



# THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND CALIFORNIA

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## WestCare Family,

November is an important month for so many reasons. It begins with **Dia De Los Muertos**, a time for many to honor their lost loved ones, and ends with the first three days of **Hanukkah**. It is punctuated with **Thanksgiving** and as **National Native American Heritage Month**, is a pivotal time for learning about the rich history of our Native American brothers and sisters - our nation's first Americans.

To our organization and those that we serve, November is an absolutely crucial one with its emphasis on Veterans and military observances including **Military Family Appreciation Month**, the **U.S. Marine Corps' 246th Birthday**, and **Veterans Day**. Whether active-duty, reserves or retired - we salute you and thank you for your service.

In commemoration, our program spotlight for this month will focus on our four **San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV)** offices in Fresno, Hanford, Merced, and Stockton! We hope that you'll take a moment to read about the great work that they do for local Veterans and their families as well as how you can help by donating needed items to an office near you! Also, for this year's **Giving Tuesday** coming up on Tuesday, November 30, we will be accepting donations to support the needs of our SJVV offices! Please see [page 2](#) for information on how you can assist them as they give back to those who have served!

To our SJVV staff, some of which who are Veterans themselves, thank

you for your tireless support of the Vets that you serve and for working together with community partners like your local Veterans Administration (VA) contacts to create solutions for them and their families whether it's obtaining their earned benefits or securing permanent housing. Access to health services and housing should never be out of reach for these heroes and their loved ones and thanks to your hard work, we are able to ensure that they receive only the utmost dignity that they deserve for all that they have already sacrificed for the freedoms that we are so fortunate to enjoy.

On behalf of my fellow members of leadership, I'd also like to send my heartfelt thanks to our staff at **MLK Residential, Veterans Plaza GPD, McKinney Plaza**, and **Liberty Plaza** in Fresno; **Bakersfield Residential**, the **Richmond Health & Wellness Center**, and our **Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Programs (CCTRP)** in San Diego and Stockton who worked on Thanksgiving to ensure that those within our care had a warm holiday with a delicious meal while they receive services away from their loved ones. Thank you for your time, care, and dedication to Uplifting the Human Spirit!

Until next time, I hope that you have a wonderful month, and thank you for all that you do!



Mary Ann Knoy, Vice President, WestCare California



[westcare.com](https://www.westcare.com)



**San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV)** is a unique project of WestCare California, Inc. that serves Veterans in Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kings, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare Counties and collaborates with the State of California and local Veterans Administration (VA) branches to close the gaps in services WestCare currently offers to transitioning Veterans. SJVV operates out of four offices located in Fresno, Hanford, Merced, and Stockton. Each office serves as a single, welcoming location where Veterans can meet with Veteran service representatives from a variety of agencies.

SJVV's services include but are not limited to case management, Veteran advocacy, clinical support for Veterans with PTSD and other conditions, housing assistance for them and their families, employment assistance, linkage to their VA benefits, and transitional living. The offices of SJVV also provide an easily accessible space for Veterans to meet with service representatives, search for jobs, and attend support groups. SJVV serves all Veterans including members of the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard, those who received honorable discharges, and anyone who served a day or more in the armed forces. SJVV is a place where Veterans are honored and respected and are empowered to change their lives one simple step at a time.



San Joaquin Valley Veterans  
@SJVV\_CA  
@sanjoaquinvalleyveterans

## Support SJVV with items from their wish list

The staff of SJVV's offices in Fresno, Hanford, Merced, and Stockton are currently seeking donations of:

- Gas cards
- Bus tokens
- \$5 gift cards for Dollar Tree, McDonalds, Taco Bell
- Snacks to provide to Veterans during outreach
- Sleeping bags
- Small tents
- Baby wipes, deodorant, brushes, and dry shampoo
- Batteries with flashlights
- Coats and sweatshirts
- Blankets
- Solar-powered phone chargers

If you would like to make a donation, please contact your nearest office:



**Fresno Office**  
1505 N. Chestnut Ave  
Fresno, CA 93703  
**Phone:** 559-255-8838



**Merced Office**  
399 George Dr, Bldg F  
Merced, CA 95341  
**Phone:** 209-722-3501  
Ext. 145



**Hanford Office**  
410 E. 7th St, Ste 5 & 9  
Hanford, CA 93230  
**Phone:** 559-584-8100



**Stockton Office**  
2291 W. March Ln  
Ste C-100  
Stockton, CA 95207  
**Phone:** 209-662-6073

## Kudos to Christina!

"I would like to spotlight Christina Valtierra, Lead Veteran Advocate/Housing Specialist. Christina displays dedication every day. She is tasked with different projects and demonstrates professionalism, respect, and is diligent about the work she does in housing our Veteran community. Her expertise has provided us with valuable insight, which has helped grow and push our team's objective forward. Reliability is hard to come by. We are so grateful for all of your hard work. Thank you for bringing your best to work every single day."

— Angelita Edwards, Program Director, San Joaquin Valley Veterans

## Meet Michael THIS IS HIS STORY

Prior to entering our program, Veteran, Michael R., found himself in quite a dilemma. He had been living with severe physical disabilities rendering him wheelchair dependent. The home that he resided in eventually fell into ill-repair and was deemed unfit for habitation, so finding a new home became a priority. Over the course of three years, Michael actively worked with multiple programs to find housing and had no luck due to the circumstances at the time. It seemed hopeless, but one day he was referred to WestCare and although reluctant, he decided to take a chance at finding a new home with the assistance of SJVV. Despite this bold decision, it was only the beginning of an arduous road that he would face in regaining his stability and independence.

At the time that Michael entered the program, he was very low-income, had poor credit, and was physically dependent on a standard wheelchair. These three distinguishing barriers created some of the most difficult challenges when seeking housing in Kings and Tulare Counties. However, with the very little disability income that he received from the VA, he was able to receive emergency housing assistance (EHA) from SJVV and was referred to the HUD-VASH program to obtain a subsidized housing voucher. During his stay at a local motel in Hanford, we provided housing navigation services, and sought appropriate housing that met ADA-compliance and was close to public transportation to/from the Fresno VA. However, with the help of Michael's daughter, Julie, the team was determined

to find him a new home. With the increasing rental rates and lack of affordable housing available, SJVV was intent on overcoming these barriers and finding a suitable home for him.

After months of working with SJVV and a few setbacks, the team was able to identify a unit that met all of his needs, a senior living community subsidized by Kings County Housing Authority. But then, as all seemed to be moving smoothly, his wheelchair began to malfunction, leaving him immobile. So, SJVV and his daughter worked together to assist him with transportation and his other needs. However, this was a huge set-back on his journey to regained independence. So, our Health Care Navigator began work immediately, working tirelessly to navigate the VA Health Care System (VAHCS) and in a few short months, he received a brand new electronic wheelchair. Shortly afterwards, Michael was approved for an ADA-compliant one bedroom unit and was provided a new bed, general housing supplies, and groceries to assist him in creating a new home for himself.

SJVV is incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity of working with as kind and resilient of a Veteran as Michael. To be given the opportunity to empower him to grow and change, is at the very core of our mission. Michael feels overwhelming joy about the new life he has been given and feels that his successful journey of exiting homelessness is a prime example of the perseverance and willful determination of the SJVV team.

In turn, he is eternally grateful.







## The 2021 Fresno AIDS Walk Celebrates 10 Years and Raises Awareness!

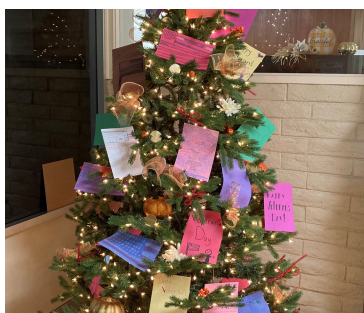
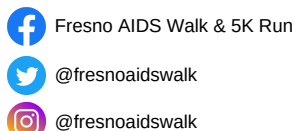
In October, we were proud to present our 10th Annual Fresno AIDS Walk in support of The Living Room, Fresno's only social support center for those infected, affected, or at risk of HIV/AIDS.

In light of the ongoing pandemic, this year's event was presented as both a virtual walk/5k run and a produced 49-minute awareness video/event that premiered live that morning on YouTube! This video placed a special emphasis on awareness of the virus as well as paying tribute to our late Program Director for The Living Room, Toni Harrison, whom we lost this past July. In addition, the video featured local performances, a tour of The Living Room, messages of thanks to Toni, and more!

Watch this year's event online at: [westcare.link/2021faw](https://westcare.link/2021faw)

We'd like to thank all of our wonderful staff, community partners, speakers, performers, walkers/runners, sponsors, and donors who not only helped make this event possible - but our best year yet with over \$38K raised in proceeds for The Living Room!

If you would like to make a donation in support of The Living Room and their continued services, you can do so by visiting: [fresnoaidswalk.org](https://fresnoaidswalk.org)



### MLK's Thank You to Veterans

In November, the women and children of WestCare California's MLK Residential facility in Fresno took the time to make some thoughtful thank you cards for the Veterans served by our San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV) team! Thank you to those that we serve and to our MLK Residential staff that organized the activity for taking the time to uplift the spirits of those who have given so much for the freedoms that we are so thankful to enjoy!



### A Special Veterans Day Thank You to Our Fresno Vets

Following the recent Veterans Day holiday, our San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV) team in Fresno delivered goodies in the form of thank you cards signed by their team, a flag, and a cookie to the Veterans that we serve at our HomeFront GPD, Veterans Plaza GPD, and Renaissance at Parc Grove complexes as well as to our Veterans who are currently utilizing shelter in hotels.

*"This was a small gesture to show gratitude for our Veterans and the sacrifices they have made."*

- Yadi Renteria, Program Coordinator for SJVV's Fresno office

### Red Ribbon Week in Kings County

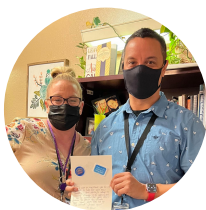
For this year's Red Ribbon Week, our amazing Adolescent Services team took part in four days of outreach events through Kings County at Sunset Reef Middle School in Avenal, Liberty Middle School in Lemoore, Kings Lake Continuation School in Corcoran, and at Parkview Middle School in Armona! They were joined by local providers and members of law enforcement with the common goal of promoting education as part of the largest drug-abuse prevention campaign in the United States! Thank you to their amazing team for their continued efforts and dedication to their local youth!



View all of this year's amazing Halloween photos on our WestCare California social media accounts!



### Kudos: Hassan Driver, Unit Clerk, MLK Residential



"Hassan, I want to say thank you for all that you do to help our unit run smoothly. Your ability to adapt to ongoing change is so appreciated. I am so grateful for your desire and passion to assist the clients. Your hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank you!"

— **Jennifer Childers**, W2W Coordinator, MLK Residential



### 10.15 – Boss's Day: Thank You to Our Amazing Mentors, Supervisors, and Leaders!

Throughout California, our staff recognized their supervisors as part of Boss's Day in a variety of thoughtful ways!

As part, we'd like to share some heartfelt sentiments that we received from our team in Bakersfield regarding their supervisors:

"This Boss's Day, we want to recognize these three amazing supervisors representing WestCare Bakersfield!"

**Adriana Garcia** is the Senior Case Manager for the STOP – Area 3 office here. No matter what her day entails, she is always supportive and has a warm smile that greets staff on a daily basis. Adriana is hard working, diligent, and is dedicated to WestCare.

**Dwayne Gotay**, Program Director of Bakersfield Residential/Outpatient, works consistently to create a positive working environment for staff as well as our participants.

**Samuel Alonzo**, Program Coordinator of Bakersfield Residential/Outpatient, worked as a coordinator before he was even hired to do so because it was what was needed for the success of the program. He continues to step up to the plate and be both an amazing WestCare employee and supervisor.

As a testament to their dedication and employee support, the cards that went around to staff (behind the scenes) are filled to the brim with accolades from the staff they supervise. They are much loved here in Bakersfield and we are very proud of their efforts in "Uplifting the Human Spirit."  
- The WestCare staff of Bakersfield Residential/Outpatient and STOP – Area 3.

To all of our supervisors, thank you for your leadership, guidance, mentorship, and support!



### 10.15 – The WestCare California Family Goes Pink for Breast Cancer Awareness

On October 15, our team made the choice to go pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, in support of our survivors, and in remembrance of those that we have lost. Thank you to all who participated!

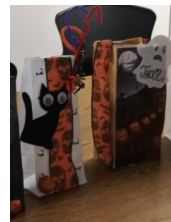
*Your health should always come first. Please visit [cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov) for information on how you can be proactive for yourself and for your loved ones.*



### 10.21 – Purple Thursday

On this Purple Thursday, our California team proudly wore purple in support of all survivors of domestic violence and to raise awareness of the services that are available to those who have been affected.

*If you're experiencing abuse in your relationship, please know that you are not alone. Contact an advocate 24/7 by texting "START" to 88788 or by visiting [www.thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org).*



### Continue the journey online!

Follow WestCare California on social media to see all our fun photos from Bosses Day, Go Pink Day, Purple Thursday, and Halloween!

#WestCareCA



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### Connect with us in California

Get in touch with our Marketing Department to learn more about what is happening in WestCare California at [marketing@westcare.com](mailto:marketing@westcare.com)