

Veterans in Colorado Springs find new hope through Transitional Housing Program

The VA GPD program helps veterans transition from homelessness to stability through housing and supportive services.

After six years of service in the U.S. Navy, Dony Anders returned home and struggled to adjust to civilian life.

“I was searching for a new purpose, but deep down, I felt lost,” he said.

At the same time, his wife, Natalie Anders, lost her job and faced difficulties finding new work to make ends meet. As bills piled up, they fell behind on rent and soon found themselves living in their car while their young daughter stayed with family.

“It all happened so fast, and we found ourselves not knowing what to do next or where to turn,” said Dony Anders.

With a frigid Colorado winter approaching and nearly three months spent living in their car, their fear for their safety and well-being increased.

“We felt desperate,” Anders said. “We just knew we had to get out of living in the car.”

One day, while visiting a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) office, Anders learned of [The Salvation Army Colorado Springs Veterans Grant and Per Diem \(GPD\)](#) Transitional Housing Program—a partnership funded by the VA that supports community agencies serving veterans experiencing homelessness.

Through The Salvation Army’s work with the GPD program, veterans regain stability by receiving temporary housing and comprehensive support from case managers who help with the steps toward independent living.

“It’s almost impossible to focus on anything when you don’t have a home, a shower, or a kitchen. Once we had housing, we could focus on finding jobs and saving money.”

Natalie Anders



An [annual point-in-time count for El Paso County](#) reported a 26 percent decrease in veterans experiencing homelessness in 2024 compared to 2023, attributing part of the decline to increased social service programs and outreach efforts in the area.

After hearing about the program's success and seeing a chance for a fresh start, Anders contacted The Salvation Army's GPD office. Within 48 hours, his family moved into a fully furnished, two-bedroom shelter home.

"It was amazing—the program saved our lives," he said.

Launched in 2018, the GPD program in Colorado Springs has grown to be one of the state's most successful veteran support programs, with over 88 percent of participating [veterans securing permanent housing](#), according to Ashley Jelks-Fragier, VA GPD Program Manager.

Jelks-Fragier said the program prioritizes housing as the first step while also addressing veterans' broader needs through comprehensive support services to ensure long-term success. [There are 54 units available](#), with 49 veterans and their families currently receiving support.

Veterans can stay in transitional housing for up to two years, though Jelks-Fragier noted many secure permanent housing sooner.

"We work closely with veterans to understand some of the barriers and challenges that led to their loss of housing," Jelks-Fragier said. "We provide that roof so they can start focusing on everything else."

She noted that the program partners with the VA and local agencies to connect veterans with mental and physical health services. Salvation Army case managers then assist veterans in obtaining essential documents, such as government IDs, and provide support with applying for disability benefits or finding employment opportunities.

"The veterans have already given so much," Jelks-Fragier said. "One of our goals is to make sure they know they're not alone as they rebuild and for them to see that there are options for support."

For the Anders family, the GPD program served as the lifeline they needed.

"It's almost impossible to focus on anything when you don't have a home, a shower or a kitchen," said Dony Anders. "Once we had housing, we could focus on finding jobs and saving money."

While in the program, the family received bus vouchers, clothing vouchers, essential household items and Christmas gifts for their daughter.

"It was rare that we had to ask for anything," Anders said. "Everyone was so kind and always seemed to know what we needed."

With the program's support, Anders secured employment and gained approval for income-based housing after six months of transitional living. The family moved into their new residence at the end of May 2025.

"It's shocking how quickly they were able to help us," Natalie Anders said. "We finally felt like we could breathe and focus on what we needed to do to get on track. I don't know where we'd be without The Salvation Army's help."

Although the Anders family has completed the program, they plan to return as volunteers.

"We wouldn't have made it without this program," Anders said. "We just want to give back and stay involved."

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