



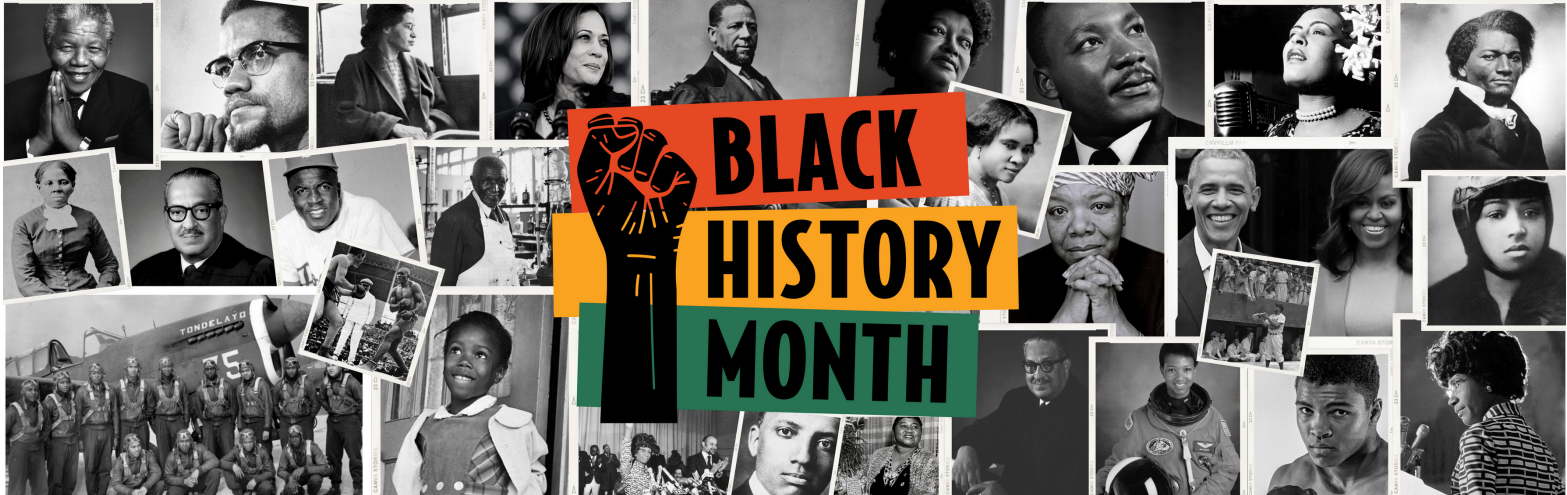
THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 2021

ISSUE 93

VOLUME 7



February marks Black History Month, a celebration of the contributions African Americans have made to this country. The theme for 2021 is "The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity." Since 1976, Black History Month has been an important time to recognize the achievements of African American individuals in history, reflect on the continued struggle for racial justice, celebrate a rich heritage, and unite around shared experiences. It is a reminder that history goes beyond the textbook and into everyday society. This history of Black Americans is being written every day as we honor the past, the present, and what is to come in the future. This month, I hope we will continue to:

Learn more about Black individual contributions. Every day this month, our WestCare Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee have and will continue to send all employees an email highlighting a Black individual for their amazing contributions to American society. I encourage you to read each story and understand how remarkable those moments are to history. Our goal at WestCare is to stand by our fellow Black colleagues by ensuring our organization is racially equitable.

Appreciate art and culture by Black artists. Immerse yourself in Black history from a Black perspective. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture are offering digital programming to celebrate this month at home that can be accessed online.

Identify our privilege. As a white male, I understand the privilege I have had in my life. This Issue of The Loop is dedicated to Black History Month because I know that if we do not talk about Black history and understand the issues that Black individuals face today, we are part of the problem. I, and our entire organization, want to be part of the solution. Let us all engage in courageous conversations with the shared goal of better understanding the wide-ranging diversity within the Black community to bring us together.

To all of our fellow Black colleagues, please do not hesitate to share your stories with me. Over the last thirty years, I have heard, seen, and acknowledged the issues and challenges the Black community face in all of our service domains (treatment/rehabilitation, mental health, criminal justice, veteran services, housing, and HIV/AIDS). If there is anything I can do to make our organization better, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am, and will always, continue to be on the side of diversity, equity and inclusion.



Shawn L. Ford
Deputy COO - Western Region



#WESTCARECA

new look. Same great stories. **WELCOME TO THE NEW LOOP**

The Loop has gone through many changes over time. Our newsletter started in 2014, with evolvments in 2017, 2018, and now in 2021 we have a new design. This is one of the many new and exciting changes to our organization this year that we hope you enjoy!



I gave a dirty test. CPS held a Team Decision Meeting and I agreed to let the kids go with my mom. I selfishly wanted them to go into the system because my drug use led me to believe that my family was out to get me. Before I entered WestCare, I went to my moms to pick up my two kids for a visit and ended up hiding for a few days. I took them with me to WestCare and entered the program. A few hours after entering the program, CPS came to the program with a warrant to take my kids. Although my kids had been taken again, I decided to stay in the program because I knew that was the only way that I would be able to get my babies back.

“**WestCare helped change my life for the better. I know that it can do the same for anyone else.**”

My name is Jennifer and I have been struggling with addiction since I was 14 years old. My drug of choice was meth. I was always a smoker, but in the last year or so of my addiction, I got curious and decided to try slamming meth. In the beginning, I thought it was the best thing to ever happen to me because the high was like no other – but it wasn't long before I realized that it was the worst thing ever. I started doing things that I now look back at and couldn't imaging ever doing now sober. My life became unmanageable as I was having an affair with an older man, getting in physical altercations with his partner, and doing things with him in front of my children.

To make a long story short, I was being evicted from my house because my landlord got out of prison and wanted his house back. He did not want to give me a chance to find somewhere to go. He terrorized me and my family. It got so bad that I had to stay with people across the street that I didn't really know. It was during this time that my landlord called Child Protective Services (CPS) on me. Eventually, CPS took my kids and placed them with my mom. I continued to use after my kids were taken. When I had to test for CPS,

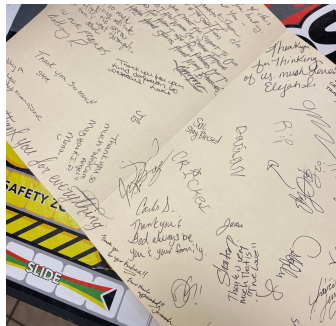
I was enrolled in the BEAT program. It was their staff that helped me identify how risky the life that I was living was; that if I did not make the necessary changes, things would not get better for me or my kids. I learned a lot about myself while I was in the program. I learned that I didn't like who I was when I was an addict and that I had mental health issues that were beyond my control. Through recovery, I was able to maintain my mental health and my sobriety. WestCare and the BEAT program really helped by working with me at my pace. If it wasn't for the program, I wouldn't be where I am today. I have a job, regular visits with my kids, and am working towards reunification. I just got my own place and have a huge support system that consists of family, friends, and the staff at WestCare. I would recommend the program to anyone battling addiction. Today I am clean and sober and have successfully completed my residential and outpatient programs and am proud of how far I have come!



Sharing the Love at CCTRP Stockton

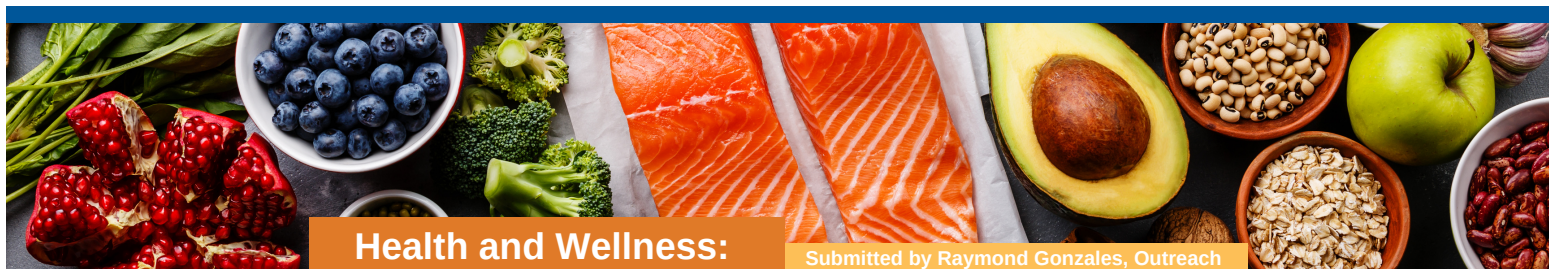
This past Valentines Day, the women at our Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program (CCTRP) in Stockton took part in a love themed door decorating contest! Staff members got to be the door decorating judges and presented prizes to the top 3 picks!





In late January, the family and friends of Richard Fraga, whom lost his battle to substance abuse last year, made a donation in his memory to benefit the men, women, and children that we serve at our MLK Residential facility in Fresno. Each gift of hygiene items and warm clothing came with a special message from the Fraga family as well as various bible verses to help them along in their journey. As a way to say thank you, those that we serve presented the Fraga family with a drawn portrait of Richard and a signed thank you card. On behalf of our programs and those that we serve, we'd like to send not only our heartfelt thanks to the Fraga family for this tremendous gesture but strength as they move forward!

A Memory Lives On Through Kindness



Health and Wellness: Making Every Bite Count

Submitted by Raymond Gonzales, Outreach Specialist, SJVV (Fresno)

This **March is National Nutrition Month** and for a lot of us, it's all about eating well and eating right.

As many of us begin this New Year, we are apt to set goals and plans, but one of the greatest goal or plans to have is a healthy eating plan. Certainly, nutrition and healthy eating habits are a must to maintain a healthy outlook on life and overall health. The foods and beverages that people consume have a profound impact on their health. An eating plan that helps manage your weight includes a variety of healthy foods. Add an array of colors to your plate and think of it as eating the rainbow. Dark, leafy greens, oranges and tomatoes - even fresh herbs - are loaded with vitamins, fiber and minerals. Adding frozen peppers, broccoli or onions to stews and omelets gives them a quick and convenient boost of color and nutrients.

According to Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars
- Stays within your daily calorie needs

Some of the foods groups that we may choose are listed below:

Fruits: Fresh, frozen, or canned fruits are great choices. Try fruits beyond apples and bananas such as mango, pineapple or kiwi fruit. Choose canned varieties of fruit packed in water or in its own juice.

Vegetables: Add variety to grilled or steamed vegetables with an herb such as rosemary. You can also sauté (panfry) vegetables in a non-stick pan with a small amount of cooking spray. Also try frozen or canned vegetables for a quick side dish - just microwave and serve.

Calcium-rich foods: In addition to fat-free and low-fat milk, consider low-fat and fat-free yogurts without added sugars. These come in a variety of flavors and can be a great dessert substitute.

Meats: If your favorite recipe calls for frying fish or breaded chicken, try healthier variations by baking or grilling. Maybe even try dry beans in place of meats. Ask friends and search online for recipes with fewer calories.

Comfort Foods: Healthy eating is all about balance. You can enjoy your favorite foods, even if they are high in calories, fat or added sugars. The key is eating them only once in a while and balancing them with healthier foods and more physical activity.

Here's some general tips for comfort foods:

- Eat them less often. If you normally eat these foods every day, cut back to once a week or once a month.
- Eat smaller amounts. If your favorite higher-calorie food is a chocolate bar, get a smaller size or eat only half a bar.

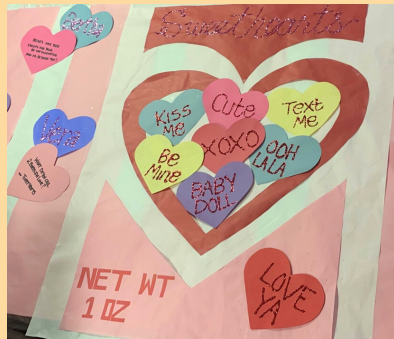
In the end, the food that we choose to eat can have a great impact on our health and our weight. Thank you and enjoy life one day at a time and yes - one bite at a time, too!



A Month of Love at MLK Residential!

In celebration of Valentine's Day, the staff of our MLK Residential Learning Center planned a variety of activities throughout February!

On Valentine's Day, staff members made cupcakes for everyone to enjoy a sweet treat. Decorated doors lined the hallways for a candy and card exchange all while maintaining COVID-19 guidelines. As a sweet moment to give back to our community, a banner with personalized Valentine's messages was brought to a local convalescent care home. The banner brought lots of smiles to the faces of their residents!



To help our Administration and Housing Services teams get into the Valentines Day spirit, our Creative Services Manager, Justin Kamimoto, prepared a sweet treat for everyone - cake pops!

We appreciate your kindness!

A Kudos to Justin!

Creative Services Manager,
WestCare Foundation

Congratulations to Norma!

Recipient of the **CORE (Characteristics of Remarkable Employees) Award for Support Excellence:** Norma Gonzalez, Family Service Specialist, MLK Residential



The Support Excellence award is presented to an individual who has shown consistent support for supervisors and co-workers and has represented their program or department in a positive, accommodating, courteous, professional, respectful, knowledgeable and mission supportive role.

Submit A Story for The Loop

The Loop newsletter wouldn't be possible without the regular submissions that we receive from staff! Whether it's a success story or an event, we'd love to see it! Please send any high-quality pictures (Non-identifying if of clients) and a brief summary to: marketing@westcare.com



Benjamin Hernandez
Social Media
Specialist



Justin Kamimoto
Creative Services
Manager



Gabriela McNeil
Director of Marketing
& Procurement



Michael Mygind
Marketing
Specialist