



Summer Newsletter Wrap-Up 2018-2019 Casa Veterans Ministry

The Casa Veterans Ministry is pleased to provide an annual wrap-up of all our activities over the past year. Since our ministry launch in May of 2012, we are now entering our 8th year as we continue ***to take concrete actions to assist service members, veterans and their families with healing and educational programs, events and services designed to support their spiritual and emotional needs in a welcoming and compassionate environment.***

We had an AMAZING year! Highlights this year include:

- Receiving the Copper Eagle Award from the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society
- Launching the Building Spiritual Strength Program in Arizona
- Launching a one-day Veterans Awareness Training for Deacons in the Diocese of Phoenix
- Receiving an anonymous donation of \$15,000

Two more thrilling moments...Fr. Michael Lapsley, who leads our Healing of Memories for Veterans Workshops and is Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories in South Africa, had a private audience with Pope Francis in June! And...Mike Wold, our Coordinator for the Healing of Memories for Veterans Workshops at the Casa, will be inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame this Fall!

To learn more about these and other exciting events within the Casa Veterans Ministry, **READ** below...

New Offerings This Year



Building Spiritual Strength Workshop -- “Building Spiritual Strength: A Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals and Clergy/Chaplains” was a one-day workshop held last May. The purpose of the workshop was to provide mental health professionals, clergy, military chaplains, and other community providers the tools needed to bring a Building Spiritual Strength program to veterans in Arizona. The principle presenter was Tim J. Usset, an Army Chaplain and Ordained Minister from Minneapolis, who developed this model with Dr. Irene Harris, Ph.D., formerly with the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

This workshop was an outstanding success. There were forty-one attendees. The workshop provided participants with an understanding of the relationship between post-traumatic stress, moral injury and spiritual distress. It also presented the research behind the Building Spiritual Strength model, an evidence-based practice, and reviewed the BSS teaching materials to help attendees to facilitate a BSS program in their community.

A huge “Hats Off” to CVM Core Team member Linda MacLeish, who organized the event.

Beyond a Wounded Warrior: A Deacon's Guide to Helping Veterans and Military Families—

The Casa Veterans Ministry held a one-day workshop last October for Deacons and other Clergy in the Diocese of Phoenix to be better trained and equipped to help veterans and military families in their respective faith communities. This was led by Mike Wold, Patti Sills-Trausch and Dean Pedrotti.



Update: On-Going Programs



Beyond a Wounded Warrior Retreat—Last December, the Casa Veterans Ministry offered our second delivery of “Beyond a Wounded Warrior: Journey to Wholeness in Mind, Body and Spirit.” Spear-headed again by Linda MacLeish, with Fr. Conrad, Greg Masiello and Bill Reese as facilitators, there were 24 attendees. This retreat was designed as a follow-up to other veteran retreats offered at the Casa to help veterans learn various spiritual practices and complementary and alternative approaches to becoming grounded and centered. (Note: The retreat has been renamed: “A Resilient Warrior’s Journey Forward.”)

St. Francis: Journey of a Wounded Warrior Retreat— In March, 24 veterans explored the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare with Fr. Conrad, Greg and Bill. They looked at the challenges confronting veterans today by examining the life of a saint who rose out of the ashes of combat to become an icon of peace. Some veteran comments included: “Learning about St. Francis truly inspired me to keep doing God’s work where I can” and, “I learned I am not alone and there is always hope and forgiveness.” (Retreat has been renamed: “St. Francis: Journey of a Resilient Warrior Retreat”).



Healing of Memories Workshop for Veterans— Mike Wold coordinated two more “Healing of Memories for Veteran” workshops at the Casa over the past twelve months. One took place last October and another was held this past May. There were 38 male and women veterans attending. With the two additional HOM retreats held this year at the Spirit of the Desert as well, there have now been 24 HOM workshops held with over 350 Arizona veterans who have benefitted from these healing retreats!

Some of the comments from veterans attending the workshop include: “I never expected that I would connect and experience a release of grief and loss,” “very empowering,” and “Highlights for me were having feelings and emotions and they were positive and not destructive.”

Mike also shares, “The Casa received a grant from the Disabled Veterans Foundation through the Institute for Healing of Memories North America for a workshop for women veterans this November.” For more information, go to <https://thecasa.org/casaveteransministry/> or <https://healingmemoriesna.org/>.

Father Lapsley Meets Pope Francis! Last June, Father Michael SSM, well known among military veterans in Arizona, had a private audience with Pope Francis. As Founder and Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories (IHOM), Fr. Lapsley began the visit by sharing with the Holy Father some of his life journey, including the pivotal experience of receiving a letter bomb which blew off both his hands. Pope Francis was visibly moved. Fr Lapsley then explained how his bombing, in time, led to his calling to create the healing of memories work. Fr. Michael then talked about the significant power of



acknowledgement as a first step on the road to healing, both at the level of the IHOM across the world, and in the context of the ministry of Pope Francis, especially in the way he acknowledges the pain of the human family and always insists on mercy, compassion and solidarity, particularly towards the most disadvantaged and excluded people. Fr. Lapsley and the Holy Father got along extremely well... same sense of humor...same direct language...same listening capacity... same priorities. And even a big hug at the end. Congratulations to Fr. Lapsley and the Institute for Healing of Memories!

Terry Araman Attends Healing of Memories Institute Conference in South Africa—Terry Araman, a well-known U.S. veteran in the Valley and Founder of MANA House, flew to South Africa in June to attend the “International Conference on Healing and Justice” in Cape Town, South Africa. Terry, who was inducted into the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame, said this about the 3-day conference, “There were numerous presenters from around the world...from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. I was surprised to learn that these situations are very similar. The vast majority of refugees, regardless of where they are fleeing from, are attempting to escape violence, poverty, human rights abuses, and lack of opportunity.” At the end of the conference Fr. Lapsley stressed the importance of family by saying: ‘Healing is a journey towards Wholeness.’” (Picture: Terry standing with Dr. Spiwa Xapile, a board member of the Institute of the Healing of Memories and founder of a community center in South Africa).



St. Joseph Baskets—206 Baskets Delivered!—Dr. Rebecca Hawkins, a retired VA physician, with the assistance of Chris Mulligan, has delivered 47 baskets of supplies to homeless and near-homeless veterans over the past year as part of “St. Joseph’s Baskets”-- a program she created in 2012. These are “baskets” of household goods given to homeless veterans who are vetted and housed through Community Bridges or the Arizona Housing Coalition.

Dr. Hawkins voiced a word of concern this year: “There are increasing numbers of homeless veterans due to the lack of affordable housing in Phoenix and many of the larger cities across the United States.” “Because there are so many people moving into the Valley and a shortage of low rent apartments,” she says, “rents have risen considerably. Many veterans can no longer afford the rent and lose their homes and often, all their possessions. We help them get resettled.”

Would you like to help us in this unbelievable ministry? It consists of shopping, organizing and delivering the baskets (and perhaps, help with fundraising.) If so, email Rebecca at casaveteransministry@thecasa.org.

Veterans Day Picnic—A very successful picnic was hosted by the Order of Malta at the Franciscan Renewal Center on Veteran’s Day. A huge thank you to Patsy Hall and the Order of Malta for coordinating such a wonderful event.

Veterans Day Stations of the Cross—A outdoor Stations of the Cross service was conducted on a peaceful evening on Saturday, November 10th with 15 veterans, service members and family members attending. This was conducted by James Peck and Fr. Bob Rossi, a Crosier priest who founded “Crosswalk: A Veterans Journey to Healing” program. A big thank you to both!



Franciscan Pilgrimage Program For Veterans to Italy – Five Arizona veterans and their spouses attended the annual Franciscan Pilgrimage for Veterans to Rome and Assisi this past May to explore the life of St. Francis and St. Clare. It was the largest veteran pilgrimage ever (34)! One highlight of the trip was a service held on Memorial Day high above Assisi by Fr. Conrad, Greg Masiello and Bill Reese. Attending from Arizona include Chaplain Elmon Krupnik and Christina and Juan Martinez. This makes more than 22 Arizona veterans who have journeyed

to Italy on the Veteran Pilgrimage since its inception. And, with gracious donations incoming and demand increasing, there will be TWO Pilgrimages in 2020. For more information, see:

<https://www.franciscanpilgrimages.com/veterans-of-the-military/>

Vets ReConnect & Community Educational Events—Last year was a busy one, as four education events were held at the Casa on behalf of veterans and military families:

- **Healthy Relationships Workshop**--Linda MacLeish worked with the “Intimate Partners Violence Program” at the Phoenix VA and held a one-day workshop at the CASA last October. The purpose of the program was to help veterans and military family members to identify the qualities of a healthy relationship and examine some evidence-based relationship tools to de-escalate situations that may lead to conflict. Over 50 folks came to the workshop and heard from the experiences of veterans and their partners who have successfully addressed the challenges of reintegrating into civilian life.



- **Mindfulness – Jamie Valderrama**— 28 folks attended this highly entertaining and educational class by noted ASU Lecturer Jamie Valderrama (and an Arizona Teacher of the Year) last October as she looked at how one can, through the lens of mindfulness, de-regulate our reaction to stress and physiologically change our brains to promote focused and responsive behavior.

- **Meet the Neighbors**—Last November, over fifty community members learned about four fantastic veteran service organizations in Phoenix. Pat Upah of Honor House, Joan Sisco with Veterans First, Danielle King of MANA House and Christeen Verchot from The James Walton Home shared heart-warming stories on how they assist injured and traumatized veterans, women veterans and veterans experiencing homelessness.

- **Understanding Brain Function in War and Peace**—**Dr. Patricio Reyes** – Back by popular demand, “Dr. Pat” talked about the neurobiological basis of the significant cognitive and emotional challenges that men and women face both during and after conflict. There were a whopping 58 folks who attended, including Ms. RimaAnn Nelson, the Medical Director of the Phoenix VA Health Care System. Evaluation comments included: “Excellent informative meeting. I am a medical doctor and I learned a lot from Dr. Reyes” and “My son is a vet w/ PTSD—This was very helpful to me!”



Memorial Day Rosary/Prayer Cards for Veterans—To commemorate this year’s Memorial Day, a Rosary was held on May 30th in the shade surrounding the Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine. Guests were honored by a rendition of “Taps” and “God Bless America” by bugler Roger C. Ellis, the Arizona State Director of *Bugles Across America*. His wife, Mrs. Mitzi Ellis, provided a brief and informative overview of the Memorial Day origin. The Rosary once again was led, most graciously, by James Peck. The names of veterans were collected after Masses the weekend prior to Memorial Day in remembrance of those who died as a result of military service and were recited during the Rosary. A truly blessed and enjoyable experience for all.



Participant in Vet Symposium—For the 5th year in a row, CVM’s Mike Wold coordinated the Faith and Spirituality track at the annual Arizona Coalition for Military Families’ Veteran Symposium in April. One session was “The Role of Psychology and Spirituality in Healing Veterans.”



The second was a panel discussion with leaders of successful faith community veteran ministries. One point highlighted was the reluctance that many mental health therapists have in bringing

up a discussion of spirituality into their session with a client in an ethical way. Yet, all attending, including veterans, expressed great benefit when a therapist is open to a discussion of spirituality, and better yet, can refer a client to spiritual resources when indicated.



Coming Up This YEAR !!

Southern Arizona -- Beyond a Wounded Warrior: A Deacon’s Guide to Helping Veterans and Military Families—The Casa Veterans Ministry is currently working with the Diocese of Tucson to offer this workshop to train deacons and other clergy in southern Arizona. Date TBD.

Vet ReConnect and Community Education Events—One Vet ReConnect event, and another Community Education event, are in the pipeline for this year, so mark your calendar!

- *Phoenix Veterans Court*: **Nathan Foundas**, an attorney in private practice will talk about his experience working as a Supervising Defense Attorney with the City of Phoenix Veteran’s Court on **October 15, 2019**.
- *Mindfulness for a Balanced Brain: Reactive to Responsive*: This will feature **Jamie Valderrama** once again on **January 30, 2020** as she continues her mindfulness series for our veterans and military family members.

Retreats/Workshops—And we have several retreats scheduled this year:

- **Healing of Memories (HOM) Workshops**: November 15-17, 2019; May 15-17, 2020 and October 23-25, 2020.
- **Warrior Songs Creative Arts Retreat Scottsdale**, November 20-24, 2020. An exclusive retreat for women veterans affected by sexual assault (in partnership with Warrior Songs. For more info, go to: <https://www.warriorsongs.org/events>).
- **A Resilient Warrior’s Journey Forward** (formerly: St. Francis Beyond a Wounded Warrior Retreat): March 6-8, 2020 and November 13-15, 2020.
- **St. Francis: Journey of a Resilient Warrior Retreat**: April 17-19, 2020.

For more information on these retreats and other activities planned by the Casa Veterans Ministry, go to: <https://thecasa.org/casaveteransministry/> or email us at: casaveteransministry@thecasa.org.

With blessings for a cool summer from your CVM Core Team,

Dr. Rebecca Hawkins
Linda MacLeish
Robie McDowell
Dean Pedrotti
Christeen Vershot

Vivian Register
Susie Sisco
Patti Sills-Trausch
Frank Petroni
Mike Wold



CASA VETERANS MINISTRY
Connecting. Serving. Healing.