

THE MISSION  CONTINUES

OPERATION

WESTSIDE SURGE



2017 IMPACT REPORT



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When we started planning for our second Mass Deployment, we had two goals: Massively infuse resources into one city, and train and equip 65+ veterans with the tools, resources and motivation to return home to their own communities and take their leadership and engagement to the next level. Both goals aligned to one vision: Veterans at the heart of meaningful and measurable impact in our cities. Knowing that Westside Atlanta is a multilayered community with areas of expressed need, a rich history and a strong foundation of engaged community members, it was a natural setting for that impact, and Operation Westside Surge was born.

For a year, our team prepared for a week of marathon-style service projects. Community members and partners answered the call to join us, from project site partners to guest speakers and special event hosts. We heard from the Westside Future Fund, local elected leaders, and funders who were true partners throughout. We toured the BeltLine, trained at the Atlanta Tool Bank, and swam with whale sharks. Above all, we mobilized a veteran volunteer force from across the country, led by a team of 10 ambassadors - graduates of our first mass deployment in Detroit - and channeled their skills, passion, and commitment to service.

Together, we dug in for five mud-caked and sweat-soaked days of service, unified in our desire to create long-term impact in Atlanta's Westside. From June 8-15, 2017, 69 veteran volunteers, along with community partners and local volunteers, created play spaces, laid sod in the pouring rain,

and listened as community members shared words of inspiration and encouragement. In total, volunteers provided nearly 7,500 hours of service, but the greatest gains could be seen in the connections made among veterans and non-veterans alike throughout the week.

Our inaugural mass deployment, Operation Motown Muster, proved a concept and a model for service. With our second mass deployment, Operation Westside Surge, we took the program to the next level, focusing our efforts on the learning and development that will seed future leaders.

Operation Westside Surge may be behind us, but the work continues in Atlanta. As we move into the year ahead, we are committed to fostering the bonds we built and continuing the projects we created. As for the future, from the planning of our 2018 Mass Deployment to our ongoing weekly service projects, you'll find us Reporting for Duty in cities across the country.

In service,



Mary Beth Bruggeman
Executive Director, Southeast Region





ABOUT THE MISSION CONTINUES

MISSION

The Mission Continues empowers veterans who are adjusting to life at home to find purpose through community impact.

PROGRAMS & IMPACT

The Mission Continues has operations across the country engaging veteran volunteers to address critical challenges facing underserved communities.

It's a unique model that creates a positive impact for veterans and the communities they serve.

VISION

We deploy veterans on new missions in their communities, so that their actions will inspire future generations to serve.

WHY ATLANTA?

Atlanta has a proud history — and has a FUTURE — worth fighting for.

As with many urban areas in America, Atlanta’s Westside residents endure daily struggles related to underresourced schools, depopulation, blight and unemployment. Such poverty-related trials are experiences that many veterans last encountered during deployments to countries in crisis.

Veterans are a powerful force when called upon to serve. Using their skills, leadership, and experience, they worked alongside families and community partners in Atlanta — all of whom are working together to revitalize these neighborhoods through positive action and co-operation. Veterans’ skill sets can inspire residents to take pride in their city again to continue the mission after Operation Westside Surge. And with more than 200 active members of The Mission Continues engaged in community efforts across Atlanta — veteran leadership is at the heart of sustaining this work for years to come.

OBJECTIVES

Seed points of inspiration from one location to across the country in our veterans’ local communities;

- Provide a unique opportunity for veterans to serve in the community;
- Build capacity at the local level to make an impact with long lasting implications;
- Recruit veterans to lead and participate in programs at The Mission Continues; and
- Drive compelling stories of service inspiring others to serve.

WHAT IS A MASS DEPLOYMENT?



The Mission Continues Mass Deployment program is a team-based event that mobilizes veterans alongside local partners and volunteers in a single city over the course of a week-long project. We select cities with a need for revitalization and the potential for sustainable growth, ensuring our efforts and resources have a visible impact within the communities we serve. Our purpose: To seed future leaders and motivate more veterans to embrace new roles of service in their community — while inspiring others to serve.

Over the course of one week, The Mission Continues deployed 69 veterans to “The A” to take part in a week-long service mission to tackle some of the pressing challenges facing Atlanta’s Westside Community.

MATTIE FREELAND PARK

JUNE 10, 2017

Mattie Freeland was a longtime resident of English Avenue in Atlanta. In a neighborhood that suffered greatly during and after the crack epidemic of the 1980's with violent crime and blight, Mattie was a fixture of positivity and love. She was considered a grandmother to all in her community. While she lived, Mattie envisioned a peaceful and beautiful gathering place in her neighborhood. After her death in 2008 at age 93, the community rallied to create Mattie Freeland Park. During our day of service at Mattie Freeland Park, youth from the community come out to help paint murals, lay sod, install a swing set and more - all to create the park that Mattie had envisioned.

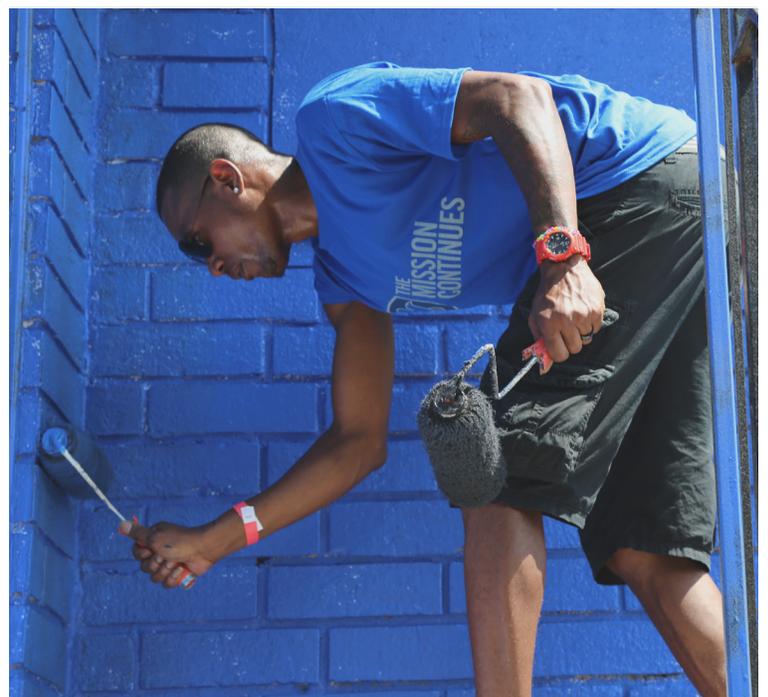


MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

COMPLETED:
200 FT OF EDGING
100 YARDS OF FENCING

BUILT:
6 PICNIC TABLES
5 MENDOCINO BENCHES
4 GARDEN BEDS
4 TRASH & RECYCLING RECEPTACLES
2 PATIOS
1 PLAYGROUND

PAINTED:
1 COMMUNITY MURAL



TRULY LIVING WELL

JUNE 11, 2017

Truly Living Well is a leader in urban agriculture, seeking to connect people to the land through education, training, and the demonstration of economic success. They are strategically located in a food desert within Atlanta's Westside, and work to bring the community together through their programming, open landscape, and activities focused on the theme of fresh and healthy eating. There's a purpose behind each project at Truly Living Well. On our second day of Operation Westside Surge, our team was able to help give the farm a facelift.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

SPREAD:
20 YARDS COMPOST MULCH

BUILT:
OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER STAGE WITH
SEATING & WALKING PATH
12 BENCHES & SEATING AREAS
2 FARM TABLES
2 MOBILE CHALKBOARDS
1 TRELIS ROOF
1 CHICKEN COOP

PLANTED:
200+ FLOWERS, PLANTS, SHRUBS
TREES & BUSHES



ATLANTA BELTLINE WESTSIDE TRAIL

JUNE 12, 2017

The Atlanta BeltLine is a 22-mile network of multi-use trails that will, when completed in 2030, connect 45 neighborhoods in Atlanta in a loop around the city. The BeltLine includes streetcars and parks, and is built on old railroad corridors that encircle the city. The BeltLine's Westside Trail is a 3-mile corridor that runs through the Westside neighborhoods, and will open in late summer 2017. The trail includes a number of "bump out" green spaces that are currently just vacant lots, but are envisioned as gathering places, picnic areas, and gateways to the Westside Trail. Even when it started raining, The Mission Continues crew was committed to helping the BeltLine's vision come to life.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

REMOVED:
200 FT OF FENCING
130 FT OF FALLEN TREES, DEBRIS & OVERGROWTH

BUILT:
16 x 32 FT PERGOLA
16 FT PICNIC TABLE

LAI:
6,000 SQFT OF SOD

CREATED:
1/4 MILE MULCHED TRAIL PATH
1 GRANITE STAIRWAY



ENGLISH AVENUE CAMPUS

JUNE 13, 2017

The Mission Continues has a long-standing partnership with the Boys and Girls Club at Bellwood. They have hosted many of our fellows over the last year, and are also the partner site for the Atlanta 2nd Service Platoon. During Operation Westside Surge, our participants teamed up with the young leaders of the Boys and Girls Club's Keystone Club to transform a vacant lot owned by local councilwoman, Mable Thomas, known as English Avenue Campus into a vibrant space for widespread community use.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

BUILT:
26 BENCHES
5 FITNESS STATIONS
4 STONE GARDEN BEDS
4 SHADE STRUCTURES
4 STAGES
4 PICNIC TABLES
2 SETS OF BLEACHERS
2 PARK SIGNS
1 STAIRWAY

CREATED:
13 MURALS ON BOARDED WINDOWS
1 MUSIC WALL
400 FT WALKING PATH
SIDEWALK GAMES ON BLACKTOP



QUEST VETERANS VILLAGE

JUNE 14, 2017

Quest Community Development Organization offers permanent supportive housing to special needs homeless and low-income individuals. Quest's supportive services include financial planning, educational, and vocational training. The Quest communities include a Veterans Village; A 12-unit garden-style apartment complex reserved for veterans. Our Atlanta 1st Service Platoon, sponsored by both the Blank and Home Depot Foundations, is partnered with Quest and seeks to engage the residents of the Veterans' Village in service opportunities throughout the surrounding neighborhoods. During our day of service at Quest, we served alongside our partners and Quest residents to upgrade the housing development through landscaping, painting and the building of community spaces.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED:

LAID:
4,000 SQ. FT OF PINE STRAW

BUILT:
20 GARDEN BEDS
5 RAIN BARREL SYSTEMS
3 PRIVACY FENCES
3 MENDOCINO BENCHES
2 PINCIC TABLES
2 PERGOLAS

PAINTED:
1 COMMUNITY MURAL



VOICES FROM THE FIELD



COLE SHERMAN
Seattle 2nd Platoon

“Seeing the youth volunteering really made my week and seeing the positive impact it had on their lives for taking ownership in their community. Through mass deployment, which was my first The Mission Continues event, I gained a whole new sense of family and kick start to continue to serve. Since Operation Westside Surge, I have dove into my Platoon head first and am now part of leadership. My platoon focuses on helping at risk youth on the Tulalip Indian Reservation.”



AJ THOMPSON
St. Louis 2nd Platoon Leader

“What I took away from Operation Westside Surge is that I have a new family that works like a well-oiled machine. The different personalities along with the passion and work ethic was so infectious, simply put it was a camaraderie like no other. My plan is to take back some of the phenomenal ideas and skills learned from OWS and implement them right into my service platoon back home. Over the next month, my goal is to become even more active in the recruitment of veterans in my community. OWS gave me a broader understanding on why it’s imperative for veterans to lend their experiences to other service projects and other veterans outside of The Mission Continues.”



HEATHER CERESTE
Philadelphia 1st Platoon

“I crave to feel useful and belong to something bigger than myself designed to tangibly help the vulnerable. My volunteer work up until Operation Westside Surge, while enjoyable, hadn’t yet filled the void in me, or given me a new life’s purpose. I seek something more in my life, but, until OWS, wasn’t quite sure what. The OWS impact on me has been life-changing. The most enjoyable part was serving alongside other veterans, each with their own struggle, but all of us with the same heart—to continue to serve our country.”

FROM OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



ROB BRAWNER

Executive Director,
Atlanta BeltLine

“At its core, the Atlanta BeltLine is about making connections – connecting neighborhoods and the people who live in them to better health and improved economic opportunities. The opening of the Westside Trail later this year will connect residents with transit, schools, jobs, parks and more. The Mission Continues team played a vital role in helping us create a wonderful entrance onto this important new section of the Atlanta BeltLine that residents and other trail users will enjoy for years to come.”



STEPHEN CAUBY

Manager, Community
Partnerships Division at Atlanta
Regional Commission,
Mattie Freeland Park

“The Mission Continues helped us start to realize the ultimate plan for Mattie Freeland Park and what it can be for the English Avenue community. We struggled for years to improve the space on our own, but The Mission Continues gave us a huge shot in the arm to make quick progress. We’ve had countless neighbors stop by and comment, or offer encouraging words about the park. We are hosting a live jazz event tonight and we couldn’t have done that in our space before this project. Thank you to all the volunteers and partners who did this amazing work - we will always remember you!”



RASHID NURI

CEO/President,
Truly Living Well Center for
Natural Urban Agriculture

“After giving so much to our country, it was heartwarming to see so many veterans willing to give back to our community. Operation Westside Surge increased our capacity to expand food production, education and outreach. Our Collegetown Farm serves as a STEM learning lab for M. Agnes Jones Elementary and other schools. The volunteers created a 16 foot stage and outdoor classroom where we’ll teach over 500 children to grow food and environmental stewardship. In another area of the farm, veterans constructed raised beds to add 1,000 square feet of growing space that could produce over 2,000 pounds of food for our community.”

FROM OUR SUPPORTERS



STEVE CANNON

CEO,
AMB Group

“Creating meaningful, inclusive, long-lasting transformation in any community cannot be done by one group or one organization, which makes the devotion and all-out collective effort towards improvement of Atlanta’s historic Westside by The Mission Continues significant to the positive change happening on every block. The Blank Family of Businesses is deeply appreciative of their service to our country, to each of us, and to the residents of the Westside.”



HEATHER PRILL

Senior Manager, National
Partnerships & Atlanta
Hometown Giving,
The Home Depot

“The Home Depot Foundation was really excited about the opportunity to support Westside Surge with The Mission Continues. In Atlanta we focus on housing for veterans, arts, outdoor spaces, as well as healthcare. Being able to increase the visibility and usability of outdoor spaces with and for Westside residents is something that they can continue to utilize for years to come. We believe that with The Mission Continues, veterans will be able to make a huge difference on the Westside. We’ve been able to see the passion that they have for continuing to give back and continuing to serve, and just to watch them put that passion into action on the Westside is amazing.”

OUR IMPACT

WE ASKED OUR PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE AT OPERATION WESTSIDE SURGE. OF THOSE WHO RESPONDED:

100%

WOULD RECOMMEND THEIR EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS

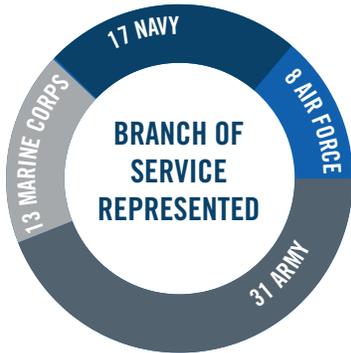
83%

REPORT PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION WESTSIDE SURGE TO CONTINUE TO SERVE AND/OR TO BECOME A LEADER

98%

REPORTED BEING SATISFIED WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE

96% BELIEVE THAT THEY MADE AN IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH THEIR EFFORTS



“I can adjust and move forward with confidence that my readjustment is on track. With other volunteer service organizations I show up, work, and go home. This introspection and interpersonal awareness is unique to The Mission Continues and, in my opinion, absolutely necessary for successful readjustment into society.”

— DWIGHT ENGLISH
DENVER, CO

94% BELIEVE THAT OPERATION WESTSIDE SURGE HELPED THEM TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SENSE OF PURPOSE.

“My Operation Westside Surge experience has taught me how to better understand myself and communicate with other veterans.”

— TONYA COOK
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

14,000 SQUARE FEET OF SOD
116 YARDS OF MULCH
200 GALLONS OF PAINT



875+ OPERATION VOLUNTEERS

NEARLY 7,500 COLLECTIVE HOURS SERVED



THE IMPACT OF OPERATION WESTSIDE SURGE IS EQUAL TO OVER

\$179,500

WORTH OF SERVICE IN OUR COMMUNITIES*

* Based on the Independent Sector's estimate of the average value of a volunteer hour (\$24.14 in 2016)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Operation Westside Surge generated strong media coverage, appearing in print, digital and radio features in national, local and military outlets. Placements included a pre-event feature story in the Atlanta Journal Constitution – which was picked up by the Associated Press and shared through more than 20 additional media outlets – along with onsite and post-event coverage – with overall media impressions totaling more than **107 million**.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SELECTION OF MEDIA OUTLETS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO PRE-EVENT AND EVENT COVERAGE:



The Miami Herald



SFGATE

MilitaryTimes



The Washington Times



Atlanta Falcons
@AtlantaFalcons

Following

"As the Westside rises, Atlanta rises."



SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

POTENTIAL REACH VIA OUR PARTNERS: 6,405,277

LARGEST AUDIENCE SHARED TO: 4,038,824

SOCIAL REACH: 435,988

REACH OF FACEBOOK LIVE: 73,200

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT: 3,469

INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT: INCREASE OF 114%

WEBSITE VISITS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA: INCREASE OF 37.28%



Kandi Burruss added a new photo.
June 9 · 🌐

Shout out @themissioncontinues! They're doing so many great things in the community. They'll be doing service projects over the next 5 days in the west side of Atl! Join them & follow them on IG! We're kicking off #WestsideSurge



Like Comment Share

885

Top Comments

OUR PARTNERS

Operation Westside Surge was made possible by the sponsorship and support of partners in Atlanta and from across the country. These partners were key to the success of the mission, providing financial support needed to house, train and deploy volunteers, equipping the team with the right tools, serving as vital connectors with other civic organizations and community leaders, and more. Their combined efforts empowered our team of veterans and community volunteers to take action and fuel a long-term, veteran-led operation in Atlanta's Westside.

PRESENTING SPONSORS



The Marcus Foundation, Inc
**THE ARTHUR M. BLANK
FAMILY FOUNDATION**



LEGACY IMPACT SPONSORS



DAILY SPONSOR

LOCKHEED MARTIN

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IN-KIND SUPPORT

BENJAMIN MOORE

COCA-COLA

HARDEE'S

SPARTANNASH

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



Operation Westside Surge's week of service is complete, but our long-term investment in the city of Atlanta surges onward. The veterans of the local service platoon are hard at work, maintaining the projects created during the mass deployment, fostering relationships with our local community partners and setting the stage for future projects, including another massive undertaking at the Future Foundation in South Atlanta.

The efforts of our team and local community volunteers are part of a larger, sustained operation in Atlanta — one that combines the impact of our Fellowship and Service Platoon Programs, and focuses these instances of service with the intensity and dedication needed to truly achieve transformational change. With the help of local boots on the ground, the progress made in Atlanta during Operation Westside Surge will continue to flood the city.

Our second mass deployment, Operation Westside Surge, was about focusing our effort into one area of the city most up for the challenge and developing leaders in service from across the country. This was truly an operation that strengthened a community, pushed a resilient team of veterans to new heights, and forged bonds for an ongoing operation that will keep veterans at the forefront of change in Atlanta for years to come. Until our next mass deployment, you'll find us on the reporting for duty on the frontlines of communities nationwide.

For more information on The Mission Continues, to apply for a Fellowship, or to join your local service platoon please visit: www.missioncontinues.org

To donate and help fuel our work please visit: www.missioncontinues.org/donate



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