



MEOWS FOR MILITARY

The Hermitage's Meows for Military is a program for military Veterans at the Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System in the Community Living Center. Each week our Outreach Coordinator and a Feline Ambassador visit our Veterans and provide supportive therapy to help heal their wounds and lift their spirits.

Pets and humans have a special bond, and our pets often help us through our traumas in ways that we can't truly explain. Evidence-based research, and metadata studies (<https://www.uclahealth.org/pac/animal-assisted-therapy>) have shown that interacting with animals is therapeutic: it lowers blood pressure, decreases rates of depression and anxiety, and promotes healing. The Hermitage understands this, and through our Meows for Military program, we hope to share some of the love of our kitties with the Veterans in our community who need a little purring in their lives.

Our Feline Ambassadors spend time with Veterans who are recovering from physical illnesses and disabilities, including the loss of limbs. In one case, Haboob, a kitty who had lost a leg and was having some difficulties adjusting met with Mr. M, a Veteran who was also an amputee. Although Mr. M was in the hospital himself, he took extra time to care for the little Ambassador Haboob, encouraging him and giving him special attention. We believe that this encouragement and love helped Haboob as much, or more, than it helped Mr. M. In this case, and several more, we have found that our Hermitage kitty visiting the veterans received so much more love than he or she could have given. The smiles and joy left behind tell a story of love and care.

In 2018, we had 43 visits, and helped 553 Veterans by bringing them some snuggles and purrs!

