



Clear PathTM
FOR VETERANS
NEW ENGLAND
SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY HOME[®]

Annual Report
2020



The background of the page is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag. The stars and stripes are visible, with the blue field containing white stars on the left side and the red and white stripes extending towards the right. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Our Mission

Clear Path for Veterans New England (Clear Path NE) is a 501(c)3 established in 2017 with one mission – to build a safe, supportive and respectful place for Veterans to seek the help and resources they need in order to successfully integrate into their communities. The Family is an integral part of this and the first line of defense in upholding wellness.

Clear Path NE has signed a licensing agreement with Clear Path for Veterans New York and will work in tandem to provide programs and services that mirror their holistic approach to Veteran care. Clear Path NY will provide assistance, training and mentoring to support Clear Path NE to provide programs and services that work.

There has been a growing recognition that we, as a nation, and as individual communities, need to do more to support our Veterans as they leave military service and return to civilian life. Clear Path's vision is to create a community that understands and supports the journey home for our Veterans and their families and inspires other communities to do the same.

Letter From Executive Director:



Addressing Veteran Health and Wellness takes special care and attention to detail. This is particularly true when supporting the most vulnerable populations, like Veterans and First Responders. Clear Path for Veterans New England (Clear Path NE) is a 501(c)3 established in 2017 with the mission to build a safe, supportive and respectful place for Veterans to seek the help and resources they need to successfully integrate into their communities.

One of most exciting accomplishment for 2020 is the completion of the Journey Home Capital Project. Completion of the capital project will increase capacity in terms of employment, community and volunteer engagement, peer to peer support, delivery of additional wellness services and increased placement of service and emotional support dogs.

Our staff worked hard this year to create a community that understands and supports the journey home for Veterans and their families and inspires other communities to do the same. While COVID provided many challenges, we were ready and responded immediately by opening popup empowerment Centers to distribute food to the most vulnerable in the population.

The key strategic goals of Clear Path NE include: (1) A more **effective and productive transition and integration** to civilian life for Veterans and their families (2) A cohesive group of partners that collaborate to **help accelerate achievement** of and support their mission (3) **Through educative outreach efforts; Strengthen the bond** between general public/communities and Veterans (4) **Sustain** and remain flexible in meeting and anticipating the needs of the Veteran population

The key to connecting Veterans with these resources is outreach efforts designed to gather data and information to meet their needs within the community. The wellness focus recognizes the life long journey that can be embraced by all members of the community and provides a roadmap to guide the development and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services they offer. Clear Path NE serves not only the existing Veteran population in New England, but also military members prior to their separation from service to facilitate successful integration back into civilian life.

Clear Path NE is working with partners across many different sectors, including higher education, for-profit healthcare, governmental, and more. This network allows for a truly comprehensive approach to Veteran health and wellness that fills each piece of the continuum of care and addresses different factors that elevate suicide risk such as, homelessness, financial challenges and substance use and more.

Donna Bulger

Vice President/Executive Director

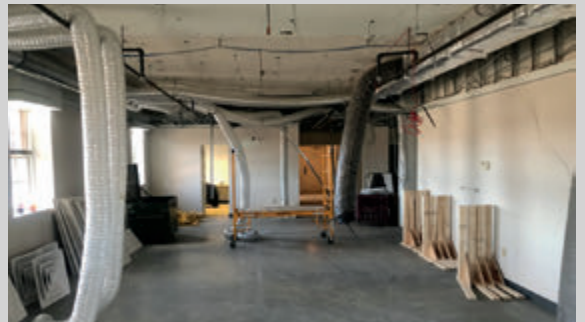
Clear Path for Veterans New England

The Journey Home Capital Project

In July of 2018 Clear Path for Veterans New England purchased the Historic 21,000 square ft former Army Headquarters/Hospital building at 84 Antietam St, Devens, MA. Our capital project is complete with the exception of additional site work that needs to wait until the spring. This project allows us to expand our program and service offerings while maintaining the historical presence and nature of the building.

The building is on the National Historic Register and all renovations plans comply with requirements of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Completion of the capital project will increase capacity in terms of employment, community and volunteer engagement, peer to peer support, delivery of additional wellness services and increased placement of service and emotional support dogs.

The project includes an industrial size teaching kitchen and the family style dining area, office areas, conference room, dedicated mental health support area, wellness areas and service dog training area. The project will bring the building to full American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance including a new entry way and installation of an elevator.



Meeting Basic Needs in the Community

Partner Highlight



North Central
Massachusetts



Food Insecurity;

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, Clear Path for Veterans New England has been actively responding to the needs of local Military, Veterans and their families. With support from donors, partners and Community Foundations we have been able to continue operations and do more to reach the families that are being impacted the most. Elderly Veterans are among the most vulnerable in our communities and we have been there to assist providing much needed food, supplies and wellness check ins. Our Peer support team continues outreach efforts and are being called on to provide assistance with housing, financial, benefit and employment services. Our strong community connections are essential as we work together to rebuild and thrive in this new era. The COVID 19 crisis has increased the demand for food items and Clear Path has been able to supply its Veteran Service partners and guide them in the establishment of pop-up empowerment centers in communities with known underserved population of Veterans. Food boxes have been distributed to over 150 cities and towns. The program has been so popular Clear Path is contacted by Veterans Service Organizations on a daily basis with the identification of new sites. Each distribution site follows Clear Path designed registration procedures which enables accounting and tracking not only the distribution but also the demographics. Of note, 62% of the Veterans that receive a food box are over 60 and 20% are families that have children under 2.



We are proud members of the Bob Woodruff Foundation's (BWF) local partner network, increasing the collaborative capacity of our local community to achieve optimal well-being for veterans and their families. As a backbone organization with support from BWF, we collaborate with other organizations in our region to increase our collective impact on improving outcomes for veterans and their families after they transition from military service. Our partnership with BWF has resulted in over \$55,000 in funding since June 2020 as well as numerous opportunities to network with our regional and national peers.



Volunteers

Over 525 people volunteered over 5,027 hours to CPNE. Events include Food Distribution, Senior Barbecue, Holiday Food and Toy Drive, Thanksgiving food distribution, Building Support, Canine Fostering, and Event Support

“Volunteering at Clear Path for Veterans New England is always a fun and rewarding experience. While volunteering at events, painting at the building, helping pack and distribute food boxes and more I have met many veterans and their families. I am inspired daily by their stories and always look forward to the next opportunity to give back to this community.”

-Maria Santucci



“When I heard about Clear Path and their mission to support the veteran community, I wanted to help out. I became a weekly volunteer and I truly enjoy it. My volunteer work helps in a small way and is always appreciated by the Clear Path staff.”

-Helen Grasso

“I have been a volunteer with Clear Path since they started in 2017 and love being part of such a hardworking and dedicated group of people. They go above and beyond for all Veterans, and as a veteran myself it personally helps me to continue my service by helping other veterans”

-Scott Germain- SGM USA (RET)





Service Dog Program

The service Dog program is to help those Veterans and current military service members with a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Canine pairs are trained to assist the Veteran/MSM with PTSD, MST and/or TBI to learn to recognize such things as elevated heart rate and quickness of breath or disturbed sleep. The canine pairs also learn how to mitigate these issues by such methods as waking their owner from a nightmare, maintaining their owner's personal space in public settings, and offering a soothing presence that can help the owner regain composure and control.



9 SERVICE DOG
HANDLER PAIRS
IN SERVICE



18 SERVICE DOGS
IN TRAINING



32 VETERANS
TOOK BASIC
OBEDIENCE



12 VETERANS TOOK
INTERMEDIATE
OBEDIENCE



7 VETERANS TOOK
GCC TEST



13 VETERANS TOOK
PUPPY CLASS



6 VETERANS
DID A 1 ON 1
CONSULTATION



Service Dog in Training, Krazor

Canine Program

The Canine Program also officers for Veterans, Military Service members and their families, training for their own personal dogs as well. Clear Path for Veterans offers a puppy class as well as our Red, White, and Blue classes. These classes will assist in obedience to help make your pets more a part of the family instead of running the family.



Developing Warrior Reset Activities:

Peer Facilitated Flag Building Workshops

One day a month Clear Path for Veterans New England facilitate a flag building workshop with a master woodworker. The highly rated all day workshop provides four Veterans the chance to escape their routines and create a work of art that they can proudly display.

One of the key mental health benefits of woodworking is enhancement of self-esteem. Participants are guided through the woodworking process and are given creative license to make the project their own. The day requires intense focus and precision work. When it all comes together there is great pride and joint praise for a job well done.

The mental health value of the Build a Flag woodworking art therapy project is evident in the positive feedback we receive. During the 8-hour workshops participants plan their project, measure parts and pieces needed, cut the pieces, fit them together, sand, stain, and paint the final product. They learn shop safety procedures and are introduced to new tools. The comradery of the team working together as they focus on the individual pieces is very satisfying. The intense focus needed to complete the flag has participants forgetting about the outside world

The day ends with a group photo that captures four new friends with smiles all around. Brandon Bregel, Clear Path's Peer to Peer lead participates in each workshop and through the program develops community contacts that become part of our network of Veterans looking out for Veterans. Despite the challenges this year, Brandon successfully facilitated workshops for 44 Veterans, and each have created their own flag.



"The project was the first woodworking task I have done in many years. The pride of making a Flag out of wood from start to end makes the project even more important. The class was almost like therapy installing pride and self-worth. I would definitely encourage any veteran to take the class."

-Charles Ellis, U.S. Army Veteran

"It was a great experience. Lance is an excellent teacher and his wood shop is therapeutic. From the warm welcome to the final clear coat, Lance provides instruction with humor. His passion to help veterans through his trade shows. I love my flag and can't thank Lance enough for the experience. I would really like to thank Clear Path for this awesome opportunity."

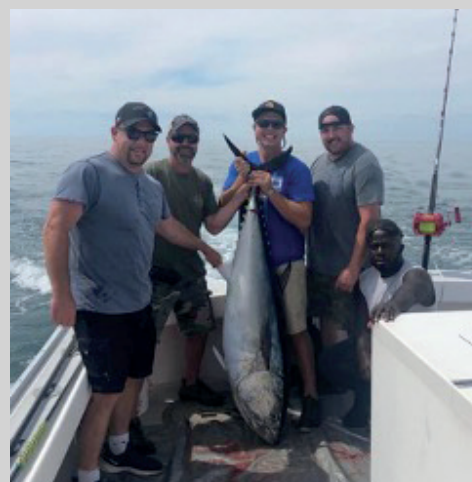
-Deborah Bezanson, U.S. Army Veteran



More Warrior Reset Activities:

New Hampshire Fishing Trip: Over the summer our Peer Program hosted 10 Veterans on two fishing trips on the boat Fair Warning leaving from New Castle New Hampshire. On both trips the weather was great. The day at sea alone provided an opportunity to de stress, particularly given the COVID environment. On trip number one the team had the experience of a lifetime - reeling in a Tuna! The excitement of working together as a team to reel in the special catch provided an unforgettable experience. On the second trip the team was not as lucky – yet still enjoyed a full day of enjoyment and comradery. We look forward to hosting more fishing trips with this crew next season.

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Mountain Biking: Clear Path for Veterans New England purchased 6 cycles and periodically hosts “Socially Distant” ride on local Bike Trails. Veterans bring their own cycles or use one of ours and ride the combination of gravel, natural and paved wooded trails. Clear Path provides cycles, and assistance with fitting you to your cycle. Participants are encouraged to ride as much as they want in the time given. Generally, we select terrain that is rated at beginner/intermediate. Next season we intend to expand to include Family Members.

Participants were required to wear a face mask, except during physical exertion with appropriate distancing.

In partnership with **North Each Passage,**
Veterans and First Responders Healthcare
and Swim with a Mission we provided
259 instances of Recreations and Therapy
Activities **Serving 108 Veterans**
and Family Members

Communities & Task Forces

Continuum of Care Homelessness Assistance Program, Balance of State MA-516: Clear Path serves as appointed member of the Board. Clear Path representative actively participates monthly on the Balance of States Veteran Advisory Board as well as Balance of State Advisory Board.

Coordinated Outreach and Engagement Team Taskforce, Lowell, MA: Mary Shannon Thomas, LICSW Director of Homelessness Initiatives in the city of Lowell requested Clear Path participation to represent Veteran population. Signed MOU in place as Task Force participant with a focus to end homelessness amongst veterans in the City of Lowell. Participate in periodic meetings.

Chelmsford Housing Authority: (Partners on the Shirley Meadows Project). Clear Path has a signed MOU to participate in the Supportive Services Sub Committee. Clear path assisted in the planning of the first Regional forum in the Northeast, bringing community providers and VA together to discuss the Supportive Services available in the Northeast. Attended first regional forum and presented on Clear Path Mission and Vision for the future. Established multiple contacts in the Ayer community Housing Authority. Identified 7 Veterans and assisted in application process for Shirley Meadows Project.

7 Veterans and assisted in application process for Shirley Meadows Project.

VA Bedford Mini-Empowerment Center: Established an Empowerment center at the VA in Bedford BLDG 5. Currently filled with non-perishables and winter coats. Established a relationship with Volunteer Services which holds a Food Pantry day for Veterans and Family Members. This rolling pantry sees up to 300 families a month.

This rolling pantry sees up to 300 families a month.

VAMC Bedford Emergency Bed Program: Clear Path continued to assist homeless veterans currently residing in the emergency bed program at the VAMC Bedford with continued Peer support with the housing applications for Shirley Meadows. Total of 7 veterans to date referred to this project. Also provided food Pantry services to 6 of 10 veterans currently in the Emergency and Transitional Housing Programs program. Of particular note, providing assistance to elderly Veterans in homeless programs receives priority.

This rolling pantry sees up to 300 families a month.

Special Spotlight: Methuen Cares: Methuen Cares is an initiative which Clear Path for Veterans New England fostered, implemented and community volunteers have adopted within the City of Methuen. Clear Path NE has been able to provide over 2400 units of food, either perishable or non-perishable to the veteran community and those in the Merrimack Valley that were in need. This initiative was timely due the retirement of their Veterans Service Officer, Clear Path NE was able to provide needed services to the Veterans in the community on behalf of the City of Methuen. During this time, Clear Path NE developed and implemented a much-needed Community Based Needs Assessment for Veterans and families in the community. This was able to highlight the most needed services or needs in the veteran population while the city searched for their new Veteran Services Director. This survey was welcomed by the city as well as the Veteran Community. This Methuen Cares initiative has helped Clear Path NE to develop new relationships with community providers or Veteran agencies within Methuen and across the Merrimack Valley.

Provided over 2400 units of food, either perishable or non-perishable to the veteran community



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FOR VETERANS
NEW ENGLAND



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