



# THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND NEVADA

MAY 2021

ISSUE 2

VOLUME 1



From Left to Right: Dan Musgrove, Congresswomen Susie Lee, Leo Magrdichian, Jason Engel, Irma Magrdichian

Greetings. I am once again extremely excited about introducing to you another issue of The Loop newsletter. This is our second issue and it remains our intention to keep you abreast with everything happening in and around WestCare Nevada.

When pondering the month of May and what it signifies, I am reminded that May is known as a month of transition and by the time it comes around, flowers are usually blooming, birds are singing and for many, life is starting to seem a little more joyful. I learned that May has two birth (bloom) flowers; the Lily of the Valley and the Hawthorn. The Lily of the Valley represents a return to happiness and sweetness, while the Hawthorn flower is a symbol of hope. However, this may not always be the case for others, such as those who are forced to experience some form of mental health stigma and instead of joy, they are experiencing pain for something that is out of their control and possibly preventing them and those close to them from seeking the support that they so desperately need.

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month** and as a result, we want to focus portions of this month's issue on our continued effort to fight mental health stigma. All of us in the mental health community need to raise our voices against stigma and educate others on how to do the same. We do this by making a continuous effort to talk openly about mental health to raise awareness about some of our most vulnerable. We do this by continuously educating ourselves and others regarding mental health, which in itself, gives mental health the importance it deserves and nurtures the process of destigmatization. We do this by paying attention to our language, which can discourage people from being open and willingly talk about their problems. We do this by showing compassion to those suffering while acting with kindness and an open heart. We do this by putting our judgments aside and by putting on their shoes while listening to them. Finally, we do this by addressing stigmatizing acts or bullying immediately.

In this issue, you will have an opportunity to read about what one of our own, Registered Nurse, Grace Cadavona, learned about mental health during her recently completed studies towards becoming a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner.

As you all know, in May, we also celebrate **Mother's Day** and we would be remiss to not use this issue as a way of celebrating mothers and their influence on just about every aspect of our lives. The influence of a mother or caregiver upon the lives of children cannot be quantified. Therefore, we are highlighting our **Women and Children's Campus' Women's Set Aside (WSA) grant**, which provides enhanced services to pregnant and parenting women in residential treatment. This includes another success story and the fact that this month, we have also replaced our regular Employee Kudos section with photographs of some of our WestCare working mothers and their children. We hope that this issue will bring about happiness, sweetness, and a symbol of hope just as the Lily of the Valley and the Hawthorn do.

On a personal note, my mother, Ruth, passed in February of 2015 and the truth is, not a day goes by that I don't demonstrate her example and her attitudes in my own life and in the way in which I care for others. Words cannot express how much I love and miss the person who gave me all the love she possibly could and for that - I am forever grateful. So, in her absence... With all of my heart, I want to wish all mothers a very happy Mother's Day!



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

*"WestCare has always been the place that saved me."*

The Women and Children's Campus (WCC) would like to salute one of our own, **Kellie Jeffries (Giustina)**. Ms. Kellie was born in Medford, OR into a broken family after her biological father walked away from the family, leaving her mother with five young children including herself - a newborn.

During her time here, she also renewed her relationship with God. Kellie would remain in her treatment program for four months. During this time, she would become Head of House three times over, the highest council position held by a client within the therapeutic community.

During childhood, she would come to experience a great deal of trauma, forcing her to learn survival skills at a young age. Her mother remarried when she was seven and the family relocated to Las Vegas. Life would change for the better after relocating, but her feelings related to her trauma and abandonment remained.

Kellie shared that after completing the program, she knew that she wanted to return one day as a WestCare employee. After completing a sober living program where she remained for two and a half years, she remained connected to WestCare by facilitating AA meetings every Thursday. She entered college, got married to a wonderful man, and regained custody of her children. Kellie recalled, "I loved giving back and showing those women that WestCare works."

This would lead her to seek an escape from feelings of being unloved and unworthy. At the age of 14, she started experimenting with drugs and alcohol and would continue to self-medicate and numb herself for 23 years. During this period, she would experience abusive relationships, lose family, lose jobs and eventually, lose her children.

When the time was right and a position opened up, she would apply to be a behavioral health technician. She would become an employee of WestCare in October of 2019. She shares, "In that time, I have learned and grown so much." She was recently promoted to the position of case manager for the Women's Set-Aside (WSA) grant at the WCC. Kellie concluded her story by saying, "It just took 5 years of sobriety."

On April 6, 2016, she entered WestCare Nevada's treatment program for women. Here, she would learn ways to address her brokenness by surrendering to the program.



## Kellie's Story

By Gardis L. Canty, MS, CADC,  
Clinical Manager, WCC

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Our Women & Children's Campus has been blessed with a new grant called the **Women's Set-Aside (WSA)** Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment Agency (SAPTA) grant. WSA enables us to provide clients with enhanced services such as more hands-on counseling, case management, and child development services. Clients that are placed under this grant are eligible to receive gifts that are needed to further their success of recovery by limiting stress as a result of the daily challenges that mothers often face early on in their recovery. Through this funding, we have been able to provide baby showers for women who in other circumstances may not have the chance to experience one. It has also provided highchairs, strollers, diaper bags, playpens, hygiene items, baby clothing, and diapers to mothers who have completed programming and have been reunified with their children to take them home with them. The grant has also been able to provide maternity clothing for expecting mothers.

The WSA grant encourages mothers to develop new parenting skills by utilizing resources in the nursery and Children's Resource Center, a new addition that was provided by the grant that provides learning activities, computers, and a homework space for school-aged children. We also hope to use the WSA grant to upgrade our furniture, toys, and other fixtures to accommodate the needs of our clients and their children.

The grant also funds a team of professionals that work closely with our ladies to provide transportation to appointments, assistance with obtaining personal documents, housing assistance, linkage to employment, life skills courses, and ultimately, setting these ladies up for a successful future. As of this issue, WSA has had eight successful completions of the gram along with the joy of seeing those mothers reunited with their children. The WSA team looks forward to future accomplishments and furthering the success of the ladies that we serve!



## Women's Set-Aside (WSA) Grant

By Dawn Tudor, Counselor & Melanie Felipe,  
Child Development Specialist, WCC - WSA



## Congresswoman Lee Tours the WCC

By Leo Magrdichian, LCSW, LCADC, Vice President Operations, WestCare Nevada



In late April, the Women and Children's Campus (WCC) received a visit from **U.S. Representative Susie Lee**, (D-NV) who later in the week joined Representative Fred Upton (R-MI) in introducing The Virtual Peer Support Act. If passed, this bill would increase the accessibility and capacity of crucial behavioral health support programs by expanding services to online platforms. As an organization, we were honored to share our endorsement of this important bill.

During the tour, the congresswoman and her team were updated on our plan to build The Village at The Women and Children's Campus, a proposed 57,999 square foot transitional living facility to be located on the five-acre property the WCC currently occupies in Las Vegas. Rep. Lee is an advocate of WestCare, supports this expansion, and is confident that future participants of The Village will eventually return to Nevada's 3rd District, which she oversees, to become productive members of society.

You can read our [statement of support and the full press release](#) by [clicking here](#).

*Thank you for your visit and continued support!*





**Nancy Mays** has the distinction of being a fourth-generation Las Vegas, whose family moved from Butte, Montana to the area before Las Vegas was officially founded as a city in 1905.

Her grandfather worked for the Union Pacific Railroad for 50 years and met her grandmother on his job while going from Las Vegas to Salt Lake City.

He brought her to Las Vegas, where they were married in 1912. Her father was born in 1917, attended the University of Nevada, Reno, served over three years in the U.S. Navy, and returned to Las Vegas to join the gaming business and hold a Nevada state gaming license. He started his career as a dealer and moved up to the roles of an executive and an owner for some of the city's most successful and famous casinos. Her mother's family came to Las Vegas from New Jersey in 1937. They were married there in 1946.

With such a rich family history that is woven into the fabric that is Las Vegas, Nancy herself was a part of the city's history. She began her career in the Las Vegas hotel industry on August 5, 1966, the day that Caesars Palace opened! Today, she is happily married to Bill Mays, with whom she has two grown children.

Nancy has been a member of WestCare Nevada's Community Action Council (CAC) for approximately 10 years. We are thankful for the experience and insight that she brings to the table to help us enhance how we Uplift the Human Spirit of all of those that we serve!

She has volunteered with helping fulfill the needs of the WestCare Nevada Women and Children's Campus. She has been pivotal in holding our annual Christmas Tea event with gifts for the children and mothers as well as helping conduct various other projects on the campus throughout the year.

Nancy also enjoyed being involved in the creation of the transitional wing at the Women and Children's Campus and seeing it through to fruition.



**MaryAnn "Timbuck" Moore Rivera** is a third-generation Nevadan, born in Las Vegas and educated at Bishop Gorman High School and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She taught school for five years and was an Administrator at Bishop Gorman for 12 years who oversaw development. For over 10 years, she served former Nevada Governors, Robert List, Richard Bryan, and Bob

Miller on both the State Board of Museums and History and the Energy Resource Advisory Board.

She has been a member of the Las Vegas Junior League since 1972; during which time, she was awarded the Volunteer of the Year award in the field of education. She has also served on the Advisory Boards for Catholic Charities and Valley Hospital. Additionally, MaryAnn was a founding member and past President of the New Horizons Academy, whose mission is to serve children with learning disabilities.

In 2006, she was honored at Bishop Gorman High School's annual gala, the Knight of the Gael, for her work in helping get their new campus built, which officially opened in 2007 in the Las Vegas community of Summerlin.

She has been a proud member of WestCare Nevada's Community Action Council (CAC) for approximately 10 years. We are honored to be able to learn from her and collaborate with her on ways to better benefit the men, women, children, and Veterans that we serve!

Married to Lyle Rivera since 1967, they have three grown children and two grandsons. Besides being an adoring grandmother, she enjoys hiking, biking, golfing, cooking, and spending her summers in Sun Valley, Idaho.

*Thank you both for your service!*



## A Legacy of Giving Continues

By Andrew Moran, Development Director, WestCare Foundation

We'd like to recognize one of our donors whose legacy of giving to support our programs has continued well after his passing. Sean Higgins, whose family has been a key supporter of WestCare for many years, spent his legal career in Las Vegas' gaming industry and served as the general counsel for Affinity Gaming (formerly Herbst Gaming) as well as an executive at Golden Entertainment. His family included his mother, Lucia, his nine brothers and sisters, and many nieces and nephews who all adored him. He was also a devoted Notre Dame fan.

Led by his beloved wife, Lynn with help from his daughter, Samantha, and son, Connor, his family organized a [GoFundMe campaign](#) on his behalf in support of our organization. Their original goal was to raise \$11,000, but through over 500 shares and donations from 120 generous donors who loved and respected him, they were able to raise just under \$20,000 when the campaign ended this past October! True to Sean's

devotion to philanthropy, his family gave a donation of their own to round the total up to \$25,000! This incredibly generous gift will be used to expand the sports court at our Women and Children's Campus.

With a large and loving family of his own, it's easy to understand how Sean had such a special place in his heart for providing support to women and children in need. With the support of his community, those that we serve will have a special place on our campus to enjoy for many years to come, made possible by his legacy of generosity.

**On the family's GoFundMe page, they wrote:** *Sean Higgins was a beloved husband, father, brother, friend, and member of the Las Vegas community. He tragically passed away on September 23, 2020.*

*Born and raised in Las Vegas, he was dedicated to improving his community. In his memory, his family and friends have decided to raise money for WestCare Nevada.*

On behalf of our staff, programs, and those that we serve, we'd like to send our heartfelt gratitude to the Higgins family for this generous gesture in support of our continued services.

♥ *Our love to the Higgins Family*



The Before - Our Sports Court at WCC



By Grace Cadavona, DNP, Registered Nurse, Las Vegas Community Triage Center (CTC)

Mental health stigma remains a challenge for societies to overcome. The term, “destigmatization,” has been emerging to break down barriers that accompany feelings of embarrassment, shame, or disgrace associated with mental health. As part of the interdisciplinary team of WestCare, we are required to collaborate and complete trainings that exercise the destigmatization of mental health. One training in particular that I look forward to each year is the Person-Centered Services training. In this class, we are reminded to meet the client where they are at. This means that as providers of mental health care, we must approach each client’s circumstance in a unique way that meets their own needs and priorities. Client-centered care is not a one-size-fits-all approach, however. Often at the **Las Vegas Community Triage Center (CTC)**, we are the first point of contact with clients in crisis. The nurses, BHT’s and counselors here are meeting with our clients at their most vulnerable state, which most often equates to “rock bottom.” By applying person-centered techniques, we practice empathy, motivational interviewing, unconditional positive regard, and genuine care. It is a humbling experience to have the opportunity to work with clients in their most fragile states. Practicing human kindness in the art form of nursing is a step forward to breaking down mental health barriers and access to treatment.

This month, I am graduating with my Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) with an emphasis as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP)

Part of my graduate school education included learning advanced practice nursing assessment and skills, medication management, and translating my knowledge into research. My dissertation titled, “Implementation of a Virtual Support Group to Improve Perceived Stress in Family Members of Individuals with Substance Abuse”, addressed the mental health of family members of people dealing with addiction. Through my research study, I was able to further understand the magnitude that a family’s support can have on an individual’s recovery journey as well as their continued sobriety following treatment.

One of the first steps to destigmatizing this problem is getting our society and families to feel comfortable with discussing the issues of addiction and co-occurring disorders as well as their prevalence within our communities. By creating empathy for similar lived experiences, we can nurture a stronger support system for individuals affected where they would no longer feel that they have to go through these circumstances alone. Identifying a client’s support system is an important part of preventing relapse. Sometimes, we have clients that have no family present in their life. What I appreciate about being a part of WestCare is the feeling of family here. Some have gone through our withdrawal management, partial hospitalization programs and have graduated from our residential programs to then become part of the WestCare family as an employee. This is a beautiful process and it is truly rewarding to have a role in that client’s journey towards success. One of my favorite WestCare traditions is the graduations that we hold for our new alumni. I hope as our country continues to open up safely, we will soon be able to reunite and celebrate this special day together.

It is also important to address the mental health of staff working in healthcare settings. Burnout has been

a recurring theme in healthcare, but it has been amplified with COVID-19 pushing workers beyond their limits. As nurses, we are naturally programmed to put the needs of our patients before our own. However, what happens when the mental wellness of nurses falls apart as well? A significant amount of studies has revealed that the compounding effects of burnout syndrome found in healthcare workers has resulted in a higher rate of medical errors, produced less favorable client outcomes, and has jeopardized client safety. A 2017 research study published by the National Academy of Medicine found that the results of nursing burnout and medical errors ultimately resulted in a higher financial burden for healthcare organizations. Organizations need to acknowledge the negative impacts of burnout and stress among their frontline workers.

[Data that the University of Michigan analyzed](#) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) from 2007 to 2018, revealed 2,374 suicides among nurses and 857 among physicians. Now, imagine these numbers in the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current health and mental wellness state of emergency around the globe has motivated me to team up with the Nevada Action Coalition (NAC) to address burnout, stress, substance use disorders, and other mental health needs within the nursing community. Starting next month, I will be volunteering with the NAC to facilitate MINDBODYSTRONG support group sessions for nurses and nursing students in Nevada. I am excited to deliver this evidence-based cognitive skills-building program for the healers of our community. My goal is to address the mental health needs of nurses and other members of the collaborative healthcare team. I hope more nurses would feel more comfortable approaching mental health specialists and ask for help because we are just as human as the clients that we serve.



## SCCP Celebrates Six Years of Service & National Day of Prayer

By Senior Chaplain Ryan Michael Creelman, Spiritual Director / Staff Care Chaplain

Spirituality is deeply personal, uniquely individual and unequivocally private awareness of the self - “To thy own self be true.” Our Chaplains’ non-mandated reporting responsibilities of confessor-confessant privilege provides the safety for our persons in care to explore past wrongs, hurts, and personal choices that more times than not are the genesis for addictive lifestyles. “A fifth step friend - guilt and shame no more...”

Our person-centered spiritual component to addiction treatment is more than a reasonable response to such a large part of what makes us human. It’s our professional obligation to care that prevents continued neglect of one’s self. WestCare’s mission of Uplifting the Human Spirit most definitely includes spiritual care!

We are also happy to report that on May 6th, the SCCP participated in the 70th Annual National Day of Prayer by praying over Federal, State, County, and City Government Leaders at our local Metropolitan Police Department. Specially designed prayer boxes were created by persons in care at our Women and Children’s Campus (WCC) to individually personalize, recognize and honor their respective religious beliefs.

Coming up on May 22nd, a special three-hour BBQ and Spiritual Modalities event will be hosted by the Spiritual Alumni Leadership Team to celebrate the SCCP’s six-year anniversary. In addition, the SCCP will be presenting the Servants Heart Recipient Award for Spring 2021 to its latest spiritual volunteer who has surpassed expectations and efficacy through their service – Chaplain Cynthia Branham! Congratulations, Cynthia!

Greetings, WestCare family. May 1st marks the six-year anniversary of the **Spiritual Care Chaplain Program’s (SCCP)** introduction into WestCare Nevada. The SCCP is an all-inclusive spiritual wellness program created to educate and support the spiritual nature of individuals in WestCare’s withdrawal management and residential treatment care facilities. For many, a biopsychosocial approach to understanding and treating addiction has been the primary model for care.

On this day, WestCare began the implementation of spirituality under the direction of a professional inter-faith clinical chaplain, adding a relevant and responsible dimension of care to the treatment and support of the whole human being through mind, body, and spirit!

But, why spirituality? This is because spirituality emphasizes the highest capacity of a human being – creating meaning and purpose in life. Adding spirituality to a biopsychosocial model allows individuals to progress beyond the physical nature of their addiction problems. Many new healing possibilities become available with an increased understanding of the spiritual aspects of the human experience, which provides comfort and peace and nurtures the healing process.

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)