

“Citizen Athletes”

An Interview with Greg Cannito,
Managing Director, Corvias Solutions



Greg Cannito

EDITORS' NOTE Greg Cannito oversees the application of Corvias' innovative public-private partnership (P3) model to challenges faced by public sector institutions nationwide. He was instrumental in the development of The Clean Water Partnership, a first-of-its-kind P3 pilot program that will address federal environmental regulatory requirements for stormwater management in Prince George's County. Previously the Senior Vice President of Program Development of Corvias Group, Cannito successfully managed operations representing a total development budget of over \$500M at Fort Meade and Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, as well as the development of Reece Crossings, the Army's first-ever on-post apartments for junior unaccompanied service members.

Why were you drawn to the military and did your time in the service affect your decision to join Corvias?

When I joined the military, I not only wanted to challenge myself, but more importantly, I wanted the experience of being a part of something larger and more meaningful that required a level of personal sacrifice and commitment. I was, and have continued to be, drawn to the core values and the “Esprit de Corps” of the United States Marine Corps, as they have served as a foundation for both my personal and professional life. I found this same sense of empowerment and eagerness to serve among people at Corvias but in a business setting, so it was a natural fit for me.

This was evident in Corvias' mission – to directly impact and improve the quality of life of our country's service members and their families – and the core values enforced by John Picerne himself, our owner: to be the best partner, the best provider of service, and to give back to the communities we serve.

Do you believe that Corvias and the military have a similar sense of values and a commitment to maintaining their missions and core principles?

One of Corvias' key successes has been the alignment of the company's mission and culture with that of its partners. The military is fundamentally built on a foundation of respect and excellence, and a focus on supporting those in need. As a company, Corvias does not sell a professional skill or commodity, such as engineering, construction, or financial services, but instead centers itself on problem solving, innovation, and empathy.

At first, working for Corvias allowed me to give back and specifically support the military community, but over the past 14 years, we have broadened our definition of the local community to give back to so many others. We have focused on solving deeper challenges that are pervasive in large institutions in any community, such as economic development or environmental issues.

How do you describe Corvias' mission to others?

The problems we look to solve for public universities, private colleges, the military, or municipalities (to name a few), are all similar. It's not about what we're building; it's about our approach to developing a long-term solution that delivers quality service and benefits the community in more ways than one.

I like to use the term “Citizen Athletes” when describing who we are and the types of people we employ. It implies we feel a greater sense to give back and are thankful to have the opportunity, as a company in the private sector, to participate in developing long-term, sustainable solutions for our government partners that put their interests at the forefront.

Has your personal desire to give back evolved since you joined Corvias and how has it grown with the company?

It's not as much that my desire to give back has evolved, but working at Corvias and with John Picerne has helped me understand how I can make an even greater impact in my efforts to give. ●

A Strong Sense of Mission

An Interview with Kurt Ehlers,
Managing Director, Corvias Campus Living



Kurt Ehlers

EDITORS' NOTE Kurt Ehlers is Managing Director of Corvias Campus Living, where he is responsible for new business development, client relationships, and staffing operations. Prior to joining Corvias Group, he worked for two of the nation's largest multifamily developers and was responsible for construction, development, and management of projects in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, California, Oregon, and Washington State. Ehlers holds a B.S. from Syracuse University.

How has Corvias as a company evolved over time?

Our Founder and CEO, John Picerne, is and always has been a very purpose-oriented leader and inspired Corvias employees at every level to feel a strong sense of mission. When the company was in its infancy in the early 2000s, we served military families that were dealing with frequent deployments and hardships that most Americans would not typically experience. During every moment of every single day, we were 100 percent focused on doing what was right for the customer and would never let traditional constraints around customer service get in the way. Our employees knew it was our highest priority as well and felt a real purpose for going to work every day.

This employee-driven mentality held the entire company to a higher standard, and that mentality has now been transferred into all of our partnerships. Although we've engaged in different types of partnerships with other government entities and higher education institutions, all of our work to help solve our partners' problems with sustainable, long-term solutions is motivated by our deep desire to better communities and the lives of others.

What did you find when you entered the higher education industry?

People working in higher education take tremendous pride in their school's culture, as well as the mission and value of their own unique educational experience. People in this industry dedicate their lives to the educational experience and work to help our next generation succeed. In that way, this work has a much different impact on society at large. In many instances, the local communities see the educational institution as a primary economic engine, which is very similar to military installation communities. For this reason, we are thrilled to see the ways we can support change on a much larger scale than simply renovating or building new facilities. As we partner with schools, we are committed to the best interests of their surrounding communities.

What do your partners value most in your working relationship?

What differentiates Corvias is the “true partnership experience” that includes listening, flexibility, and innovation. Our ability to do something as simple – but rare – as listen, is something that we found to be crucial while working with the military. These fundamental tools have certainly been true in higher education as well. For this reason, we look outside the higher education industry for talent; we look for people who have the specific skill of listening in a very meaningful way.

How do you enforce the company's core principles?

It's actually a case of our employees enforcing our culture. They hold leadership to a very high standard. To that end, it's very important in everything we do that we infuse our core principles of being the best place to work, providing the best customer service, and giving back to the communities we serve. I challenge everyone on my team to constantly think about how they're infusing these principles into conversations on a daily basis, and not just in how we talk about Corvias to people outside our organization, but also in the questions we ask. ●