

# WestCare Express

The WestCare Foundation Employee Newsletter



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## Prescription Drug Abuse Increasing Among US Troops

Article published by USA Today

*Other survey findings include:*

USA Today reported that about one in four soldiers admit abusing prescription drugs, most of them pain relievers, in a one-year period. That's according to a Pentagon health survey recently released. The study, which surveyed more than 28,500 U.S. troops last year, showed that about 20% of Marines had also abused prescription drugs, mostly painkillers, in that same period.

The survey showed that pain relievers were the most abused drug in the military, used illicitly at a rate triple that of marijuana or amphetamines, the next most widely abused drugs. About 15% of soldiers said they had abused prescription drugs in the 30 days before they were questioned for the survey. About 10% of Marines said the same thing.

"We are aware that more prescription drugs are being used today for pain management and behavioral health issues," Brig. Gen. Colleen McGuire, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force, said Wednesday. "These areas of substance abuse along with increased use of alcohol concern us."

Painkiller abuse among troops has soared since 2005, the last time a similar study was conducted. The 2005 survey showed that 4% of soldiers had abused painkillers in the previous 30 days, compared with 13% in 2008. Abuse within the previous year was 10% in 2005 compared with 22% in 2008. The authors of the report said different questions were used in 2008 compared with previous years. That makes an exact comparison difficult.

- The percentage of troops showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder increased during the war years. The largest increases were within the Army and Marine Corps, the two service branches doing most of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Nearly 60 % of Marines admit engaging in binge drinking. The rate of heavy alcohol use among all service members ages 18 to 35 remained higher than in the civilian population.
- Service members admitting that they had thoughts of suicide during the year prior to being surveyed doubled from 1 % in 2005 to 2 % in 2008.



Go to:

[www.usatoday.com/news/military/2009-12-16-milhealth\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2009-12-16-milhealth_N.htm) for the full article

# WestCare California's Annual Christmas Party

Submitted by Tim Scott – *Special Projects Officer*

WestCare California's annual Christmas party was a great success with participants coming from as far away as Sacramento to Fresno, California to share in an evening of food, raffles and dancing on Saturday December 19th. Ralph Genovese, Counselor at MLK Residential, was recognized for

Outstanding Documentation and Compliance Efforts 2009 by the Contract Compliance Department. The Holiday Committee's extraordinary efforts resulted in a beautiful and heartwarming evening for all in attendance.

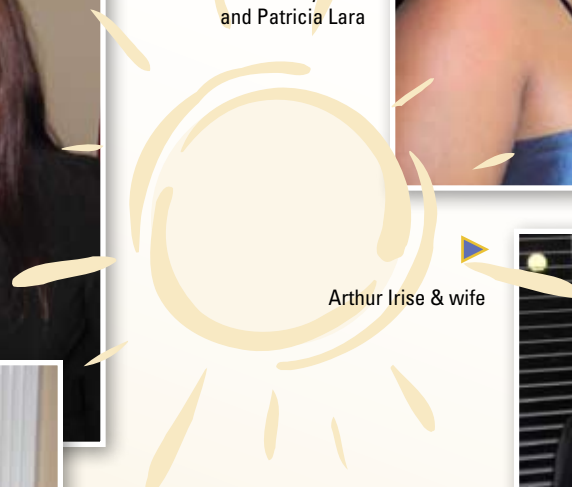
## California



Jitin Brar and Mai Vang



Tiffany Horn and Patricia Lara



Arthur Irise & wife



John Philips & wife



Ralph Genovese



## Did You Know? – January 29th is National Puzzle Day

Here are a few puzzles to try from a puzzle site online:

1. Four Rivers Strategy Puzzle – <http://puzzles.about.com/library/java/blfourrivers.htm>
2. Towers of Hanoi – <http://puzzles.about.com/library/java/blhanoi.htm>
3. Rush Hour – <http://puzzles.about.com/library/java/blrushhr.htm>

If you don't like these, check out <http://puzzles.about.com/> and try to solve another. Good luck!



## GulfCoast Florida



## Gulf Coast “WE CAN” Program Is Making a Difference!

By Jana Balicki – *Gulf Coast Area Director*

In 2008, WestCare Gulf Coast Florida, in partnership with Pinellas County Drug Court, University of South Florida and a local substance abuse provider was awarded a five-year SAMHSA grant. The “WE CAN” program specifically targets women in need of intensive outpatient treatment with a history of abusing prescription drugs.

The project is well underway and has seen incredible changes in many individual lives. One story on how this project is making a difference is about a woman who entered the program six months ago with ten counts of doctor shopping and forging prescriptions. She was looking at a possible sentence of 50 years but was offered an opportunity to

participate in this special Drug Court program.

When she first started treatment, she didn't realize how much control the drugs had over her and how serious the situation had become. During the past six months, she has committed herself to treatment, has worked closely with her case manager and counselor, and has made some substantial changes in her life. Today, she leads the Peer to Peer support group for women with prescription drug abuse issues, and she is off all medications. Needless to say, life is very different for her today as she continues on her path to recovery. Congratulations to the staff of Gulf Coast for making a difference in the lives of our clients!

## South Florida

The Vocational Department of the Village South offers an array of services to clients to reach their optimal level of success as they prepare to re-enter the community. One of these services involves computer trainings offered by Per Scholas, a non-profit social venture dedicated to using technology to improve the lives of people in low-income communities.

In coordination with the Village, Per Scholas establishes the coordination of services and creates an efficient method for the referral of adults suffering from chemical dependency, mental illness and/or related behavioral problems. Our clients participate in 48 hours of Introduction to Computers and Microsoft Office® training as well as the option of participating in the Computer Technician Training.

So far, 18 of our clients have enrolled in the program, with 17 successfully completing the program and one currently enrolled in the Computer Technician Training. Per Scholas continues to be critical to the ongoing success of the Vocational Department at The Village South as we continue to service the needs of our community.

## Village South Clients Receives Computer Training

By Kevin Brooks – *Village South Vocational Coordinator*



▲ Picture: from left to right Kevin Brooks, VS Vocational Coordinator, Nadine Dalrymple, Per Scholas Director, Eliezer Lagares, VS client, Casey Williams, VS Vocational Case Manager, Pablo Puento, Per Scholas Job Developer

# WestCare Nevada, Community Involvement Center Celebrates Their 3rd Annual Thanksgiving Festivity

By Kevin Morss – WestCare Nevada

For many clients, Thanksgiving has changed its personal meaning. Before, families were torn between their love for each other and the pain addiction has created. Today, Thanksgiving actually means something positive. The Community Involvement Center celebrated its third annual thanksgiving dinner among all outpatient clients. In attendance were Adult Intensive Outpatient, Outpatient, USPO CARE Intensive Outpatient and HCCP Co-Occurring clients with their families.

The festivities included a special guest speaker from our own staff, Richard C., and a blessing of our dinner from fellow intensive outpatient client Robert M. Clients gathered and expressed their appreciation for their life, their families, and for all the things that are possible.

Below are some words from the men and women who attended the dinner and have been working hard to change their holiday traditions with reasons they are thankful for this year:

Robert M. – *I am thankful to have my daughter in my life, to WestCare for being my home, and to the family and friends I have made here.*

Alex C. – *I am thankful for everything I have today, especially with my sister entering into detox and hopefully starting her new life. That's all I've wanted for a long time.*

Shyla S. – *I am thankful for all the relationships in my life, new friends and the chance to be clean and sober.*

## Nevada



## Kentucky

# Pikeville's Annual Christmas Parade

Elves at the WestCare Kentucky Hal Rogers Appalachian Recovery Center participated in Pikeville's Annual Christmas Parade. UNITE Pike, a local community partner, sponsored the WestCare float.



## Arizona Staff Holiday Party

By Kim Mitchell – Office Manager, WestCare Arizona

The Arizona staff held their annual holiday party December 14, 2009 at the AVI Hotel and Casino. More than 42 staff and their guests enjoyed a dinner buffet and the always humorous gift exchange, where the most popular gifts this year ended up being a Snuggie, a picture frame and lottery scratch tickets. The emcee for the evening was Raquel Merrigan from the Positive Action program. A raffle drawing was held and several Ipod Shuffles and gift certificates were handed out to the winners. A total of \$250 was raised, which will go toward our annual company picnic to be held in the spring. Individual goodie bags were handed out to all employees by Tracy Stevens, area director. Everyone got a chance to meet all the new staff from Sage House and the Lake Havasu City office.



Bob Wishart, guest, with the Snuggie



Emcee of the evening, Raquel Merrigan, Positive Action Program



Tracy Stevens, area director, left, and Judy Jensen, Domestic Violence Intervention Program, right



Dena Dodson, Donation Coordinator, right and Kim Mitchell, Office Manager.



Tony Gann, Maintenance Coordinator

## Georgia



## The Experience of a Lifetime

By Sabrina Pierre – Case Manager, WestCare DJJ

If I had to explain it in one word it would be priceless. The relationship between man and horse is shown in its deepest form in the show Cavalia. Each scene had a different atmosphere and really had the audience filled with “oohhhs and aahhhs.” The sight is simply amazing. I have to admit, at first I was kind of skeptical, because I am not nor have I ever been a lover of horses or animals for that matter. But none of that mattered because once you get in the show and take your seat, it’s “all she wrote.” I would recommend this show to everyone. We were able to take eight of our senior and best behaved residents and they really enjoyed the show.

## The Care Program HIV Testing Event at Walmart

Submitted by Georgia Staff

The Care Program held an HIV testing event at Walmart December 15, 2009 in Lithonia GA. HIV testing was offered to their entire staff and 43 people were tested. Walmart could not accommodate the space to test customers; however, an information

table was set up to provide free HIV literature and referral sources for free HIV testing, including our program.

The Walmart manager was so pleased with the service that he suggested our services to his

colleagues at their locations. He also has asked The Care Team to come out quarterly on different work shifts to provide HIV testing. We are schedule to return February 2010.

## Illinois



## WestCare Illinois Wins New Award at the Cook County Jail!

WestCare Illinois is preparing for our January 4, 2010 “start up” of our new in-jail contract at the Cook County Jail called the WestCare IMPACT Program. The IMPACT program is funded by the Cook County Sherriff - Department of Corrections for three years and will give us the ability to provide comprehensive Therapeutic Community treatment for 142 male detainees in Division 4 of the Cook County Jail. We will provide up to 120 days of in-jail TC treatment services that incorporate research-based practices to address topics on substance abuse, cognitive behavioral, life skills, recovery process and relapse prevention, job readiness, anger management, parenting, HIV transmission and prevention, and other health issues related to substance abuse and criminality.

Our Cook County Jail model will build on “lessons learned” from our experiences at Sheridan; particularly in regard to the importance of re-entry and aftercare planning. Pre-release planning and reentry/transition services, will be coordinated with the CCDOC institutional staff, our sub-contractors - TASC and Deer Rehabilitation -and other identified community based partners in order to optimize participation in continuing care services.

Our new WestCare IMPACT Program Director, Larry Harris, will also work with WestCare Regional Evaluator - Dawn Ruzich, Dr. Frank Scafidi and Dr. Arthur J. Lurigio (the independent evaluator) on the evaluation component of the project.

Thanks to Kristen Chaffee, regional controller, Dawn Ruzich, Dr. Scafidi and “crackerjack” grant writer -Rita Arnett for their work on this successful proposal!!!

# 5 Questions with Anthony Williams

*Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff  
Miami, FL*

I have had the pleasure of working with WestCare for several years, first as a Board Member in Miami and for the past 6 months as a member of the staff.

### **1. What is your most rewarding experience and biggest challenge working for WestCare?**

The most rewarding experience for me has been getting to know the men and women around the country who get up everyday and serve our clients. WestCare has become one of the largest non-profit behavioral health organizations in the country because of the dedication of our staff and I'm proud to be a part of this team.

### **2. What do you do in your spare time?**

What spare time? I'm a big sports fan, football and basketball mostly. I play a little golf when I can, I like movies and concerts and I love to eat.

### **3. What would everyone be surprised to learn about you?**

When I'm not working I'm pretty quiet and shy.

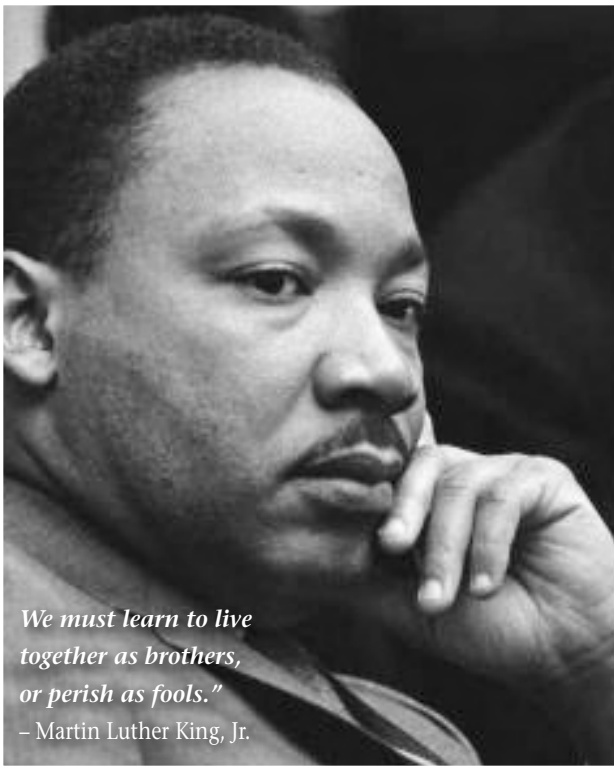
### **4. Proudest personal or professional accomplishment?**

I like building things, my last job gave me the unique opportunity to take a very small non-profit with no active programs and no staff and grow it into a \$5.5 million dollar organization in 2 years. The experience allowed me to prove to myself that anything is possible if you have an idea and work to make it a reality.

### **5. What is your favorite TV show? If you do not watch TV what is your favorite type of music?**

My favorite TV show is HOUSE. I enjoy the puzzle and the process of coming up with a new and crazy idea that solves the problem no one else could.





*We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish as fools."*

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is January 18, 2010

On January, 18, 2010, people of all ages and backgrounds will come together to improve lives, bridge social barriers, and to move our nation closer to the “Beloved Community” that Dr. King envisioned. Dr. Martin Luther King devoted his life’s work to causes of equality and social justice. He taught that through nonviolence and service to one another, problems such as hunger and homelessness, prejudice and discrimination can be overcome. Dr. King’s teachings can continue to guide us in addressing our nation’s most pressing needs – poverty, economic insecurity, job loss and education.

*Volunteer with Americans across the nation on the 2010 King Day of Service and make a real in difference in your community.*

### Plan a King Day project!

Everything you’ll need is located here at [MLKDay.gov](http://MLKDay.gov) including tips on getting started, building partnerships, organizing the day, and fundraising (PDF). You’ll also find a service-learning guide for schools and organizations (PDF), project examples, and marketing tools to help promote your project. If you want to do a project that engages your community beyond Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, then join our Service Connection community.

## Mental Health America Offers Tips on Reducing Anxiety over Economic Bad News

By Steve Vetzner – *Mental Health America*

“Protecting and strengthening our ‘mental health’ couldn’t be more important given the stressful times we live in,” said David L. Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO of Mental Health America. “Mental wellness allows one to cope and deal well with daily life and the challenges it brings – at home, work and in life.”

*Celebrating its 100-Year anniversary in 2009, Mental Health America offers these simple steps to help families cope with anxiety over tough economic times.*

1. **Make a New Year’s Resolution:** Make it your New Year’s Resolution to reduce stress and anxiety over the economy. Start by turning off the evening news and spending quality time with loved ones. Taking a step back will help you gain long-term perspective and focus on the people who matter most in your life.
2. **Focus on Your Health:** The relationship between physical health and mental health is important. Focus on finding the right balance in your diet, through exercise and getting a good night’s sleep.
3. **Don’t Make Rash Decisions:** Making any decision on the spur of the moment is never a good idea. Try not to react immediately to bad news.
4. **Don’t Stress Over the Things You Can’t Control:** Focus less on the things you can’t control, like the stock market and the cost of living, and more on the things you can. Review your expenses and see where you can make cuts. Postpone that vacation or eat out a little less. Use the opportunity to find things to do with your loved ones that bring you closer and cost less, such as a family game night or handmade Christmas presents.

# WestCare Wellness Watch



5. **Don’t be afraid to seek help:** If the anxiety becomes too much, find someone you can talk to about what you’re going through. Don’t be afraid to ask for help from family members, friends and a professional, if necessary. For a list of resources in your area, go to [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

According to Mental Health America, anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America; more than 40 million are affected by these debilitating illnesses each year. One of the most common is Generalized Anxiety Disorder, also known as GAD, which is marked by chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday routine life events and activities. Symptoms lasting at least six months can include fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea. For those experiencing GAD, help is available. For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs), contact **Mental Health America**, or contact your local Mental Health America affiliate.