



Your Investment in Our Mission

Winter 2020



A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Over the last year, our world has been completely altered by the effects of COVID-19. Our social support systems have been decimated, and loneliness and isolation continue to rise, particularly for our nation's veterans.

At the same time, the communities in which we serve are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic—particularly around issues of food insecurity. Lines of cars snaking for miles to pick up food from local pantries, food banks, and schools have become commonplace. Since the beginning of the pandemic, rates of household food insecurity have doubled, providing a stark reminder of the continued need.

Throughout 2020, The Mission Continues' veteran leaders stepped up to create opportunities for others to come out of isolation to connect to each other—both virtually and in person—and to serve in support of Operation Nourish, a nationwide campaign to combat food insecurity. Because of your support, during the 4th quarter of 2020 alone, we logged more than 1,200 activations on the ground through 200 service projects, providing over 7,200 hours of service in communities.

In a single day, our Atlanta Platoon distributed more than 400 boxes of food and 800 gallons of milk, impacting 1,290 families. And in Los Angeles, our Platoon has worked with the East Side Riders Bicycle Club to serve 38,221 meals to local families whose children have been out of school since late March.

Thank you for your dedication to our mission to connect veterans with under-resourced communities. Because of partners like you, we are building a movement that empowers veterans to continue their service in these uncertain times and empowers communities with veteran talent, skills, and preparedness to generate visible impact.

Charlie Mike,



Mary Beth Bruggeman

At The Mission Continues, we're on a mission to connect veterans with under-resourced communities. Our programs deploy veteran volunteers to work alongside nonprofit partners and community leaders to improve educational resources, tackle food insecurity, foster neighborhood identity, and more.



Lorena Gonzalez works alongside Miami Platoon members.

Lorena's Story

No one was fully prepared for this moment. But in a year marked by unrelenting wave after wave of COVID-19 outbreaks, lockdowns, social isolation, and a social justice reckoning, veterans across the country have stepped up to serve once again.

Trained through their military experience, veterans have the ingenuity, resilience, and resolve to meet the challenges 2020 threw at them. Through The Mission Continues, these veteran leaders, like Lorena Gonzalez, leader of the Miami Platoon, are empowered to do what they do best—go where they are needed most.

When she separated from the U.S. Navy, after serving as an aircraft mechanic for P3 Orions during Operation Enduring Freedom, Lorena says, ***"I had a two-month-old and nowhere to go but my aunt's house"***.

Over the next several years, Lorena faced both mental and social challenges, and she needed a support system to transition from military to civilian life. And through the Florida International University, Lorena found The Mission Continues.

"It was the first time since my separation that I felt like I was home".

This turning point empowered Lorena to make a difference. Now Lorena serves as Platoon Leader for the Miami Platoon. She is an advocate for women in the military and was recently recognized during the Miami Dolphins' Salute to Service for her work with the Platoon.

Of her fellow Platoon members, Lorena says, ***"They teach us to have courage, to have duty, to have honor, to have loyalty, to have commitment. They teach us to be there for one another"***.

Charlie Mike. *This military term is code for Continue Mission—pushing through adversity no matter the difficulties.*



OPERATION NOURISH



The Miami Platoon teamed up with Bridge to Hope to tackle food insecurity as part of Operation Nourish.



Miguel Vasquez serves alongside community partners at a food drive in South Los Angeles.

“Box after box, crate after crate—fruits, vegetables, non-perishables—nourishment to feed families in need, make their way into 250 bags. The food drive in Compton, California, draws families from all over the city of Los Angeles to collect what they need. Our food drive in South LA has been around for thirty years—it didn’t start in March, it just got busier, and the lines continue to get longer.”

~ Miguel Vasquez

US Marine Corps Veteran, The Mission Continues Volunteer and Leader



The Chicago Platoon helps out at the Windsor Park Lutheran Church Food Bank.



Members of the Seattle Platoon came out to support the Laos and Hmong communities to unload and load nearly half a ton of food pallets for distribution to food insecure Community members.

We empower veterans to continue their service as part of a nationwide movement to transform communities, leading to our outcomes in connectedness, personal growth and community impact.



We are proud to have support from The Boeing Company for OPERATION NOURISH, mobilizing veterans in service of combating food insecurity.

You helped activate veteran leaders alongside community members in **7,217** hours of service from October through December 2020.

Executed **200**
Service Platoon
Events



Engaged
1,271 Service
Platoon Event
Participants



Empowered **221**
Participants at
Operation
Bayou City Blitz



Completed **28** impactful service projects through five days of service
at Mass Deployment: **Operation Bayou City Blitz in Houston**

Virtually engaged **70** veteran
leaders through the Service
Leadership Corps



Launched the Second Cohort
of the **Women Veterans**
Leadership Program



In the fall of 2020, we conducted our **ANNUAL PLATOON LEADER SURVEY**. Nearly all participants would recommend The Mission Continues to others, and **100%** said that service gives them a sense of purpose.

RESULTS

91%

feel more
connected with
other veterans

89%

feel more
connected with
The Mission Continues

97%

feel they have the
ability to make a
difference in their
community

97%

feel part of a
cause larger
than themselves

91%

have a greater
sense of purpose

89% are passionate about their platoon's mission



FEEDBACK FROM THE SERVICE PLATOON LEADER SURVEY

"I'm thankful that The Mission Continues gave me a chance to find my purpose while I'm trying to redefine who I am." ~ Anonymous

"It gives me a reason to look forward to the weekend every month."



Pittsburgh Platoon members lay wreaths in partnership with Wreaths Across America

Service Platoons

- Support for our Service Platoon Program from **Prudential Financial, Inc., The Walt Disney Company, Wounded Warrior Project, The Kendeda Fund, and Starbucks Corporation** have enabled platoon members to continue to serve in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These platoon members grew as community leaders, creating connections to drive change efforts in their local communities.
- The generosity of our supporters has enabled platoon members to continue to serve in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These platoon members grew as community leaders, creating connections to drive change efforts in their local communities.



In honor of Veterans Day, Platoon Leaders planned 33 events in 18 cities,

engaging more than 250 individuals in service.

Platoons across the country participated in wreath-laying ceremonies in partnership with **Wreaths Across America** in December.



For the final project of Operation Bayou City Blitz, we were at the Veterans Retreat Center where we turned a vacant concrete slab into a beautiful basketball court.

MASS DEPLOYMENT: OPERATION BAYOU CITY BLITZ

Thanks to the flexibility of our Mass Deployment partners, including the **Bob Woodruff Foundation** and **The Qatar Harvey Fund**, **USAA Foundation**, **JPMorgan Chase & Co.**, and **Lowe's**, we executed our fifth annual Mass Deployment in Houston in November. While it looked different this year, unchanged was our veterans' resolve to support communities hit hardest by Hurricane Harvey. Veterans, supporters, and partners safely gathered in small groups at project sites that left a significant impact on communities like Independence Heights and Gulfton.

WOMEN VETERANS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Thanks to support from the **BAE Systems**, **The Boeing Company**, **CarMax**, **The Coca-Cola Foundation**, **Robert R. McCormick Foundation**, and **Lockheed Martin** we launched the second Cohort virtually on December 9 with more than 70 women veterans. These leaders have joined a growing movement to redefine what it means to be a woman veteran. By the end of this one-of-a-kind program, participants are empowered to lead the charge for gender equality in their communities.



SLC Cohort Three members with SLC Advisor, Kathy Mackie in the field.

SERVICE LEADERSHIP CORPS

Support from the **A. James & Alice B. Clark Foundation**, **The Marcus Foundation**, and the **Acorn Hill Foundation** enabled The Mission Continues to create a new model to train future Platoon Leaders as community-based leaders. SLC Cohort Three was the first Cohort to launch under this model. Meeting twice this quarter, participants gained knowledge in platoon leadership skills such as service platoon operations, project management, resource allocation, tools and project safety, and event management. This Cohort will graduate in February 2020.



GROWING THE MOVEMENT OF VETERAN LEADERS

Every week since the COVID-19 pandemic began our Los Angeles Platoon has supported a food distribution out of the Compton VFW for community members in need. Since March, demand has increased by 400%, and **Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex**, recently joined the Platoon to pack meal kits alongside veteran volunteers.



Former Fellow and former Houston Platoon Leader Oriana Franklin overcame many obstacles in transitioning to civilian life. Her dedication to service never wavered, and it is a thrill to see her honored for her hard work and resilience as a Gift of a Lifetime recipient by Lifetime and **Stand4Heroes** with the **Bob Woodruff Foundation**.

We were proud to be featured at Stand Up for Heroes alongside our supporters, including Jon Stewart. The event featured some of the biggest

names in music and comedy who joined forces to raise money for the **Bob Woodruff Foundation**.

This organization provides resources and support for veterans and military families and is a long-time partner of The Mission Continues.

We are thankful for partners like Navy Federal Credit Union and USAA, who featured The Mission Continues in their Veteran's Day campaigns, raising awareness through emails, social and traditional media while encouraging donations and volunteerism from employees and customers.



THANK YOU TO OUR MISSION PARTNERS



Thanks to Bob Woodruff and his son Mack for joining us at Jane Long Futures Academy High School/Las Americas Middle School for the first weekend of Operation Bayou City Blitz.



We're grateful for our partnership with Lowe's Home Improvement, who produced limited edition "military buckets" to honor Veterans Day along with a donation to The Mission Continues.



NYC Platoon members supported the veteran community with a socially distanced parade.

This past year has taught us many lessons. The importance of connection, purpose, sacrifice and impact. No matter what 2020 threw at them, our veteran leaders rose to the challenge, grew as community leaders and advocates. The ability and desire to adapt and overcome is part of a veteran's DNA, and while we have had to redesign our in-person events, our veteran leaders never stopped serving. As we enter a new year, the need is urgent and clear—to keep veterans connected to fellow veterans and to underserved communities. **Charlie Mike.**



The first weekend of Operation Bayou City Blitz was a huge success with projects at Jane Long Futures Academy High School / Las Americas Middle School and Blodgett Urban Gardens



Our Oahu Platoon teamed up with our friends at Operation Gratitude to help them thank 20,000 veterans with care packages to all 50 states in celebration of Veteran's Day.

WAYS TO ENGAGE

1. Volunteer with our **Service Platoons'** efforts on the ground.
2. Your generosity is essential as we continue our vital work in communities. Your donation provides the necessary resources we will need to rebuild and fortify our communities after this devastating pandemic.
3. Support our work at donate.missioncontinues.org/invest.

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