A VETERAN SUCCESS STORY: Ron Butkus, a local Veteran (former Army Wheel Vehicle Mechanic Recovery Specialist) and ColumbiaCare client, has a lot to be proud of. Over the past 6 years, he has been busy accomplishing things that once seemed out of reach. ColumbiaCare was first introduced to Ron in 2012 as he was just relocating from his previous home in Las Vegas, where he was living, as he describes, at “rock bottom”. Ron openly shares about his drug, alcohol and gambling addiction, which had resulted in him living with “no hope”. Upon arriving in the Rogue Valley, he connected to the Community Reintegration Program at the White City (SORCC) VA, and was referred to ColumbiaCare’s Veteran housing program. From there, he began taking every opportunity afforded to him and committed to the hard but rewarding work of totally changing his life. After doing well at Royal Court, Ron stepped down into Meadow Wood, ColumbiaCare’s most independent level of Veterans housing, and he didn’t stop there. He chose to become involved in the VA’s VRAP program, which helped fund his education in Criminal Justice, while he simultaneously volunteered at the VA. In 2014, he applied for the position of VA Social Services Assistant, and got the job. Just 2 ½ years later he became a Peer Support Specialist. This year, surpassing his own expectations, Ron was approved through Homes for Heroes for a $200,000 loan to purchase a house, and on January 28th he got the keys to his very own home in White City, where he resides with his sister and his dog, Sunshine. He is thrilled to have a place to call his own. “It’s close to work, has more space, and I now have a storage shed, flowerbeds, BBQ and firepit.” When asked what role ColumbiaCare played in his recovery, he shared that the team he worked with “knocked down barriers, and gave him a chance with no stigma attached”. When ColumbiaCare was asked what role Ron played in his great success, they replied “everything”. They shared that he worked hard, stayed positive and took every opportunity to better himself. “He is a role model that inspires everyone around him.” His sister, Annie, describes him as “determined, loyal, and humble.” She is extremely proud of all he has done.

When asked what he would say to others who are starting their own recovery journey, Ron provided these wise words of advice “Good habits are just as hard to break as bad. Real happiness lasts longer than unhealthy highs, so keep busy with positive things. You have to meet those who want to help you, go 51% of the way. Live above board. Move out of your comfort zone. Stay plugged into support groups. You have to want to do it.” We couldn’t agree more, and are proud to have played even a small part in Ron’s journey. What’s more, we look forward to watching how Ron’s story will have a positive ripple effect on the lives of others.