


ISSUE 42 • JULY 2022

At Ease

MID-ATLANTIC MILITARY LIFE

Oorah!

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'The face of the
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TOASTEE COFFEE
Brewing up a cup o' Joe with a
military-inspired roaster



A few simple acts grow into a foundation for veterans who find themselves adrift

§ Story and photos by Patsy Lynch

It started with a few concerned people who decided to act on their beliefs that charity should begin at home. In their case, it was providing food and blankets to the homeless, some of whom were military veterans. As more people started getting involved, these simple acts grew into a nonprofit organization that now provides transitional housing, job training and substance use counseling.

As one resident said, “This is my safe space. I know that while I can come and go as I please, I am part of a community that supports me when I am up and gives me a hand when I fall.” This is The Baltimore Station.

The Baltimore Station is unique as it offers creative therapies, physical activities and educational experiences to veterans who are involved with the program. These programs also include peer counseling, alcohol and substance use disorder counseling and support services for those who relapse. They also provide daily meals.

This approach lays the groundwork for those veterans who, after their separation from military service, found themselves adrift and may have led to being homeless. The Baltimore Station’s outreach provides veterans the opportunity to reconnect with the community, improve their mental health while replacing negative behaviors such as alcohol and drug use with positive behaviors that encourage them to become more involved in their community and take responsibility for their own lives.



For John Friedel, the executive director of The Baltimore Station, service is a family tradition. While not being a veteran himself, he comes from a family of veterans and wanted to give back.

“After spending time in the private sector, I wanted to give back to the community.”

As Friedel observes, The Baltimore Station provides a therapeutic environment for veterans who may be having a challenging time reintegrating back into their communities after their time in service.

“Some of the veterans who come to us have a variety of issues including but not limited to mental health concerns to on-going health-related issues that may have stemmed from their time in service. We work with various VA programs to make sure that these veterans are provided the support they need and the opportunity to gain experience in new or different skills that will help them in the future.”

He continued by saying that within the last few years, there has been a shift in the veteran population that they serve.

“We are seeing older veterans who may have a higher level of physical and mental health issues that need to be addressed. So, our programs include at least one hour a day with one-on-one mental health counseling provided by licensed social workers and mental health professionals. Personal hygiene and dental care along with providing meals and transitional housing are also available. Those veterans who have participated in these programs and move on, are welcome to come back if their circumstances change. If we can, we will reach out to those who may need help and try to provide what services they need.”

“We have had family members of the veterans who have ‘graduated’ from our programs, as well as the veterans themselves come back and talk to our current residents about their own experiences and to show that they too can succeed.”

When asked about the absence of women veterans, Friedel admits that he would love to have the funding and staff to provide those services that may be unique to women.





"I am grateful for the services I am getting here," Smitty said. "I want to give back to others. Yes, I do live one day at a time because I tell people that it's crazy to want to go back to my old life. I value being valued and when I meet other vets who are reluctant to seek help, I tell them that they are worthwhile and by helping them get help, I know that I am valued."



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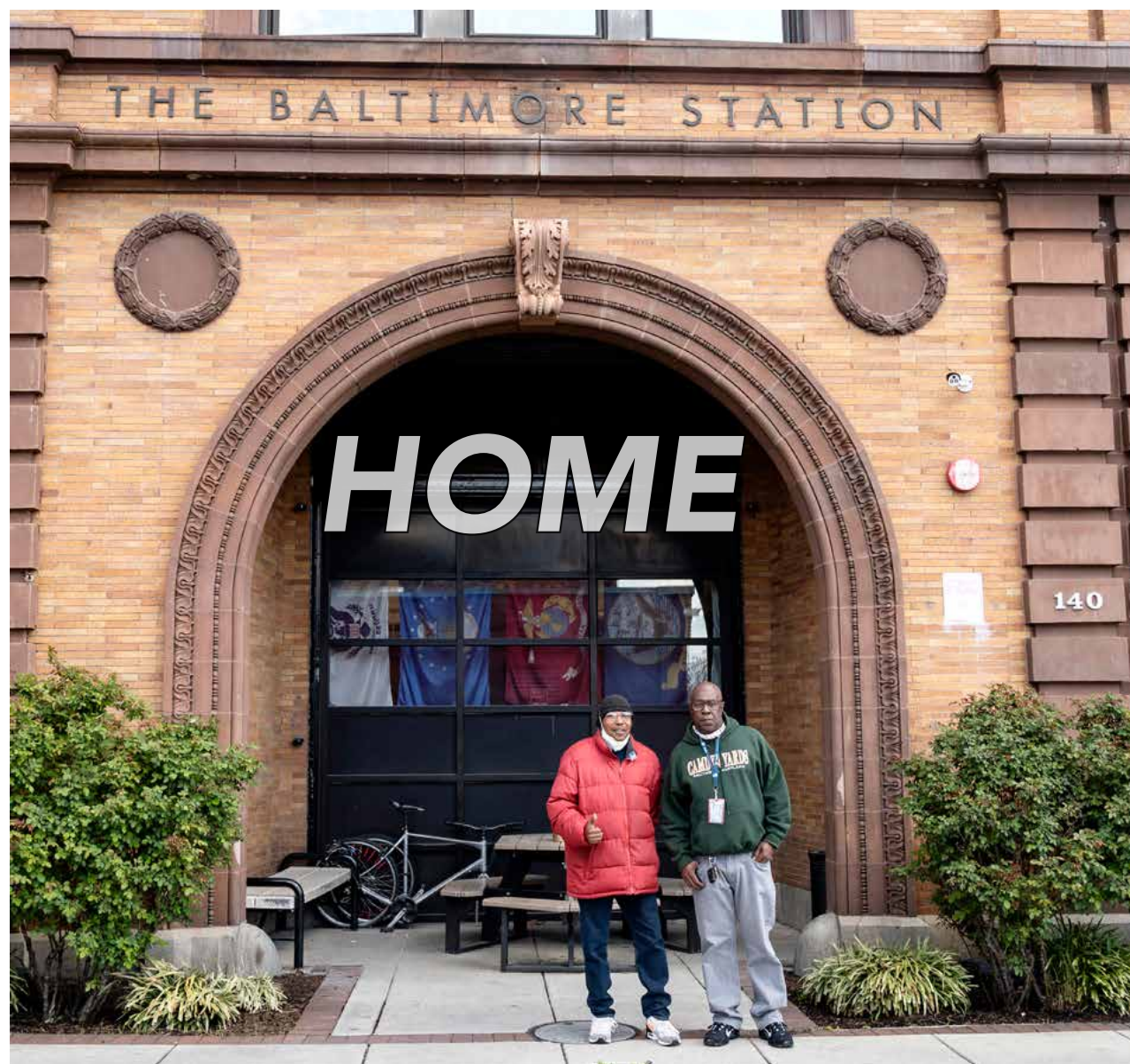
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The Baltimore Station's residential and out-patient programs are designed to help homeless veterans suffering from chronic substance use disorder mental health challenges. Veterans graduate with permanent housing, sustainable income and the tools they need.

Currently, The Baltimore Station is providing about 100 veterans with transitional housing with the assistance of the Veterans Administration. The Baltimore Station will take a homeless veteran into their program from anywhere around the county.

They will work with the local VA to provide transportation to Baltimore in the most efficient way so that the veteran can get the treatment he needs as quickly as possible. The Baltimore Station

will take a homeless veteran into their program anywhere in the country. They will work with the local VA to provide transportation to Baltimore in the most efficient way so that the veteran can get the treatment he needs as quickly as possible.

Volunteers are an integral part of The Baltimore Station. They collaborate with paid staff members providing a variety of therapeutic services that play a key role in the resident's self esteem and self-worth.

For those interested in volunteering as individuals or as a group are encouraged to contact Volunteer Coordinator Lilly Frazier at lfrazier@baltimorestation.org. For those interested in learning more about The Baltimore Station, visit www.baltimorestation.org.



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