



BUNKER BRIEFING

DECEMBER 2023

The Coffee Bunker serves military and veterans of all eras and branches of service. It is for officers and enlisted. It is for veterans of all races, religious preferences, cultures, education levels, and discharge status. Visit us at coffeebunker.org for more.



**From the Executive
Director**

Michael Horton, EdD (USAF)

Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Place

The Coffee Bunker is a special place for veterans and their families. For some it is a place of respite and care. For others a place for connection. For others a place to regain wholeness. For all it is a place to launch their next mission. Our logo expresses the energy, “Veterans Moving Forward.” In the truest sense of what a bunker is for, we maintain that “everybody needs a bunker!”

In 2023 we made significant improvements to the Bunker as that special place. Timely and creative upgrades were made to our exterior front, the lobby, the activity room, the pantry, and to the security system. The facility has never looked or felt better.

In 2024 be looking for improvements in our pantry area, sound system, and different office locations for staff.



Community

The Coffee Bunker is a special community. It is a unique expression of the Tulsa area's commitment to and concern for veterans and their families. The coffee is always fresh and hot. The Connection Table is open. A full complement of staff, volunteers, and other resource persons are ready to address the needs of all veterans and their families.

The Bunker's community is characterized by a unique culture. The culture of the Bunker is welcoming, affirming, encouraging, and challenging. When veterans embrace the culture and become part of it, they take an intentional step towards moving forward and toward wholeness.

In collaboration with the Veterans Administration, the Bunker hosted the first VA Coffee Social Hour.

In 2023 the Bunker community celebrated 8,555 visits by 1,376 veterans. Meals were shared, problems were solved, Vietnam veterans were appropriately honored, veterans were laid to rest, veterans in hospice received their flags, and friendships were both started and strengthened

A first: In collaboration with the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame, the Bunker inducted three veterans into the Oklahoma Hall of Honor. The inductees were Cpt. Cliff Richard (USA), Col. Raymond Knapp, Ret (USAF), and Sgt. Jim Lyall (USA).

In collaboration with the Veterans Administration, the Bunker hosted the first VA Coffee Social Hour. The purpose of this event is for hosts to make a special effort to invite veterans to a social event and help them establish new connections and friends.

In 2024 be looking for increasing numbers of veterans visiting the Bunker as we provide more opportunities for peer support. Peer support will be made available through our Social Work Intern, Chris Hotella, Peer Support Specialist from CREOKS, Quinton Smith, Peer Support Specialist from the VA, Al Hernandez, our four Chaplains, and all those at the Connection Table. Also available for peer support is Emmett Shannon from VA Whole Health.





Transition Services

The Coffee Bunker provides full range of services related to the needs of veterans who are making the transition from military life to civilian life. Our transition services program was strengthened significantly in capacity and capability with the hiring of Dr. Robby Hedrick as Director of Transition Services.

2023 Year in Review

- We hosted another professional development course in continuous improvement methodology, Lean Six Sigma. This course included student veterans, an operations officer for a major company in Tulsa, an entrepreneur and job seekers. Skill courses like these strengthen the resumes of veterans and support their career goals.
- The Coffee Bunker made history as the first Veterans Service Organization (VSO) in Oklahoma to host Soldier for Life, an event that has opened doors to unprecedented opportunities and collaborations. Soldier for Life is a US Army program supporting new veterans. We now have a collaborative relationship with the Army through Soldier for Life and through leadership at Ft. Sill. We've had the privilege of partnering with esteemed organizations such as Our Community Salutes and the Association of the United States Army, solidifying our commitment to empowering and supporting our veterans.
- In addition to our collaboration with the Army, we have taken the first steps to do so with the Air Force through the leadership at Tinker AFB. This year the Bunker was the only nonprofit organization invited to the

Tinker Air Force Base Job Club. Our work and presence at the event resulted in an invitation to return in 2024.

- The Coffee Bunker assisted 50 veterans with their education and training endeavors. Services ranged from career guidance, assistance with selecting schools, applying for financial aid, and GI Bill benefits. Coffee Bunker, in conjunction with Northeastern State University, provided continuing education in the Leadership Certificate program for seven veterans.
- Our enhanced social media campaigns have played a pivotal role in extending our reach far beyond the borders of Oklahoma. We've connected with and supported veterans from Boston, Minnesota, California, and many more locations, forging meaningful connections, and providing assistance where it is needed most.
- The community continues to support us by joining our growing alliance of corporate sponsors. Each new organization strengthens our alliance profile and prompts new veterans to consider Tulsa as a great place to start their civilian life.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to announce the kickoff of our inaugural event with Leadership Tulsa called Leadership Tulsa for Veterans. This signifies a new chapter in our journey, and we are eager to continue making a positive impact on the lives of veterans and their families.



Advocacy

The Coffee Bunker is active in its advocacy work for veterans. Here are some examples from 2023:

- We collaborated with State Representative Sheila Dills to get a bill passed giving veteran service organizations in Oklahoma sales tax exemption.
- We provided training to TCC RN students who have interest in working with veterans as patients. To date the Bunker has trained over 300 RN

students.

- We hosted and provided supervision to two MSW interns from OU.
- We are now working with Tulsa Transit Authority leadership to resolve bus stop issues related to making the Bunker more accessible to veterans who use public transportation.

In 2024 we will increase our advocacy through an expanded role for Debbie Drain as Community Relations Coordinator.



Awards and Recognitions

2023 was a banner year for Bunker recognition stories from all TV outlets. We appreciate the radio coverage we received from Jim Jeffries, Big Country Radio. The Bunker was featured in the November issue of Tulsa People and in the inaugural September issue of Scissortail magazine, and feature articles in the Tulsa World including front page, Sunday, December 17.

The Bunker was recognized as a finalist for the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits' ONE Award. We were noted as one of the top six nonprofit organizations and winner of the Education Award.

Funding Our Mission

To date in 2023, the Coffee Bunker has received over 950 financial contributions from foundations, corporations, organizations and individuals locally, regionally, and around the country to fund our programs. **Would it not be great to have 1000 financial donors?** If you have not yet donated, please join our family of donors. Help us benefit from a family of 1000 donors.

In addition, we have had over 800 product and food donors that helped to fill our food pantry, provided nutrition packs, clothing, hygiene products and other items for veterans. Coffee Bunker volunteers have donated thousands of work hours to organize, sort, package, feed and assist veterans in their transition journey.

We are so grateful to all our volunteers and donors for their support of our mission and for their support of each veteran who benefits personally. We could not do our work without your partnership and assistance.

Not on the Radar

Things the Bunker does for Veterans that are Little Known:

- We support families whose veteran deceases.
- We provide personal flags to veterans who are in hospice.
- When veterans decease and have no known family, we work with the funeral homes and the county to ensure they have proper burial at Ft. Gibson.
- We visit veterans in hospitals.

A Recent Story Not on the Radar

A few weeks ago, one of our homeless veterans was hospitalized in Tulsa and subsequently moved to a rehab facility in Henryetta. This was about a three-month process. It was thought that he would need to have his foot amputated. With no family nearby to support, Chaplains and staff from the Bunker have visited him regularly and provided clothes and other helpful items to support his long stay. He is now out of rehab but remains homeless. The Bunker and one local church are working together to make sure he has shelter for the immediate time.

This is just one story. The Bunker addresses multiples of these situations annually. Perhaps you would like to help us in our support of veterans who are trying to manage serious difficulties with a last-minute donation.

We Love Last-Minute Donors!

Are You a Last-Minute Donor? Here are six quick ways to donate to the Bunker before the year ends:

1. Donate online at coffebunker.org
2. Mail a check to Coffee Bunker, 6365 E 41st St, Tulsa, OK, 74135
3. Sign up for Holiday Stars & Stripes, coffebunker.org/holiday-flags
4. Purchase merchandise from the Coffee Bunker lobby
5. Donate non-perishable food items to the Bunker Food Pantry
6. Bring a donation to the Coffee Bunker, 6365 E 41st St, Tulsa, OK, 74135