

THE *Express*

OUR WESTCARE STORIES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Meet Dick Steinberg

President & CEO

This month, I am proud to share space at the beginning of The Express with our **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Staff Workgroup** to share two important moments in February: Black History Month and Lunar New Year.

People are at the core of what we do here at WestCare. We bring our mission of empowering folks to engage in a process of healing, growth and change around the world. In every region we serve, there are diverse folks supporting people who walk through our doors at their lowest lows following them to get to a point of cheering them on at their proudest moments. We're a family.

As a family made up of unique individuals unified by a shared mission, we know that there are many layers to us all with varying cultures, traditions, and histories that are brought to the table. And in order to work toward our mission, we must listen and be knowledgeable about these different journeys that others navigate. We, as WestCare, can extend this empathy, support, and understanding the moment someone steps through our doors.

Families are complex and we have fast challenging times that are occurring now and will continue into the future, but the difference within us is that our resilience grows when we stand together. By embracing DEI we can only become stronger.

WestCare Family, I would like to leave you with this thought. As we strive to make a better community amongst ourselves, let's continue to learn from each other. **(Continued on Page 2)**

Celebrating BLACK HISTORY MONTH

For WestCare, Black History Month is about honoring the lives of all Black Americans, and how their experiences shape and strengthen America. It's about shining a light on the past to create a brighter future. It's about marveling at the resiliency of the human spirit, that rises from oppression, stronger, wiser, and more powerful.

We can thank Harvard-educated historian Carter G. Woodson for conceiving the idea of Black History Month in 1915. An inspired Woodson formed what is now named the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH), to encourage the study of the accomplishments made by Black Americans.

The theme for 2022, is *"Black Health and Wellness,"* with a focus on the legacy of Black scholars and medical practitioners, the rituals, traditions, and healing modalities of Black communities, and the disparities and discrimination that many Black Americans experience when seeking healthcare.

This year's theme resonates with WestCare as we continue to strengthen our cultural competence and responsiveness to help decrease health disparities faced by the individuals we serve while striving to create a more diverse workforce and more inclusive organization.



Lunar New Year YEAR OF THE TIGER

In 2022, Lunar New Year began on the 1st of February, and continues for more than two weeks, culminating with the Lantern Festival beginning on the 15th of February, making it the longest Chinese holiday.

The ancient holiday, also known in China as Spring Festival, marks the beginning of a new moon (*known as Lunar New Year in some countries*), a new year in the Chinese calendar, and the transition between zodiac signs to the Year of the Tiger (*symbolizing bravery, wisdom, and strength*).

Lunar New Year is a sacred time to reflect, to usher out the old year, and bring forth the luck and prosperity of a new one. Also, it's a time to honor ancestors, banish evil, and pray for good fortune.

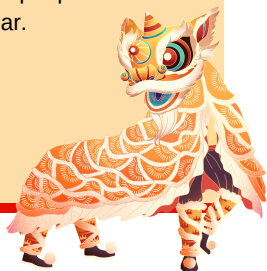
Attend a traditional Lunar New Year celebration and you will hear the Dragon Dance and fireworks in the distance, see buildings and people adorned in red and gold; smell the feasts of spring rolls, dumplings, steamed fish, and noodles; and overhear the gleeful sounds of children receiving gifts of red envelopes or Hongbao filled with new crisp paper money as tokens of good wishes.

The Lantern Festival that follows celebrates family, honors relatives that have passed on, and promotes reconciliation, peace, and forgiveness.

It's estimated that more than one (1) billion people across the globe celebrate Lunar New Year.

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UPLIFTING THE HUMAN SPIRIT



(Continued from Page 1) I enjoy listening to your voices to better understand how we can build equity. I value your thoughts and comments about how we can improve and what we can do differently. I welcome the community spirit and safe places created for hard but necessary conversations. This journey we are on is one we're taking together, and I am here to support and listen to each and every one of you.

As your President and CEO, I realize that equity means value, fairness, and justice. To our clients, we want all WestCare sites to be your accepting place. To our team members, WestCare is your extended family. We will continue to adapt to meet the needs of everyone.

We bring our cause to life around the world. If you see myself or any other member of leadership visiting, please tell us about how we can be better. From your perspective, I want to work with our leadership to make us better. I need people of all experiences here at our organization because you all bring a new perspective. Through our diverse thinking, we can come together to meet the needs in our community. I have much hope and optimism that this will allow us to grow into the next generation with a bright future.

We know there is continued work to do. But I know we have a shared vision. I am excited as to what our future holds as we continue to see diverse leaders being built here at WestCare.

Let us leave our comfort zones this year to embrace all of the people we come into contact with. Embrace people for who they are and what we can learn from them. The best way for WestCare to continue to grow is to recognize that we are all essential here. When people think of WestCare, I want them to think of all of us. We all make up WestCare. We might not all see things the same, but we're here for a common goal. From the inception of WestCare, we have been a collective of different people all working together. We share the commonality that we will make a difference in people, community, neighbors, coworkers contributing through individual experiences that empowers us to do the best we can together.

You are valued and appreciated here at WestCare.

Dick Steinberg



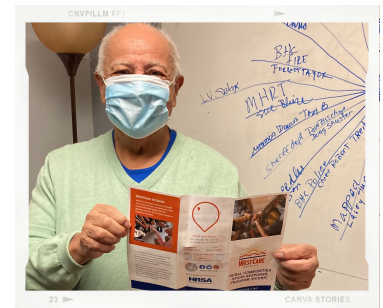
Collaboration in the Community

By Emily Selby, Case Manager/BHT

Chaz Martinez, Program Director of WestCare Arizona's **Rural Communities Opioid Resources Program (RCORP)**, conducted a RCORP consortium meeting at Mohave Community College on January 21. The meeting's objective was to give an overview of the **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)** program and how consortium members and their organizations can utilize each other's services to treat anyone seeking help for Substance Use Disorders or Opioid Use Disorders (SUD/ODU) in the tri-state area. In attendance were 38 community stakeholders, including Bullhead City Chief of Police, Robert Trebes; retired Kingman Chief of Police and Program Coordinator of Mohave Substance Treatment Education & Prevention Partnership (MSTEPP), Bob DeVries; the Western Arizona Regional Medical Center's Chief of Staff, Dr. Waheed Zehri, MD; the CEO of the Havasu Regional Medical Center, Mike

Patterson; the Director of the Mohave County Department of Public Health, Denise Burley; the CEO of Talas Harbor at Bullhead City Behavioral Health Hospital, Rick Remley; Mohave County Supervisor for District 2, Hildy Anguis; and leaders representing behavioral health and social services organizations throughout the tri-state area. WestCare's Chief Clinical Director, Dr. Jason Engel and Chief Operating Officer for the Western Region, Shawn Jenkins, participated virtually through Microsoft Teams.

The HRSA grant is currently providing funds to open a satellite office in Bullhead City located at 937 Hancock Road, Ste. 85, staffed by two peer supports, the program coordinator, and the program director. WestCare Arizona is excited to continue growing in our community and being a part of the solution!



WestCare Arizona



@westcareaz



A Parolee Success Story featuring "Joe"

By Val Sumner, Senior Case Manager

"Joe" is a 60-year-old lifer with two children who was incarcerated for 32 years at a **California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)** prison for men. Upon his release in 2019, he entered our MLK Residential treatment facility in Fresno and completed the Men 2 Men program in 2020. He then moved into our McKinney Plaza recovery residence and began services with our Fresno adult outpatient program.

His stay was extended so that he could continue to work on himself and his recovery. In time, "Joe" gained employment with a maintenance position and was highly recommended for the great work ethic that he displayed while in his treatment episode. He developed a positive attitude towards himself, his peers, and his sobriety. He was able to build a secure foundation with society, secure permanent housing, and achieve his long-term goals.

"Joe" was motivated to regain positive change and reinforcement with his life commitment to sobriety, personal responsibility, and self-awareness with his newfound life. He has been a positive role model after serving 32 years of incarceration and came to our program willingly and with an open heart to establish fundamental goals and live a healthy life within his community. Thank you to our wonderful staff at MLK Residential for helping men like "Joe" succeed in making lifelong positive changes!



WestCare California



@WestCareCA



@westcarecalifornia



Always a Helping Hand

By Belinda Morales, Program Assistant

On January 13, **Guara Bi Dominican Republic** held an outreach event at Parque Cervantes in Santo Domingo where food was provided to people of limited resources, the unhoused, and individuals with substance abuse problems. Thanks to the generosity of **Krispy Kreme**, we were able to offer different kinds of donuts as dessert. As part of our sexually transmitted disease prevention and targeting initiative, condoms were distributed to those who arrived at the event.

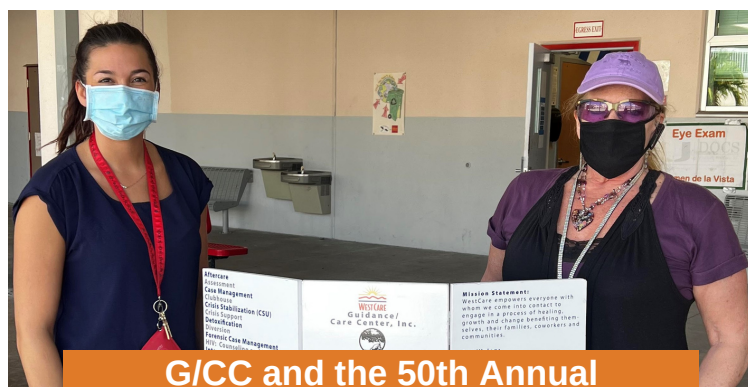
The staff of Guara Bi Dominican Republic and its collaborators are very committed to continuing the search for collaborative agreements that allow us to continue supporting our communities and its most vulnerable populations. What a nice way to begin this new year of 2022 with the feeling of humanity, sharing, and Uplifting the Human Spirit once again!



A Special Thank You to Gabriella

By Eric Singleton, EOC and Food Services Director

Gabriella Faedo has been actively volunteering at **The Village South** since 2015 at the young age of 11. Through the years, we have had the opportunity of seeing Gabriella grow into a hardworking and mature young adult. Her initial visit blossomed into Christmas parties and Valentine's Day events for our children. This year in addition to the annual Christmas Party, she created, built, and donated a bookshelf for our new **Pembroke Pines Children's Academy** on the campus of the **Village South Women's and Children's Center**. She also spearheaded a book drive within her school community and collected and donated over 1,000 books to fill the new bookshelf and help the academy's students explore the wonderful world of reading. We will forever be grateful to Gabby not only for the new bookshelf and books, but for her kind and generous community service over the years!



G/CC and the 50th Annual Florida Keys Health Fair

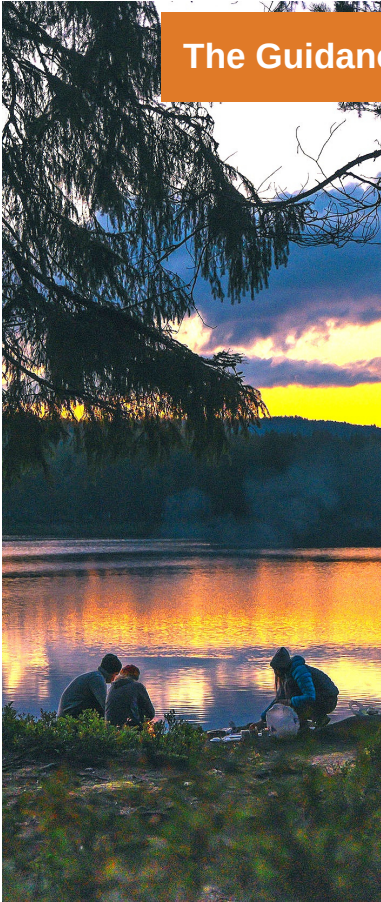
By Bronte Walsh, Prevention Specialist

The **Guidance Care Center's Prevention Program** was thrilled to be a part of the **50th Annual Florida Keys Health Fair** that took place on Saturday, February 5. The event provided free services and screenings for dental health, mental health, children's health, vision, and so much more to the residents in Key West and Marathon, FL. Their team has set their efforts on raising awareness about G/CC's different programs offered to the community and continues to get G/CC's name out there. I was proud to represent our **Project Success** program, which focuses on educating high school students on mental health, providing individual and group counseling support, and conducting monthly school-wide awareness activities at Key West High School. This February played host to **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month** and this apparent at the fair where dating quizzes and information about the warning signs was available to adults, children, and families that attended the event.



The Guidance Center Partners with Adventure Recovery

By Ray Cox, Program Director



The **WestCare Georgia Guidance Center** and **Adventure Recovery (AR)** have connected and are collaborating with each other to bring a new dimension to the Guidance Center's recovery program! Per their website, adventurerecovery.com, "AR leads clients through the external and internal wilderness. What does that mean? We take people outside into nature and teach them new ways to get outside of their comfort zones, build self-reliance, and uplift mindsets and moods. In addition, we share observations, support one another, challenge ourselves, and get into a deeper connection with our sense of self and connection to others."

The AR model incorporates mental health awareness and recovery-based practices into all that we do. Individually and in group settings, we engage in experiential activities that allow us to explore, experience awe, and embrace a beginner's mind. This allows us to be flexible and integrate somatic learning. The idea is to get comfortable in our own skin, connect with others, and shift our perception from thoughts and patterns related to destructive patterns to new, healthful modes of being. The work is profoundly meaningful to us since most of us are in recovery from either mental health struggles or addiction. There is

nothing like seeing the light go on in someone's eyes when they learn something new and what's more, it's fun."

The AR program will accept applications from the residents and then go through a screening process. Once the participants have been identified, an orientation will be done by AR staff who will discuss the trip and the goals.

The initial trip will be from Thursday through Sunday and will be in the North Georgia mountains and the foothills of the Appalachian Trail. The residents will travel approximately three miles per day. They will be educated about nature and given the opportunity to embrace the splendor of the mountains. In addition, there will be guided journaling exercises and group discussions. As part, the Guidance Center has donated some military ruck sacks to the organization to support their cause and look forward to the adventures that await with this exciting new partnership!



WestCare Georgia

@westcarega

FAVA Welcomes the Clinical Data System to Iowa

By Jennifer Cleveland, Support Services



The **Family Alliance for Veterans of America (FAVA)** team in Iowa was blessed through grant funding to receive updated cell phones, laptops, desktop computers, and a copy machine in the last year. The equipment is now allowing the team to move from hard copy files to the long-awaited Clinical Data System (CDS) electronic healthcare record being built by Emily Hoffner, WestCare's Director of IT Project Management. WestCare Foundation's Chief Clinical Officer, Dr. Jason Engel and Chief Information Officer, Dwayne Stevens, have been by our side to ensure non-clinical protocols and security are maintained.

The FAVA staff has been working very hard over the last few months with the CDS project team leaders to build our electronic health care record for the **Supportive Service for Veteran Families (SSVF)** program. There are at minimum 80 pages for each client file. Staff researched to make sure all pages were the most up-to-date forms and identified which were patent protected.

Dr. Engel has showered the team with wonderful compliments on our build. He has stated that the way that we have designed our SSVF program in CDS is outstanding and could be a model for other SSVF programs throughout WestCare in the future. This is the first of its kind to be built for the organization.

The CDS and FAVA teams have been working closely together to really take advantage of the CDS system to not only document our client records but to enhance our ability to track key information for grant and WestCare requirements. The system has been designed in a way that is user-friendly, fulfills all grant requirements, and captures data for each client that can be queried through custom reports. The old systems of paper tracking will not be missed! The benefit of having access to these custom reports will be limitless and improve our performance immensely. The FAVA team is very excited to start using the system and looks forward to starting the training process. Case navigators will now be able to do their work in the field electronically as they are responsible for the top Northern portion of Iowa's 43 counties from the far west side to the east.

We appreciate all the professionalism of the leadership team in making this system a reality. It will bring Iowa into today's standards and out of the old ways of how things were done. Thank you, Emily, for making this such an easy process for us to accomplish!



FAVA (Family Alliance for Veterans of America)



Cermak Team Partners with Cook County Health to Fight Opioid Addiction

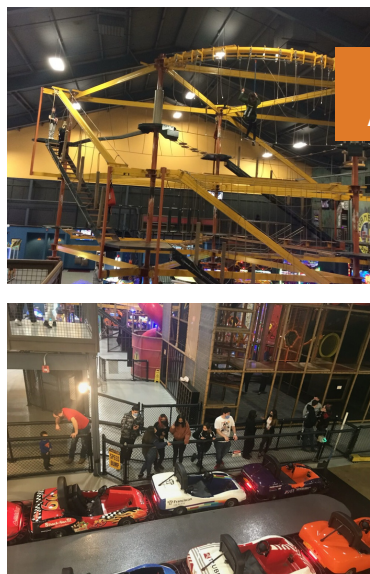
By Melissa Valentine M.Ed., CADC, Program Coordinator

It's no secret that the opioid epidemic continues to be a threat to society, but some areas are hit more dramatically than others. Opioid overdoses continue to rise across Illinois, but Cook County appears to have been hit the hardest.

In 2021, an estimated 1600 opioid-related deaths were reported by the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office. In response to these staggering numbers, the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) awarded [Cook County Health](#) a five-year \$2.6 million grant to fund opioid use treatment programs. This five-year plan is known as [Project REACCH-OUT: Rapid Engagement and Access at Cook County Health for Opioid Use Treatment](#), and the purpose will be to enhance the treatment and recovery of individuals diagnosed with opioid use disorder and substance use disorder by implementing a low barrier and high-capacity bridge clinic. Our dedicated Cermak Team will partner with Cook County Health on this initiative.

"WestCare Illinois is pleased to partner with Cook County Health to offer a holistic portfolio of services which includes linkages to housing, job referrals, and mental health treatment at no cost to those in need. Through this collaboration, WestCare Illinois will also be organizing outreach events aimed at decreasing opioid overdoses where we will provide Narcan training and fentanyl testing strips"

- Stacy Munroe, WestCare Regional Vice President



Youth Engagement for Awareness, Fun, and Sobriety!

By Carlos G. Rodriguez, Program Director

On January 26, [WestCare Illinois](#) staff took 14 students from our partnering school, [Pathways in Education](#) to Jak's Warehouse for food and fun. The [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) awarded WestCare a five-year grant, Partnerships for Success. The goal of the grant is to reduce underage drinking and other drug use by providing group programming for local alternative high schools.

WestCare's Carolina Diaz and Lydia Shepard recently planned an engaging outing for students. The purpose of the engagement activity was to develop closer relationships with the students, teachers, and the staff of Pathways; increase program enrollment, and provide sober fun for our group participants.

Students and staff were treated to an evening of pizza and ice cream as well as an array of games and activities including go karts, basketball, video challenges, rock climbing, laser tag, and a high ropes course!





Clients Learn Valuable Career Experience

By Anna Bevins, M.Ed., T-CADC, LPC-A, Project Director



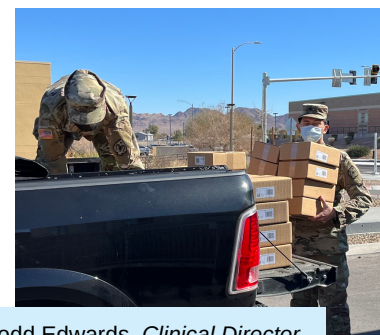
Overall employment of agricultural workers is projected to grow 2% from 2020 to 2030. Despite limited employment growth, about 138,900 openings for agricultural workers are projected each year on average over the decade. Armed with this information, the **Supported Employment Program**, operating within the **WestCare Kentucky Hal Rogers Appalachian Recovery Center**, decided it would be a great trade to help our clients achieve sustainable employment. Our Vocational Specialist, Tony Adkins, and Life Skills Instructor, Shaun Doan, began turning dirt on a 10,500 sq foot garden, which will be treated as employment with each resident being mock interviewed and “hired” as help. The candidates will have a set schedule and work requirements each day to emulate actual employment. This effort is to teach the residents a sustainable resource for their future, educate them on supplement food costs, and provide nutritional meals to our treatment center and nearby WestCare homeless shelter. A sister-effort is also being undertaken at the **Judi Patton Center for Families** with a 4,000 square foot garden!

Fun facts about crop production:

- Gardening sales grew by 10% in 2018
- Americans spent \$3.5 billion on gardening food in 2013
- Urban farming produces 20% of our food



 WestCare Kentucky



COVID-19 Self Tests Help Slow the Spread in Clark County

By Todd Edwards, Clinical Director

WestCare Nevada recently received over 600 Binax NOW self-tests in a unique partnership between the **State of Nevada** and the **Southern Nevada Health District** to ensure the safety and health of our most vulnerable participants. WestCare has committed since the onset of the pandemic to continue to serve our clients despite rising COVID-19 cases in the Clark County region.

Our Director of Residential Programs, Irma Magrdichian, has worked closely with officials from the **Nevada Department of Healthcare Quality and Compliance** as well as Chief Clinical Officer, Dr. Jason Engel, to develop testing procedures to ensure the safe intake of clients into our program throughout the duration of this unprecedented outbreak. These processes include the double testing, quarantine, and isolation of all clients entering our programs. All clients are tested prior to intake and placed into a

seven-day quarantine where a second PCR test is administered. During their time in quarantine, WestCare Nevada has developed innovative strategies using telehealth capabilities to continue to deliver clinical services during this critical intake period. Any clients who test positive can be immediately placed into isolation units and cared for until they are back to good health and can reengage with their therapeutic community.

Testing is not only offered to our consumers but also the staff responsible for their care. According to CDC.gov, self-tests are an important component in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 for people who may be at risk or haven't developed symptoms yet. The costs associated with such rigorous testing programs have been large and this new partnership with state and local health departments will provide greater access to supplies to continue to ensure the safety of participants and staff.



WestCare Nevada



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FARE Plants the Seeds for Greater Nutrition With our Youth



By Abby Hofrichter,
Communications &
Social Media
Coordinator,
Hofrichter Creative
LLC, with
contributions from
Libby Freeze, FARE
Coordinator

There is just something about seeing a group of pre-teens gathered around a cutting board preparing a heart-healthy snack that warms the heart! Since the start of 2022, our **Food Access Resiliency Enterprise (FARE)** program has successfully and regularly met with over 35 students in both elementary and middle school to give them hands-on experience with prepping healthy foods.

Miss Libby, our FARE Coordinator, leads a Food & Gardening SPARK for the first graders in our after-school **Miracle Makers** program every Friday afternoon. As the weather warms up, they will adventure into gardening, but for now, the group is content with making healthy snacks like yogurt parfaits with oodles of toppings and lean green smoothies. While making smoothies with chia seeds and greens, all 20 students were asked to add more of each ingredient after learning how the nutritional benefits could help them grow big and strong! "A rare but amazing feat," as described by Miss Libby.

Miss Libby explained another similar experience from a recent class with 7th and 8th-grade students at **Wright Brothers Middle School**. The group was excited to share that they enjoyed the grilled veggies with homemade ranch using Greek yogurt much more than the traditional store-bought kind. While perhaps easy to gloss over in the course of a busy day, it is these little moments that go such a long way in demystifying new foods and giving students access to nutrient-dense ingredients. All in all, not a bad start to American Heart Month at **East End Community Services**!

About the FARE Program: FARE began in 2017 with support from Montgomery County and the United Way, to improve food security in East Dayton by increasing the affordability, quality, and nutritional value of the food available to our East Dayton families. Simultaneously, our gardening efforts and classes aim to enhance residents' knowledge of how to grow and prepare healthy foods.

Bright Futures Begins Community-Based Services

By Beverlyn Coleman, Clinical Program Director

WestCare Pacific Islands' Ma'lak Na Ha'ani-Bright Futures program ended the year by saying goodbye to its school-based model and screaming a big, "HAFA ADAI" to its community-based model! With a fully staffed team, new office space, and a brand-new logo, Bright Futures greeted the new year by moving full speed ahead and ready for rebranding.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI) grant funded by the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)** enables Bright Futures to provide critical, trauma-focused mental health services to middle and high school-aged youth in our island community. Bright Futures focused much of its efforts in January on having follow-up meetings with partners, engaging in a social media boost reintroducing our program, and providing program referral forms and brochures to schools and community agencies to promote and raise awareness of our valuable services.

Bright Futures did not just stop there - the team went a step forward and visited these schools and

partners in person while complying with COVID-19 measures. The team was able to speak with school counselors from several public and even private middle schools and high schools. These meaningful conversations opened the door for Bright Futures to speak with faculty and staff about our mission to empower and support our youth who are working through mental health struggles. We also visited community partners to introduce our program and team members. This personal approach of matching the name to the face proved to be beneficial in strengthening our established partnerships with multiple programs and agencies.

As Bright Futures continues, our hope is that through community outreach and in-person introductions, news of our program and its much-needed services will reach those who need it most - our island's youth. As one of the island's few nonprofit organizations to offer youth mental health services, Bright Futures aims to be not only an added option for youth and their families who are seeking help, but a ray of hope for a brighter future to come!



Bright Futures' Daime Rivera and Melissa San Nicolas, speaking with a representative from one of Guam's private schools about the program.



Bright Futures' Melissa San Nicolas, Daime Rivera, and Jean Macalinao, delivering program brochures and referral forms to Simon Sanchez High School.



WestCare Pacific Islands



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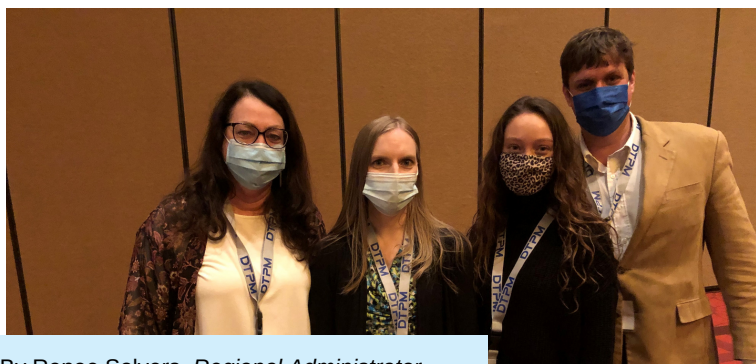
Celebrating a Success Story Featuring Reinaldo

By Elizabeth Roldan, Administrative Assistant

We are very excited for Reinaldo L., who finished his reentry program with great success. Reinaldo came to our reentry program through the [Real Transformation Program](#), which provides services to penal institutions. Reinaldo was referred to our permanent housing program, Guara Bi Carib, where he always showed great interest in his rehabilitation process. At the end of 2021, Reinaldo requested assistance to start applying for his own place to live and he was granted a Section 8 voucher from [The Puerto Rico Department of Housing](#). He now has his own apartment equipped with all the basics and plans to write a book about his life where he can tell his process of rehabilitation and improvement to encourage others and help them be a success story like himself. Reinaldo's next goal is to get a job so that he can demonstrate his skills. Congratulations and blessings to Reinaldo for his achievements and for his desire to continue surpassing himself in life!



TARPCON 2021



By Renee Salyers, Regional Administrator

Our [WestCare Tennessee](#) team was proud to attend the three-day [TARPCON 2021](#) conference in December presented by the [Tennessee Association of Recovery Court Professionals \(TARCP\)](#). The conference was well attended by recovery court staff across the state. Our team really connected with the message of the opening day's keynote speaker, Mark Sanders, LCSW, CADC, who presented on "Creating a Healing Forest: The Entire Community as the Recovery Center." This presentation expressed the need for greater collaboration between providers, drug courts, community providers, concerned citizens, employers, faith-based organizations, longtime members of the recovery community, and more to create a more equitable continuum of care for individuals in need of care. After three amazing days of presentations, our team came back with many new tools and resources and have already begun putting them to use for those that we serve!

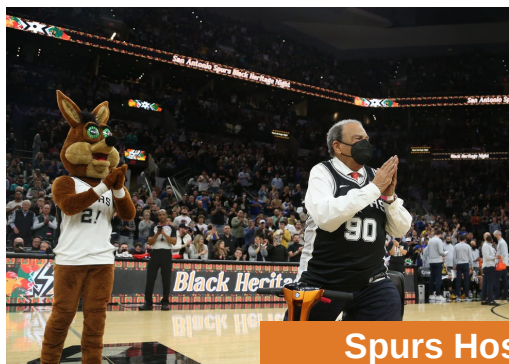
Caption: L-R Renee Salyers, Regional Administrator of WestCare Tennessee; Sonya Gibson, MCRC Counselor; Ashley Potter, Drug Court Coordinator; and Ian McCabe, Public Defender



WestCare Tennessee



@WestCareTN



Spurs Host NBA Foundation Grantee WestCare Texas for Black Heritage Night

By Jessica Cerda

WestCare Texas San Antonio has fostered a new relationship with its hometown **National Basketball Association (NBA)** team, the world-famous **San Antonio Spurs**, as the recipients of the **NBA Foundation** grant. WestCare Texas is the first San Antonio nonprofit to receive this grant which will seek to support youth development programs and activities in San Antonio's Eastside, known to many as a "Promise Zone," one of the top five high-poverty areas in the country that President Barack Obama pinpointed in 2014 as a priority for providing care.

While WestCare and the Spurs build a strong relationship to achieve positive change in our communities, the Spurs hosted WestCare Texas and other community leaders for the "**San Antonio Spurs Black Heritage Night**" on February 1 to kick off Black History Month, complete with a pregame panel featuring former United Nations Ambassador and Civil Rights Leader, Andrew Young; musician, Deon Jones; and 16-year-old activist, Ayanna Brooks. Attendees had no idea this night would bring them to tears with the moving and inspiring stories of these heroes and heroines.

"Listening to Ambassador Young speak of the moments before the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was very emotional. He put us in that room with them laughing, joking, and having a pillow fight at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis before tragedy struck," said "It was an honor to be in Ambassador Young's presence and learn something very personal about the Civil Rights Movement. I applaud the Spurs for a phenomenal tribute to Black Heritage Month."

Costella Green
Vice President, WestCare Texas

Although the Spurs came up a little short against the Golden State Warriors that night, this Black Heritage event epitomizes why this hometown team is always number one in our hearts. Caring about the community, education, and our youth goes hand in hand with WestCare Texas' mission. We are both excited and proud to work with the NBA Foundation and the San Antonio Spurs!




 WestCare Texas

Uplifting Wednesdays

By Yolanda Gonzalez, Program Assistant

The Village – VI Partners in Recovery would like to uplift our community in the best way possible. On January 5, we introduced our WestCare Wednesdays in which we post an uplifting message on our social media using the hashtag, **#WestCareWednesday**, as we venture through 2022! Our staff of professionals deeply believe that every day is an opportunity to appreciate the small things that make life beautiful. We want to motivate people to be filled with positive energy through these messages that we long for and uplift the human spirit!



 The Village - VI Partners in Recovery Inc / WestCare





Contributing to Improve Public Health and Safety

By Donald Lachman, *Special Projects Coordinator*, and Andrea Talmadge, *Regional Coordinator*

As WestCare's staff are aware from their professional and personal experience, the COVID-19 epidemic intensified homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, and poverty while unraveling many traditional social and civic support networks. Seattle continues to experience a serious public health crisis affecting neighborhoods and residents - particularly the downtown community. Seattle's public health crisis has fostered fear and frustration among a diverse mix of stakeholders.

Known by many as "*The Emerald City*," Seattle, like several large municipalities, has had a significant rise in gun violence, vandalism, random assaults, homelessness, and organized theft. Residents and visitors alike have watched encampments overwhelm public parks and sidewalks as the occupants struggle to just survive. There has been a proliferation of open-air street markets, particularly in the downtown and international districts. These markets cater to the movement of illegal drugs, sex trafficking, and stolen goods.

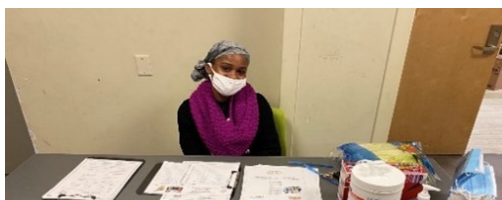
In response to unprecedented levels of crime and violence, recently-elected **Mayor Bruce Harrell** announced new measures by the city to reduce lawlessness and restore public health to downtown Seattle as well as other neighborhoods. His proposal places an emphasis on improving the response by law enforcement and the municipal courts where our new city attorney, Anne Davidson, is facing a backlog of over 4,000 unfilled cases. The Mayor is also leading the realignment of valuable city resources with our county partners to improve and expand the capacity of mental health, substance abuse, and homeless services. This will have a significant positive impact.

To advance the mayor's goals, **WAServes/WestCare Washington** is proposing a regional collaboration involving representatives of the **King County's Medicaid Transformation Project (MTP)** and the **Washington State Department of Corrections**. Services are prevention grounded and target re-entry by incarcerated individuals including Veterans, seniors, and disabled individuals who are released to Seattle/King County from Washington State DOC institutions.

Approximately 80% of all DOC inmates are released to five counties in Washington State. Of that group, almost 75% will come to King County and Seattle to reside and work. Justice-involved populations tend to have a disproportionate impact on community health, safety and will face biased perceptions.

Professional experience with therapeutic Veteran courts as well as conversations with former inmates, law enforcement, and corrections staff emphasize the positive impact of pre-release involvement, engagement with comprehensive services, and trusting relationships with case managers. The transition from prison to the community is currently characterized by higher morbidity and mortality, often associated with drug overdoses. Additionally, Medicaid studies highlight a disturbing fact that recently released inmates have low rates of therapeutic engagement with health care including treatment for substance use disorders. This week, with support from our partners, we will formally introduce a reentry collaboration to the Secretary of the DOC and the Mayor's staff to improve public health.





Public Service is Business as Usual at WestCare Wisconsin

By the WestCare Wisconsin Team

For the residents in the Harambee community that we serve who cannot get to the center to pick up food at the weekly **Everything And Then Some (E.A.T.S.) Food Pantry** - help has arrived! The **WestCare Wisconsin** team mobilized to bring the food pantry to the families at the **Maskani Place**, a housing complex developed in the Harambee neighborhood to address the need to help stabilize Milwaukee's impoverished families that were previously living in shelters, homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

The **E.A.T.S. Food Pantry at the Harambee Community Involvement Center** allows for the neighbors and other Milwaukee residents to come and pick up an assortment of sustenance goods including fresh vegetables, fruit, spring water, kid-friendly snacks/drinks, and more for free every Wednesday starting at 12:00 PM until everything is gone. WestCare Wisconsin operates a food distribution program that is open to the public as a community partner and active member agency with **Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin** and is also supported by other charitable collaborating partners that include Walmart, Trader Joe's, and Starbucks Coffee.

The WestCare Wisconsin team appreciates every opportunity that we can get to do kingdom work!



Welcome, Mark S. Fossie!

By Claudia M. Brewer, *Administrative Coordinator*

The **WestCare Wisconsin** team is pleased to welcome Mark S. Fossie into his new position as the Clinical Director! Mark comes to our community-based organization with over 30 years of experience providing psychotherapy to children, adolescents, and adults who present various co-occurring disorders. He is culturally competent and blessed with the ability to communicate effectively in intercultural situations involving outpatient treatment of individuals (*adult, youth, children*) who struggle to achieve emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing.

Mark has a Bachelor of Science degree, a Master's in Science Education, and a Master's in Business Administration, and is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (*LMFT*), Clinical Substance Abuse Counselor (*CSAC*), and an Intermediate Clinical Supervisor (*ICS*). In addition, he is a graduate of Psychotherapy in Family Services-Milwaukee from the Family Therapy Training Institute (*FTTI*) and is a clinical member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

Mark has provided professional development training to counselors, social workers, and interested individuals across the state of Wisconsin in the areas of mental health, cultural diversity, and alcohol and other drug addiction education.

Mark co-founded and served as the Chief Executive Officer of M&S Clinical Services, a non-profit human service agency that specialized in mental health, alcohol, and other drug addiction assessment, evaluation, and treatment as a service provider for Milwaukee County.

Please extend a WestCare greeting to welcome Mark Fossie to the family! He can be reached at mark.fossie@westcare.com.



WestCare Wisconsin



@westcare.wi

Information Technology Welcomes Three New Teammates!

Over the past few months, three new teammates have joined the WestCare Information Technology Department in front-line support roles, and we wanted to give everyone a chance to meet them! Ben Beller is an IT Support Specialist for Village South, Bennie-Lee Paul is an IT Service Delivery Specialist, and Deborrah Macklin is an Application Support Specialist for California.



Ben Beller, IT Support Specialist, Village South

"Hi, my name is Ben Beller and I am grateful to be part of the IT team at WestCare. I have a diverse employment background. I've had a job since I was a teenager and I've often worked two or even three jobs at one time. I've also almost always done work on the side. There are not many things I haven't done for a paycheck at one time or another. Even if it was just once, like roofing, when I lasted one day before I figured out that wasn't for me.

I have an Associate Degree in Advertising Design and a diploma in Desktop Publishing and Design from the Art Institute in Fort Lauderdale. I have Microsoft certifications in Server 2003, Windows Vista, Windows 7, CompTia A+, and Network + certifications. I am also partially finished with a web design degree from Miami-Dade College which I intend on completing. IT was something I just seemed to fall into. I've had several jobs in the graphic arts department of printing companies and I always seemed to end up being the person addressing any issues with technology. I got my certifications because of the recession in 2008. I was laid off and graphic arts jobs were very scarce at the time. My first IT job was a temporary position at a private school called Ransom Everglades. I loved that job.

After a couple of jobs for companies that weren't very good, either to their customers or employees, I decided that the company that I worked for was more important than what I did for that company. That is how I ended up at The Village as a Behavioral Health Technician. I am also in recovery and will have 25 years clean and sober on March 4. Being part of a company that helps addicts get clean is near and dear to my heart. When The Village closed the residential facilities in Miami, I applied for a peer position. Rory, the Clinical Director, asked me if I was interested in the position of Employment Specialist. I have previous experience helping people in recovery get jobs. I've also read lots of resume writing books and countless books and articles on finding jobs and marketing oneself. The job seemed like a good fit, so I took it. While working at that job I got to know Leo Martinez, the Regional IT Manager for Florida and the Caribbean. I volunteered to help Leo with IT tasks whenever I could. He told me that a support technician position would eventually become available. When it did, he called me and here I am! I am really excited to be part of the team and look forward to working with all of you!" - Ben



Bennie-Lee Paul, IT Service Delivery Specialist, Dandridge Administration

"My name is Bennie-Lee Paul and I started out as a sociology student with community action work as my goal, then found a passion for computer science. I work out of our Dandridge, TN office as an IT Service Delivery Specialist. My responsibilities include facilitating several purchasing processes, assisting in managing IT vendor relations and decisions, ensuring all operational and technology related requirements are adhered to, and regularly analyzing data to make certain we are continuously taking advantage of the most efficient and effective processes as the market and organization grows and changes, assisting with the development and maintenance of standard operating procedures related to IT Service Delivery, and contributing to the initiatives of the Information Technology Team as needed.

I have worked in community action professionally since 2019, but have always carried a passion for instilling a lasting change in how we help others. Before jumping into community action work, I attended Carson Newman University and worked for several customer service type roles from serving tables and managing grocery stores, to high-focus positions such as data analysis and bookkeeping. I am now finishing a degree in computer science and am very happy to be putting my work into Uplifting the Human Spirit while being introduced to a piece of the Information Technology world through WestCare."
- Bennie-Lee



Deborrah Macklin, Application Support Specialist, WestCare California

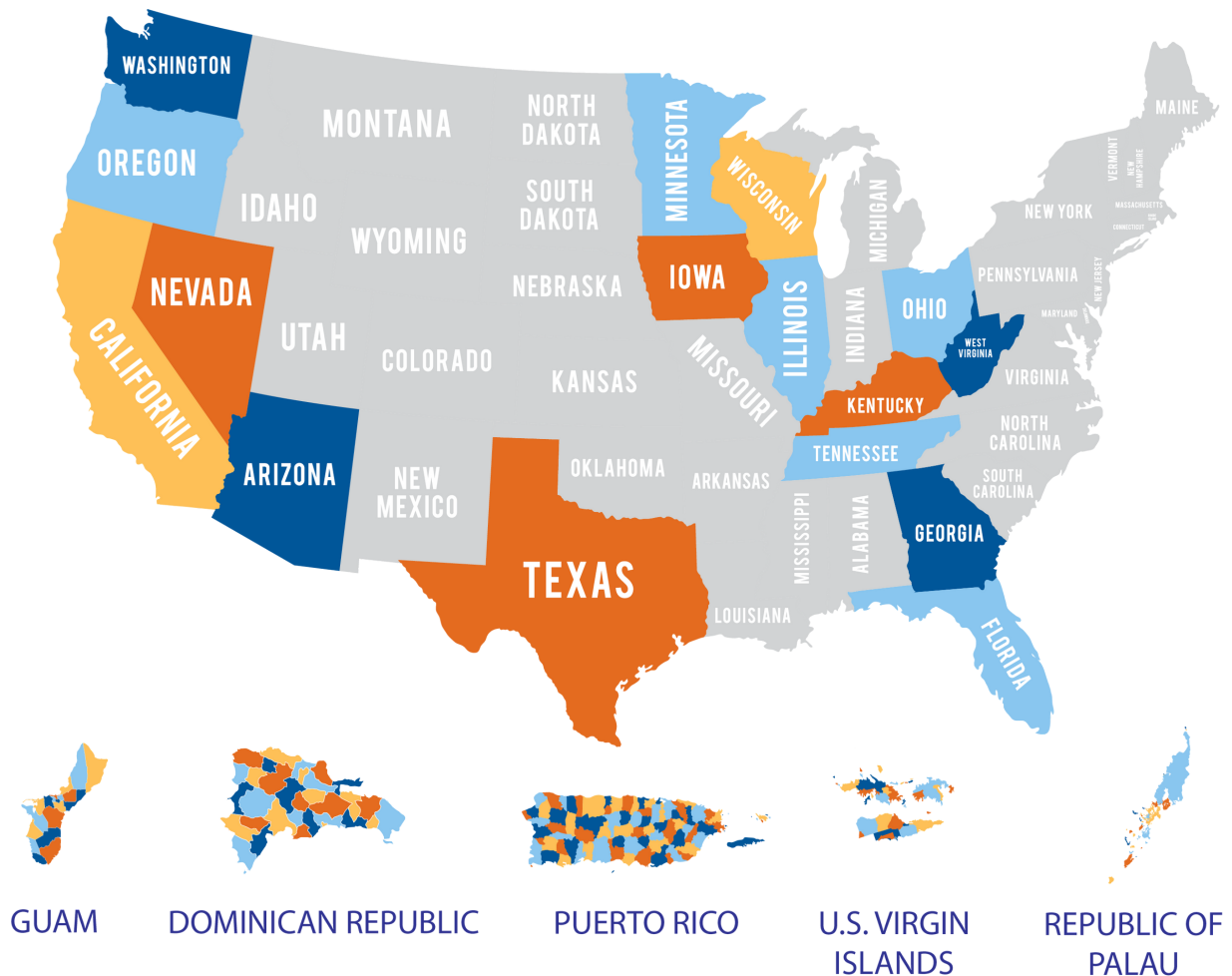
"My name is Deborrah Macklin and I started my career here at WestCare about four years ago. I started with WestCare California as a Data Specialist and soon moved up to a Billing Specialist. My new position has lead me to WestCare Foundation where I am one of the Application Support Specialists in the IT department. I have had the pleasure of working with the STOP team and the CDS team where I was one of the trainers that trained all new hires in California. During my tenure at WestCare, I have obtained my Bachelors in Business Administration degree and I am currently working on my Masters in Management and Leadership to be completed by January 2023.

My new duties consist of managing and monitoring WestCare's intranet database, providing technical assistance in all WestCare regions, maintaining user profiles, and collaborating with the project management team to implement enhancements and/or any updates needed in the intranet. I also still temporarily work with California's data team where I oversee Medi-Cal billing and Other Health Coverage (OHC) denials and am responsible for training the team on other Electronic Health Records and the billing process for California contracts. I have learned so much in a short period of time here at WestCare. I look forward to applying my newly obtained education and on-the-job learning to learn more about WestCare's operations." - Deborrah

Uplifting the Human Spirit since 1973

WestCare, a family of tax-exempt nonprofit organizations founded in 1973, provides a wide spectrum of behavioral health and human services in both residential and outpatient environments. Our service domains include Treatment and Rehabilitation, Mental Health, Veterans Services, Criminal Justice, Housing Opportunities, Education, Prevention, and support for those fleeing Domestic Violence. These services are available to adults, children, adolescents, and families. We specialize in helping people traditionally considered difficult to treat, such as those who are indigent, have multiple disorders, or are involved with the criminal justice system.

Proudly serving sixteen states, three U.S. territories, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Palau



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