



WESTCARE EXPRESS

JANUARY 2017

THE WESTCARE EXPRESS NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*EXPRESSions... A Flower Child
Continues to Blossom*
Page 2

*The Family That Bowls Together,
Stays Together*
Page 6

*Foundation Announces
Two Key Hires*
Page 7

Kudos!
Page 7

Stylin' in Wisconsin
Page 9

Holiday Snapshots
Page 11

A New Year's Message From Our President and CEO, Dick Steinberg

Dear WestCare Family,

As we celebrate the passing of another successful year, I hope you too feel the sense of joy and satisfaction that comes from our shared commitment to uplift the human spirit.

Through our passion, skills, and dedication, thousands of lives are changed for the better every day. I can't help but be amazed when I consider the implications – when we help one person, we are also uplifting families, friends, coworkers, and entire communities.



WestCare could not sustain the level of clinical excellence, coordinated access, and collaborative innovation we are known for without all of you. You are the heartbeat of our organization, and I am eternally grateful that you are part of the WestCare family.

As we reflect on this past year, let's celebrate that we have been able to reach more communities in need, now providing critical services in 18 states, three U.S. territories, and the Republic of Palau. With the extraordinarily talented people we now have, I am confident that 2017 will be a year of continued growth, progress, and expansion.

When I began this journey 39 years ago, I could not have predicted this. But, as has been the case year after year, I believe the best is still yet to come. Thank you for all you do every day. Sharon, Olivia and I send our best wishes to you and your family for a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2017.

EXPRESSIONS: *An Original Flower Child Continues to Blossom*

By John Wallace, Editor

She tells tales of growing up in an era that was unique to America culture. You envision Woodstock, Haight/Ashbury, Sproul Plaza. Even poodle skirts. It mattered not where, but positive qualities of compassion, leadership, a certain *joie de vivre* were being developed in one young woman of the 1960's. And just as the so-called Beat Generation craved non-conformity, Barbara Varner marched to her own beat... and continues to do so.



The Express has had the pleasure over the years of trying to keep up with Barbara, as she seemed to find strength and energy picking up a new, always significant, hobby.



Weightlifting, mountaineering, zip-lining. You know, things that should be on everyone's 'bucket list', but our buckets usually involve *"regular recipe, legs and thighs."*

Several years ago, her faith and fate led

Barbara has ended a stellar 25 year career with WestCare California, most of that time in the tedious, yet critically important job of data entry. For a full one-third of her life, she did the work reliably, professionally and efficiently. She is already missed by her legions of co-workers, whom she had regaled with stories of her *"hippie"* days, and who gave her a classy sendoff in December.



Barbara to begin supporting a small orphanage along the western coast of Baja California. From afar, she poured her heart, soul, time, talent and treasure into that little haven. And now, proudly at age 75, she will become a full-time fixture on the property. A simple lifestyle, as in her earlier days. She will undoubtedly keep up with her friends at WestCare, and they will TRY to keep up with her.



Adios, nuestra amiga. Peace.



CALIFORNIA: *Saddling Up for Personal Growth*

Content Courtesy of Michael Mygind and Gabriela McNiel

Veterans in the *San Joaquin Valley Veterans (SJVV)* program have begun taking part in an *Equine Guided Learning* pilot therapy program geared toward current and former military personnel. The program is hosted by the **Center for Equine Assisted Recovery and Healing** and provides our Vets with lessons on caring for horses as well as time to spend with them. Through bonding and nurturing for these animals, we hope that this serves as a therapeutic experience during their time of personal transition.



THE QUESTION CORNER: *January 2017*

This Month's Question: *"What is the craziest thing you've ever done?"*

"Flying in a two-seater airplane through an Alaskan blizzard."

- **Kathy Hayden**, Clinical Services Director - California



THE QUESTION CORNER: *Question for February 2017*

"What was your favorite grade in school and why?" Send details and a vintage photo to john.wallace@westcare.com by Friday, January 20th.

FLORIDA: *A Difficult Situation...a Professional and Compassionate Response*

By Maureen Kempa, Area Director-Key West

Monroe County Florida is a rural community with 130 miles of a chain of islands. It can be known as paradise, but also has the highest rate of suicide in all of Florida. In early December, a 13 year old student and son of a teacher died by suicide and sadly added to this statistic. Of course, to lose a child in this tragic manner is devastating to all involved.

Guidance/Care Center, Inc. (GCC) staff jumped in and supported the family, staff and the community during this difficult time providing true community based services. Clinical Coordinator **Deb Matthews** worked with her staff to create a support network. Therapist Amy was dispatched to the meet with the brother that evening and with the family the days following the loss. Therapists and Counselors: Kate, Brittany, Shauna and Bob were present at the school the day after for teachers and students who needed crisis counseling. The principal

commended them all on how the situation was handled and were immensely grateful for their compassion and time. **Susan Babb**, LCSW who also works at GCC conducted debriefing sessions with GCC staff and externally with school staff.

Certainly, work to be proud of, with the usual strong sense of community and another example of uplifting the human spirit. You make a difference!

Team Debriefing, pictured:

Deb Matthews - Clinical Coordinator

Amy Beeler - Therapist

Shauna Burmaster - Counselor

Susan Babb - Therapist

Bob Borselli - Prevention Counselor

Kate Armstrong - Therapist

Brittany Carnago - Therapist





ILLINOIS: *Safe, Respected, Dignified...from the Inside Out.*

WestCare was significantly represented at a recent conference in Chicago, *An In-Depth Look at the Pathways and Experiences of Justice-Involved Women from the Inside Out*. The conference included a focus on findings from the operational systems at Logan Correctional Center.

WestCare leaders **Leslie Balonick**, **Stacey Munroe** and **John Zidek** along with Logan Correctional Center representatives **Amy Hancock** and **Linda Cox** led a comprehensive presentation. It included the widely-acclaimed “*Clothesline Project*,” (which has been featured in prior issues of *The Express*), and exemplifies the movement to provide safer and gender-responsive services to the justice-involved women at Logan CC. Conference attendees saw how WestCare’s *Women of Dignity* expressed their emotions by decorating shirts calling attention to domestic violence.



WestCare staff continue to “*Uplift the Human Spirit*” by participating in events that are aimed at driving change!

Visit www.clotheslineproject.org for more details.



Let's Have a Laugh



“If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times: Don’t exaggerate!”

“I’m sorry. I’m not very good at names. Mine is either Bob or Phil.”

“As I get older, I become less gullible. For instance, I seriously doubt everybody was Kung Fu fighting.”



NORTH CAROLINA: *Volunteerism at its Best*

(Here's a follow-up to a previous story in The Express)

Historically, the young residents of the WestCare *Girls Program* in Manson, North Carolina have always volunteered to help cook, feed and clean-up after many fundraisers and events at the local Volunteer Fire Department. In October, they helped raise over \$4,000 by assisting with a dinner/fundraiser. And for their efforts, they were recently given a plaque and treated to lunch.

This is just another way our community has supported one another. It was also so wonderful for the people we serve to get some recognition for giving back, and showing they can be productive members of the community again.



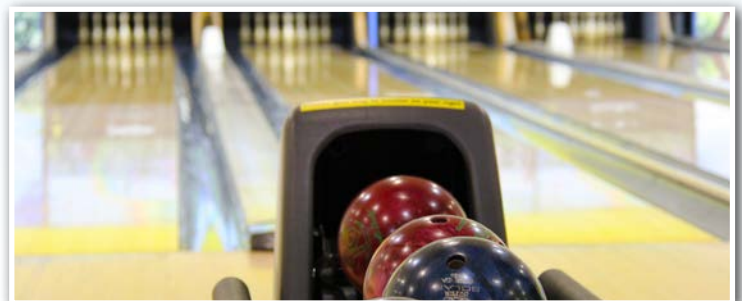
US VIRGIN ISLANDS: *Families Bonding... With Fun to "Spare"*

By Merle Wynter, Program Assistant

The sounds of crashing pins, laughter, and cheers filled the Tropical Ten Pins bowling alley in Christiansted St Croix USVI. The staff of the *Strength Project* and five families who completed the evidenced-based Strengthening Families curriculum took part in a pro-social activity at the bowling alley. Such activities are used to encourage family bonding outside of the home.

The bowling activity was selected to offer an opportunity for families to work together as a team, having fun, and

using some of the tools taught in the SFP sessions: Compliments, positive encouraging statements, hugs and laughter.





FOUNDATION: *Leadership Hires*

As announced by COO **Maurice Lee** in December, **Beverly Watts-Davis** has joined the WestCare family as the new Deputy COO for the Western Region.



Ms. Davis has over 30 years experience in a wide range of professional activities, including leading and managing public agencies, non-profit organizations and private companies, many in and around her home base in San Antonio, Texas.

And Senior Vice President of Human Resources **Shannon**

Alvarez welcomed **Bob Silverang** as the Vice President of Human Resources - East Coast, a new position for the WestCare family.

This position is responsible for overseeing the human resources operations in all of our programs east of the Mississippi, plus Iowa and Minnesota. The position will operate out of our east coast headquarters in Dandridge, Tennessee.



KUDOS! *Our Monthly Shout-Outs to Exceptional Individuals*



Great job by **Linette Escobar**, Administrative Director for Guara Bi Puerto Rico, and Coordinator **Ivan Mendoza** in securing a \$7,000 donation from the Catholic Archdiocese of San Juan. The money was used to buy food for our various social programs throughout the island.



KUDOS! *Our Monthly Shout-Outs to Exceptional Individuals (Con't.)*

Uplifting the Human Spirit is what Director **Stan Brooks** did every day at the Sheridan Correctional Center with the people he came into contact with, by his listening, mentoring, loyalty to WestCare, work ethic, enjoying daily living, and passion to help others. An award has been created to keep Stan's spirit alive throughout the WestCare nation. (The beloved Mr. Brooks passed away in January 2015.) Only one staff member can have such an honor each year, and the second recipient is supervisor **Ryan Bell**.



Pictured are: **Stacy Munroe, Jim Carr, Lauren Holt, Duke Johnson, Jim Carr, Joe Green, Ryan Bell, Stacey Palmer.**



Amazing business collaboration continues a tradition in California where nine Veterans and their families *each* received \$1,000 to make it a terrific Christmas and holiday season. Thanks go to **Gill Ranch Storage**, local real estate agencies, **EVC Homes LLC**, **Regional Housing Cooperative**, **M.C. Real Estate**, **Home Rescue Corps** and **Flores Holdings LLC**. Thank you for believing in San Joaquin Valley Veterans.

When **Larry W.** came to Fresno's Veterans Plaza transitional housing program he had no source of income. One day, he mentioned that he had 25 years of experience driving trucks. Along came the *Veterans Safeway to Work Program (VSWP)*, which gave Larry the opportunity to get back into truck driving. In order to enroll in driving school he needed \$800 for tuition and a renewal for his Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL). VSWP was able to assist. Good luck, Larry!





WISCONSIN: *Dressing Up, Not Messing Up*



Despite nine inches of snow in Milwaukee, the *500 Black Tuxedos* event was successful, and WestCare Wisconsin was well represented by four young gentlemen. **Andre Lee Ellis**, founder, said the purpose of the event is “to

show our young African American brothers that they can dress up their lives before they mess up their lives.”

They had a phenomenal day of mentoring and coaching. Added Mr. Ellis: “*We strongly believe that it will be very rewarding for our mentors as well. By giving these young men a chance to put on a tux and parade in the streets of Milwaukee, we open up their whole perspective on life. As I talked to young brothers in the hood, many did not think that they were worthy of wearing a tuxedo and going downtown for a black tie dinner. I say let’s show them differently!*”

The day culminated with dinner at the Hilton Hotel in the Crystal Ballroom.



How Anyone Online Can Support WestCare

If you know someone who loves to shop online, they can help WestCare by shopping at **AmazonSmile** (bookmark <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/86-0852629>) and selecting **WestCare Foundation**. A portion of the purchase will be donated to WestCare at no cost to the shopper.



WestCare is registered with **PayPal Giving Fund**. When shopping on eBay or using PayPal online, users can select WestCare as their charity of choice. Donations can be made by visiting <https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/105865137050618816/charity/74402>.



WestCare is also on **Razoo**, the online fundraising engine. The organization participates in events like #GivingTuesday. Donations can be made by heading to the following link: <https://www.razoo.com/us/story/Westcare-Foundation>.



PACIFIC ISLANDS: *Hasso. Diseha. Cho'gue. Remember. Hope. Act.*

By Kelly Jensen, Project Coordinator



For the first time since the Pacific Islands assumed responsibilities of the *GUAHAN Project (GP)*, the region's only AIDS service organization, a dedicated staff was assigned to manage the project to re-energize and expand its overall focus. Reflecting over GP's presence on the island since 2003, the founders, volunteers, PLW's and their families not only created an agency, but also a network of support that provided the essential connections to each other, creating something far more genuine than even the scope of its mission. With that inspiration, World AIDS Day (WAD) activity participants took part in what will hopefully be part of a lasting tradition.

A simple recognition was held December 1st at the WCP offices. GP coordinator, **Kelly Jensen**, led the Acrylic Painting Workshop, beginning with an overview of past WAD recognitions along with current statistics and trends. Participants were then asked to reflect on their feelings about what they heard and how HIV has impacted their lives personally and professionally, and identify a color they

were feeling most drawn to.



One at a time, each participant took a turn adding their color to a blank canvas in the first phase of the abstract project. Those colors were then blended together, representing unity. Members were then asked to view the painting once again and add to it if they felt the color they had identified with needed more presence on the canvas, representing each person's individuality. Once the base of the painting was completed, three large red ribbons were added. One to represent those who we have lost to this tragic epidemic; another to represent Persons Living With HIV/AIDS and their families; and a final ribbon representing growth – towards a cure.

Anyone who wanted to add a small ribbon in memory of someone who has been lost to this virus was invited to do so. At the conclusion of the hour long event, candles were lit and placed in the WCP window, facing the Pacific Ocean, not only in memory of those we have lost, but also as a reminder that the Human Spirit is just as expansive as the ocean we are so blessed to see, each and every day.

Florida Annual Award Winners - Village South

.....



FITT (Families in Transition Team) - Program of the Year

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| LaTonya Hall | BHT of the Year |
| Wesley Pierre | Prevention Employee of the Year |
| Shante Davis | Court Services Employee of the Year |
| Leonard Ross | Clinical Employee of the Year |
| Pam Ungvary | Coordinator of the Year |
| Ross Kellom | Administrative Employee of the Year |
| Dr. Anslie Stark-Bloom | Village Leadership Team Member of the Year |



SNAPSHOTS: *Holiday Edition (Con't.)*

Florida - Gulf Coast

.....



Along Florida's Gulf Coast, WestCare employees gathered to enjoy food and fellowship. And they saluted Mr. John James for his extraordinary efforts on behalf of the people we serve.



Carol Renard and Sandy Patnode are among the many doing remarkable things in St. Pete.

SNAPSHOTS: *Holiday Edition (Con't.)*

Florida - Guidance / Care Center Annual Awards

.....



InPatient Unit - Program of the Year

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Ceri Checkley | Marathon |
| Ileana Kluge | Marathon |
| Kristen Flores | Jail Programs |
| Marianne Benvenuti | Keys Leadership |
| Megan Davidson | Key West |
| Sasha Thompson | Manager of the Year |
| Tammy Hansen | Key Largo |

California

.....



In California, employees from throughout the state gathered in Fresno for their annual party. The event featured a mannequin challenge that was filmed utilizing most of the over 200 guests in attendance.

Link to California's 2016 Holiday Party Mannequin Challenge: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCJzVK7RMZ8&t=3s

Directors Award winners were **Lynn Pimentel**, **Dr. Herbert Cruz**, **Michelle White** and **Mardi Palacios**. (With Senior Vice President **Shawn Jenkins**, at right)



SNAPSHOTS: *Holiday Edition (Con't.)*

California



Also in California...the 18th annual Hell's Angels Toy Run, distributing over 800 shiny new bicycles to various non-profits, including WestCare. And again this year, the pictures tell the story.

SNAPSHOTS: *Holiday Edition (Con't.)*

Nevada



In Nevada...The Crossing Church came to the Women and Children's Campus to set up a Santa Shop for all Southern Nevada program parents to drop in and choose gifts for their children.



Nevada



Kwanzaa celebrations get underway, including this table display at a Las Vegas church!

The celebration in Las Vegas centers around the fifth principle of Kwanzaa: *Nia* (Purpose). *Nia* makes the people's collective vocation the building and developing of its community in order to restore the people to their traditional greatness.



SNAPSHOTS: *Holiday Edition (Con't.)*

Pacific Islands - Guam

.....



And in paradise, lovely faces helped bring in the holiday season for WestCare Pacific Islands.