



# THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND NEVADA

JUNE 2021

ISSUE 3

VOLUME 1



**WE STAND WITH YOU**

Greetings, WestCare Family and Friends!

I am amazed by the overall response and optimistic feedback that we at WestCare Nevada have received since the introduction of our monthly newsletter, The Loop. Our initial goal to provide information, updates, and inspiration regarding all things WestCare Nevada has proven itself to be so much more. This newsletter is providing a platform for discussion regarding some of the more important issues that our society faces today and even more importantly, it is enabling some of our own the opportunity to express themselves, their thoughts, their views, their feelings, and their experiences with each of us, truly enriching our lives in the process. As we continue to embark on the mission of Uplifting the Human Spirit, I believe that this issue carries a strong and compelling message about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

For the month of June, we have chosen to highlight national observances that include **LGBTQ+ Pride Month, Juneteenth, and Father's Day**. We will also highlight another program/service that is dedicated to community outreach and the homeless population, our **MORE Team**. We have another client success story, this time featuring Mr. Alex Cortez, who has not only changed his life but has actively taken on his most important role of being a father. Our Community Action Council member spotlight is Mr. Arnold Stalk, considered a father to many based on his overall commitment and dedication to this community and to so many individuals in need of food and housing.

In relation to LGBTQ+ Pride Month and Juneteenth, we have several employees who have willingly made the decision to share their own stories regarding these observances, Mr. Michael Howard and Ms. Gardis Canty. I promise you that after reading their accounts, you will not be the same. The personal accounts should stir up something deep inside of you and possibly compel you to change some of your own personal views and potentially make

the decision to act on behalf of others standing up against anything less than, *"Freedom for All."*

We just celebrated Memorial Day by honoring and remembering the men and women who died while serving in the military and protecting our freedom. Shouldn't that freedom be equal for everyone and shouldn't their ultimate sacrifice be protected by those of us who are still able to do so? I believe that it is our duty to continue to work diligently toward assuring that what so many have fought, died, and continue to fight and die for is obtainable and equivalent for everyone and I believe that the entire WestCare family believes in and will continue to fight for inclusion while embracing diversity. I challenge each of you to do the same.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my own father, Mr. Jim Magrdichian, who passed one month after I moved to Las Vegas to begin working for WestCare Nevada. My intention was to bring him here with me to repay him for everything he did for me and for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. I truly regret the fact that I was not able to serve him as he aged and in this capacity, which is why I have dedicated my life to serve others with nothing less than the utmost dignity, respect, and decency - no matter who they are. Happy Father's Day.

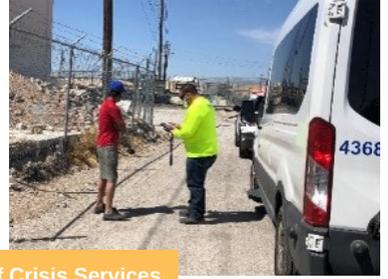
*"Freedom makes a huge requirement of every human being. With freedom comes responsibility."* - Eleanor Roosevelt



**Leo Magrdichian, LCSW, LCADC**  
Vice President, Operations



westcare.com



## MORE Teams Continue to Show Success By Frank Reagan, Director of Crisis Services

**WestCare Nevada's MORE (Multi-Agency Outreach Resources Engagement) Teams** are funded by a grant through the City of Las Vegas. These initiatives were instituted to address the issue of homelessness that continues to affect many folks in the Las Vegas Valley. The MORE Teams have been in operation for a little over three years and continue to thrive, expanding from the two teams in its infancy to the five that operate today. In conjunction with the **Las Vegas City Marshals**, the **Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department**, **Salvation Army**, **HELP of Southern Nevada** and **U.S.Vets** - these teams are making a difference every day.

Over 1,200 were linked to services and taken off the streets. Along with a multitude of services provided for those that want them, these teams also assist with documentation assistance, bus tickets back home to see family, Clarity Cards as a form of identification when pursuing services and simply handing out bottles of water.

With all of the great services that WestCare has provided over the years, the benefit of outreach cannot be understated. These team members love to visit encampments, get to know the individuals, establish trust and move them into services when they and/or

their families are ready. Compassion and cultural awareness/competency are paramount in ensuring that trust is established as we do our part to uplift the human spirit.

When asked, one of our case managers stated, *"The feeling that you get when you move someone out of homelessness is just overwhelming. It is so awesome to see!"*

Case Manager, Will Manor, commented, *"I do this work because this population is truly underserved. I am one of the people that bridges the gap between homelessness and*

*housing. I thank God for giving me the opportunity to be a part of something so fulfilling and amazing."*

Behavioral Health Tech, Christina Harrington stated, *"It brings me great joy to plant a mustard seed of faith in a human being and watch them grow into self-sufficiency. This is why I do what I do. This is truly Uplifting the Human Spirit."*

We look forward to many more years of service and the thousands of contacts and services that will be rendered. Keep up the great work, MORE Team!

Between 2019 – 2020, there were over 8,000 contacts made with homeless individuals and families of all different backgrounds, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses.

## Meet Arnold Stalk, Ph.D Community Action Council (CAC) Member Spotlight



Arnold Stalk, Ph.D. has more than four decades of experience in the public and private sector and is responsible for dozens of notable residential, industrial and commercial projects in Nevada, California, and throughout the U.S. as well as in Haiti and China. He

has been the Principal of Arnold Stalk Consulting, a Las Vegas-based full-service firm specializing in "Start-To-Finish" planning and urban design, redevelopment, governmental relations, real estate acquisitions, property management, and property financing projects.

Dr. Stalk received his bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture from the Southern California Institute of Architecture (Sci-Arc) and holds a Ph.D. As a professor of architecture, he has taught and lectured at California State University, Northridge; Southern California Institute of Architecture; the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); University of Southern California (USC); California Polytechnic University Pomona and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). He was previously a licensed general contractor in the State of California and is currently a licensed real estate agent, property manager, and expert witness in the State of Nevada.

Having served on the Board of Trustees of Habitat for Humanity, Goodwill of Southern Nevada, United Way of

April - Greater Las Vegas, American Red Cross of Southern Nevada and Heaven Can Wait Animal Society, Dr. Stalk understands the intense need for caring about our community. He was also an advisory board member of Variety Early Learning Center, 100 Black Men of Las Vegas, and is currently a trustee and the president of SHARE, a non-profit organization that was founded in 1994.

Dr. Stalk is the Founder of **Veterans Village Las Vegas**, which is now known as Share Village Las Vegas, which serves U.S. Veterans and families in need. This is a unique and innovative approach to holistic and comprehensive housing with intensive supportive services. Public and private collaborative partnerships have been created to provide supplies and services to residents including housing, medical and mental health services, employment training, referrals and placements, food pantry/nutrition programs, and transportation to the VA and other clinics in Las Vegas.

Dr. Stalk was recognized with the National Daily Points of Light Award from the White House, presented by President George H.W. Bush and President George W. Bush in 2007. In addition, he has received the Community Associations Institute's "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Measures Award," was a nominee for the Volunteer Service Humanitarian Award for the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce and Volunteer Center of Southern Nevada. Dr. Stalk has also received Community Partners for Better

Health - Veterans Village US Veteran Services Award and was nominated for the CNN Heroes and the President Citizens Medal Award. In recent times, he was honored by First Lady Michelle Obama and Vice President Mike Pence at The White House for housing formerly homeless U.S. Veterans with respect and dignity.

Wendy Grant, Special Assistant to the Founder, Share Village Las Vegas, shared her thoughts regarding Dr. Stalk:

*— “ Arnold Stalk is an amazing man of honor and integrity. What is most admirable about him is the way that he cares for his family. His son, Jacob, is a shining example of what a successful father/son relationship looks like. He has spent much of his time making sure that his son has a life worth living.*

*Dr. Stalk is also like a father figure to many people in society who have no one to turn to. Residents trust him with their lives and our soldiers seek his guidance in a safe place to call home when their days of service are over.*

*He is the father that some never had and a man whom thousands depend on daily. He is firm, yet loving and gentle when need be. He is a man of God with a heart full of love and compassion for others.*



## WESTCARE NEVADA ALUMNI GROUP'S ANNUAL 4TH OF JULY FIREWORK SALE

JUNE 28 - JULY 4 | OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY

All the money raised goes towards events for the clients that WestCare Nevada currently serves

Come and support our fundraiser by purchasing your fireworks from us!  
Corner of Flamingo Rd/ Rainbow Blvd  
(NE corner next to the Jack in the Box)



## It Takes a Community to Build The Village

By Andrew Moran, Development Director, WestCare Foundation

On May 20th, the community of Southern Nevada came together for a special breakfast event at the historic Las Vegas Country Club to discuss the future construction of **The Village at the Women and Children's Campus**, a proposed 57,999 square foot transitional living facility with 42 two apartment cottages to be located on the five-acre property that the WestCare Nevada Women and Children's Campus currently occupies in Las Vegas. WestCare Nevada's Community Action Council (CAC) members, Arnold Stalk and Marilyn Moran invited members of the design, development, and construction community to join us for a presentation on the proposed facility and how they could submit a bid to partner with us on its construction.

At the breakfast, both Arnold and Marilyn provided presentations on the roots of WestCare and how this project can have a lasting positive impact on the lives of the women and children served. We had the great

show of local support as well as attendance by members of WestCare's senior leadership from across the country including Dick Steinberg, Shawn Jenkins, Ken Ortals, Leo Magrdichian, Scott Faulkenberry, and Jason Engel, all of whom spoke with our attendees about how they can become a partner.

Since the event, conversations have continued with local contractors as we continue towards our common goal of supporting the women and children of Southern Nevada by providing transitional living, vocational assistance, and the confidence needed to live independently while also making a positive contribution to their community. We'd like to thank our amazing CAC members for organizing this informative event, the Las Vegas Country Club for hosting it, all who attended, and those who have begun the process of placing a bid! Stay tuned for more updates on this exciting and life-changing project!

## HAPPY FATHER'S DAY



## Meet Alex THIS IS HIS STORY

Hello, my name is Alex C. and I am a grateful recovering addict. I would like to share and thank WestCare for saving my life and making me the man, father, son, brother, partner, and friend that I am today. Growing up in the streets of Los Angeles County in the '80s and '90s, I became a product of my environment consisting of gang life, drug dealing, and fast money. Living that lifestyle brought criminal activity along with a lot of jail and prison time. It also brought a lot of misery, living in the circle of insanity, breaking my moms' heart, and bringing pain to my family. In my mid 30's, I became a father for the second time. I had no contact with my first child and chose the lifestyle of gangs and drugs over him. I did not want that for my daughter, but I found my addiction was still running my life. I ended up once again in the county jail fighting a case. I was tired of being sick and tired. A friend of mine that found recovery wrote to me and said,

*"I didn't have to live this way anymore; there was another way."*

Recovery will give you freedom. It was then that I decided to fight for my life, but I did not know-how.

I asked for drug court but was denied for all of the violence I had been a part of. I wanted to give up. But, then I asked God for help. At that point, help came. I was told that I had a video visit, which usually isn't good news in the middle of the week in the afternoon. God had heard me. I picked up the phone and there on the video screen was a man that looked just like me. He said that he was coming to give me an assessment and that he worked for WestCare.

WestCare showed me how to get free from my active addiction. Going to **Harris Springs Ranch (HSR)** was the best thing that happened to me. I learned that drugs were not my only problem. WestCare taught me about behavioral modification and changing the way that I think. The seed had been planted. Doing inpatient, intensive outpatient, and outpatient treatment were the best things that I could do for myself. This led me to be introduced to my family, The WestCare Alumni Team. Having predecessors in this Alumni team that had gone through the same hurdles that I was facing as a newcomer was a tremendous help. The Alumni team let me know and showed me that, *"I wasn't alone anymore."* I was pushed by them to do my best and they showed me how to be of service and give back to the guys and girls that came into the program behind me. I fell in love. The next thing you know, one year became two - then three - then four, and on my fifth year of being clean, I fought for and gained custody of my daughter. She is my reason for living clean, making me the best father that I can be for her. It wasn't easy, but I had the senior sisters in my WestCare Alumni family that were there for me and taught me how to brush her hair and other things that I didn't have a clue how to do. I had brothers on the Alumni team that were single fathers and taught me how to be not just a friend to my daughter, but her dad.

Being clean, I am able to provide my daughter with a stable home. She is a great kid, gets good grades, and knows that she is safe and that I will be there for her no matter what. At seven years clean, I met the woman that God sent to me. Along with her, came two boys. The youngest was living with her and I then became a father of two. I became the example of how a man should treat a woman and am able to be a father figure. At 10 years clean, we bought our first house, got two dogs and life is great! I am of service with my fellow WestCare Alumni. I am of service in my 12-step program. I have now worked in the drug and alcohol treatment field for over 10 years. I love my kids and my family. My wife-to-be is amazing and stands by me as I stand by her. I am 13 years clean today. I am a father, son, brother, member of a 12-step program, and a partner to my best friend that I am going to marry. What a life!

*Thank you, God, and thank you, WestCare!*



## A Brief Overview of LGBTQ+ Pride Month

Written by Marybel Ramos, Clinician, Las Vegas Community Involvement Center

June is known as **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Month**. The purpose of Pride Month is to remember the history and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community. On June 28, 1969, New York police officers raided the Stonewall Inn, an LGBT club during a time in which they were illegal to operate. As a result, patrons and staff revolted against the police harassment and persecution that LGBTQ+ persons had often suffered. A year later, Gay Pride Week and a Liberation Day Parade were started. From these events came the New York Pride March, which prompted pride parades and marches around the world. In 1978, the rainbow flag was created and adopted as a gay pride symbol at San Francisco's Pride March. Memorials for those who have been lost to hate crimes or HIV/AIDS are also held as part of the month's various events.

Previous research has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals face additional discrimination and barriers to treatment. According to **The Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity (CoE LGBTQ+ BHE)**, "Research shows that LGBTQ+ populations of all ages disproportionately experience more instances of mental health and substance use disorders, suicidality and poorer well-being outcomes compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers." In keeping with WestCare's mission of Uplifting the Human Spirit, it is our responsibility to create a safe environment to address this disparity and provide culturally responsive care to all individuals who are seeking help. As a provider of behavioral health and human services, we do not discriminate nor permit discrimination, including, without limitation, bullying, abuse, or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or HIV status.

## What Pride Month Means to Me

I was asked to share what Pride Month means to me. At first, I was unsure what I wanted to say about it as the request sort of caught me off guard, and those who know me know this does not happen very often. I was honored to be asked, which caused me to start thinking about what I wanted to share about this month that celebrates everything amazing about a population in all of our communities. The LGBTQ+ community has been my friends for a long time - long before I knew what it meant to be gay. It has been a love/hate relationship for many years, but I have come to find comfort in it. A group that accepts you for who you are and who loves all of the things about you, even if you do not love them all yourself - something that I've had come around on myself recently. This is thanks to some very amazing people that I call friends.

Some of the words that I can think of to describe some of these amazing individuals are courageous, driven, honest, accepting, tolerant, and having enough tenacity to last for days. This is not a complete list by any means, but it is an example of some of the qualities that make this group so incredibly wonderful and make me extremely honored to be a welcomed member. Like a friend of mine, who decided to come out as trans after over 40+ years. The courage and strength that it took to embrace her authentic self is nothing less than awe-inspiring. To the ones that step up not only at festivals but every day of their lives - they are some of the bravest and most honest people that I have ever met. Don't get me wrong, there was a time when I wanted nothing to do with any of that, but when the chips were down, they were the ones that were there to say, "**It's ok and so are you.**"

Let us not forget those who stand with us. Those who have been by my side for as long as I can remember. Friends who have made me a part of their family and

given me a place at their table in their home and who continue to do so. It is hard to find friends who will stand with you through things that can be controversial on a good day but to have them look at you and see just another person who is willing to be their friend and love all of their flaws as much as they are willing to do the same for you. It's those relationships that make life the extraordinary journey that it should be.

**If I had to boil what Pride Month means to me into just one word, I would say, "Hope."** The remarkable courage of the LGBTQ+ community and how they are out there not just this month, but every day of every other month fighting for the rights of people who they do not even know so that all of our lives can be better. Better so that when two men, two women, or someone trans walks in, we might get a smile and a nod and nothing more, for we are a fundamental part of the communities that we live in and not just outliers that mess up someone's perfect bell curve of who they think our communities should consist of. Looking at the different places that I go during my day and seeing a gay or lesbian couple sitting and having coffee at a coffee shop with people just passing by as if the two could be a neighbor or a coworker or just a member of their community. To see that happening puts a huge smile on my face in knowing that every time I see that, we get one step closer to where who we choose to love genuinely does not matter. It is about who we are in our hearts and what we can contribute to making the world better. I believe that there is enough hope in this world to carry us to the finish line so that there is not just one month where this amazing community is celebrated, but instead, we are celebrated every day for the incredible human beings that we are. Isn't that what we all want? To be celebrated for what makes us unique. That is what Pride Month means to me.

Written By Michael Howard,  
Lead Behavioral Health  
Technician, Community Triage  
Center (CTC)



## What Juneteenth Means to Me

When I was approached and asked to write what Juneteenth meant to me, my first feelings were that of bewilderment. I was not sure how to put into words my feelings about this day of celebration. As a child, I remember my parents preparing for a road trip that we tilted as, "going to the country." The location would be Macedonia A.M.E. Church in Brantley, AL. This is my family church - land purchased by two of my great-great-uncles. Here is where my grandmother and her siblings would attend school, host community meetings, hold church services and hide runaway slaves. Here family members from as far back as four to five generations would gather for our annual, "Big Meeting." Here is where many of our ancestors are buried, some graves with names, many without - but their location is known nonetheless. Here is where as a child, I was taught why my family celebrated the holiday known as Juneteenth.



By Gardis L. Canty, MS, CADC, Clinical Manager, Women and Children Campus

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free under General Orders, Number 3. Note that this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official on January 1, 1863. According to a 2013 PBS article, "Since the capture of New Orleans in 1862, slave owners in Mississippi, Louisiana and other points east had been migrating to Texas to escape the Union Army's reach. In a hurried re-enactment of the original Middle Passage, more than 150,000 slaves had made the trek west." On this day, my ancestors told stories of slave owners refusing to free their slaves and entering



into agreements with slaves which they had no intentions of honoring.

How we as descendants of slaves should be proud of the blood that runs through our veins and how we are stronger as a people and a family because of the suffrage of our ancestors. Today, I celebrate Juneteenth as a way to honor my ancestors and to remain mindful of which I came.

I am thankful for the recognition shown by WestCare to consider what this holiday means to the African American community and their willingness to acknowledge why this holiday exists in the first place.

Juneteenth is celebrated every year on June 19

Connect with us in Nevada

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