

THE *Express*

OUR WESTCARE STORIES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



**Welcome from
Dick Steinberg**

President

WestCare Family,

For the past forty-four years, I have had the privilege of watching WestCare evolve from a single therapeutic community in Nevada into the world-wide organization we know today. Serving as the President and Chief Executive Officer has taught me the importance of teamwork as we collectively continue Uplifting the Human Spirit across the world. If the past forty-four years have shown us anything, the next forty-four will take us to unprecedented places.

With that, I have exciting news to share regarding changes amongst our Senior Leadership Team. While I continue serving as the President, I am handing the Chief Executive Officer responsibilities to our former Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President, Ken Ortballs. As the President, I will be responsible for the endowment and private philanthropy,

FitzHouse Enterprises and shaping the future direction of WestCare's treatment and community development work. As the Chief Executive Officer, Ken Ortballs will be responsible for leading our world-wide clinical and administrative operations. I'm very excited to work with Ken as we continue to grow our organization and serve even more people around the world.

Our team is undergoing a few additional changes. Savannah Jones has taken on the role of Chief Administrative Officer in which she will oversee Grant Development, Human Resources and Professional Services. Linda Erath is now the Deputy Chief Financial Officer in which she will oversee financial reporting and accounting operations for the entire organization. Stephen Wright has stepped into the role of Chief Operating Officer of the Eastern Region. Frank Rabbito has graciously delayed his retirement to serve as the Chief Operating Officer for Florida.

As WestCare embarks on this new chapter, I invite you to celebrate the successes that brought us here today. Within that, I am also celebrating you, as we could not have those successes without your dedication to doing hard work. The Senior Leadership Team is eager to offer support in each of our new capacities to continue Uplifting the Human Spirit.

Please join me in congratulating these individuals as they take on new roles.



Ken Ortballs
Chief Executive
Officer



Savannah Jones
Chief Administrative
Officer



Linda Erath
Deputy Chief
Financial Officer



Stephen Wright
Chief Operating Officer,
Appalachian & Great Lakes



Frank Rabbito
Chief Operating
Officer, Florida



Celebrating Juneteenth and Its Importance

By Emily Selby, Counselor/BHT

WestCare Arizona celebrated Juneteenth with a barbeque among some of our community partners. This was a great day to show the community our support for freedom and an important part of America's history.

According to an excerpt from an article published on History.com by Elizabeth Nix, "Juneteenth (Short for June 19) marks the day when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1865 to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed. This was two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth officially marked the end to slavery in the United States and is the longest African American holiday, becoming a federal holiday on June 17, 2021."

We celebrated with hotdogs and water donated by **Laughlin Community Health Center** and **Aquarius Casino Resort** in Laughlin, Nevada. Vendors joined in on the festivities and the event was open to the public.



WestCare California Celebrates Juneteenth

By Michael Mygind, Director of Marketing

Across the state of California, our various programs proudly celebrated the rich history and importance of Juneteenth in a variety of ways! To kick things off, our **STOP: Area 1** staff in North Highlands celebrated by sharing what Juneteenth has taught them.

Meanwhile, on the 17th, **Bakersfield Residential** held a BBQ luncheon for clients and staff. Their Cook, Wanda Turner; Program Coordinator, Sammy Alonzo; and Driver, Steven Lee, prepared the BBQ and side dishes. Counselor and Cultural Diversity committee member, Mamie Welch, prepared various activities including an art contest, karaoke, and the reciting of poems by staff and clients. Counselor, Katie Early, set up a PA system for use during the event. It was a fun time for all and many new memories were made!

In Fresno on the 18th and 19th, our teams on behalf of **Admissions, Fresno Outpatient, Housing Services, Marketing, MLK Residential, Our WestCare MATTERS, Project Hope, and San Joaquin Valley Veterans** took turns sharing information on our various services at our outreach booth as part of the Jubilee Celebration at Valdez Hall! Additionally, on the 20th, members of our California leadership team attended a commemorative flag raising at Fresno City Hall!



WestCare Arizona



@westcareaz



WestCare California



@WestCareCA



@westcarecalifornia



The Caribbean CAC Holds Their First Meeting

By Belinda Morales, *Executive Assistant*



The staff at **Guara Bi, Inc.** had the pleasure of welcoming the members of the Community Action Council (CAC) from the Caribbean and Latin America for the committee's first meeting. We had the privilege of having the presence of staff from the **Virgin Islands** and **Dominican Republic** together. We also had staff from **WestCare Guara Bi Dominican Republic** and our partners from Argentina join us virtually. The excellent collaboration and commitment to our organization was recognized by our Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Cristian Duarte; Administrator, Government of the United States Virgin Islands and Chair of the CAC, Mr. Samuel Sanes; Vice Chair of the CAC, Ms. Lymaris Rodríguez; and Dean of the Technological University of Santiago UTESA and Chair of the Dominican Republic CAC, Ms. María Elena Cruz.



 Guara Bi



A Gulf Coast Client Success Story Featuring Jennifer

By Maureen-Ann Traci, *Executive Assistant/HR Generalist*

"WestCare helped me develop self-confidence and gave me the tools I needed to once again become a productive member of society. They helped me find a job that I absolutely love. I have a new family at work - where I am thriving every day! I have already received a raise and I look forward to going to work daily. I have built such a strong support network with my coworkers and sisters at WestCare alike. God is good! Trust the process!" - Jennifer F.



Kudos to Ian! A Job Well Done at the Virtual Role Program!

"Since his hire with our company, Ian Y. has been a superstar! He has mastered his position with us, is full of positive energy, and is more focused than anyone in our office to succeed. He motivated those around him and is always willing to help other agents. He is here every day, bright and early, saying good morning to his coworkers and always has a great attitude. It has been a pleasure and honor to have him on our team." - **Jose Rivas**, *General Manager at Virtual Role*

"Ian is a great asset to our team at Virtual Role. He comes to work every day with a positive attitude and a smile on his face. Since he started with us two months ago, he has been a top rep setting new records every day. He also takes direction very well, ensuring that he is always doing his job correctly!" - **Jenny Armstrong**, *Assistant Manager at Virtual Role*



WestCare GulfCoast - Florida



@WestCareGCFL



Mobile Crisis Response in the Keys

By Maureen Dunleavy, LMHC, *Regional Vice President*

Last September, Congress passed the **National Suicide Hotline Designation Act**, creating a new three-digit dialing code (9-8-8) for the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**, the nation's main connection point to suicide prevention and mental health crisis response services which rolls out this month on July 16, but mobile crisis response is not new to the **Guidance/Care Center (GCC)**.


For the past three years, GCC has had a mobile crisis response team to enhance the crisis system of care in the Florida Keys. The **Mobile Crisis Response Team (MRT)** offers 24-hour triage for all Monroe County residents and in person response when needed to avoid unnecessary psychiatric hospitalization, emergency room utilization, or jail. The goal is to have crisis counselors and peer specialists deescalate, link, and enroll individuals of all ages to our community-based behavioral health services. It first started as an under 25 program and expanded to all ages this year. The program has been overwhelmingly successful. In fact, GCC staff voted the MRT as the 2021 Program of the Year!

Recently, the program got together to celebrate their accomplishments with a pizza party. Shortly thereafter, the **Monroe County Sheriff's Office** had an individual on their threat assessment team who was in crisis. They requested assistance from MRT to do joint response with them so that they could get this individual the help they needed. MRT responded and assisted as expected. This outcome resulted in safety for the individual and our community. I was thrilled to receive accolades from Monroe County Sheriff, Rick Ramsay. We are very proud of our MRT team. Job well done!

"I wanted to pass on info on a great job and teamwork with a suicidal person. Our agency and its threat assessment team worked with Dwayne to come to a peaceful resolution and subsequent Baker Act linkage. My team had great things to say about Dwayne and GCC. Thank you, Dwayne and your team members," said Sheriff Rick Ramsay, Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

We would also like to use this opportunity to welcome our new MRT Team Leader, Rivon Shaneyfelt, Licensed Clinical Social Worker. How lucky to start with such a successful program! More info can be found on the GCC, Inc. website at guidancecarecenter.org.



 Guidance/Care Center by WestCare





Building Strong Teams

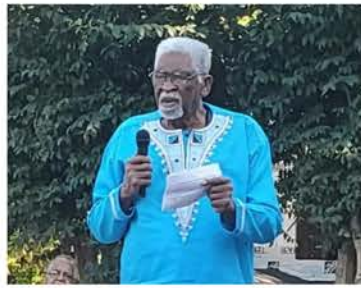
By Pam Ungvary, *Director of Prevention & Early Intervention*

Since the summer of 2021, **The Village South's Early Intervention Department** has increased its **Healthy Start Miami** team by nearly doubling in staff and adding a **Healthy Start Broward** program. The pandemic not only changed service delivery to include telehealth, but it also shifted the daily office life. With staggered days in the office, many of the newer staff unfortunately have not had the same opportunity for staff bonding that would often happen organically over such everyday workplace activities like chatting over a cup of coffee, eating lunch together, or spending time together before or after a meeting. Team building encourages collaboration amongst employees to work together to solve a problem. When staff work together, it helps build trust and respect which leads to increased morale and a stronger team!

The Healthy Start Miami and Broward teams came together on Friday, May 24 for a day of fun and creative activities to help staff connect and see each other in a different light. Leading up to the day, there was one major ground rule: *"No work allowed."* This meant office doors were closed by yellow caution tape and no one could discuss anything work-related. The goal of the day: staff would leave work behind to focus on team building, mindfulness, and enjoying the planned activities. Teams were formed by encouraging staff to join with coworkers that they do not work with on a regular basis. Teams played board games such as Uno, Scattergories, and Giant Jenga. They also competed in the department's **1st Annual Office Olympics**. These exciting games promoted teammates working together to win their event. Activities also consisted of various icebreakers allowing staff the chance to discuss outside interests and find common hobbies. During lunch, staff completed simple craft projects (such as DIY frames and friendship bracelets) to inspire creativity and mindfulness. Before the end of the day, the staff all asked, *"When can we do this again?"* The day was a success!



 The Village South, Inc  @thevillagesouth
 @thevillagesouth



The 6th Annual Juneteenth Dashiki Party

By Eldredge Washington, *Community Service Coordinator*

On June 19, **WestCare Georgia** served as the title sponsor for the **6th Annual Juneteenth Dashiki Party**. Under the direction of WestCare Foundation, we celebrated Juneteenth as a holiday. The Juneteenth Dashiki Party is a cultural experience like no other. Every year, we host a celebration rooted in our ancestors' historical traditions and triumphs. The day was full of artistic music, food, clothing, and much more. Not only did we sponsor the event, but we also provided free HIV/HEP-C testing, and our very own board member, Dr. Eugene Walker, was the keynote speaker. This event allowed us to serve our target community, celebrate a historical holiday, and uplift many spirits.



WestCare Georgia



@westcarega



Welcome to Paul Andres

By Darrell Mayo, *Veteran Advocate*

Paul Andres is a U.S. Army Veteran who is now helping WestCare take care of other Veterans suffering from homelessness. Paul was born on the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific. He speaks both English and the Marshallese language. Shortly after finishing high school in 2011, Paul enlisted in the U.S. Army and stayed until his enlistment was up in 2015. He enlisted into the U.S. Army as a logistical specialist who after his training, was stationed in Fort Bliss, Texas. He did a one-year tour overseas at the Naval Support Activity (NSA) in Bahrain, where he transported vital parts for the U.S. Army artillery unit supporting air defense for the naval base.

After leaving the military, Paul then went to college in Taiwan and studied diplomacy and international relations. He graduated college with a bachelor's degree and worked as a diplomat in Dubai, United Arab Emirates for six months. He then moved to Iowa to be with his family and is now working for us at WestCare's Family Alliance for Veterans of America.

Paul enjoys playing basketball with friends and family when he is off work. He also has a four-year-old daughter named Andrea that he loves to take to all of the different parks in Sioux City when the weather is nice. Paul hopes to be an asset to WestCare and to help as many Veterans for as long as he can. Thank you, Paul, for bringing your expertise to our program!



FAVA (Family Alliance for Veterans of America)



Illinois Strengthens Bonds Amongst their Teams

By Melissa Valentine, *Program Coordinator*

In June, staff across the state banded together to celebrate each other and engage in teambuilding activities. The festivities began on June 6 and 7 with Vice President of Human Resources, Rashieda Shabazz, and Chief Administration Officer, Savannah Jones, traveling from Nevada to Sheridan to interact with staff from the **Sheridan Correctional Center**. They then traveled to Chicago on June 8 to spend the day with our staff there. During their visits, staff had the opportunity to work together in fun competitions to enhance communication skills as well as get to know one another on a personal level.

On June 29, Regional Vice President, Stacy Munroe, and Chicago Program Director, Carlos Rodriguez, traveled to Giant City Park in Southern Illinois to engage in teambuilding activities with staff from Harrisburg, DuQuoin, and Dixon Springs. It was a day filled with fun, sunshine, and fried chicken!



WestCare Illinois



**The Sean Higgins Wellness Area
Becomes a Reality at the WCC**

By Andrew Moran, Development Director

It is with great pleasure that I get to share the generosity of an amazing family and their heartfelt donation to our **WestCare Nevada Women and Children's Campus' (WCC)** sports court, dedicated in memory of longtime gaming attorney, lobbyist, and friend, **Sean Higgins**. Sean passed away in late 2020. The family, headed by his beloved wife, Lynn Higgins; daughter, Samantha; and son, Connor, set up a GoFundMe page on his behalf for WestCare. They raised over \$25,000 for the WCC through small donations from hundreds of community members that respected and loved Sean.

Additional support came from his family including his mother, Lucia, and his nine brothers and sisters and many nieces and nephews, who all adored him. He spent his legal career in gaming and was general counsel for Affinity Interactive, formerly known as Herbst Gaming and Affinity Gaming. Sean was also an executive at Golden Entertainment. Being from such a large and wonderful family, he had a special heart for women and children. Now, through his memorial and this gift from his family, he will pass that love along to so many.

With the donation, we did an entire revamp and beautification of the sports and wellness court at the WCC, now known as the Sean Higgins Wellness Area. We bought brand new tables, benches, and umbrellas so that the families can get out of the heat and relax. The walking path was redone and now the women can get exercise as they stroll around the area. We put in new landscaping and trees to add shade and make it more welcoming. The volleyball and basketball courts got complete facelifts and were repainted. The courts also received new sports equipment and we added bikes for the little ones to enjoy. The area needed love and we are extremely grateful for this family and their continued support of WestCare over the years. The families can take pride in where they live and be able to get exercise and have a beautiful yard to continue to heal in. The entire WestCare Nevada family would like to thank the Higgins family for their act of kindness. Your contribution was a kind and generous way of supporting the lives of the women and children that are trying to rebuild their lives. Thank you for stepping forward and making a commitment to assist us in our mission of helping others find recovery!



WestCare Nevada



@westcarenevada



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Conversations for Change

By Jan Lepore-Jentleson, Executive Director

WestCare Ohio/East End Community Services and our **Peers for Change** team of certified Addiction Recovery Peer Supporters conducts the 'Conversations for Change' event every other month in Dayton for persons struggling with drug abuse and recovery. The 'Conversations' include a healthy meal, a motivational speaker with lived experience, group discussions about long and short-term goal setting, training and distribution of free Naloxone, HIV and HEP-C testing, and information sharing about treatment, and records expungement through the Public Defender's office. This month's Conversation attracted 59 attendees from Dayton's north side. Eighteen agencies that provide treatment or other recovery resources also made themselves available to answer questions and set up appointments.



East End Community Services



@eastendcommunityservices



Overcome and Persevere

By Salome Vuki, Quality Improvement Coordinator

This July, **WestCare Pacific Islands' Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)** program celebrates Guam's **Liberation Day** on July 21 with the theme, "The Strength to Overcome, the Faith to Persevere!" Liberation Day commemorates the end of the Japanese occupation in Guam by the U.S. military. In honor of Liberation Day, SSVF remembers and thanks Veterans and current military members for their service. SSVF continues to serve Veterans and their families in maintaining housing stability, providing case management services, and linking them to resources in the community. This month, SSVF was able to meet our target threshold of serving 75 Veteran households for the year. We expect to serve even more Veteran households as the year closes. SSVF remains committed to serving our island's Veteran community and honoring their selfless acts of service for the freedom of many.



WestCare Pacific Islands



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Another ORP Success Story

By Elizabeth Roldan, Administrative Assistant

Our client, Luis V., successfully completed **Guara Bi's Offender Reentry Program (ORP)** amounting to one year of services. Luis remained stable, cooperative, and positive throughout his process of reintegration into the community, acquired all of his personal documents, obtained a permanent job as a security guard, and with great pride, we report that he has acquired his own apartment. Seeing a participant conquer his fears, trust himself to be a productive person, and establish himself in life through his own efforts and independence, is a testament to our commitment to service and reinforces our goal of Uplifting the Human Spirit.



Juneteenth Celebration in Puerto Rico

To commemorate this important chapter of American history regarding the **Juneteenth** celebration, the employees and clients of **Guara Bi**, participated in different activities. One of the activities was wearing the colors red, green, black or yellow. They also shared snacks, played games, took part in recreational activities, and most importantly, participated in educational workshops to better understand the importance of Juneteenth. At Guara Bi, Inc., we believe in human rights and equal opportunities for every person regardless of race, color or sexual orientation. Harriet Tubman said, "I have freed thousands of slaves and would have freed thousands more, only if they had known they were."



Guara Bi



Healing Trauma with Art

By Shandi Hill, Area Director

Children at the **White Pine and Newport Boys and Girls Club** were introduced to a new program, Art with Heart. **Art with Heart Magnificent Marvelous Me!** is a therapeutic activity book designed to help kids that have experienced trauma or adversity. The book contains activities that promote emotional support and encourages the exploration of complex emotions. Through guided writing prompts and art activities, children will learn strategies to build healthy connections and communication through creative expression. Madison Porterfield, Youth Activities Coordinator, is facilitating the Art with Heart program for 10 weeks. The initial kickoff for the program was on June 6. Children were provided with their very own Magnificent Marvelous Me! activity book and followed along with an art activity.



Welcome to the WestCare Tennessee Family, Courtney Williams, HRSA Data Coordinator!

"My name is Courtney Williams. I have lived in Tennessee my entire life. I graduated from Carson-Newman University. I married my high school sweetheart and together we have a daughter and two dogs. I love helping those around me and improving our community. I am glad to be a member of the WestCare family!"



WestCare Tennessee



@WestCareTN



All Hands on Deck for the Summer Extravaganza

By Jessica Cerda

A look midway through the **Summer Extravaganza 2022** program reveals the impact, experiences, and challenges faced in the final stretch.

Unless you are a working parent with school-aged children, summer does not quite underscore the need for full-time summer programs. Add the stress of income disparities, single parenting, high-crime neighborhoods, and idle time for kids who are out for summer break, and you will no doubt find parents in a difficult situation. The mission of Summer Extravaganza was designed to fill this void and provide support for both parents and kids during this often-volatile period for zero cost to the parents.

While the team at **WestCare Texas San Antonio** has effectively created the longest running program covering the entirety of the kids' summer break for the East side of San Antonio, it has transformed the operational work roles for everybody on the WestCare Texas team.

"The staff members for WestCare Texas are some of the hardest working community coordinators and advocates. We work endlessly and tirelessly to create a healthy, economically viable, safe, and resilient community. To

transition in the summer from community outreach services to direct services for our kiddos is what makes us unique and needed in a disinvested community," said WestCare Texas Director of Operations, David Davis.

Summer Extravaganza has enrolled almost 200 campers and junior counselors. As the second half of camp approaches, the team has taken pause to assess each group of children attending camp and identifying those who need extra attention such as ESL or English as a second language and those who need help with behavioral and emotional issues.

"Our goal and challenge is to give each participant a world class experience regardless of their life experience or trauma. We work through various issues with our kids as opposed to leaving them out or behind since exposure to financial literacy, home economics and sports activities are linchpins to long term success," added Davis.



WestCare Texas



Celebrating Pride Month



By Shelisa Allen, *Administrative Assistant*

On June 18, the **Virgin Islands Partners in Recovery** staff joined one of our many community partners, **Frederiksted Healthcare Clinic (FHC)** to celebrate Pride Month. **FHC's Division of Social and Community Programs** hosted this year's **Pride Parade Walk/Health and Wellness** event, specifically geared toward our LGBTQ+ community, which has historically faced unfair backlash. Our staff proudly supported our brothers and sisters in this marginalized community by marching in solidarity. We believe in equality for all and are dedicated to serving everyone within our community without bias and judgement. The Village and WestCare Virgin Islands' sole purpose is to Uplift the Human Spirit, regardless of sexual orientation, race, creed, or gender.



The Village - VI Partners in Recovery Inc / WestCare



Joining Together to Transform the Lives of Veterans

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

Steve and Carol struggled for several years trying to resolve a possible \$68,000 overpayment related to Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits received by John, their 96-year-old father and WWII Veteran. John is blind, deaf, and immobile due to a series of strokes he experienced in 2019 and required an increasing level of care. A major financial resource supporting his daily care needs is the **VA Aid and Attendance** pension.

This valuable needs-based pension is available to Veterans who served during a period of war, as well as their surviving spouses, age 65 years and older. This pension offers financial aid to help offset the cost of required care for eligible Veterans who need assistance with the daily activities of living including bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, and transferring. It is often an underutilized resource because many applicants fail to adjust their annual income to reflect the financial drain of recurring healthcare expenses affecting needs-based eligibility.

John's family promptly complied with the VA's request to provide additional information. At this time, the VA, like most organizations across our nation, was experiencing the dramatic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing and programming. Steve, himself a Vietnam Veteran, and his wife, suddenly found their own lives complicated by a diagnosis of COVID-19. They struggled to recover from the virus while also attending to their father's challenging health and financial needs. The circumstances and conditions created by COVID-19 placed undue stress on all parties.

Steve contacted **WAServes, WestCare Washington's** Veteran-specific coordinated case management program for guidance. After reviewing a box of related documents, WestCare staff recommended that the family team up with Senator Patty Murray's Director of Veterans Services, Marjan Didra, to work with the VA and advocate for a humanitarian waiver of the alleged debt. This is exactly the action that was initiated by all parties as they joined forces to help this elderly WWII Veteran.

Seven weeks later, Steve and Carol received the much hoped for news from Marjan, as well as official notification from the VA approving debt relief. Additionally, Ms. Coy with the VA informed the family that she was personally attending to an increase in their elderly father's VA pension award. Again, even with the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to experience the best in people and organizations. Thank you, Senator Murray, Marjan Didra, and Ms. McCoy with the VA for transforming the lives of Veterans!





WestCare Wisconsin Partners with the Community to Lend Hope to Felons

By Felicia Williams, Program Director

Our **WestCare Wisconsin** team was proud to present an amazing community event with our collaborating partner, **Gee's Clippers Barber & Beauty Salon**, featuring Mr. **Doyle Sprewer**, Probation Parole Officer at Wisconsin Department of Community Corrections, who conducted a valuable presentation regarding the **Wisconsin Felony Pardon** process to an attentive audience. Mr. Sprewer understood the need for this first information session. The first event was so well attended that there was a request for a second date to be added with multiple sessions and a third date being added because the word is spreading that there is hope.

Here is a humbling highlight at a session: There was a meeting where a gentleman traveled with his wife from Kenosha to attend the session in Milwaukee. Even though attempts to discourage him were real, he almost gave up hope that his case from 1996 ever had a chance to be considered for pardon. He was told four different times by four different attorneys that his drug-related offense would never be eligible for pardon consideration. With the information he received, he was given hope. His expression of joy was priceless. We were delighted to meet him and help strengthen his faith that better tomorrows truly are on the horizon!

Much appreciation to Quiana Mann, representing our Clinical Services team, for your presence and assistance throughout the day listening, learning, and lending a helping hand as Mr. Sprewer delivered a message of hope and help!



WestCare Wisconsin



@westcare.wi

Grants & Resource Development



Welcome to the Team, Sharon Collins!

By Lisa Jackson, GPC, Interim VP of Grants, WestCare Foundation

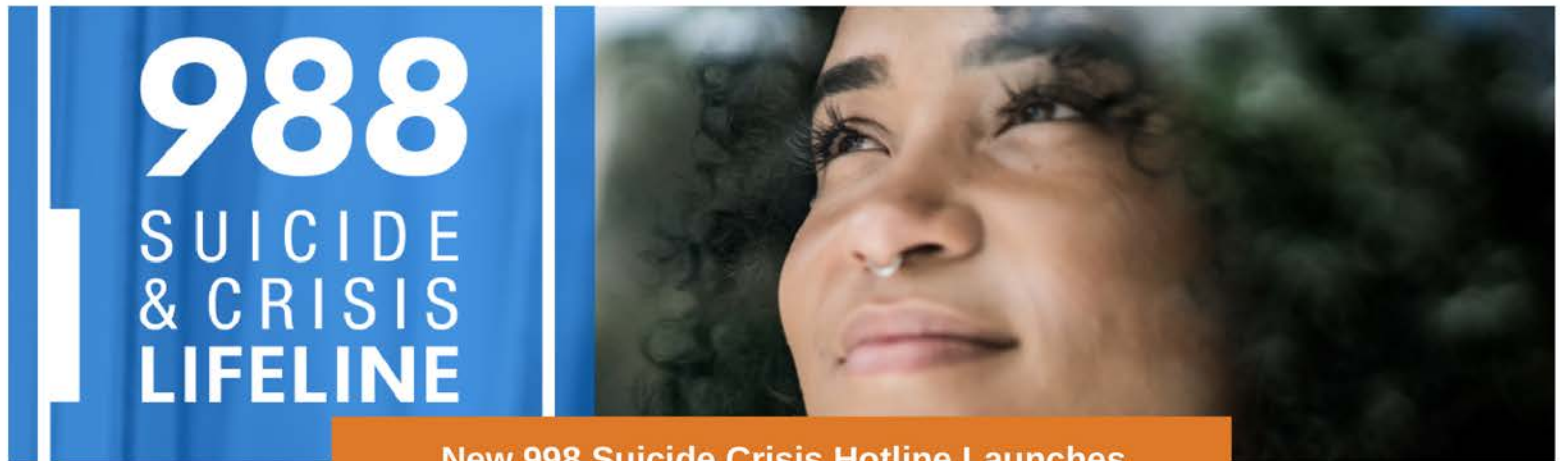
Sharon Collins is our new Development Officer here at WestCare. Sharon has extensive experience working in nonprofit development for over 25 years.

Upon graduating from the University of Houston, her career began as a Senior Legislative Aide to a Texas State Representative, Karen Connelly, where she wrote legislation (*as a coincidence, this is the representative that represented our Texas Promise Zone where many of our Texas programs are now located*) and speeches, researched social policy, participated in grant writing workshops, and served as an aide on the Texas State Appropriations Committee - which enabled a profound understanding of federal and state funding.

Sharon has gone on to work as a grant writing services consultant and board advisor with over 50 national and international nonprofit organizations combined and has extensive experience writing grants for NGOs. She has hosted grant writing workshops for Nigerian social enterprise organizations. She is a member of the International Association of Women and a long-time member of the Grant Professionals Association. Sharon has won numerous awards writing prosperous corporate, local, state, and federal grants on social and community service, youth, education, policy issues, and mental health. She has had successful grant application submissions for nearly every agency within the Federal Government. Her grant writing career entails several years of experience in program development and project planning, specializing in children's projects.

Sharon's recreational activities include tennis and swimming and she is an avid salsa dancer. She loves being home cuddling with her Himalayan cat, Grayson, when she is not participating in outdoor activities. Please welcome Sharon to the WestCare family!

Information Technology



New 988 Suicide Crisis Hotline Launches

Adapted from a July 15, 2022 article titled, "There's A Suicide And Crisis Hotline Called 988. Here's Everything To Know About It," by Katie Camero on BuzzFeed.News

A recently launched service aims to help those with suicidal thoughts, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. Just like someone can dial 911 if they are in danger or physically injured, anyone in the U.S. can now call or text 988 to talk to mental health counselors with the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The new, easy-to-remember number puts those in need in touch with free and confidential support 24/7. The launch comes nearly two years after the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act was signed into law in 2020, which set the stage for the new code's activation. The current Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) is still available for people in need, as well as those concerned about loved ones. Callers can use that number or contact the Lifeline through an online chat at <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>

The transition to the 988 dialing code comes at a time when more people are experiencing mental health crises. Each year, more people in the U.S. die by suicide than in car crashes. In 2020 alone, an estimated 12.2 million adults in the U.S. seriously thought about suicide, according to the CDC. Another 3.2 million planned a suicide attempt and 1.2 million tried to kill themselves. In the same year, suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 14 and 24 to 34, second only to accidents. Overall, 45,979 people died by suicide in 2020, which equals about one death every 11 minutes. The suicide prevention lifeline received nearly 2.4 million calls that year.

The good news, however, is that the current mental health crisis in the US can be reversed, experts said, and the new 988 code can help. A 2018 study of 550 callers who contacted the hotline found that follow-up calls helped prevent 80% of people from killing themselves.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which was initiated in 2005, consists of more than 200 local and state-funded crisis centers across the U.S. When someone calls or texts 988, they will be routed to the nearest center based on area code, which will ensure those in need are connected with mental health counselors who are familiar with the resources and services available in their area.

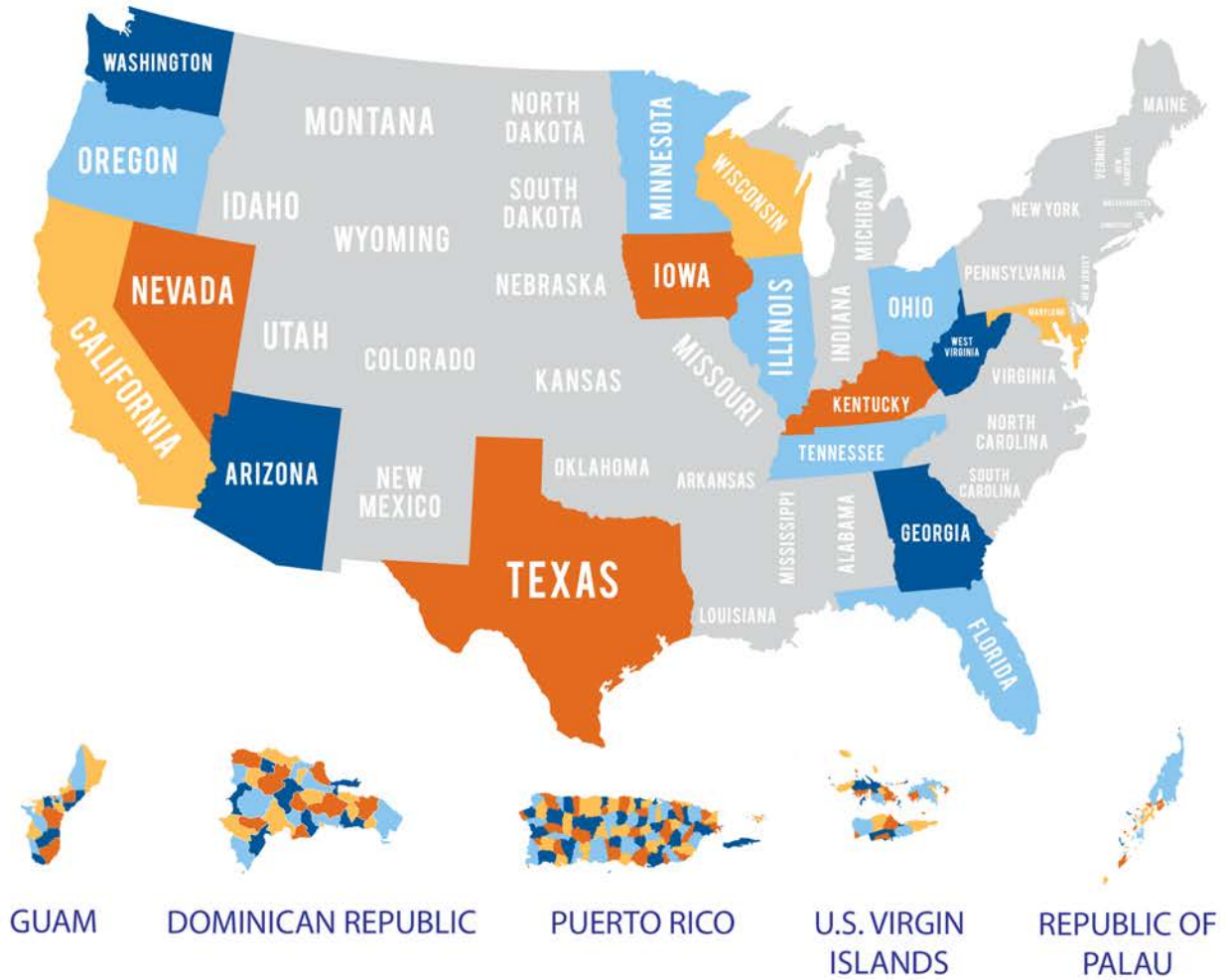
After dialing the code, callers will hear an automated greeting that will list different options, including a connection to the Veterans Crisis Line (press 1) or services in Spanish (press 2). Otherwise, they will be directed to the nearest crisis center where trained counselors will listen, provide support, and connect them to other resources if necessary.

Part of the 988 hotline's services include "active rescue," which means staff are required to "take all action necessary to secure the safety of a caller and initiate emergency response with or without the caller's consent if they are unwilling or unable to take action on their own behalf." These actions include accessing the caller's location to send emergency services, which most of the time involves police. Over time, government officials say they envision 988 offering additional services like mobile crisis teams or stabilization centers, which provide voluntary support and treatment to anyone in a crisis due to mental health or substance use.

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 seventeen states, three U.S. territories, the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Palau



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Gabriela McNiel
Vice President of
Marketing &
Communications



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