## **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**



**REPORTING FOR DUTY IN YOUR COMMUNITY** 

## **INTRODUCTION**

Veterans possess the drive and desire to serve others, but without access to the tools needed, their potential to make a meaningful impact at the local level remains untapped. On the other end of the spectrum, growing numbers of communities in this country are underresourced and being left behind. The Mission Continues bridges this gap.

## **OUR MISSION**

We are on a mission to connect veterans with opportunities to continue their service and leadership in under-resourced communities.

### **OUR VISION**

The Mission Continues' vision is for all veterans with a desire to continue their service to be part of a movement to transform communities.



## **CORE VALUES**

Our core values are the set of principles that guide our choices as individuals and as an organization. Having a unified, clear view of our values helps ensure we are living out our promise every day, in every location, and to the absolute best of our abilities. As such, we expect and encourage all volunteers, staff members, and program participants to embody the following values as representatives of The Mission Continues: Collaboration, Compassion, Inclusiveness, Integrity, and Growth Through Learning.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

We value the diversity of identities, lived experiences, and perspectives that veterans and partners bring to our work. We appreciate that it is a privilege to make a difference in, with, and for the communities we serve. There is more work to do but we are committed to making The Mission Continues a place where everyone feels they belong.

### **IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS**

5,142 VETERAN PARTICIPANTS
<b>42,853.75</b> service hours
<b>243</b> COMMUNITY PARTNERS
<b>10,097</b> volunteer activations
721 VETERAN-LED PROJECTS
<b>221</b> VETERANS GRADUATED FROM THE VETERAN LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR



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## **A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT**

Staying the course through service: That was the mission – to our staff at The Mission Continues, our dedicated veteran-led service platoons, and our unwavering sponsors and community partners – for 2023. And when you take a step back and look at what we accomplished together, we produced some wins worth celebrating. But as we say every year – there is still a lot of work to do, and that keeps us motivated, excited, and engaged in our mission.

In our ongoing effort to create even more opportunities for veterans to leave a lasting impact in communities, we had more than 10,000 pairs of boots on the ground at more than 700 service and support projects, adding up to an incredible 48,000 volunteer hours across the country in 2023.

Once again, our primary drivers were our four National Days of Service – MLK Day, Earth Day, 9/11, and Veterans Day – which drove record-setting numbers of volunteers to serve alongside The Mission Continues.

And when we're not serving, we're training. We kept our veteran volunteer force busy throughout the year with first class programming opportunities. Between our Leading For All, Service Leadership Corps, Women Veterans Leadership Program, and Mass Deployment programs, we brought together nearly 1,000 veterans to various locations to receive hands-on leadership development training in 2023, and we are confident that the skills they learned at each program are being re-invested back into their hometown platoons and surrounding communities.

All this work. So much service. And we also gave ourselves a makeover in 2023, in case you hadn't noticed. This new look, part of our first complete brand refresh in almost a decade, is something we are proud to present to our supporters. Now we hope you'll gear up with us across the country as we intend to serve even more in 2024.

See you out there. Charlie Mike!



Mary Beth Bruggeman President, The Mission Continues



## **DEVELOPING "BRIDGE-BUILDING" LEADERSHIP**

At the end of March, we brought together 61 veterans from 23 different states for a three-day intensive that challenged these leaders to learn new ways to use their voices and experiences to lead across all lines of difference. We also asked them to explore how their military experiences impacted their leadership and relationships with veterans and non-veterans alike, and how they can lead in crucial conversations by leveraging the social capital that comes with being a veteran.













## **CULTIVATING MISSION-DRIVEN**



The Service Leadership Corps (SLC) is designed to equip and support Service Platoon Leadership Team (PLT) members as they collaborate with community partners and local volunteers to generate visible, sustainable impact in neighborhoods across the country. Through SLC, these Platoon Leadership Team members receive access to the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to effectively lead service platoons across the country.

This past October, 34 veterans came together in San Antonio as part of Cohort 7 of the Service Leadership Corps to lead, learn, and lean on one another. During this time together, these veterans took place in hands-on leadership training, as well as idea-sharing, on topics such as leading and executing service projects, cultivating and sustaining relationships and partnerships, and engaging and activating volunteers into service.

An additional vital component is that the cohort then puts these skills into practice in a community. For this group of veteran leaders, they spent a day of high-impact service at San Antonio's Haven For Hope, which is an organization dedicated to supporting their community's homelessness issue. The SLC participants assisted the community partner with painting, gardening, landscaping, and overall community upkeep.











## **EMPOWERING WOMEN VETERANS TO BECOME AUTHENTIC LEADERS**

WOMEN VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

In November 2023, 61 participants graduated from Cohort 6 of the Women Veterans Leadership Program (WVLP) in the nation's capital. The celebration of the new members capped a months-long journey where women veterans showed increasing levels of leadership, skills, confidence, and passion that will help them lead from the front in their own communities.

As always, the in-person leadership gatherings include a service project element that allows the participants to host, lead, and learn more about the impact that veterans can have in communities across the country. For Cohort 6, this meant a day of service in support of Veterans Day at Anacostia High School in Washington, D.C. Additional local volunteers and community partners joined the cohort at the school to make needed improvements in the education spaces, outside courtyard, storage spaces, and overall campus beautification and upkeep.











## **OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN US IN SERVICE**

THE MISSION CONTINUES LEADS DAYS OF SERVICE IN CITIES FROM COAST TO COAST TO BOLSTER THE WORK WE DO, BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER, AND INSPIRE OTHERS TO SERVE.



### **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE**

On January 16th, 2023, more than 400 people volunteered at the Houston service project to support the Alief Youngblood Intermediate School.

Houston Platoon Leader Bernadette Plummer introduced The Mission Continues to the Alief Youngblood School.

When she visited the school for the first time, she noted that the children did not have adequate places to sit on the school grounds, trash littered the campus because of the lack of trash bins, and there was no shade from the Texas sun. Bernadette saw this as an opportunity to form a relationship with the school to help improve the school grounds. Recalling the experience Bernadette said, *"We were well received. They are looking forward to us coming back and doing additional projects… I believe this will be a lasting partnership."* 

National Campaign: Activated 1,963 volunteers Held 50 service projects Completed 9,507 hours of service

### EARTH DAY

To celebrate Earth Day, nearly 40 volunteers from the El Paso Platoon visited Hart Elementary School to paint garden beds, plant fruit trees, and clean the school grounds. Volunteers also took part in tasks that included landscaping, garbage removal, and overall beautification of the school campus.

National Campaign: Activated 773 volunteers Held 28 service projects Completed 3,608 hours of service



## **OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN US IN SERVICE**

THE MISSION CONTINUES LEADS DAYS OF SERVICE IN CITIES FROM COAST TO COAST TO BOLSTER THE WORK WE DO, BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER, AND INSPIRE OTHERS TO SERVE.

### UNITED IN SERVICE: 9/11 NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE

To commemorate the 22nd anniversary of September 11th, veterans and volunteers in nearly 50 communities gathered in support of the United In Service: Honoring 9/11 campaign. Nearly 800 volunteers participated in service projects in under-resourced communities across the country, leaving a lasting impact in neighborhoods while honoring 9/11.

In Las Vegas, members of Cohort 6 of the Women Veterans Leadership Corps joined local community partner, U.S. Vets, for a 9/11 service project where they accomplished some needed upkeep at its housing facility that supports veterans experiencing homelessness.

National Campaign: Activated 754 volunteers Held 49 service projects Completed 3,041 hours of service





### **VETERANS DAY**

The Boston Platoon honored Veterans Day with a project at the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Dorchester. Twenty-eight volunteers participated in the Kroc Center's annual Thanksgiving distribution event that provides more than 2,000 families in the Greater Boston area with all the ingredients needed for a complete Thanksgiving meal. Volunteers also supported the Salvation Army with other projects including assembling and decorating Christmas trees around the center.

National Campaign: Activated 466 volunteers Held 53 service projects Completed 1,914 hours of service

























**OPERATION** 

THE MISSION CONTINUES

# **MASS DEPLOYMENT**

## OPERATION DISTRICT DRILLDOWN ACTIVATED MORE THAN **740** VETERANS AND LOCAL VOLUNTEERS WHO COMPLETED MORE THAN **5,720 HOURS** OF SERVICE FOR AN ESTIMATED **\$320,500** IN ECONOMIC IMPACT.

In June, we activated hundreds of veterans and community volunteers in Washington, D.C. for a week of impact. During Operation District Drilldown, we served at six partner locations in Washington, D.C.'s Wards 7 and 8. Project locations included Anacostia Park, Fort DuPont Park, The Douglass Community Center, Sousa Middle School, Kramer Middle School, and Anacostia High School.





### **FINANCIALS** 2023 TOTALS







## **ANNUAL SURVEY RESULTS**

Our 2023 Annual Survey results have shown that our strategies for empowering veterans as community leaders are contributing to our desired outcomes of personal growth, connectedness, and community impact. Through our leadership and service initiatives, veterans are building meaningful relationships, positively influencing their communities, and making progress toward goals that matter to them.

### According to the veterans who are active in their platoons:



**95%** believe they are part of a cause larger than themselves



believe they are pursuing a meaningful mission



feel connected to the community



feel a greater sense of purpose

### Non-veterans' responses highlight their connection and involvement in TMC:

**100%** feel like part of a cause larger than themselves



**100%** believe they are pursuing a meaningful mission

89% feel connected to the community

80% have an improved understanding of the skills veterans learn in the military



have a better connection with veterans in their community









NTINUES



ACTION NEWS

ATOONLEADER

### **MEDIA MENTIONS**

In 2023, we aimed to increase our national coverage and media mentions through strategic campaigns such as MLK Day, Mass Deployment, 9/11-United In Service, and Veterans Day. Our multi-focused plan included maintaining constant contact with media contacts at national outlets, developing new and resurfacing existing engaging content for national distribution, and establishing TMC as experts in veterans' mental health, leadership development, diversity & inclusion, and service and volunteerism, providing experts for national exposure in every TMC market. We also focused on leveraging earned media for growth in local and regional markets across our 40 Platoon Cities by building relationships, providing valuable content, contacts, and convenience to local media outlets. Comprehensive media monitoring, including TV broadcasts, online news services, social media, and digital article placements, ensured complete coverage and maximized the impact of our earned media efforts.











**\$892,351** Total Calc Publicity Value

> **1,672,579** Total Nielsen Audience

**138,200** Total Nielsen Radio Audience WGN

WC

**495** 

**Total Story Count** 

\$297,454

**Total Calc Ad Value** 

NS

HERALD-Standard





Boots on the Ground Podcast sparks meaningful conversations with veterans and veteran service organizations dedicated to addressing the critical issues and challenges impacting veterans, their families, and communities nationwide. In 2023, the podcast reached significant milestones, demonstrating its growing impact and reach within the veteran community.

Through engaging episodes and insightful discussions, Boots on the Ground continues to amplify the voices of veterans and community leaders, fostering awareness and driving positive change.

#### 2023 Highlights:

Total Downloads: 1,662 Total Downloads Since Inception: 2,651 Episodes Published in 2023: 24 Total Episodes Published: 37

### PARTNER SPOTLIGHT CARMAX

A lot of The Mission Continues' success in 2023 was driven by the unwavering dedication of National Partner CarMax. This goes beyond just supporting our service platoons from afar - the CarMax team of associates from across the country put their own boots on the ground alongside veterans, volunteers, and community partners to show what an organizational effort of impact from a partner can do for communities from coast to coast.

With nearly 300 CarMax associates volunteering at more than 30 veteran-led service projects in 2023, this team contributed to more than 1,200 hours of volunteer service that led to nearly \$40,000 of community impact. And they did this in 18 cities across the United States, showcasing the national show of service CarMax brings to the table.

"You can't overstate how much the support of a national organization like CarMax can have on our mission," said James Gillen, Chief Development & Marketing Officer of The Mission Continues. "The impact from the CarMax team putting boots on the ground with The Mission Continues leaves instant and last impacts on our nation's veterans and the communities in which they serve. They have no doubt led from the front with supporting our goals of veteran connectedness and community bridging and impact, and we look forward to working alongside them for years to come."

CarMax has been driving its dedication into The Mission Continues' service platoons since 2015. And despite how successful 2023 was thanks to the support of it's nationwide team, the staff and families of CarMax are committed to serving even more in 2024.







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Susan Schneider Household Susan Thaxton Household Susan Werth And Hillary Silver Household Susanna Novoa Household Tabitha White Household Tami Test Household Tammy Brown Household Tara Leweling Household Tara Shelton Household Ted Mora Household Terrence Heidenreiter And Jeanne Rabel Household Thaddeus Dickens Household Tharon Johnson Household The Boeing Company The New York Community Trust Thomas Finnerty Household Thomas Mckissick Household Thomas O'Hara Household Tiffanv Rvan Household Todd Siegfried Household Tracey Vining Household Travis Klann Household Tremaine Wright Household Tvler Dahl Household Valencia Pete Household Valerie Glass Household Venkata Atluri Household Veronica Lamkin Household Veronica Lively Household Veronica Sawyer Household Vickie King Household Victoria Santos Household Vincent Loretoni Household Vivian King Household Wavne Green Household Wayne Johnson Household Wendy Salmon Household William Andreas Household William Austin Household William Cunningham Household William Gil Household William Marting Household William Nicholas Household William Owen Household William Shoehigh Household

William Shoehigh Househo Winifred Waterbury Household Woodfin Yuk-Hong Ting Household

Zach Beckmann Household





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