



VETERANS TRANSITION CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

Empowering Veterans to move from crises to self-sufficiency

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TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This quarter, we want to highlight the work of Francisco Narewski, one of our Case Managers and an important part of Team VTC. Francisco served in Iraq and Afghanistan and was named Monterey County's 2023 Veteran of the Year. He is passionate about assisting fellow Veterans in finding housing, helping them build credit, create a budget, and connect with benefits from the VA. Francisco is working towards a Master's of Social Work at CSU Monterey Bay and dedicates his free time to volunteering with the Veterans Day Parade Committee, coaching Hartnell Men's Basketball, and playing recreational basketball. He is a strong advocate for Veterans volunteering; it's a way to give back to themselves and connect with the community. Francisco finds that volunteerism is how he can continue to serve his country and pursue his own healing journey, a life-long commitment to himself and his family. We are thrilled to have Francisco as part of our team. Keep it up, Cisco!

LETTER FROM THE COO December 2023

Dear VTC Supporters,

As the holiday season dawns, I find myself brimming with gratitude. I want to express my profound appreciation for this incredible team, working diligently each day to ensure our Veterans have the best chance at leading peaceful lives. I'm thankful for our residents, trusting us to guide them on their journey. Finally, I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support, allowing us to serve those who've served our Nation.

Over the past year, our available housing options have continued to expand, driven by the ongoing construction of Lightfighter Village and our efforts to fund and install six ADA-compliant Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) on VTC property. Thanks to our strong community, we already have secured the funds needed to acquire the first of these ADUs. Follow the progress of these innovative projects on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#), where we go by the handle @VTCofCalifornia.

In September, our work at the Veterans Hub in CTF Soledad received recognition at the Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County Annual Nonprofit Awards ceremony, and we were honored with the **Innovator** award. From Millati Islami to Wiley's Wish Dog Training program, everything our Transformative Reentry team does inside CTF, directed by Jennie Nestler, provides our Veterans with a sense of self-worth, purpose, and hope for the future. This has played a pivotal role in our Veterans maintaining a 0% recidivism rate upon release into our programs.

I'm incredibly proud of our team and eagerly anticipate the possibilities that 2024 holds.

Sincerely,

Mike Stull, CDR, USN (Ret.), COO



LIGHTFIGHTER VILLAGE UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Lightfighter Village Wall Raising Ceremony on Nov 3rd! We were honored to be surrounded by so many enthusiastic supporters and community leaders. Occasions to celebrate milestones of affordable housing projects are rare, and we are deeply grateful for the speed at which this project is progressing.

Remarks were given by Mayor of Marina Bruce Delgado, EAH's VP of Real Estate Development & Construction Dave Egan, US Representative Jimmy Panetta's Director of District Operations Erin Davison, California State Assemblymember Dawn Addis, Monterey County Supervisor Wendy Root Askew, our very own CEO Kurt Schake, and VTC founder and Board Chair Dr. Tom Griffin.

Guests signed a large beam that will be included in the construction of Lightfighter Village - a demonstration of how essential advocates like you are to VTC's ability to permanently house Veterans.



One highlight of the event was a discussion of the numerous units that will be fully ADA-accessible, with all remaining units designed to be easily adaptable to accommodate additional residents who use mobility aids. We also focused on the importance of helping Veterans find a permanent home, as Supervisor Askew emphasized the challenges of military families spending only a brief period in one place before relocating.

The estimated completion date is December 2024, with 70 Veterans and their families set to move into these new permanent supportive housing units in early 2025.



Huff Construction has made remarkable strides as they've completed underground construction, poured concrete, and raised walls. Residents and staff alike can see the progress unfolding rapidly, to our great enjoyment.

EAH Housing is a major driving force in making Lightfighter Village a reality. Without their efforts, this impactful project would not be possible. EAH will take on the administrative role to run this community, allowing VTC to dedicate our resources towards wraparound services for our Veterans. We extend our sincerest gratitude to them.

As we continue to transform Lightfighter Village into a haven for Veterans, stay tuned for more updates - follow us @VTCofCalifornia on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#), or by visiting our Upcoming Projects page on our website (www.VTCofCalifornia.org).



WILEY'S WISH

Wiley's Wish Animal Rescue retrieves dogs from high-kill shelters on the Central Coast. Canines then are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped while as they await their FURever homes.

VTC is thrilled to partner with this stellar non-profit to provide enrichment for Veterans at CTF Soledad. Dogs given a second chance at life are paired up with the Veterans incarcerated at CTF Soledad. Over a period of six months, they learn commands, work on positive interactions, and complete the AKC Canine Good Citizens course. If a dog displays aptitude for service dog work, they are placed in a training program and placed with a Veteran or first responder who cannot afford one.

VTC and Wiley's Wish share a mutual focus on second chances, and we hold them in high regard for the love and compassion they provide to everyone involved. If you would like to adopt one of these dogs, please fill out an application at www.wileyswish.com.



SPECIAL THANKS

A huge thank you to the Parks at Monterey Bay - their team spent a day volunteering at the VTC to landscape our Veterans' residences and to make much-needed improvements to Martinez Hall. Even simple projects like clearing away overgrown branches add to the sense of pride our residents have in their homes. We are so grateful for your generosity and dedication to our heroes!



PROGRAM OF THE QUARTER

Our **Veteran Support Services (VSS)** staff is an exceptional resource for VTC programs. This team plays a crucial role in our mission - they ensure the pantry is stocked with fresh food, they provide transportation assistance to our residents, they maintain all our properties, and they recently completed the renovation of the VTC Music Room. VSS folks always are eager to get involved and offer assistance wherever it is needed - thank you gents!

Music Room renovation made possible by the munificence of Steve Vagnini



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Stay up to date on everything VTC and see firsthand how your support makes a difference by following our social media accounts.



@VTCofCalifornia

SPECIAL THANKS

Shout out to these individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the Veterans Transition Center of California this year. We can't do this without you.

INDIVIDUALS

Joanne Colombo Crist & Bill Crist
Gerald & Carolyn Griffin
Bill Mitchell
Arthur & Roberta Nelson
Craig Painter
Linda Winchester
Ronald Wright
Parker & Joan Wood
James Turner



ORGANIZATIONS

Elks Lodge 614 BPOE
Monterey County Bar Foundation, Inc.
Vaquero Foundation



VETERAN TESTIMONY

Upon my release from Folsom State Prison in March 2022, following a 32-year sentence, the invaluable support of case managers played a pivotal role in maintaining my focus. They guided me with patience and without being overbearing, enabling me to regain my independence and even purchase a car. This fresh beginning allowed me to reconnect with my family, reuniting with my daughter and son, whom I hadn't seen in nearly four decades. The depth of their love for me took me by surprise, motivating me to remain on the right path. My children now stand as my constant wellspring of inspiration as I continue my journey, and the Veterans Transition Center of California has evolved into my extended family.



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