



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

OUR CASE FOR SUPPORT

Veterans Academy

Information Brochure

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Join Us to Keep 108 **Formerly Homeless Veterans** Housed

About the Presidio Housing Site:

Swords to Plowshares opened its first permanent supportive housing program, the Veterans Academy, in 2000. It was, in fact, the first-ever permanent supportive housing program for formerly homeless veterans in the county. Located in San Francisco's Presidio National Park, this site houses 108 formerly homeless veterans and promotes housing stability, community, and health and wellness for its residents.

Many residents have histories of chronic homelessness coupled with mental illness, disability, and substance use. Through access to on-site supportive services—including case management, counseling, income assistance, communal meals, social activities, and therapy and support groups—the Veterans Academy housing

program helps veterans remain stable and housed as they build their health, income, and independence.

For 20 years, the Veterans Academy has successfully housed and supported the most vulnerable veterans in San Francisco with a 95% or greater housing retention rate. The majority of residents envision this as the place they will live out their remaining days.

Swords to Plowshares is currently undergoing a major rehabilitation to support veterans to age in place. We will be rededicating the site known as the Veterans Academy in honor of our late board member and dedicated veteran advocate, Jon W. Paulson. In the future the site will be known as the Jon W. Paulson Veterans Community.





Significant Rehabilitation Project

In late 2018, Swords to Plowshares began rehabbing the housing site in the Presidio. The two buildings, which are former barracks, needed significant work, including new floors, new windows, painting and more. The biggest remaining element of the project is the installation of an elevator in each building.

The Veterans Academy is two repurposed U.S. Army barracks built in 1980 to house able-bodied young adults. When the site was reconfigured as supportive housing for homeless veterans, very few major upgrades were made to support this population’s needs. Since most of the present residents are seniors, they are beginning to experience deteriorating health and mobility. Elevators are increasingly necessary to address urgent mobility issues for residents, most of whom are aging Vietnam veterans.

Residents want to age in place with their peers at the Veterans Academy, but currently, stairs provide the only access to units on the upper floors. We moved all residents with major mobility challenges, such as those with a wheelchair or walker, to units on the first floor; however, this is only a temporary solution. The 21 veterans with degenerative health conditions—foot and knee injuries, chronic back and hip pain—still reside on the upper floors. As residents continue to age, the numbers with impaired mobility will increase. Without a safe, easy means to travel around the housing site and access services and activities, these veterans tend to self-isolate in their rooms.

Swords to Plowshares seeks \$2.5 million in capital funds to complete this much-needed project. We anticipate completion in 2021.

Veterans Academy is the **first permanent housing site for homeless veterans** in the United States

Our Mission

War causes wounds and suffering that last beyond the battlefield. Swords to Plowshares’ mission is to heal the wounds of war, to restore dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency to all veterans in need, and to prevent and end homelessness and poverty among veterans.

Our Vision

All veterans will have access to the care and services they need to rebuild their lives.

- ★ The Veterans Academy has been in operation for 20 years
- 🏠 108 veterans currently reside permanently
- 👥 100% of residents are formerly homeless
- ♿ 100% of residents have one or more disabilities
- 👴 More than 2/3 of residents are seniors

Meet **Our Vets**

Harry Gonzalez **US Army, 1975–77**

Harry was born and raised in San Francisco and graduated from Mission High School. He was homeless in San Francisco for a few months before he found a home at the Veterans Academy in 2013. He suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) so he cannot walk a long distance and has always lived on the first floor. Friendly and talkative, Harry loves to help other vets with setting up cell phone service or signing them up for food stamps. Harry is often found on his motorized wheelchair delivering food or packages for his fellow veterans on the first floor who are blind or sick. He feels badly for many of the seniors and disabled veterans who live on the upper floors. He misses his friends on the upper floors who have become increasingly immobile in the last several years. He says as these veterans get older, it is impossible to maintain a sense of community with other residents without the elevators. "Visiting each other in this community shouldn't be a chore," says Harry.





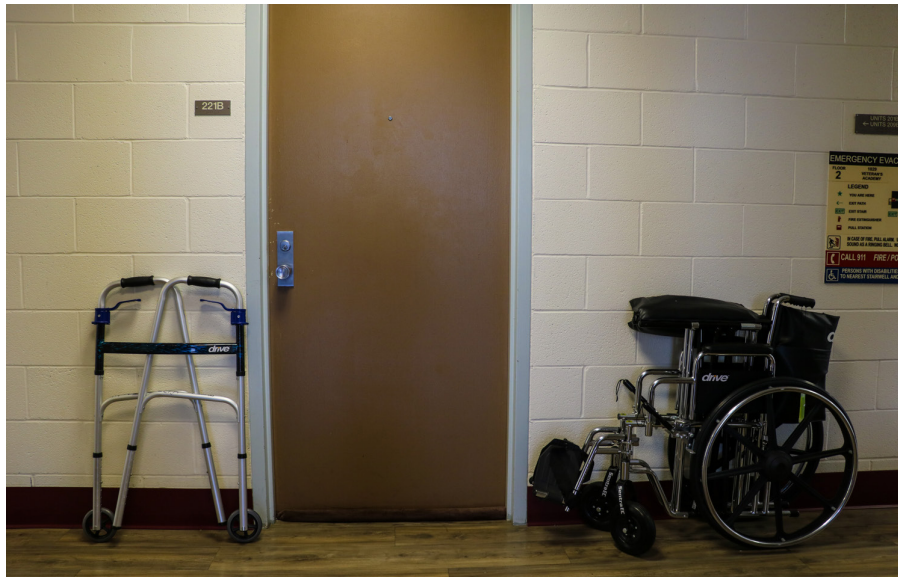
Frank Powell
US Marine Corps, 1977–79, 1980–84

Born and raised in San Francisco, Frank attended Lincoln High School. He was homeless on and off for the last 30 years. He left a shelter on 25th Street 15 months ago to find a permanent home at the Veterans Academy. He says he loves living at the Academy but walking up and down the stairs is becoming increasingly difficult. His left hip is not well but the only unit he could get into was on the 3rd floor. When he moved in, his case manager assured him that elevators would be installed in the building, but significant construction delays make him concerned. He supports himself with a wooden cane in one hand and can barely carry much with his other hand when climbing stairs. He says he often has to wait out in the lobby of the building or in the courtyard after coming back from a grocery store. If he has a couple of bags of food, he cannot carry them up to the 3rd floor by himself. “Being one of the new guys, I have to wait for someone I know to come by so I can ask for help with carrying up the groceries. People are helpful but not everyone.”

Jerome Bartlett US Navy, 1974–80

Jerry first came to Swords to Plowshares to receive help from the treatment program at Treasure Island. After spending 2 years there, he moved into the Veterans Academy in 2013. Before his back was injured, he spent a lot of time riding his motorized cargo bicycle to different parts of the city to do volunteer outreach work with the homeless. Four years ago, he hurt his back and has become immobile and been stuck in his 3rd floor unit since. He is overweight and cannot put any pressure on his legs to manage the stairs. Despite his current situation he maintains a positive attitude and he tries to look for things to be thankful for, like the VA Home Care support he receives regularly in his 3rd floor unit. During July 2020, however, his visiting nurse found Jerry's heartbeat to be irregular and suggested that he checks himself in at an ER. Unable to manage the three flights of stairs, he had to call Presidio Fire Department. It took ten firefighters from that station to move him down from the 3rd floor to the street level. As Jerry recalls that incident, he breaks down in tears, and thanks those firefighters who lined up to cheer him on with encouraging words as he was carried into an ambulance. After spending three weeks at the hospital for his heart issue, Jerry is now back in his apartment on the 3rd floor. There were a couple of offers for him to move down to the 1st floor in the last couple of years, but he could not get himself to move. "My unit does not get direct sunlight so the room keeps cool. My room also faces the courtyard, so I can at least look out and see what people are doing in the courtyard, which I spend a lot of time doing. I like my neighbors and I really don't want to move." He is trying now to work with a physical therapist who comes to visit him regularly and working on using his crutch to move around in his hallway. He is in tears as he says multiple times during the short interview, "we really need elevators here."





Cedric Aaron US Coast Guard, 1979–83

Cedric is not a man of many words. He has a walker and a wheelchair that sit outside of his 2nd floor room. After his service in the USCG, he worked at the VA but was medically discharged after injury to his back and has been living at the Academy since 2009. He had upper back surgery some years ago but was told at the time that he should try to avoid lower back surgery if at all possible. His condition is worsening, and he is increasingly immobile, but he is not planning on getting any work done on his lower back. “What if I can’t walk at all after the surgery? I still enjoy my limited independence.” He likes his current neighbor with whom he gets along well and has no issue sharing a bathroom. He says moving to the first floor is unthinkable because he is afraid he may not be matched with as good a neighbor as his current one. He is hoping that an elevator construction will be completed soon.





Presidio Housing Rehabilitation Project

Timeline & Budget

The rehabilitation of this project kicked off in 2018 with much-needed improvements which were completed in a year's time. The elevator project presented unforeseen challenges, primarily upon discovery of soft ground that would not support the elevators. The project was delayed significantly to further assess and redesign the plan. The project is fully moving ahead at this time.

Project Timeline:

February 2020

Notice to proceed

March – September 2020

COVID delays project

October 2020

Elevator Prep

November 2020

New hallway near elevators

January 2021

New roofing

March 2021

Elevators fully installed

April 2021

Project complete

Project Budget:

Construction Total (elevators, foundation, roofing, hallways)	\$2,350,000
Architect	\$140,000
Project Management	\$12,000
Consultant (Engineer)	\$30,000
Misc Costs	\$25,000
Project Total	\$2,557,000