

# MI FREEDOM CENTER

Serving Those Who Serve Us



## 2020 Annual Report



### Freedom Center **LOCATIONS**

#### **Detroit Metro Airport:**

McNamara Terminal

North Terminal

#### **Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS):**

Lansing and Troy

## Mission:

“Serving those who serve us.”

The goals of our Michigan Freedom Centers are to:

- \* Provide service members with an opportunity for rest and reflection as they deploy into harm’s way or return home from deployment.
- \* Ease the trials and challenges of air travel for military families, Veterans and Allied Forces.
- \* Honor the families of fallen heroes as they make their final journey home.
- \* Show appreciation for the sacrifices of service members and their families in defense of our freedom.

## History:

Since opening the doors on **Veterans Day, November 11, 2011** inside the McNamara terminal of Detroit Metro Airport, the Michigan Armed Forces Hospitality Center (a.k.a. Michigan Freedom Center) has been serving Veterans, active members of the military and their families with a warm smile, kind words, travel guidance and comfort as a way to honor their dedicated service to our country.

In the beginning, loyal volunteers, mostly staff from Delta Airlines, helped get the ball rolling; and the Michigan Freedom Center has since grown to 4 locations.



## 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:

### Eagle Scout American Flag Project Presented to Michigan Freedom Center

The Eagle has landed.

Eagle Scout candidate Cameron Korman, a senior at Troy High School, created and hand-built a gorgeous wood and glass cabinet to display a special American Flag at the Detroit Metro Airport Michigan Armed Forces Hospitality Center, a.k.a. Michigan Freedom Center.

The installation took place on the Freedom Center's 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the McNamara terminal, Nov. 11 at 11:00 a.m.

Cameron said that both of his grandparents had fought in the U.S. Military and how he believes that Veterans today don't get the full credit they deserve for the sacrifices made, and he hopes the American Flag display case brings honor to all.

"We owe our lives to them and I

am so grateful," Cameron said.

The flag itself was a donation of Freedom Center volunteer, Mr. Frank Sinagra, retired Capt. in the U.S. Marine Corp. who lives in Canton. The flag first came from a 2016 Memorial Day service in Ann Arbor where he gave an address to the crowd, and it represents all fallen

servicemen and women from all wars.

In mid-2016 Sinagra embarked on a trip to Vietnam with the Defense POW/MIA Ac-

counting Agency (DPAA), to search for a missing Marine. During a stop-over in Hawaii he stayed at Hickman AFB, which overlooks Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor, and was the first military base hit by the Japanese nation on Dec. 7, 1941. While he was in Vietnam on the search mission, the flag was flown at Hickman AFB for several days.



## Year in Review:

Like many businesses and non-profits across the state of Michigan, the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions hit the MI Freedom Center particularly hard.

Here is a timeline overview:

### January – Mid-March

Normal full operations

### Mid-March to Mid-May

Complete shutdown by State Order and Airport mandates.



### Mid-May – December

Front door service w/ Greeters providing travel information and snacks, drinks, etc. offered to military and Veteran travelers and their families.



## Guests Served:

In 2020: 32,991

Since opening in late 2011:

**728,000 +**

### Our guests/target population include:

- ◇ Active-duty U.S. military personnel, Veterans, and their traveling dependents
- ◇ Veterans of Allied Forces
- ◇ Gold and Blue Star family members. Gold Star families are those who lost a loved one in military action. Blue Star families are those who have members on current active duty.

Our guest count was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020, which also caused us to modify services to protect guests and volunteers alike.

## Guest Testimonials:

“I’ve used the DTW Freedom Center for both US and International travel. Not only are the services and people great and very accommodating, I even ran into a former Officer friend of mine who was on a deployment with me 6 years ago and we reconnected and got caught up. So highest accolades for taking care of the Soldiers and Veterans and very much appreciate finding an old buddy there one morning too. Thank you!!” **Eric P.**

“The Freedom Center gives us that moment of decompression... because you can come home a wreck. You know there you’re in a safe place, a quiet place, a respectful place. The staff is amazing... they have a sense like they know (what to do) to make our couple of hours at the Freedom Center more relaxing and a benefit to us. That’s what I love about the Freedom Center. We’re so grateful we have the opportunity to have it at the airport.” **Joe M.**



## Volunteers:

Our volunteers – many who have children serving in the military or are Veterans themselves – are the amazing backbone of the MI Freedom Centers.

Due to the financial support of others, it allows our **volunteers** to give, in immeasurable ways, when their kind words lift the spirits of a young kid who is scared as he/she flies off to Boot Camp or their next military assignment ... or to provide the genuine ‘thanks for your service’ a Veteran hears and feels when they have a comfortable place to rest between flights and grab a cup of coffee and a snack.

It is well known that the majority of military personnel seek just one thing – a **simple gratitude of ‘thanks’ from the American people**. Our goal at the MI Freedom Center is to show it in tangible ways on a daily basis.

### **Total volunteers in 2020:**

**195**

### **Total Volunteer Hours Served at the Airport:**

**9,805**

Board, Committee and Event volunteers and their hours served are additional.

## Care Team:

**Our volunteer Care team stands ready to support the families of any Fallen Soldiers who come home to Michigan to their final resting place. The Care Team always stands ready to help comfort others, and it was a blessing their services were not needed in 2020.**



**Fund Raising:**

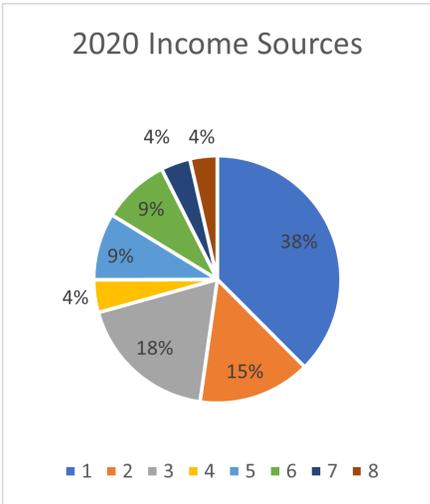
Fund raising in 2020 was to say the least, a huge challenge due to our airline supporters and our overall economy being hard hit by Covid-19 losses. Michigan Freedom Center volunteers did, however, pull off the annual golf outing in late July and raised more than \$9,000 due to the generosity of sponsors and nearly 140 golfers.

And with much thanks to the **Masco Corporation** and its \$10,000 Matching Gifts campaign, we raised another \$10,300 on top of that donation from individuals in the month of December.

Additionally, a \$10,000 grant was received from the **Wendell and Doris Rogers Charitable Foundation** in 2020.

All-in-all, many supporters of the Freedom Center came to the rescue to keep us afloat as we greatly reduced expenditures by 53% under 2019’s expenses by cutting staff hours, supplies and laying off one staff — because overall, **2020 income came in at nearly \$140,000 less than 2019 income.**

Donor / Income Comparison 2019-2020	
2019 Income:	\$305,333
2020 Income:	\$165,816 *
Year over Year Drop:	
47 percent	\$139,517
* Income includes \$24,490 PPP Loan forgiven on March 15, 2021	



- KEY to pie chart:
- 1) General donations
  - 2) 2020 PPP Loan
  - 3) Airport donation boxes
  - 4) Community Organizations
  - 5) Golf Outing
  - 6) Donations on website
  - 7) Veterans' groups
  - 8) In-Kind donations

### Our Board in 2020:

Ken Pratt, Chairman  
Chip Campbell, Treasurer  
Melonie Colaianne, Sec.  
Jim Breough  
Patrick Colbeck  
Janina Jacobs  
Col. Mike Greiger  
Dedra Clark  
David Kallman

### Our Part-Time Staff in 2020:

**Dave Duey**, Operations Director and Troy MEPS

**Matt Garris**, Operations Coordinator

**Len Rose**, Operations volunteer

**Sarah Bufford-Wallace**, Lansing MEPS

**Tom Lang**, Community Outreach Director (started in August, 2020)

**Patrick Colbeck**, Executive Director (through July, 2020)

**Bernie Girardot**, Executive Director (August – December)

Special thanks goes to McNaughton and Gunn for printing our 2020 annual report in-kind.

