

LEADERSHIP PROFILE



Executive Director
Veterans Empowerment Organization
Atlanta, GA

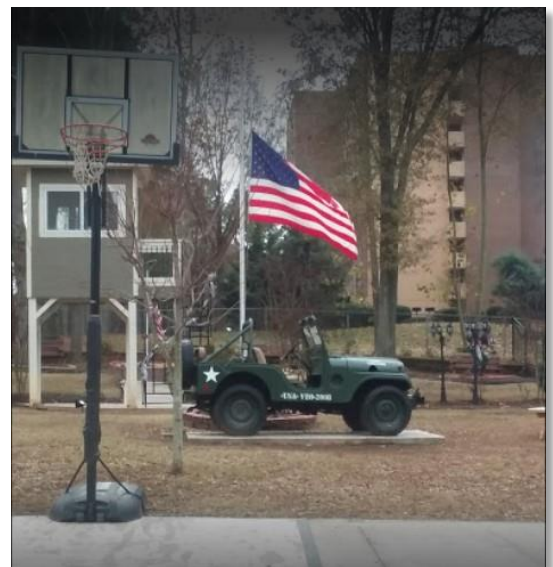
“Empowering veterans along their journey to self-sufficiency”

THE OPPORTUNITY

In a neighborhood just west of downtown Atlanta, a remarkable transformation is underway every day for a group of veterans—formerly homeless men and women—who have experienced more than the normal dose of difficulties navigating civilian life after their military service.

Whatever may have contributed to their state—PTSD, drug and alcohol addiction, physical trauma or other debilitating forces—these veterans find at Veterans Empowerment Organization (VEO) the dignity and respect they deserve in a safe, secure and healing campus environment.

Since 2008, VEO has helped thousands of veterans build better lives for themselves and



A familiar sight on VEO's campus

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their families by providing a range of essential services—transitional housing, family housing (the only such program in Georgia), wellness programs and workforce initiatives—designed to empower individuals who have given so much to their country. “*Heroes deserve a second chance*” is more than a slogan at VEO; it is the organization’s driving ethos.

In the past dozen years, VEO has shown that a caring, focused resource geared to homeless veterans and their families can indeed be life-changing. Its impact on individual lives has been very real—not only for the 5000 veterans served to date, but also for the volunteers and supporters who make VEO’s work possible.

According to the [National Coalition for Homeless Veterans](#), across the country veterans make up about 11% of the nation’s homeless population. In metro Atlanta, veterans make up between 8% and 18% of the area’s homeless population, depending on the date and source of the estimates. Overall, through the concerted efforts of many, Atlanta’s homeless rates have declined dramatically in recent years, but the issue remains very real for VEO’s clients.

Many veterans, whether homeless, unemployed or underemployed, are unaware of resources they may be entitled to, and others find the paths to assistance frustratingly bumpy. By providing both a safe living environment

“VEO doesn’t just fix one aspect; it focuses on the whole person.”

--An informed observer and long-time friend of VEO

and a range of wrap-around services, VEO and its evidence-based approaches are changing that dynamic one veteran at a time.

VEO is already the largest of several hundred Georgia nonprofits offering direct services to veterans, in part because it is the only one in the state to offer both housing and an array of ancillary services.

VEO was born out of the passion of founder Frantz Fortune, whose legacy of unflagging support for veterans is second nature to the organization. Upon his



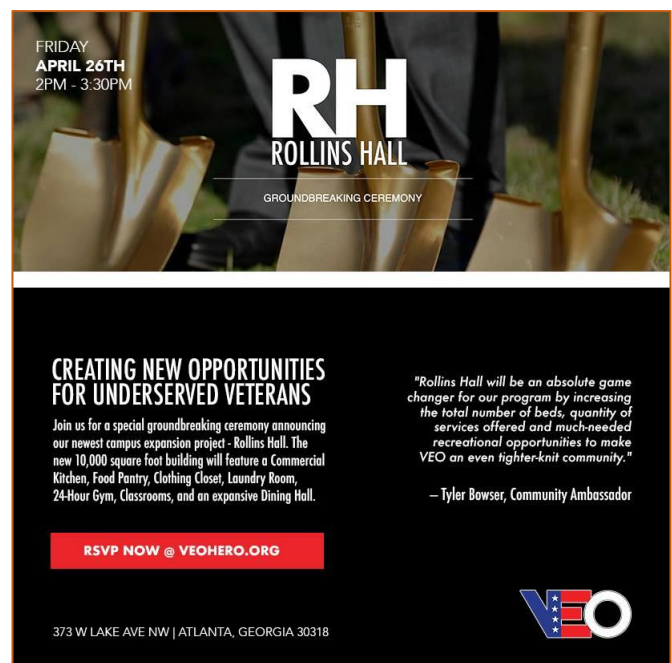
***Invitation to the 2020 Heroes Ball,
which set a record for financial support***

departure earlier this summer, the board of directors has launched the present search for his successor.

VEO's impact on its clients is well demonstrated. To ensure the prosperous, sustainable future for itself that the organization envisions for its clients, the next Executive Director must support the agency's programmatic passion with the management rigor, transparency and accountability that characterize thriving nonprofits.

THE ORGANIZATION

Veterans Empowerment Organization is an established success, and yet it is an organization in transition—from founder-led to professionally managed, from a grassroots organization to a mature enterprise. Its impact on the veterans in its care has been significant, its commitment to their success is unquestioned, and the support it enjoys from the community is substantial. Without losing any of the personalization that is the source of much pride, VEO is ready to embrace the changes required to achieve its ambitions, for the organization and for those it serves.



VEO operates from a gated campus on Atlanta's Westside that includes dormitory-style accommodations for about 100 men, with 30 beds reserved for transitional housing (90-120 days); also on campus are separate living facilities for women and meeting and dining facilities. Adjacent to but separate from the campus are townhomes that can accommodate about 15 families.

VEO's wellness program provides case management for those with mental health or recovery/substance abuse issues. (There are periodic Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings onsite, but VEO does not provide medical detox or rehab services.)

Just this month, VEO received [notice](#) from the US Department of Labor of a new three-year workforce development grant of almost \$500,000, part of DOL's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP). This is VEO's second competitive grant of like amount, strong testament to the value of VEO's services.

Through the generosity of the Rollins family and other donors, Rollins Hall, now under construction, will open this fall. The new facility will contain a full commercial kitchen, an expanded dining hall, a 24-hour gym, enhanced laundry facilities, and administrative offices.

The Rollins gift is but the most dramatic recent example of the generosity that makes VEO's services possible; other major supporters include The Home Depot Foundation, Chick-fil-A and the Arthur M. Blank Family of Businesses. United Way of Greater Atlanta has been a critical partner for most of VEO's existence, and of course the important relationship with the US Department of Veteran's Affairs continues.

This year's Heroes Ball, VEO's annual fundraiser, took place in February, just weeks before the coronavirus lockdown. The Ball netted a record \$1.2 million, a significant increase over prior years' results. Equally gratifying, donors and other supporters have continued to be generous throughout the pandemic.¹

The recent successes are impressive, but there are also challenges to face. VEO's well-established commitment to veterans has not always been matched by the business processes and management disciplines a growing organization needs. Interim Executive Director Chris Peck, formerly VP of Corporate Human Resources at UPS, assumed his duties on May 1st, and a new spirit of transparency and accountability is already evident—and welcomed.



VEO believes in second chances

VEO is not looking to become a systems powerhouse, but it does know that better collection, management and reporting of relevant information will have positive impact across the enterprise and beyond. An organization embracing evidence-based outcomes can do no less.

VEO's pre-pandemic budget for 2020 was approximately \$4 million, up significantly from prior years. In a typical year, grants and contributions account for 80-85% of total revenues, with the balance coming from program service fees. Covid-19 has had an understandably negative impact on program

¹ VEO is proud that the rigorous protocols for testing and social distancing it implemented at the outset of the pandemic resulted in zero cases of COVID-19 to date among VEO staff and employees.

fees this year; combined with challenges on some other fronts, expectations for 2020 have been modified downward. Even so, VEO has generated a surplus in all but its very first year of operation, and that pattern continues in 2020, despite the present difficulties.

The agency has some two dozen full- and part-time employees, many of them long-serving and several of whom are former VEO clients. The nonprofit is governed by a volunteer board of directors, many of whom are veterans themselves or come from families of veterans. The board is chaired by Debbie McKinley, a graduate of the US Naval Academy and former Marine Corps officer who now heads up human resources for The Home Depot's US operations.



A VEO working session, socially distanced

The next Executive Director of Veterans Empowerment Organization will inherit a well-respected and solidly resourced nonprofit with many of the ingredients in place for a vibrant future serving the needs of homeless veterans and their families.

There are specific short-term needs, such as completion of Rollins Hall and enhancements to VEO's financial and management reporting systems. More than any specific agenda item, however, the new Executive Director will be expected to make certain VEO has the strategy, structure and collaborative spirit necessary for the long-term success of the enterprise. That requires a combination of programmatic passion, fiscal discipline and operational rigor, all practiced in a manner that ensures a empowered staff, a growing base of support and the opportunity to expand VEO's reach beyond the current footprint.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to	VEO's Board of Directors
And have direct responsibility for	A lean staff reporting through managers responsible for programs, facilities, finances and resource development

<p>While strengthening relations with such partners and supporters as</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Department of Veterans Affairs regional office • Georgia Department of Veterans Services • United Way of Greater Atlanta • Partners for Home and its member agencies fighting homelessness in Atlanta • Referral agencies who also work with homeless veterans (e.g., Atlanta Mission, Crossroads Community Ministries, Gateway Center) • Area military veterans and veterans' groups (e.g., VETLANTA, service academies' alumni networks) • Atlanta's corporate and philanthropic leaders • VEO's Westside neighbors
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THE CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate to become Executive Director of the Veterans Empowerment Organization will be an experienced nonprofit executive, or corporate executive with significant nonprofit experience, accustomed to leading a tightly knit team in a demanding operational environment, ideally one involving support of clientele onsite 24/7. The board does not require the next Executive Director to be a military veteran, although such would be additive, but a demonstrated respect for veterans and their service is essential.

Among other assets, the search committee will be seeking the best possible combination of the following experiences, values and characteristics:

- An agile, empathic, business-minded leader who embraces VEO's passion for service to military veterans
- The proven business savvy to run a multimillion-dollar agency, develop and empower its management team, and attract supporters to its mission
- The operational expertise and external gravitas to balance the twin demands of residential operations and external relationship-building
- A decisive, strategic manager who balances big-picture thinking with attention to detail; a working leader
- An executive who would approach VEO's work with the modesty and respect born of personal experience; someone undeterred by VEO's grittiness
- A motivating leader whose approach energizes staff and clients dealing with some of life's toughest issues, leading VEO to be an employer of choice

"I was homeless on the street, sick with pneumonia, lung disease, and many more medical problems. VEO saved my life. I have a home now and owe it to VEO."

--A grateful client

- A compassionate boss and colleague who honors the value of honest feedback promptly given
- A board-savvy ED who understands the line between governance and management and who can partner with VEO's board as it navigates from an operating board to a true governing board
- A leader with established relationships with major funders, whether actual or potential, or the proven ability to develop same
- An executive with sufficient financial expertise to ask the right questions; someone who values life experiences *and* systems
- A servant leader adept at developing trust relationships across a wide spectrum of peers, stakeholders and supporters: a poised, authentic and reliable individual who takes pride in important work done well
- The unique individual who can both design and execute, stabilize and inspire, securing today's successes at VEO while expanding the options for even greater impact.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email
VEO@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or

call Diane Westmore at (678) 640-6935 or Sam Pettway at (404) 313-0140.

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