



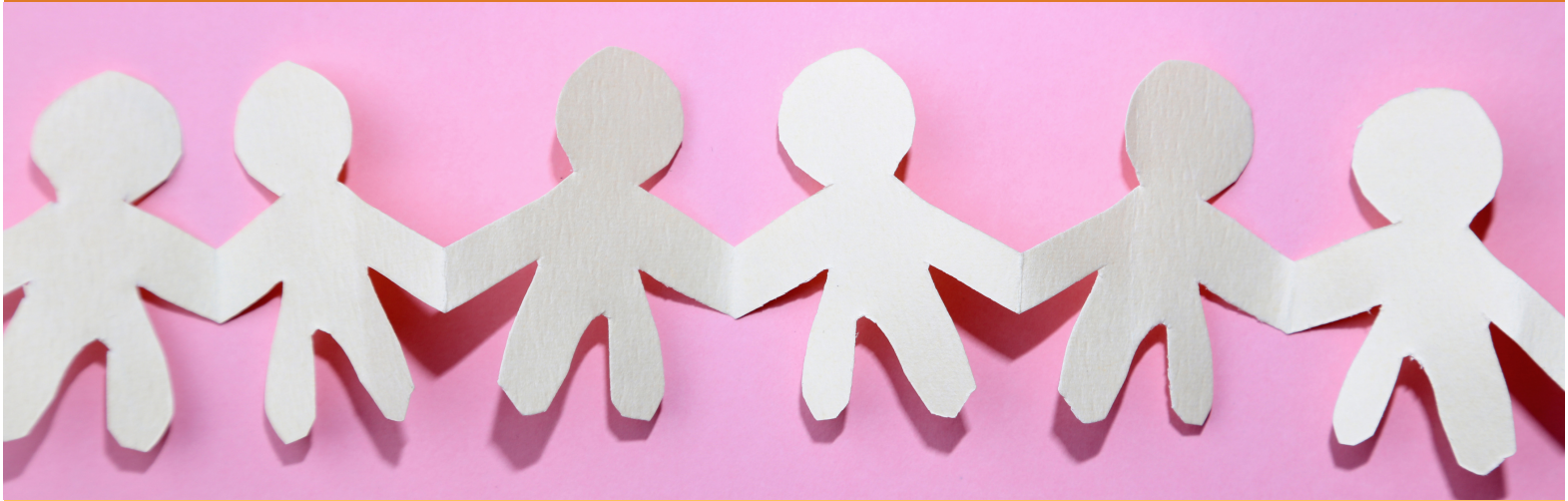
THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 2021

ISSUE 101

VOLUME 8



Every October, we are proud to observe **National AIDS Awareness Month** and its related observances that align with our service domain of Education and Prevention. This is a month of education and awareness pertaining to the prevention, transmission, and treatment of HIV/AIDS as well as a call to action for all individuals who are positive to be open with their partners about their status. In commemoration, please see inside for a program spotlight, client progress story, kudos to their staff, and donation wish list all pertaining to The Living Room and their services!

Additionally, October 15th is **National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day**, a day that aims to raise awareness of the impact of HIV/AIDS amongst the Hispanic and Latino community. This is of great importance in California, as Hispanics comprise over 39% of the state's population. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *"HIV continues to be a serious threat to the health of Hispanic/Latinx communities. In 2016, Hispanics/Latinxs accounted for 26 percent (10,292) of the 40,324 new HIV diagnoses in the United States and six dependent areas."*

We will also be presenting our **10th Annual Fresno AIDS Walk** in support of the continued services of The Living Room. While it will be held in the form of a virtual walk/5k run and a streaming produced video event premiering at 10am on our official [YouTube channel](#) on Saturday, October 23rd, it will embody all that it has in years' past from providing awareness on the impact of HIV/AIDS, support for those who live with the virus, and tribute to those that we have lost. Please visit fresnoaidswalk.org today to donate, register, start a team, and fundraise!



Mary Ann Khoy, Vice President, WestCare California

This month, I have the honor of discussing an observance that affects all of us, **National Boss's Day**, which was observed on October 15th. While this is a day to recognize the leadership and contributions of the supervisors that we report to, it is also a reminder of what it takes to be a leader in our field.

With this said, I'd like to share a sentiment about my boss and our Chief Operating Officer for WestCare's Western Region, Shawn Jenkins! With over 30 years of service to our California operations, Shawn's track record truly speaks for itself. He is a proud alumni of The Third Floor, (before we became WestCare California) has worked his way up through the organization in many different roles, and has helped steer our organization to heights that we once only dreamed of. As a fellow Alumni who has also worked his way up from the bottom in the same organization that has changed his life for the better, he and I share a special bond. When many think of Shawn, they might envision him in a closed-door meeting discussing pressing matters for his region, which is often true. But, I will always think of him on visits to our various programs stopping to take the time to chat with the men and women that we serve about their stories and how our programs are helping them. Our services and the care of those that we serve always come first for him and it shows through both his words and his actions.

In short, to all of our supervisors on staff – thank you for Uplifting the Human Spirit. Your dedication, time, and experience are not only ensuring the success of our programs and services, but are helping groom our next wave of leaders!"



Cleadus Shelton, Vice President, WestCare California



westcare.com



The Living Room, a project of WestCare California, Inc., encourages and supports the well-being and empowerment of persons infected with, affected by and/or at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. The Living Room's focus is on improving the quality and availability of HIV-specific services for all residents of Fresno County.

The Living Room is a social support center that provides a wide range of direct and indirect services for persons infected with, affected by and/or at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. Services include case management, client advocacy, hot meals, harm reduction, housing assistance through Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA), rapid testing for HIV and Hepatitis C and social support groups. The Living Room staff provides supportive networks, fellowship, information, education and referrals. All services are confidential. The Living Room advocates client empowerment and well-being through the development of healthy self-esteem through positive attitudes, support and living. The Living Room's services support people as they learn to live healthy and productive lives.



Meet Frank THIS IS HIS STORY

Hi, I'm Frank and I've been coming to The Living Room (TLR) for 20 years now. I've been HIV-positive for a long time. I found out about TLR through my doctors at Valley Medical Center who sent me here. Toni Harrison was the head of TLR and she's been a pillar of support for all of these years. Back in the day, I was a drug addict and an alcoholic and my support came from TLR. I've been coming here with other people trying to fight the battle of drug addiction and I'm still here and I give a lot of credit to their staff. This is part of my life. This is where I come for support. When I was down and out in the streets, they've given me clothes, food vouchers, groceries, and motel rooms – they've helped me a lot. I'd probably be dead if I didn't have the support here. I was even awarded an apartment through Section 8 and that was all because of TLR.

For people who are positive, they get the short end of the stick in the outside world, but here, it's a place to belong. I highly suggest that you donate to them to help future people who are positive like me, and I just want to say thanks to their staff for all of the support that they've given me here. It's been a blessing and a big part of my life. I love this place.



Kudos to the Amazing Team!

"I would like to thank the entire Living Room staff of Yvette, Ruben, and Ashley for being so welcoming to me and truly embodying the spirit of The Living Room and giving me a space to belong. I look forward to working with you all!"

– **Carlene Mendez**, Program Director, The Living Room

Wish List

The staff of The Living Room are currently seeking new or lightly used donations of:

- Surround sound speaker system
- Vinyl tablecloths
- Industrial sized freezer
- A couch/Loveseat
- Seasonal decorations

If you would like to make a donation, please call 559-486-1469.



FRESNO AIDS WALK

we're here, together

OCTOBER 23, 2021 AT 10AM

HAPPENING VIRTUALLY
WHEREVER YOU ARE

sponsored by





BEAT Jumps into the Fall with Teamwork and Creativity!



In September, the clients of our **Behavioral Education And Treatment (BEAT)** program took part in a series of fun fall-themed activities. Their staff provided various season-appropriate desserts such as pumpkin muffins, pumpkin cake pops, and fall colored cupcakes along with appetizers!

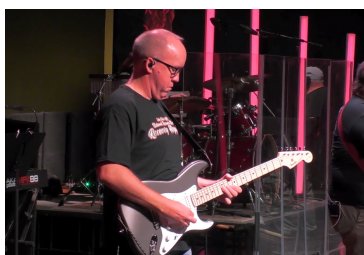
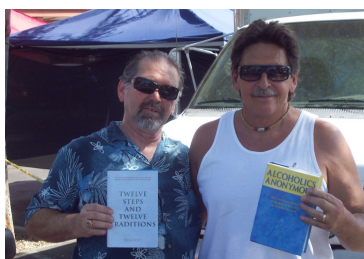
Staff and clients enjoyed board games together and as an effort to enhance their communication and teamwork skills, we gave the clients an opportunity to compete in solving a puzzle. The first of three groups to solve their puzzle won a clear plastic water bottle filled with fall candies for each member!

Thank you to our amazing BEAT and MLK Residential staff for organizing this fun fall event for those that we serve!

CP4R SoberStock XVI: Virtual Edition

We were proud to take part in this year's **Community Partners 4 Recovery (CP4R) SoberStockXVI: Virtual Edition** event by helping organize and produce the video that comprised this year's virtual event in honor of National Recovery Month and our late CP4R Co-Founder, John Duchscher! We'd like to thank all of our wonderful staff, community partners speakers, and local performers who helped make this event possible!

[Click here](#) to watch this year's event in its entirety!



Meet Amy HER RECOVERY STORY

I began using meth when I was 16 years old and gave birth to four kids within the first five years of using. I managed to stay clean during my pregnancies, but shortly after each birth, I was using again. In 2003, I witnessed my boyfriend take his own life with a semi-automatic 45. Within a year of his death, I was injecting and lost my kids to their grandparents for over a year.

I finally got my kids back over a year later after having another child. I moved to Madera and was clean for almost a year, but ended up back on meth. I struggled with meth for years and eventually moved to Fresno where Child Protective Services (CPS) finally took all five of my kids away. I got pregnant again one month after my kids were taken in. I complied with CPS during the pregnancy because I was clean and decided to put the baby up for adoption. After the birth and the adoption, my kids were still in CPS and I began using within a week after leaving the hospital. I did not go to a program as I was too scared and had no faith in anything. Instead, I lied to CPS as well as the probation office. I falsified drug tests and somehow got custody back for four of my five kids and got off probation. I continued to use for many years and drug my kids around, but I rarely saw my daughter who was staying with my aunt. I would eventually get money and find a new house, but shortly after, I'd lose everything after blowing my rent money on drugs and at the casino.

In 2015, I became pregnant with my youngest son. I stayed clean for the

pregnancy, but a week after delivery, I was right back to it. As my health was deteriorating, I was slowly killing myself. I needed a few surgeries, so I promised my family that I would get clean when I had surgery. My girlfriend and her mother told me about WestCare, but I would not listen. I thought that I could do it alone. I was trying to get custody back of my daughter when I went in for surgery and got clean just in time to pass the drug test for my custody hearing.

My daughter began to live with me and I did well for six months. One day, my neighbor, a man with mental health issues, attacked me - stabbing me in the head and left me for dead. I ended up with 16 staples in my head. With a small support system and no treatment, I relapsed a few weeks later. I used one time and said, "NO MORE." I got clean and decided to pursue a life of sobriety!

I have been clean for over three years and decided that my story might one day help someone like me, so I applied at WestCare and was hired. God had a plan for me all along and finally brought me home. WestCare is an amazing place and it is by God's grace that I stand here today with a recovery family and an environment of hope that not only helps me stay sober, but allows me to help others like myself get help. I wish I had listened to the people who told me about the WestCare program. I might have been successful years ago instead of putting myself and family through hell. I am grateful to be alive today - sober and full of hope.



Vocational Graduation at CCTRP San Diego

The past few months, 13 clients at our **Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program (CCTRP)** in San Diego attended an eight-week vocational readiness course facilitated by CCTRP's Vocational Counselor, Kori Gillis. On October 7th, their program was proud to recognize their latest graduating class for the course! Over the course of eight weeks, their women served participated in interview exercises, took part in job searches, and create five-star resumes! In addition, they gained confidence and improved their leadership and technological skills and are now fully prepared to enter a workplace! Congratulations, ladies!

WestCare Bids a Happy Retirement to Mark Leanhart

In October, our WestCare California family of programs bid a heartfelt farewell and wished a very Happy Retirement to our Director of Admissions and Outpatient Services, Mark Leanhart!



To my WestCare Family,

Since I first entered WestCare in March of 2004 as a client and as a staff since 2007, you have provided me hope, purpose, family, and opportunity. With my retirement, I reflect and I appreciate deeply the role that WestCare, our clients and all of our staff/family have played in my life. It has been central to all in my life these past 17 years and I am profoundly grateful for and enriched by all that I have experienced. I hope for you all to be touched and impacted as deeply by the mission, the people and the grace that recovery and a satisfying career can bring a soul. I will carry that and all of you with me into my retirement and long afterwards.

Like Dorothy's dear Scarecrow,

"I will miss each of you, most of all."

Sincerely yours,

Mark R. Leanhart

Congratulations, Mark! We will miss you, your sense of humor, your energy, and the passion for our services that you brought with you each and every day!

We wish you only the best on this exciting new journey that lies ahead!



Out in the Community: Shout out to San Joaquin Valley Veterans

Our **San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV)** team was out at the 2021 Central Valley Veterans Stand Down! For two days, we were able to connect Veterans with support services. The community definitely came together in a show of support for our service members in the Central Valley.

To all the Veterans we met, *thank you for your service!*

Promotions



Angie Edwards was promoted to Program Director of San Joaquin Valley Veterans



Carlene Mendez was promoted to Program Director of The Living Room



Stephanie Bertrand was promoted to Program Director of CCTRP - San Diego

Kudos



Brittany Silva, Entry Recruiter and Personnel Coordinator, Administration

In October, Brittany was recognized with a Staff Recognition token from Shawn Jenkins, Chief Operating Officer for WestCare's Western Region for her great work in recruiting staff for our various programs throughout the state!



Norma Gonzalez, Family Services Specialist, MLK Residential

"Norma – Thank you for always being willing to step up when needed. I appreciate you and knowing you've got my back! I love that you are always there for the clients."

– Jennifer Childers, W2W Coordinator, MLK Residential



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