is eager to apply his excellent people skills into sustaining the success of the state grant internship program.

## Program Updates

2016 was truly a banner year for Mt. Carmel. In the 10 months since opening our doors, we assisted our Clients through 3,325 visits. These military, veterans and their families came to Mt. Carmel in ever growing numbers to get assistance through one of our proprietary programs or from our incredible partner agencies. Additionally our Peer Navigators reached 1,976 veterans outside of Mt. Carmel through numerous events and classes. We have found that since March, 31% of our Clients come to us seeking employment services, 23% are looking for help with their veteran benefits and 27% of our guests are seeking support through behavioral health counseling or social services support. The remainder of our Clients are being served through education, legal, financial and health and wellness counseling and programs.

Under House Bill 1267, our internship program is showing immediate positive results with both community businesses, Veterans and spouses. We've had 10+ companies offer positions for potential interns to fill, with 40+ Veterans and their family members primed to fill them. Thanks to this grant, companies can help build the resumes of the potential candidates with 300 hours of paid work which is a huge asset when looking for permanent employment.

## Partner Corner

Recognizing the tremendous impact that our military has in our Colorado Springs community, El Paso County is committed to ensuring these brave men and women receive the best support and services available to them. Bringing key assets from the county to co-locate and integrate with us at Mt. Carmel has made it so much easier for many of our Veterans and families to access critical services. These great partners include representatives from the El Paso County Department of Human Services and the Veterans Service Office.

### Department of Human Services

Ms. Linda Alejo is our DHS representative within Mt. Carmel Center of Excellence and strives to protect our most vulnerable citizens while giving them efficient access to the services provided by local, state and federal governments. "We aim to keep families together and help them to become self-sufficient. We work closely with community organizations to stretch the safety net we provide even further."



Our own Mt. Carmel Generalist Navigator, Ms. Amber Hargrave, works very closely with our DHS partner, often referring her qualified clientele with greater need to Linda for the many services including Medicaid and Food Assistance.

### Veterans Service Officer (VSO)

Mr. David Donohew is our VSO and without a doubt, one of our busiest in-house partners. David assists Veterans post-separation from military service as they navigate the many federal, state, and local resources and benefits that may be available to them. Whether it's a specific question or the need to identify programs and benefits for which a veteran may be eligible, the Veteran Service Office at Mt. Carmel Center of Excellence is ready to help. As such, David serves an average of over 20 Veterans a week, and almost 100 Veterans each month.

El Paso County has two Veteran Service Offices that serve over 83,000 Veterans, dependents and survivors and supports five military bases. Last year, El Paso County Veteran Service Officers assisted over 8,563 veterans, dependents and survivors, and brought in over \$509,456.00 in VA funding. According to Mt. Carmel COE/Director of Operations, COL (Ret) Joel Hamilton, "David is an extremely valued partner and he epitomizes the meaning of selfless service, giving of himself entirely and every day."

## The Voice of Our Clients

*"Amber was very personable and friendly. She immediately addressed the problem and continuously updated me until it was resolved. Her outgoing spirit and eagerness to help made me feel very comfortable throughout the process. Aside from assisting me with my immediate problem, she took steps to help alleviate the possibility of it happening again. My overall experience was phenomenal and I would recommend Amber and Mt. Carmel to any veteran who needs assistance. I am very thankful for their service and will always be appreciative." Michael*

*"A friend in the Army told me about Mt. Carmel. I needed assistance with paying rent for the month of December and Amber was quick and informative about what resources my family qualified for. The resources provided really helped my family and I would recommend Mt. Carmel to other veterans." Sharita*

## Christmas Activities at Mt. Carmel



**Mt. Carmel was able to create many magical moments for Veterans and their families during the holiday season: We hosted a Veterans Christmas Candlelight Service as well as a Christmas Party for our Honor Flight Network group. We brought children and adults alike together with multiple events ranging from supporting the non-profit "Santa's Stockings" to a joint ugly sweater Christmas Party. All of**

**these events gave us the opportunity to commemorate the great service and sacrifice of our Veterans, some whose service dates all the way back to WWII!**



**Our Sincerest thanks to our many contributors and supporters.  
Thank you for Helping Us Help Ours!**

Mt Carmel Center of Excellence, 530 Communication Circle, Colorado Springs, CO 80905

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