

# WestCare Express

The WestCare Foundation Employee Newsletter



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## Firmer footing: Adult Education Program Benefits WestCare Clients

By Mary Meadows – *The Medical Leader, Pikeville Kentucky*

When WestCare client Jimmy Shepherd completed a 90-day court-ordered treatment program on January 13, he left the facility with some new definitions about life.

Many of those lessons learned came from an in-house program that helped him accomplish something he's wanted to do since he dropped out of school in the seventh grade – earn his GED.

Shepherd, 31, said he dropped out of school because he repeatedly got into trouble and he struggled with school work. As a teenager, he moved out of his home and started working. He admits that drug abuse caused problems, which included multiple run-ins with the law.

He's learned from those mistakes. Now, Shepherd has a new lease on life, and his education, a tool that no one can take away from him. "I didn't think it [school] was for me. I didn't think I needed an education," he explained. "As I got older, I hated myself for quitting. I always wanted to take the GED test, but I never really had the chance to take it. The adult education group gave me that chance, and I'm truly grateful for it."

While at WestCare, Shepherd attended a state-funded adult education course that's administrated by the Pike County Board of Education. For three hours every Monday, he received one-on-one instruction from instructors Danny Moses and Mark Meade.

"It feels great," Shepherd said one day prior to his release from WestCare. "I accomplished something I didn't think I would ever accomplish. It was one goal my dad wanted me to do – get my GED or graduate. I feel great about it."

He plans to complete training to become a welder

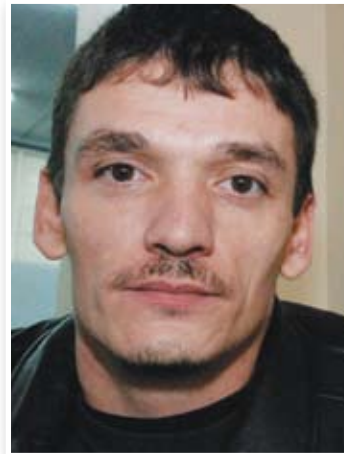
– something he couldn't accomplish before because he couldn't get a welding certificate without a high school diploma or GED. Shepherd is just one of many WestCare clients who take advantage of adult education classes offered in the Ashcamp-based facility. On January 12, 18 WestCare clients – some seeking a GED and some wanting to brush up on math or reading skills – attended the class.

Since adult education instructors started teaching

classes at WestCare three years ago, at least 35 clients have earned GEDs. WestCare clients who have already earned a GED or a high school diploma are encouraged to enroll in college. Linda Crum helps WestCare clients sign up for financial aid during two site visits each month. All clients at the Ashcamp facility take a literacy pretest when they arrive. The organization's goal is to increase its clients' literacy by at least two grade levels before they complete treatment.

WestCare's Jason Bevins volunteers one Saturday each month to drive clients from Ashcamp to the Pike County Board of Education's administrative building so they can take the GED test. The men must be there before 8 a.m., and Bevins waits until the men finish the test, which lasts until after 3 p.m.

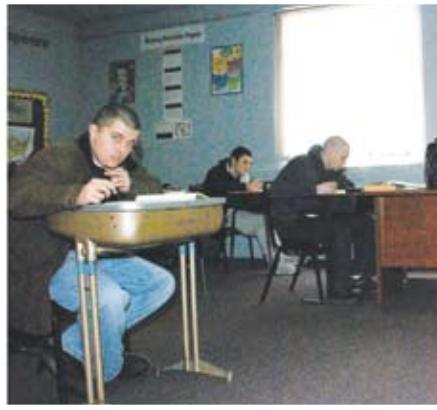
He said some WestCare clients live several hours away from the Ashcamp facility and would otherwise have difficulty finding transportation. Most WestCare clients also have difficulty paying the required \$40 it costs to take the state-certified test, he said. "I try to make sure they have money and transportation to take the test," he said. "We've had a good outcome and we're starting to see a huge increase in the number of guys going."



## Continued from page one

Bevins, who does all intakes at the Ashcamp facility, said some clients begin substance abuse treatment with a second grade reading level. By the time they leave the 90-day treatment facility, they have gained a fifth or sixth grade reading level.

"It's about turning them into productive members of society and helping them get a job," Bevins said. "It means a lot to them. That's a big reward to them."



## WestCare Staff Selected as 2009 African-American Portrait of Success!

By Ahmad Bahrami, MBA – *Coordinator of Community Involvement, WestCare California*

One of WestCare's long-time health educators, Roxanne Foster, was selected as one of four winners of the 2009 African-American Portraits of Success award. This award is presented by KSEE 24, the local NBC affiliate. These awards recognize the dedication and personal sacrifice of outstanding individuals in our community. The awards are based on an individual having contributed a significant amount of time, expertise and special talents to help better their community.

Roxanne will be featured in her own individual profile that will air on the news programs throughout the month and also be available on the news station's website.

Roxanne works full time for WestCare's Health Education Program at The Living Room. She is also a wife, mother, full-time student, county volunteer and still does work with her own church.

She is the catalyst for many of our successful health education programs. She assists with our women's

HIV support groups and transports participants to the meetings and events. She facilitates a number of our evidence-based prevention groups, which are multisession education and behavior modification groups. In addition, she conducts street outreach, including work with our local needle exchange program.

Roxanne also volunteers with Fresno's Department of Public Health to assist with HIV testing. She works tirelessly to organize community health fairs and ensure the community is able to get access to HIV prevention and education services. She conducts presentations to communities, churches and other agencies, as well as trains many of our own staff on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

She has spearheaded the African American Action Plan for WestCare, which aims to increase awareness in the local African-American community, improve outreach methods, conduct needs assessments, increase HIV educational opportunities, and

## California

implement interventions specific to African Americans such as SISTAs and Many Men Many Voices.

Roxanne has a genuine desire and passion to help others, and it's evident in her attitude and work. She had been an embodiment of the WestCare missions, and we are so proud of her for her work. Her work saves lives!

Roxanne and the other winners were honored at a formal luncheon on February 25, at which they received their awards. Congratulations to Roxanne as well as her team, as it's a collective effort for that small team to continue to achieve such levels of greatness!

## Drive Thru at the Living Room

By Seanna Herring-Jensen – *Special Projects Officer, WestCare California*

Many WestCare staff members were shocked to see our facility on the late-night news. A police chase on February 6, 2009 at about 8:30 p.m. ended with a Ford Expedition crashing into WestCare's Living Room. The SUV was carrying three carjacking suspects who were desperately trying to evade police. Luckily, no one was inside the Living Room at the time of impact. Typically, nightly meetings

of about 10 to 20 people wrap up around 8:30 p.m. If the SUV would have crashed into the building just a few minutes earlier, several people could have been seriously injured or killed. Police say the only person injured during the entire ordeal was one of the carjacking suspects, and he was treated for minor injuries.





# Augusta Participating in the Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute (GTIPI) Poster and Essay Contest

By WestCare Georgia Staff

Each year, the Georgia Traffic Injury Prevention Institute (GTIPI) conducts a statewide poster/public service announcement/essay contest on “Why You Should Wear Seatbelts and Use Child Safety Seats.” Children in grades K-12 in all public, private and home schools are encouraged to participate. The state-level winners receive a plaque and a monetary prize sponsored by Georgia Power.

This year, WestCare Augusta is participating in the GTIPI contest. Our goal is to win the statewide competition, which will allow our students’ artwork to be displayed on the 2010 calendar. This calendar is recognized throughout the state in various agencies. To integrate the safety benchmarks, our teachers developed a “safety” theme and incorporated it into the educational standards. In part, students were asked to develop posters based on the safety of seatbelts. The posters were first judged January 22 at the WestCare School level. Out of the submissions, the first and second place posters were selected by our school’s judges. The winning students received certificates, ribbons and a gift packet. However, all of the WestCare students who submitted posters in the local level contest

received prizes of pencils and stickers.

On February 1, the posters were submitted to GTIPI for county judging. We are awaiting the results of the countywide judging competition. When the WestCare School posters win first place in their category of the county competition, the artwork will elevate to the state-level contest. Then, the posters will compete with submissions from 159 counties in the state. Posters are judged on content, message, accuracy and artistic detail. The winning students at the state level will receive a plaque and a monetary prize. It is with hope that our students who won the local poster competition will win the county and state poster contest, too.



## Georgia



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WestCare Georgia DJJ Intensive Residential Treatment Program in Augusta. DJJ clients submit “winning” posters for the Georgia statewide poster contest on Driver’s Safety

▼

## Collaboration Between Atlanta Job Corps and CARES

By WestCare Georgia Staff

Late in 2008, John Bascom, resource development, and staff met with the leadership of the Atlanta Job Corps and negotiated a collaboration between the CARES program and Job Corps. CARES now provides HIV education to two units once a week for five weeks.

Residents of the Job Corps receive information about transmission, disease progression, prevention and safer sex negotiation skills. They also receive information about sexually transmitted infections

(STIs). A pre- and post-test are administered to assess the level of knowledge gained and retained. One of the final activities before receiving their certificate of completion is to play HIV Jeopardy – a game created by the CARES team. This game serves to reinforce knowledge gained about HIV and STIs during the education sessions.

Job Corps is a program that works with disadvantaged youth. The youth reside at the Job Corps facility for a period of six months and receive training in employability skills, as well as health care, vocational education and working toward their GED. They also receive basic health care. During their stay, they can earn a stipend for working toward their established goals. There are eight units with 20-40 male or female youth per unit.

WestCare Georgia’s CARES Program is funded by Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The staff perform street and community outreach and also participate in health-related events planned by other community providers. Age-appropriate HIV education groups are planned and presented for a variety of different populations, including clients in residential treatment programs, independent living programs and group homes. HIV testing is offered using Orasure rapid testing. Any person who tests positive is referred to the health department for confirmatory testing and is provided support and wraparound services as they cope with their new diagnosis. Referrals are made for any medical and mental health concerns. Substance abuse counseling is provided for those persons with a history of addiction.

The first round of five session groups is just ending, and it has been a wonderful collaboration. The CARES program is looking forward to the next round and to providing education and supportive services to youth in need.



# Fun at the Big Top

By Sanslie Stark-Bloom, PhD – Village South Children's Services Director

Children at the Village South had a wonderful time under Barnum and Bailey's Big Top when they attended the circus in January. Sixteen children from the Children's Services Center enjoyed a treat by attending this engaging event. After being filled with popcorn and the excitement of new and exotic animals, all of



▲ Andrew and Shankovia Herron are amazed at the high flying circus performers

the children agreed that the incredible acrobatics were the highlight of their outing. As part of the program at the Village South, field trips are necessary in order to enhance the children's social skills under the guidance of the childcare specialists and therapeutic staff.



# Florida Keys Unsung Hero

By Sean Furey – Executive Assistant, Florida Keys Operations



Paulette Sheagren and her husband Lt. Jim Sheagren at the ceremony

Paulette Sheagren has been a registered nurse at the Guidance Clinic of the Middle Keys (GCMK) since 1995. In 2005, Paulette was the powerhouse behind the first GCMK Relay for Life team in honor of a nurse that we lost to cancer. Since that first year, Paulette has been the captain of the team each year, overseeing fundraising events and increasing awareness of what we must do to cure cancer. She does all this while being a mom for two boys, ages 8 and 12.

Paulette was honored for her volunteer work in the Florida Keys by being named an "Unsung Hero" by the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys at a banquet attended by more than 300 individuals from the nonprofit community. Also in honor of Paulette, her co-workers proclaimed

January 30 as "Paulette Sheagren Day" at GCMK. We are all very proud of Paulette for her dedication and for the high quality of care she provides every day to our clients.

# My Experience with the First Lady of Nevada

By Dee Wirth – Supervisor, Adult Women's Treatment Services WestCare Nevada



## Nevada

I was honored to be invited to have lunch in January with the First Lady of Nevada, Dawn Gibbons, at the Women's and Children's Campus. I had the pleasure of crossing paths with her on several occasions prior to the luncheon. I had been asked to speak on a panel regarding methamphetamine and how it affects our community. The First Lady was on that panel. I can remember a time when I didn't know who our state's representatives were, let alone knowing them personally. First Lady Gibbons has always been so gracious and

welcoming to me, whenever I happen to see her at any event. I feel very fortunate to share some of the same goals that she has for our community, society and our children. I am grateful for the position I have at WestCare, which has allowed me to make a difference in society—the same society that I am hoping to impact by doing the work that WestCare allows me to do on a daily basis. I believe WestCare and the First Lady have some of the same things in common, one of them being "Uplifting the Human Spirit."



# WestCare Arizona Supports Local Veterans United

By Tracy Stevens – Area Director

Despite the cold weather and scattered showers, WestCare Arizona staff participated February 14 in the Bullhead City Veterans United, Inc., 10th Annual Veterans ICS & Amateur Chili Cook-off.

Although WestCare staff did not enter any chili in the event this year, they had a great time talking to people who visited our booth while handing out WestCare pens, yoyos, coffee cups, tee-shirts and brochures. Staff member Erika Maxon did participate in the women's arm wrestling contest. Although Erika did not win, she did get a free enrollment to the Bullhead City Gym.

Over the last few years, WestCare Arizona has supported our local Veterans United. In 2006, WestCare purchased a brick to help the Veterans United complete their Veteran's Memorial project. The beautiful memorial has a path of bricks leading up to it. The memorial is a wall surrounding a flaming lit torch. The wall contains the names of those men and women from the State of Arizona who have died in honor of our country.

In 2007, WestCare agreed to sponsor the USS Arizona display at the local Military Heritage Center Museum. A plaque was placed on the

display with WestCare's name and the phrase "Uplifting the Human Spirit." Memorabilia from the USS Arizona is in the display along with pictures from the ship during the attack at Pearl Harbor.

WestCare Arizona will continue to support our local veterans and make sure they know we are here to support them should they need help or assistance in locating community resource referrals.



## Arizona

▲ Above: Tracy Stevens, Area Director and Bob Wishart in our booth

◀ Left: Erika Maxon, Counselor CDC, arm wrestling with a guest



## Illinois



Sheridan post-holiday party held in January to welcome back Stan Brooks, director, from medical leave. ▲

# WestCare at Sheridan Continues Its Tradition of Quality Staff Training

By Loretta Berry – Clinical Manager

During the month of February, the WestCare staff at Sheridan Correctional Center had two full days of onsite training. Taking advantage of two state holidays, WestCare was able to provide this training with no impact on client services.

The first day of training focused on staff participation in a role-playing scenario of three communities (pretreatment, treatment and posttreatment), followed by the concepts and tools of the therapeutic community. The second day of training provided the more advanced concepts

of group work and the different meetings and tasks of the therapeutic community. The presentations were given by WestCare's own staff, including Leslie Balonick, senior vice president; Stan Brooks, program director; Sandy Smith, James Carr and Yomi Sarumi, assistant directors; as well as Leroy Robinson and John Zidek, clinical supervisors.

Sheridan is a 950-bed therapeutic community situated in 12 buildings across a large campus. The training gave staff the opportunities to interact with staff from other buildings and to have some fun as a group.



# PIRC Grand Opening

By Xawntoia Franklin

The Village – VI Partners in Recovery, located in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, sponsored a grand opening event January 27 for its new Prevention Information Resource Center (PIRC). The event, hosted at the Estate Richmond office, was attended by members of the prevention community, parents and a local politician.

Attendees were treated to a tour of the facility, a multimedia presentation, hors d'oeuvres, door prizes and handouts on how to access PIRC offerings.

Those present specifically learned that PIRC provides the following:

- ATOD prevention information to parents, youth, prevention professionals and the community at large
- A central location for prevention professionals to meet
- Prevention-based videos and relevant curricula
- Internet access for research purposes
- A clearinghouse for island-wide accrued research data
- Training on evidence-based programs
- Experienced speakers on ATOD prevention and treatment
- Referrals to Village Prevention programs

The opening of PIRC is a big step for The Village and the community at large because there is currently no on-island location for obtaining many of the materials provided through this center. It fills a much-needed hole in the prevention community, and many attendees have already either ordered information for use in their various programs or scheduled a time to come in to learn more. The PIRC center program coordinator, Xawntoia Franklin, hopes to expand and be able to create more flexible scheduling to those in need of its services.

## U.S. Virgin Islands



## Did You Know? . . . Wearing of the Green on St. Patrick's Day



St. Patrick's Blue, not green, was the colour long-associated with St. Patrick. Green, the colour most widely associated with Ireland, with Irish people, and with St. Patrick's Day in modern times, may have gained its prominence through the phrase "the wearing of the green" meaning to wear a shamrock on one's clothing. At many times in Irish history, to do so was seen as a sign of Irish nationalism or loyalty to the Roman Catholic faith. St. Patrick used the shamrock, a three-leaved plant, to explain the Holy Trinity to the pre-Christian Irish. The wearing of and display of shamrocks and shamrock-inspired designs have become a ubiquitous feature of the saint's holiday. The change to Ireland's association with green rather than blue probably began around the 1750s.



**Happy St. Patrick's Day! March 17th**