



# Veterans Furniture Center Newsletter - New Year's 2020

Veteran Run - All Volunteer

Helping Formerly homeless veterans return to society



2019 has been a hectic year for the Veterans Furniture Center, and it is an excellent time to look back at all that has happened, as well as to look forward to what we see in front of us. Before we get into that, here is a special message from our Executive Director, Bill Conner.

## Happy New Year



It has been a great year for the Veterans Furniture Center. We were able to deliver brand new furniture and other household items to 325 veterans who transitioned from homelessness to permanent housing in the Phoenix area.

Thank you to all our volunteers, our donors, and especially our corporate sponsors for their help in making this happen. We look forward to another successful year and helping another 300+ veterans make a home for themselves and get off the streets.

**Bill Conner, President, and Executive Director, Veterans Furniture Center**

## 2019, The Year in Review

It has been a challenging year. Our volunteers have stepped up to the plate and delivered, and our supporters, both continuing and new in 2019, made success possible. Here is a look at just some of all that happened in 2019.

### A sharper Focus

A year ago we reported to you that 2018 had been our year of transition, where we moved from picking up used furniture, that people were discarding, and making that available to veterans in need; to our new model of buying all new furniture and household goods and providing a complete kit to formerly homeless veterans transitioning into permanent housing.



Since assuming control of the VFC in 2016, it has been the vision of the Board members and volunteers to seek out and help the veterans who need our help the most to successfully transition to permanent housing and start a new life. We want to apply our limited resources where they will do the most good by helping the most destitute veterans, those who have nothing, those who without our help are at high risk of returning to the streets or worse. Under our new model, we provide a complete kit of all new furniture and household goods to specifically meet the individual needs of each veteran and sized to fit in their small apartments.

These veterans have nothing and, in most cases, have not had anything significant of their own in a long time. Under such conditions, it is easy to lose hope for the future and fall in despair. To these veterans, we deliver not only furniture but hope, hope for a better future. We let them know we care and give them reasons to strive to return successfully to society.

With the advent of all new furniture, we started to see an increase in the number of veterans referred to us who didn't meet our criteria. Some, but not all, caseworkers started to send us veterans who already had furniture and just wanted new stuff, or veterans who had a means of support. In early 2019 we sharpened our focus. All the veterans we serve now, must be referred to us by the VA and be enrolled in the HUD-VASH program, a federal program designed to address the most destitute veterans. The VA provides these veterans with healthcare, ongoing counseling, and subsidized housing in the form of small, unfurnished apartments. There are no government funds to provide these vets with furniture or household goods, and we usually find them alone, in an empty apartment, and sleeping on the floor. These are precisely the veterans we are trying to reach, those who, without our help, are at very high risk of returning to the streets..

This doesn't mean we have completely abandoned our former social service partners. Many of their veterans qualify for the HUD-VASH program. It just means that the caseworkers must work with the VA, and it is the VA HUD-VASH team who will refer these veterans to us.

In mid-2019, we also made an agreement with the Arizona Department of Veterans Services to support veterans on their TIP (Transition in Place) program. Under this arrangement, ADVS refers the veteran to us and pays for the furniture. We provide all the labor and cover all the overhead.

Even with these restrictions, we assisted three-hundred and twenty-five destitute veterans in 2019, the vast majority of them on the VA's HUD-VASH program. We deliver to every veteran referred to us by the VA or ADVS without further screening or discrimination of any kind.

We are now assured that we are helping those who need our help the most, and you, our supporters, can be assured that every dollar is going where it is most needed and will do the most good.

### **Deliveries Fifty-Two Weeks of the Year**

Homelessness never takes a holiday, and neither do our volunteers. Since 2016 the VFC has delivered furniture and household goods to needy veterans fifty-two weeks of the year. If you ever want to experience this for yourself, you are always welcome to join our volunteers on one or more of their weekly deliveries. Simply send an email to [Volunteers@VeteransFurnitureCenter.org](mailto:Volunteers@VeteransFurnitureCenter.org) and let us know. We will contact you and get you more details.

### **The VFC Delivers**



During the summer of 2019, we had a change of command. Colonel Bruce Pagel, who has led the VFC since 2016, stepped down. Under his direction, the VFC has made incredible progress, converting from a charity who collected old furniture and gave it away to veterans to one entirely focused on the homeless veteran problem.



Bill Conner, who has been a volunteer at the VFC since 2014 and has served as Vice President since 2016, has stepped forward and picked up the role of President and Executive Director. Bill has been one of the most dedicated supporters and volunteers of the VFC since 2014, and his leadership is appreciated by all.

## Improved Warehouse Operations

We have been striving to make the warehouse run in a much more efficient and professional manner. This is especially important now that we have transitioned to all new items paid for by donations from you, our supporters.



In 2019 we received professional guidance and custom software provided by APL Logistics of Scottsdale. APL Logistics is an international company with headquarters around the globe. They visited the warehouse, understood our mission, and immediately offered their services free of charge to help our needy veterans. The following is from <https://www.apllogistics.com/>

*APL Logistics provides innovative, global supply-chain solutions across Automotive, Consumer, Industrial, and Retail markets. These solutions include Order Management, Distribution & Fulfillment, Customs Brokerage and Transportation products delivered across six regions. We also pioneered the use of visual data analysis and offer a robust Data Management and Analytics product suite to help you understand and solve complex problems that span systems and processes.*

*With roots in ocean shipping and rail transport, our brand was built alongside a culture of deep customer focus and attention, and we are known for providing flexible solutions to complex problems.*

APL Logistics professionals met with our warehouse team, analyzed our operation and our needs, provided professional advice, and then developed custom software to allow us to track incoming and outgoing items. Then, as if that were not enough, they provided a generous donation.

Thank you, APL Logistics!

## A New Dock Ramp



The students at Metro Technical High designed, constructed, and installed a new ramp for our loading dock. It is far superior to the old, wooden ramp we were using. Thank you to the group of students led by student leader Luis Fernando Cano Vasquez and supervised by their teacher Stephanie Besch. All funds for the project were supplied to the school by ASU. This is a welcome upgrade that will serve the VFC for many years to come.

## Reduced Operating Costs

In 2019 we cut our operating costs by almost 41%! Our most significant expenses are the warehouse and the truck, and these won't go down, but the new model significantly reduced our costs in many areas.



## VFC Awarded GuideStar's Gold Seal of Transparency



In late Spring, GuideStar, the world's largest source of information on nonprofit organizations, awarded the VFC its Gold Seal of Transparency. Corporations, foundations, government agencies, and donors rely on GuideStar when considering what nonprofits to support. The VFC welcomes this recognition by GuideStar and proudly displays the seal on our website.

## Living Spaces Delivers for our Veterans – Again and Again



Since 2017, Living Spaces has been and continues to be a strong supporter of the Veterans Furniture Center and our formerly homeless veterans. Thanks to them, hundreds of veterans who were sleeping on the floor now have a brand-new bed.

In 2019 they donated enough new beds to increase our inventory so that we could provide one for every veteran we served. Around Veterans Day 2019, they ran a special sale at all their stores where they promoted the VFC and promised to provide a new bed for our veterans for every bed they sold during the sale. On January 15, 2020, two huge trailer trucks delivered 207 brand new beds to the warehouse. There is a video of this delivery on our website, [veteransfurniturecenter.org](http://veteransfurniturecenter.org). We are very grateful to Living Spaces for their ongoing support.

### We Deliver Hope

Our change to new furniture and household goods has had a profound impact on the destitute veterans we serve. One of our supporters described it this way:

*“The VFC delivers more than furniture; they deliver hope. These veterans have nothing and haven’t owned anything of their own for a long time. Thanks to the VFC, they have the furniture and household goods they need to establish a new home. All the items are new, not someone else’s discards, and they belong to them. This gives the veteran a new outlook on life and hope for the future.”*



Hope Changes Everything.

### Thank you to all who supported us in 2019

2019 has been a challenging year. The transition to all new items and complete deliveries has proven to be of great benefit to our veterans. We are finally able to reach those who need our help the most and provide them with precisely what they need to make a home and start a new life. There are however, financial costs associated with this, and we couldn’t do it without your help.



### Many New Individual Donors

Donations by individuals are the backbone of our support. Every donation, large and small, is much appreciated. In 2018 we received donations from forty-six individuals, including Board members and volunteers. In 2019 that increased almost three-fold to one-hundred and thirty.

### More than Double the Income from Events

In 2018 we held our first VFC organized fund-raising event at the Cross Eyed Cricket in Vistancia. In 2019 we held two events at the Cricket, one in April and one in November. All of these events were a great success, and we are very grateful to the Cross Eyed Cricket management and staff for their support and to the Uncle Click Band who donated their services at all the events.

Cross Eyed Cricket - 23615 N. El Mirage Rd. Peoria AZ



In July, CrossFit Infinite Strength sponsored the VFC at their Duel in the Desert event in Scottsdale. We are very grateful to them for their support and look forward to working with them again in 2020.

## Sponsors

The VFC has come a long way in the last few years. We are proud of all that our volunteers have accomplished, but we couldn't have done it without your support. Thanks to all the individuals, groups, corporations, and foundations that have made it possible for us to be in a position of being able to help those veterans who deserve and need our help the most.



### Gold Sponsors



### Silver Sponsors



### Community Sponsors



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Knights of Columbus  
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Irving B. Selmer  
American Legion  
Auxiliary Unit 107



City of Peoria

Cross Eyed Cricket - 28615 N. El Mirage Rd. Peoria AZ



Uncle Click  
Band



And to all the many individual donors who have done so much to help the VFC in 2019.

Thank You!



## **The Year Ahead**

The VFC has come a very long way since 2016 when the new Board took over. We are now entirely focused on the most destitute veterans, those who need help the most, and we are supplying them with exactly what they need, all new. We are proud of the progress the VFC has made in helping those who have sacrificed for our country and were left behind by the society they returned to when they exited military service. From the perspective of the mission, we are now where we want to be. The challenge in 2020 will be to grow the volunteer base and increase the donor base to make the operation sustainable in the long run.

### **Improved Organization**

Up until now, the Board of Directors and the Executive Team have been almost the same. This was efficient and perhaps necessary as we brought the VFC through the transition from what it once was to what it is now. To move forward and make the operation sustainable in the long term, we need a better organization.

In late 2019 the Board developed and adopted a new set of bylaws that defines a broader organization with an expanded Board of Directors that oversees the VFC from a high level and a separate Executive Team that manages the operation on a day to day basis. It also defines new volunteer positions to take on tasks like fundraising, marketing, and event management. In 2020 we will work to put that organization in place.

### **An All-Volunteer Organization**

As of early 2019, we became an all-volunteer organization. The old model of dealing with used furniture required a part-time warehouse manager. Under our new model and with better organization, that is no longer required, and we can proudly say nobody gets paid.

### **Help Wanted**

**BE THE  
CHANGE**  
**VOLUNTEER &  
MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**



Under the new organization, we have many volunteer opportunities. Cheri Tanner has already agreed to become the Corporate Secretary, and Robert Wiggins, from Charles Schwab, is in the process of taking over responsibility for the website and our social media efforts. Robert also brought a team of veteran volunteers to help unload the Living Spaces Trucks (see the video on the VFC website.) Several of them have volunteered to help with deliveries. Those of you who were at the warehouse for the bed delivery may have met Dixie Arthur. Dixie has extensive experience in working with and managing non-profits and

is interested in doing more to help the VFC. There are also several others who have not volunteered in the past but have contacted us about possibly helping.

All of this is most welcome, but we have more volunteer opportunities. Right now, we are trying to build an Event Planning and Organization team and a Grant Procurement Team. Descriptions of both of these teams, as well as other open volunteer positions, are on <https://www.veteransfurniturecenter.org/> just hover over Help Us in the top menu bar, and click on “Volunteer your time.” You can fill out the form at the bottom of the page or send an email to [volunteer@veteransfurniturecenter.org](mailto:volunteer@veteransfurniturecenter.org).

Join Us! Be part of the VFC and help with the battle to end veteran homelessness.

### **Financial Challenges Ahead**

We also face significant financial challenges in the year ahead. We have made tremendous progress in this front over the last two years, thanks to your support. We need to continue that momentum. Under the old model of old furniture, the VFC operated on a budget of \$55K-60K per year, all of it going to operating expenses and overhead. Under the new model of all new furniture, we have cut the operating and overhead expenses. In 2019 we reduced that to about \$35K, but it requires close to \$1,000 worth of furniture and household goods per veteran, either purchased or donations in kind. We are anticipating over 300 referrals in 2020.

Between 2017 and 2019, we increased our cash income from around \$60K to over \$200K through grants, fundraising events, and donations from many individuals. This does not include donations in kind. We started 2020 with a donation of 207 beds worth \$51,750. That gets us off to a great start. If we can keep last year’s momentum going, we will have another successful year.

Here’s how you can help:

#### **Individuals:**

1. Take advantage of our AZ Tax Credit Program. The VFC is a Qualifying Charitable Organization registered with and approved by the Arizona Department of revenue. You can donate up to \$800 per couple or \$400 per individual and get your money back as a tax credit. You don’t need to itemize to claim this credit. You subtract your donation from the bottom line on your tax return. **Would you prefer to give your money to the State or help a destitute veteran start a new life?** For more information about tax credits, or to donate, see our website, <https://www.veteransfurniturecenter.org/>
2. Tell your friends and neighbors about this opportunity to make a difference at no cost to them.
3. Volunteer for our Event Planning and Organization team or our Grant Procurement Team, as described in the previous section.
4. If you are a member of an organization, church group, veterans club, or other organization, tell your fellow members about the VFC and the Tax Credit program, or arrange for us to send a speaker to talk to your group about the VFC.



#### **Organizations, Clubs, Posts, and other groups**

1. If your organization offers speaking opportunities, contact us at [donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org](mailto:donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org). We will be happy to provide a speaker for free to discuss veterans' homelessness and the VFC.
2. Run a fund-raising drive for us based on the Tax Credit program. The donations must be made directly to the VFC to be eligible for tax credits, but we can support your campaign

with a unique web page to advertise the campaign and collect the donations via credit card. We can also supply a form for you to use so that when someone donates by check, we will know where it came from and can credit your campaign. If your group is interested in exploring this, send an email to [donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org](mailto:donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org) and we will contact you to discuss it.

3. Run a campaign within your community to collect selected NEW items for our veterans in need and give them to the VFC as donations-in-kind. For example, an inexpensive toaster or coffee maker (~\$10.), hygiene kits, or other household items that we supply to our veterans in need. Contact us at [donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org](mailto:donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org) for more information.
4. If you have access to an appropriate venue or are planning an event and are considering sponsoring a non-profit, please contact our event team at [donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org](mailto:donations@veteransfurniturecenter.org) and let us work together to create a successful event for your organization that benefits the VFC and our destitute veterans.
5. If your organization provides donations or grants to charitable organizations, please consider the VFC in 2020.

## Summary

2019 was another challenging but successful year. The Veterans Furniture Center continues to make incredible progress in our battle against veteran homelessness. We now have a well defined and focused mission and are making an enormous difference in the lives of the destitute veterans we serve. 2020 promises to be both challenging and rewarding.

If you ever saw a homeless veteran on this side of the street and thought, “why doesn’t somebody do something about this?” well, someone is. We are making a difference, now more than ever before. If you have supported the VFC in the past, thank you so much. We couldn’t have made it this far without you. We hope you will continue to support us and our mission. If you haven’t helped the VFC yet, please join us this year in our battle against veteran homelessness.

Thank You!

The Board of Directors  
Veterans Furniture Center

