

# WestCare Express

The WestCare Foundation Employee Newsletter



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## WestCare's Lucky Clover

By Seanna Herring Jensen – *WestCare California*

Early Clover is a name that rings true for music lovers. Clover is the lead singer of the Cornell Gunter's Coasters, singing their big-time hits such as "Yakety Yak" and "Charlie Brown," among others. And now, Clover is the Founder and Chair of the newly established WestCare National Celebrity Advisory Council (WNCAC). "I want to use every resource I can connect with to build up the celebrity council," he explained. "I would like to get many positive-minded people involved who are willing to work in the same direction that the National Celebrity Council is going."

At the age of seven, Clover decided he was going to be an entertainer and made his first guitar out of a 2 x 4 and a hay string. "Being born a baby of nine, we had very limited resources," Clover said. "We had one small radio the family enjoyed, and I hogged it. I would sit in front of it and listen to the songs when I was 7 years old, learning them word for word." Then he would sing the words he learned from the music of Little



Richard, James Brown, B.B. King and others. "I developed a hunger for it," Clover said. Several years later he went to New York to compete at the Apollo and won 1st place twice, 2nd place three times, 3rd place in the "Top Dog of The Year" competition, and tied for 3rd place in the "Super Dog of The Year" competition. He became an Apollo favorite, performing each Wednesday for pay, and later auditioned for the Coasters. Out of 62 people he was selected to sing lead for the group in 1988. He sang lead for 14 years, sharing the stage with some of the biggest-name acts in the world.

Already in their seventh year, the Marvelettes, the Platters, and the Cornell Gunther Coasters entertain guests at the Sahara nightly, in the longest-running show in the history of Las Vegas showrooms. Clover is still the lead singer for the Coasters, and he is passionate about WestCare's mission.

Clover's excitement for the mission of WestCare has been apparent not just in his commitment to WNCAC but in his fundraising efforts. For the past two years, he has flown to Florida to perform in the Rock-for-Recovery event that WestCare sponsors. That is where the idea started. "I was speaking with WestCare staff, Darlene Terrill and Chris Yarnold, about fundraising and the idea for a celebrity board grew from there. That was about a year ago."

Clover has a history of supporting causes that need attention. He has been a long-time supporter of the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) and is a motivational speaker for those who have been victims of domestic violence. "I try to do my part to uplift the human spirit," he said.

The WestCare newly formed National Celebrity Advisory Council will do the same. The members will be spokespeople sent to motivate WestCare clients and to teach the public about all of WestCare's hard work and programs. It will be their mission to fundraise and to build up an escrow account for WestCare. "I have approached some big names," he teased when asked what other celebrities may join WNCAC.

"Some of the WestCare programs really struggle," Clover explained. "I want to accomplish a lot for WestCare and for those who work for this outstanding organization. The WestCare staff goes beyond measure to see to it that clients get what they need. I want to support them so they can supply the services."

When in Las Vegas, be sure to catch Clover's performance at the Sahara each night and get his latest album "You Gonna Need a Backup."

## “The Living Room” – No Longer A Community Secret

By Ahmad Bahrami – *Coordinator of Community Involvement WestCare California*

### California



Pictured above: Tina Marby, Toni Harrison, Ahmad Bahrami, Dr Streat, James Acastio, and Jess Esquivel. ▲

The Living Room (TLR), a project of WestCare, is one of a few places where those affected and infected with HIV can receive services in Fresno County. TLR provides a variety of services, including Ryan White case management, which range from assisting clients with medical appointments, obtaining medication, assisting with social security and or disability claims, financial counseling and helping them sustain a dignified quality of life. Additional services rendered by TLR include housing assistance, assistance with insurance, drop-in center for socialization, social activities such as art classes, special presentations and an education/support group called Living Healthy with HIV. The center also offers a gender-specific women's support group, hot meals and a food pantry.

With a generous grant from the Kaiser Foundation, the program will now implement a breakfast program that will augment the twice-weekly hot lunch program. Participants will now be able to

get healthy breakfast, lunch and support/group services all on the same day, providing a one-stop shop for our consumers.

This year the pantry program at TLR provided more than 70 turkeys and all the fixings for a home-cooked Thanksgiving dinner. The small but mighty staff of four also provided a Thanksgiving banquet for more than 85 clients to demonstrate our gratitude for a bountiful year.

Toussaint Streat, MD, Kaiser Permanente and a member of WestCare Board of Directors, presented TLR with a check for \$45,000 at the 2008 World AIDS Day event in Fresno. TLR is a primary sponsor of this important annual event.

TLR also provides health education and prevention services that includes outreach, group interventions and presentations with various local populations. At one time, TLR was one of our “best-kept secrets;” however, we are a secret no longer. Great job to the staff that have done so much for so many!

## Fresno Co. Approves Needle Exchange Pilot Program

By Barbara Anderson and Brad Branan – *The Fresno Bee*

Intravenous drug users can legally receive clean hypodermic needles in exchange for dirty ones in a pilot program approved recently by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

The one-year program, which includes substance-abuse counseling, will allow members of the Fresno Needle Exchange to move off the street and into a building where they can dispense clean needles without fear of arrest. “We can reach so many more people,” said Dallas Blanchard, who has been dispensing clean needles to injection drug users for 13 years. Volunteers have been illegally handing out 6,000 to 8,000 clean needles each Saturday and receive that many dirty ones for safe disposal, he said.

The illegal exchange has never been a secret. It occurs in Fresno down the street from the California Highway Patrol offices at West and Hedges Avenues. Police look the other way. But while the underground exchange has been tolerated, it's never been endorsed by the Board of Supervisors, who repeatedly refused to approve requests for a legal program.

Supervisors voted against creating a program the last time in 2006. At that time, Supervisor Susan Anderson

was the lone dissenting vote for a legal exchange.

Recently, supervisors voted 3-2 for the needle-exchange plan proposed by Dr. Edward Moreno, the county's public health officer. Supervisors Anderson and Bob Waterston and Board President Henry Perea voted for approval. In their support, supervisors said they were sensitive to law enforcement concerns about illegal drug use, but the county needs to reduce the spread of disease. Among intravenous drug users, needle-exchange programs have been shown to decrease hepatitis C and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

A 2005 study estimated 15,169 injection drug users in Fresno County, with 11,377 most likely infected with hepatitis C, a liver disease that can be deadly. Under the program proposed by Moreno, hypodermic needles will be exchanged once a week at The Living Room (TLR), a support center for people with HIV and AIDS and operated by WestCare. County substance-abuse staff will provide information about drug-treatment options and referrals. Fresno County health workers, who have been offering free HIV and hepatitis C screenings at the illegal exchange,

will continue to provide the tests at TLR, said Jena Adams, a communicable-disease specialist with the county's Department of Public Health.

Dr. Marc Lasher has agreed to provide free medical care. Lasher has offered the care to drug users who come to the illegal exchange. “I'm ecstatic,” Lasher said from his office after the board meeting. “We've worked so hard for it over the years.” Lasher credited Moreno for proposing a treatment-based program that got the needle-exchange program approved.

State law allows California counties and cities to operate needle-exchange programs. Seventeen counties and three cities have such programs, said Alessandra Ross of the state Office of AIDS. Ross offered her assistance to Fresno County health officials in proposing the pilot program and was in Fresno recently to offer support. Blanchard said he would like to hand out more clean needles. “The main point is there is a cure for HIV and hepatitis C,” he said before the board meeting. “The cure is prevention, and syringe exchange is prevention.”

# Veteran Association Seeks Out Treatment for Our Brave Soldiers

By Jennifer Hilton – *WestCare Nevada's Adolescent and Men's Treatment Director*

From B-ball in the city to climbing the top of a mountain, the men participating in WestCare Nevada's Harris Springs Ranch Program have the chance at a unique treatment experience. With its backdrop of Mt. Awareness and being 45 minutes outside of Las Vegas, NV it was this distinctiveness that lead the Veteran's Association (VA) to seek out services for the brave men that have served this country and now need help themselves. The Harris Springs Ranch Program is a 56-bed facility serving men and adolescents with substance abuse problems. The program is located in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, outside of Las Vegas.

With the stress our men and women undergo in serving our country, these individuals often find returning home or to a "normal" life difficult, which can lead to problems with substance abuse. So at the request of the VA, WestCare Nevada submitted a grant proposal the last week of September 2008. By September 29 it was announced that they were awarding \$331,000.00 a year to provide services for up to seven men at a time at the Harris Springs Ranch Program, beginning October 1.

As of November 14, with all of the seven beds already being filled and many already asking for services, one of the five residential cabins has been

designated as the Veteran's House, formerly know as Cabin 1. Outside the front of the cabin, a reflection pond is under construction as a memorial to fallen veterans that didn't and/or haven't yet made it to treatment. With clients who served in the Vietnam War through those serving in our most recent interactions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Harris Springs

Ranch staff is proud to help these individuals learn that "normal" is just a word. It is not what you have done or seen, but the good you will do with it in the future that matters most.

Thanks to all that have served, are serving and all those that will serve in the future, it is to you our deepest debts are owed.



## Nevada



## Snow In Sunny Las Vegas?

**S**unny and hot LV? Not lately! What are the odds? Some areas around LV received up to 8 inches of snow! In Boulder City, they received 5 inches. It took many employees much more time to get home due to the pass closing just before Boulder City. It truly was an **ADVENTURE!!!** Hope you enjoy the photos . . . *Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow!*



# The Impact of Improv

By Carl Garvin – *Prevention Specialist, the Village South*

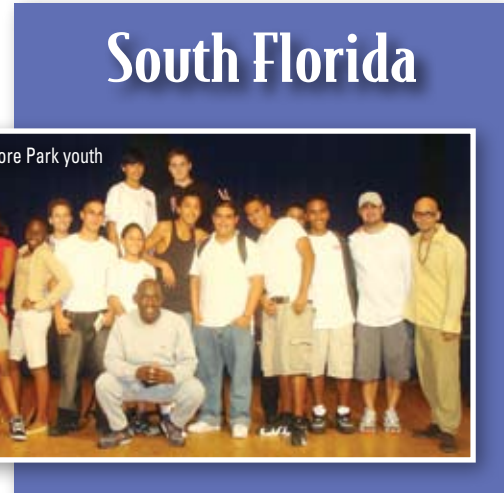
The Village South Improv is a prevention education program that targets youth ages 11 – 18 and who reside in various areas in Miami Dade County. During its twelve years of existence, the Improv has provided prevention education services for thousands of youth in areas of Substance Abuse, Teen Violence, Teen Pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS. In addition, the youth will receive Life Skills, Leadership Skills, and Theater Skills Development Training.

The Village South Improv uses Life Skills curriculum and theater as an effective process of teaching peer leaders and peer educators to deliver prevention messages through skits and drama. Consequently, these youth are able to influence risk reduction, positive growth and development in an environment that is educational and entertaining.

On November 24, 2008, the North Shore Park

youth participated in this year's final Improv performance that proved to be instrumental in their educational growth and advancement.

The youth performed theatrical pieces that addressed the negative effects of at risk behavior that may result in becoming infected with HIV/AIDS, STDs, or Teen Pregnancy. The highlight of the performance was when the youth performed the skit entitled "Puppets." This dramatic piece addresses factors of substance abuse which can lead to death. The piece is very entertaining as the message of substance abuse is conveyed through body movement and facial expressions. The cast consist of puppeteers who represent drug dealers and puppets who are the addicts. Consequently, the puppeteers/drug dealers



Participating North Shore Park youth

control the puppets/ addicts involvement with alcohol, marijuana, and finally cocaine/heroin. Ultimately, the Village South Improv continues to impact children's lives by changing negative attitudes and behaviors and contributing to leadership and achievement in our society.



## Frank C. Rabbito receives the South Florida Aids Network 2008 Leadership Award

Frank C. Rabbito, Sr. VP for the WestCare Foundation Florida Operations received the South Florida Aids Network 2008 Leadership Award at their World Aids Day luncheon held on December 12, 2008. Frank was recognized for his advocacy on behalf of persons living with HIV and in need of residential drug treatment. Frank was instrumental in a reversal of a Federal HHS decision that would have made residential drug treatment an ineligible service for Ryan White Title I funding. Frank worked with Governor Crist's Washington D.C. office, the South Florida Congressional Delegation and National Advocacy groups.

# 5 Questions with . . .

**Pat Gericke** has been with WestCare since June 2000 and is the payroll clerk. She was born in Illinois and lived in Wisconsin and Salt Lake City, UT. They moved to Las Vegas in November 1999, when her husband retired from the FBI. Her husband, Ron, and Pat raised five children, and have nine grandchildren.

**What is your most rewarding experience and biggest challenge working for WestCare?**

I enjoy working for WestCare because of the people I work with and the good work that is done for all those who seek our services.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I am an avid sports fan and love to go to games when I can. I am a Green Bay and Cubs fan even when they don't win. My husband and I love to travel, and we do that as much as we can.

**What would everyone be surprised to learn about you?**

I am an animal lover, and would adopt every dog I see, if I could. We have a little one we got from the shelter two years ago.

**What is your proudest personal or professional accomplishment?**

I am most proud of my family and my husband of 30 years.

**What is your favorite TV show?**

Some of my favorite TV shows are "Dancing with the Stars," the "Law and Order" series, and "NCIS"



## WestCare Fundraiser A Success

As published in – *All Things Country*, Dec. 2008, Hargett, KY., Volume Three, Edition Six

With the help of Modern Woodmen of America's Matching Fund Program, local members of the fraternal financial services organization helped raise funds for WestCare through a silent auction.

The event, held September 13, 2008, raised \$5,000, including \$2,500 matched by Modern Woodmen's home office. The money will be used for the sober living quarters at WestCare. Modern Woodmen members from Irvine are part of a nationwide network of camps (chapters) that help their communities through social, educational and volunteer activities.

"With the Matching Fund Program, we help carry out Modern Woodmen's mission to improve quality of life for members and their communities," said Glenda Gay Oliver, Modern Woodmen camp secretary. "And thanks to the hard work of members nationwide, Modern Woodmen makes donations totaling more than \$5 million annually," Oliver added.

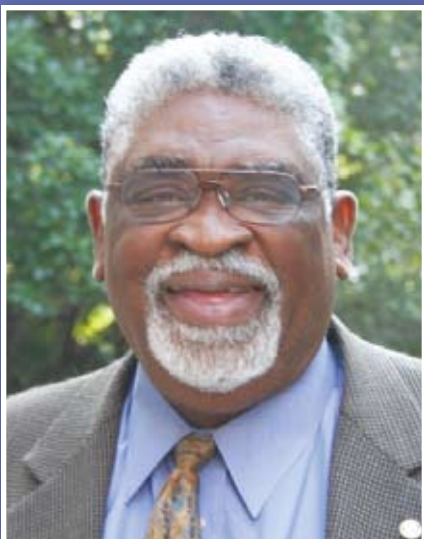
Founded in 1883 as a fraternal benefit society, today Modern Woodmen of America offers financial services and fraternal member benefits to individuals and families throughout the United States. The organization's Irvine camp provides a number of volunteer services and social activities for local members.

Glenda Gay Oliver, Modern Woodmen of America's Camp secretary, presents a donation to WestCare Area Director Renee Alexander to assist with the sober living apartment construction project.



## Kentucky

## Georgia



## Georgia's Board Chairman Wins Seat on DeKalb County School Board

By Michael Langford

Dr. Eugene P. Walker, chairman of the WestCare Georgia Board of Directors since 2003, came out of political retirement to win a seat on the DeKalb County School Board. Dr. Walker received more than 60 percent of the total votes cast in a run-off election held December 2, 2008. Political observers were not surprised that Walker received more than 40,000 votes, given his distinguished public service career. He has served the people of Georgia in both elected and appointed positions, including four terms in the Georgia State Senate, seven years on the Pardons and Paroles Board and Commissioner of the State Department of Juvenile Justice. Dr. Walker is no stranger to the

educational community in Georgia; he has served as a professor at Clark – Atlanta University and served as an associate superintendent for DeKalb County schools. When asked why he decided to run for a seat on the school board, Walker stated, "I am passionate about serving the community and assuring quality educational opportunities for our children, and this position allows me to do both."

The WestCare family extends congratulations to Dr. Eugene P. Walker on his recent victory. While he received the majority of votes, it's quite clear that the children and residents of DeKalb County are the big winners.

# A Snapshot of the Employee Holiday Party for WestCare Arizona

## Arizona



From left, Tracy Stevens, area director, Bob Wishart, Tracy's significant other, Andrews Enriquez, Amber's fiance, Amber Valletta, SafeHouse employee

WestCare Arizona held their annual employee holiday party on December 16 with 46 employees and guests in attendance. Everyone enjoyed an Italian dinner and the always laughable white elephant gift exchange, where several gift items were taken from other people. The most popular items stolen from other people this year were lottery scratcher tickets, a compact wet/dry vacuum and a very large calculator. Kirby Burgess and his wife, Shirley, were in attendance. It was a very nice evening.



From left, Kim Mitchell, Shirley Burgess and Kirby Burgess.

Jack Ballum, counselor, Laughlin office



# WestCare at Sheridan Hosts Full-Day Immersion Training

By Loretta Berry – Sheridan Correctional Center, Illinois

WestCare at Sheridan hosted a day-long immersion training November 20, which included all of the Sheridan providers and stakeholders. This idea was proposed at a recent quality improvement meeting at Sheridan during which the issue of training new staff to the service model was raised. The staffs of all Sheridan vendors, as well as the employees of the Sheridan Correctional Center, were subsequently invited to our first annual immersion training.

Staff who attended the training also enjoyed a staff appreciation luncheon hosted by WestCare and TASC. The evaluation feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Staff were pleased by the comprehensive and coherent picture of the Sheridan Model the training presented. The staff also praised all of the vendors for their sense of cooperation displayed and the unified efforts of all providers to offer a treatment model that is dedicated to comprehensive quality services. The training itself

## Illinois

became a fine example of the therapeutic community philosophy.

WestCare at Sheridan wishes to thank the following organizations and speakers for their contributions to this successful training:



- Addiction Recovery Services, State of Illinois
- WestCare, Sheridan Video
- Community Support Advisory Council
- Mental Health Services
- Outcome Evaluation
- TASC
- Safer
- IMF
- HBI
- IVCC
- Parole

- Dona Howell/Al Renkosik
- Sandy Smith
- James Coleman
- Bridget Lanktree PsyD.
- Dr. David Olson
- Linda Gaston-Rowe
- Christina Riley
- Mike Dombrowski
- Scott Eike
- Peggy Blair
- Shane Humpage

# D.C. Policy Report

An Interview with  
Congressman Patrick Kennedy



by Gordon MacDougall – *the Beacon Group in Washington D.C.*

**W**estCare recently had the opportunity to ask questions of Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), a national leader on issues relating to mental illness and substance abuse. Following are WestCare's questions and the Congressman's responses. His responses provide insight into the current state of our nation's treatment system and his personal outlook for federal funding for substance abuse and mental health services in the upcoming 111th Congress and under the Obama Administration.

*Q1) [Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions, and] congratulations on the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 becoming law. Can you share your outlook for how this will change the way families, individuals and treatment providers respond to mental health?*

A1) "The first step towards changing the perception of mental illness and addiction disorders is changing the discrimination that is embedded in our laws. And that's what we did. By changing the law, we will ultimately change both the delivery of mental health services and their perception by individuals and families who may be ashamed of seeking them. This law is important, first, because people know they'll get treated. It's also important because they can feel better about asking for and demanding treatment – because they're entitled to it."

*Q2) Congress has not reauthorized the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) even though authority for the agency has expired. Can you explain the reasons, from your perspective, why Congress has not reauthorized the agency (what are the sticking points)? Also, can you share your outlook for Congress addressing this reauthorization in the 111th Congress?*

A2) "SAMHSA has broad bipartisan support in Congress. While it is true that SAMHSA's authorization has expired, it is quite common for Congress to continue providing appropriations for programs with expired authorizations and that will certainly be the case with SAMHSA. There was some progress towards a reauthorization bill in the 110th Congress, but these things do take time. I fully expect the 111th Congress to send a SAMHSA reauthorization bill to President Obama."

*Q3) What is your expectation for how the Obama-Biden Administration will address substance abuse and mental health policy?*

A3) "We're looking forward to the new administration and the opportunity to address health care reform. With the passage of mental health parity, we have established, beyond any doubt, that mental health is a fundamental part of our health care system. It is among my highest priorities to ensure that mental health care continues to be integral to any discussions about health care reform. I'm confident that the Obama-Biden administration will have the same approach."

*Q4) In some areas of the country, city, state and county public health departments deliver substance abuse and mental illness treatment programs while in other jurisdictions substance abuse and mental illness treatment services are delivered separate from city, county and state public health agencies.*

*Can you share your view on the role of city, county and state public health agencies in delivering substance abuse and mental illness treatment services?*

A4) "Local and state public health agencies play an integral role in delivering substance abuse and mental illness treatment services. Unfortunately, many of these agencies have suffered from federal and state budget cuts, which can often translate into needed services and care reaching less people, or a scaling back on the services provided. It's essential that we continue to support these agencies financially, both at the federal level and at the state level, so that those in need have access to lifesaving services."



*Q5) What do you think are the most important questions on which researchers should focus to improve substance abuse and mental illness treatment?*

A5) "Recently I introduced H.R. 5989, the National Neurotechnology Initiative Act. Supported by the Neurotechnology Industry Organization, this legislation is designed to unite and expand federal neurotechnology R&D efforts under a National Neurotechnology Initiative (NNTI). Using targeted funding increases, totaling less than 4 percent of the total brain and central nervous system research budget, the NNTI will ease bottlenecks, increase coordination, and result in critical treatments reaching patients faster. By connecting and coordinating neuroscience research across federal agencies, eliminating duplication, and creating greater efficiencies we will improve the quality of our research, accelerate discoveries, and get treatments into the hands of those who need them."

"Additionally, the Department of Veterans' Affairs is in need of system-wide mental health care standards by which all regional Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) follow. We must also increase collaboration between VISNs so that the VA is researching the evidence-based practices that help our veterans and sharing its findings with experts throughout the VA system."

"**Policy Report**" is an occasional feature of WestCare Express. Please contact Jenifer Noland, [jenifer.noland@westcare.com](mailto:jenifer.noland@westcare.com) if you have suggestions on relevant topics for reports on federal legislative or executive branch activity.



## The Endowment Campaign Train is Rolling and Some Great People are Already on Board!

By Jim Schaitel – *The DuBois Group*

# Campaign Corner

**T**here is a lot of great news to report since last month's newsletter update! In the December issue we reported our first \$1 million milestone; this month we're able to tell you about some of the great people who have volunteered to work with us on the Endowment Campaign – check out these names!

- Honorary Chair – Senator Richard Bryan (former U.S. Senator and Nevada Governor)
- National Spokesperson – Al Unser, Jr. (yes, that Al Unser, Jr., the racing legend, part of Indy racing history!)
- Steering Committee Co-Chair – Keith Thomas (Nevada businessman and WestCare Nevada Board Chair and Foundation Board member)
- Steering Committee Co-Chair – Dawn Gibbons (First Lady of Nevada)
- Nevada State Chair – Rob Moore (one of Nevada's best-known businessmen, third-generation in Nevada)
- Kentucky State Chair – Kyle Macy (one of Kentucky's best-known and most popular basketball stars, basketball coach, sportscaster)
- Kentucky Community Co-Chair – Bill Baird (prominent third-generation attorney in Kentucky and WestCare Kentucky Board co-chair)



WestCare Foundation  
Endowment Campaign

We recently met with the WestCare Kentucky and WestCare Georgia boards and were met with great support and enthusiasm from every board member; their typical response was “what can we do and how soon can we start.” With top names in place in both of these states, community team captains and volunteers will be recruited through January with an official launch in early February in Kentucky and Georgia. We're very optimistic these two states will set the bar for the rest of the campaign across the country!

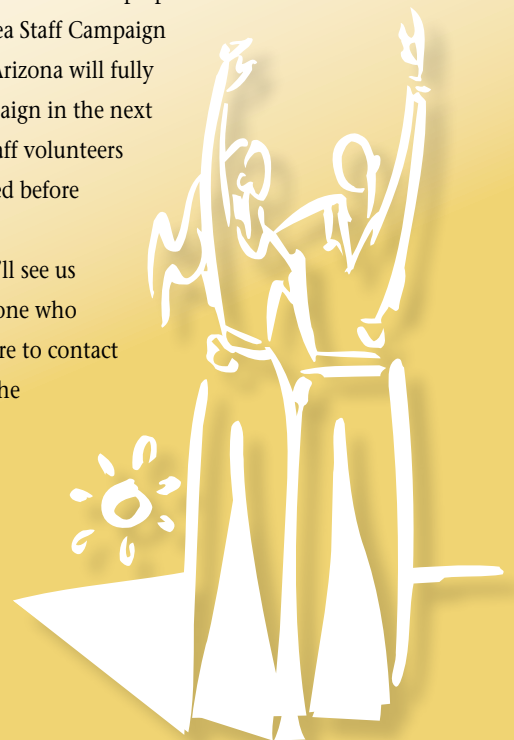


Kentucky and Georgia aren't the only states getting ready . . . the Staff Campaign in southern Nevada was launched recently, and we had to get out of the volunteers' way for fear of being run over. From initial reports, it looks like these volunteers will wrap up the greater Las Vegas area Staff Campaign in record-setting time. Arizona will fully launch their Staff Campaign in the next couple of weeks with staff volunteers

being recruited this week. Kentucky and Georgia Staff Campaigns will be completed before their Community Campaign launch in February.

We haven't forgotten Florida, California, Illinois or the U.S. Virgin Islands. You'll see us in Florida in January and in California a few months after that. If you know someone who should be part of your Endowment Campaign in your state, call us and we'll be sure to contact them. The success of any endowment campaign is truly based on the strength of the volunteers who roll up their sleeves and make it happen.

Thank you to everyone who has already stepped up to volunteer in the states that are first to start. We look forward to more great volunteers from within WestCare as well as those outside our organization who simply want to make a difference. People helping people, what better way to start 2009!



Al Unser ▶