



Ministering to Returning Soldiers and Veterans

Healing the Invisible Wounds of War through Horses Spirit Warrior, Central Maine — \$95,000

2021–2023 Biennium
Mission Goal:

\$2,150,000

Mission Grant #2

\$95,000

Sing for joy, O heavens,

and exult, O earth;

break forth,

O mountains,

into singing!

For the LORD has

comforted his people

and will have

compassion

on his afflicted

(Isaiah 49:13).

The LORD is near

to the brokenhearted

and saves the

crushed in spirit

(Psalm 34:18).

Maine is among the list of “least churched” states in the nation. It has only three Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations in the entire state and only five Veteran Administration Chaplains. Deaconess Kim Slininger was called to Hope Lutheran Church to reach out to the extensive veteran and military community in the Bangor area. Deaconess Kim is herself a disabled veteran, and the Spirit Warrior program is an extension of her ministry. Through the Veteran’s Administration, Deaconess Kim pursued her master’s degree in Diaconal Studies from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. She continued her education in Clinical Pastoral Education while volunteering as a chaplain intern at Eastern Maine Medical Center. She has also finished her Palliative Care certification.

Many veterans/service members want to connect with God. Theological discussion — as well as hearing of the love of Christ — take place while caring for the horses. Deaconess Kim became aware of the challenges our service members face every day as they return from the war theaters because of her own undiagnosed PTSD and her experiences as a chaplain intern. Often the veterans and service members identified a conflict between their moral standards and the orders they needed to carry out while in uniform. This moral struggle led Deaconess Kim to research equine health and its impact on well-being. She recognized the benefits of this type of therapy with military personnel and saw the need for this therapy with the veterans in Maine. “Equine Experiential Learning” is now a recognized therapy for those suffering from mental health issues. Spirit Warrior is a program that addresses the need to provide pastoral/diaconal care using horses with those who have endured the hardships of war and have returned. Current traditional therapy does not address the care of the spirit. Out of this need, the Spirit Warrior, L3C program was born.

The core principles of Spirit Warrior are:

1. Offering the grace of God to all who are suffering;
2. Proclaiming the name of Christ in our work and our actions; and
3. Being good stewards of all that is entrusted to us.

This grant will provide funding for 58 veterans to benefit from the program.

Learn more about this mission grant at lwml.org/mission-grants

