



MAY 2015

THE WESTCARE EXPRESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Serving Our Most Isolated Veterans

Courtesy of Department of Veterans Affairs - State of Washington
By Donald Lachman



The Pacific Northwest remains a hub for training, deployments and separations from the military as our nation continues to fight terrorism. Since our first deployment in 2004, Veterans returning from war or separating from the military have faced a myriad of challenges often complicated by physical as well as emotional injuries. For some of our Veterans this has contributed to serious legal issues eventually resulting in their dubious distinction as our nation's "most isolated Veterans," now sentenced to incarceration in a state prison. Up to 85% of these Veterans have a discharge status that may entitle them to benefits and services. Additionally, an increasing number are disabled combat Veterans with families.

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COVER STORY: *Serving Our Most Isolated Veterans (Cont.)*



Since 1996, the **Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs** has managed successful reentry programs and Veterans courts in multiple WA counties. Now, a partnership with **WestCare Foundation** and **Department of Corrections (DOC)** is applying these same principles to our state's first Vets Pod Unit at Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC)

Serving over 100 Veterans, the Unit is continually evolving as a service model. Responding to input from the inmates,

staff from WestCare, AmeriCorps Program, WDVA Behavioral Health and VA Vet Center combined resources to offer increased on-site support groups for PTSD and reentry planning. Additionally, a monthly clinic was organized to provide individual attention on reentry activities, benefits and civil legal issues.

Most gratifying of all in this innovative initiative is the commitment demonstrated by our participating Veterans. Working with DOC staff, they operate service groups to reflect the values of the Vet Pod. This includes a formal Color Guard, Community Service Group, Orientation Team, Meditation Group as well as knitting and wood carving clubs. Last month, warm blankets knitted members of the club were delivered to formerly homeless Veterans entering a housing program in rural northwest WA .

Since its inception, the Vet Pod members have worked diligently to establish a culture of respect at the prison. One of their most visible daily activities is the formal Color Guard and flag memorial honoring the various branches of the service.

This is truly collaboration, cooperation and client participation at its finest!

MAY 25 Memorial Day is May 25th!



ILLINOIS: *WestCare Sheridan Welcomes Visitors*

By Melissa Lee, Clinical Supervisor

WestCare Sheridan was fortunate to have leaders from two other WestCare programs visit us recently. **Maruwa Ferrell**, program director for *The Day Reporting Center* of Cook County Jail/ Department of Corrections, spent a week interacting with clients and staff. Many of our clients already knew him from the Chicago location and welcomed him in their groups right away.



Jerod Thomas

Jerod Thomas, deputy administrator of WestCare Kentucky programs, recently completed his second visit at Sheridan, following a graduation appearance. This visit allowed him to speak in our housing units and tell his story to much smaller groups of about 25. While listening to Jerod speak about his life growing up and the struggles he had endured, it was hard to keep a dry eye. He kept us at the edge of our seats, and his southern accent captured everyone's attention. As we listened, we all waited in anticipation for some ray of hope, but his story was a downward spiral until someone believed in him and gave him that hope and the opportunity to change his course in life. Some of the clients' reactions were, "*You gave me hope that I never thought I would have,*" and "*I never thought that I can do this, and now I know I can.*" Some clients even asked if they could parole to Kentucky!

Both Maruwa and Jerod spoke to us on a personal level, gave us suggestions, and thanked us for our continued services. They not only inspired our clients, but they inspired staff to be the best that we can, to set goals, and to take it one day at a time. Thank you for uplifting our spirits.

WYOMING: *Restoring Hope in Wyoming*

Mr. **Julio Ramirez** of Grand Island, Nebraska recently visited the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution in Torrington to help encourage and restore hope in the ITU inmates. It is important for inmates to know that there are wonderful options for their futures if they choose to move in a different direction than they have chosen in the past.

Mr. Ramirez's music was uplifting and appropriate in nature. He has been clean and sober since 2000. Prior to that time, his life was an ongoing battle with cocaine and meth, which led to frequent interaction with the criminal justice system. Good job, Sir!



Julio Ramirez

WYOMING: *Our Employees Share Their Best Practices*

By Janet Jares, Recovery Supports Specialist with Behavioral Health Division / Wyoming Department of Health



Bill Porter and **Frederick Marquez**, Peer Specialists working for WestCare Wyoming, presented as part of a panel at the 2015 Wyoming Drug Court Conference in Cheyenne. Peer Specialists utilize their own experience with recovery and specialized training to promote hope and recovery. Mr. Porter shared his own powerful story and how his work is promoting hope among the women at the Wyoming Women's center. Mr. Marquez shared a piece written by a man who was formerly at the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution, describing the journey to recovery and the role of a peer specialist. Mr. Marquez and Mr. Porter are both to be commended for their professionalism, team approach, courtesy, and the pitch-perfect presentations.

IOWA: State, Military Leaders Visit FAVA



FAVA Staff with Senator Ernst



WestCare's military support program in Iowa, **Family Alliance for Veterans of America**, hosted some top-level visitors at its Forest City headquarters. Iowa U.S. Senator **Joni Ernst** and Col. **Robert King** (Pictured with Honor) sat down with our staff and asked great questions about the veterans we serve and what can be done to serve them better in the state of Iowa.

FAVA continues to draw attention as a premier veterans' services program.

EXPRESSIONS: *Team Dynamics*

By Michael Shields, Vice President of Human Resources

I don't know about the rest of you, but I am excited that it is baseball season once again! The "*Boys of Summer*" are at it, and all is well with the world. As I write this, my hometown Detroit Tigers are doing great, so I am even more excited!!



EXPRESSIONS: *Team Dynamics (Cont.)*

In my nearly 40 years in the wonderful world of Human Resources, I have used a lot of sports analogies when talking with people about working together as a team. My experience playing hockey gives me no HR-acceptable, or politically correct analogies, other than maybe “*taking one for the team*”, but baseball experience was much more “family oriented”.

We all, especially those of you who are directly involved in client care, have ridiculously hard, stressful jobs. You somehow manage to do it every day. With that, there may be 2, 3, 5, 10 other staff doing the same things, in the same building, in the same program every day.

People being people, not everyone sees eye to eye every moment of every day. It happens.

While I do like to quote my wife, who has been a nurse forever, when she says “*I go in, do my job, take care of my Patients, come home and do my life*”, I prefer my little baseball analogy when it comes to the day-to-day interaction of employees: “*The shortstop and the second baseman don't have to love each other; they just have to turn the occasional double play.*”

While a bond generally builds between people who are side by side every day in a hospital, in a residential program; in a correctional facility, working with kids or adults...or, on a baseball diamond, there is no requirement to be “*Best Friends Forever*”! Professional client care staff, professional athletes and workers everywhere just need to work together as a team, support one another on the job site or on the diamond / field / court / rink, and get the job done in a professional manner.

Players screaming at each other during a game (unless you were Billy Martin and Reggie Jackson) rarely works. It doesn't work in a “*normal*” work setting either. It is completely unacceptable and counter-productive whether employee to employee; supervisor to staff, or staff to client.

By the same token, athletes often congratulate each other when someone makes a good play. They encourage each other. They pull each other up. That works extremely well for us “*regular folks*” as well. Pat each other on the back. Say thank you. Appreciate the little things people do to make the day more pleasant. Project completion; Contributions to something you do; Employee recognition; Festive decorating for holidays; All of those things are done by someone

EXPRESSIONS: *Team Dynamics (Cont.)*

to help someone else, or to make our workplace a great place to be for 8, 10, 12 hours every day.

We spend more time with co-workers on the job than we do with our families. Just like with our families, the negative comments / actions -especially in front of others- are harmful and counterproductive. The little words of encouragement go a long way. Let's all pull together to make this a stronger and stronger **Team!**



And good luck to your favorite baseball team! (As long as they don't whup on Detroit!!!)

QUESTION CORNER: *May 2015*

“Looking back on high school, what class do you wish you would have taken and why?”



“Public Speaking! To this day I get hives if I have to present in front of anyone I haven't known for at least 5 years!!”

QUESTION CORNER: *June Question*

For June: **“What’s the best trait you got from your mother, and how has it helped shape your life?”**

Please send response and photo of you and your mom by **May 15th** to john.wallace@westcare.com.

Reminder: *Sunday, May 10th is Mother’s Day.*

GEORGIA: *WestCare Boggs Mime Group*

By Eddie Birt, Program Manager

It all began when **Barbara Burton** took an interest in uplifting others through dance. She started out with just the young men at her church. They caught on fast and Sister Burton wanted to teach more young men to worship through dance. She asked if those at WestCare Boggs would be interested. My first thought was that these guys are too hardened and tough to try something like this.

But there were four young men who showed interest, and their first performance was at the Black History Program at Brown Grove Baptist Church in Keyville, Georgia.

Now, the mime dance team is a huge success and a meaningful addition to the programming at Boggs. The team continues to grow with seven active members and more waiting to join and perform. We are using dance to worship. Please continue to support us as we use dance to *“Uplift the Human Spirit”*.



CALIFORNIA: *Local Youth Help at MLK Campus*

(Stories submitted by Michael Mygind, unless otherwise noted)

As part of the third and final day of their *iHeart Spring Break* service projects at our various sites, young volunteers with the Every Neighborhood Partnership and the Well Community Church helped clean up the MLK site's loading area and flower beds. They also assembled a mat in one of our courtyards.



We would like to thank these dedicated young members of our community and applaud them for completing over 90 hours of combined work!

CALIFORNIA: *Whippin' for WestCare*

A new partnership has developed with a fun entertainment sports team, **No Town Roller Derby**. MLK men's clients helped set up for a recent match, and cleaned the skates and bearings for our hometown team. Our San Joaquin Valley Veterans will be among the WestCare programs benefitting from the mutual support.

Go **No Town** ladies!!!



CALIFORNIA: *First Nations Pow Wow*

Central California is home to a number of American Indian tribes, and WestCare has developed programs to serve that population. Each year, we take part in the First Nations Pow Wow. This year, at Fresno State, was the 24th annual event. It is always open to individuals and families, and includes arts/crafts, information booths, Native American dances, great food and fun. WestCare's **Gabriela McNiell** was among the many employees who enjoyed the afternoon.



Young participants in the First Nations Pow Wow



Gaby enjoying the festivities

FOUNDATION: *"What Do You Do at Work, Grandpa?"*

Many businesses, including WestCare sites, observed **National Bring Your Kids to Work Day**. The Foundation had lots of fun with kids running about. Here are a few pictures of young **Michael Hilton**, with his mom **Jennifer**, who is Director of Training and Technology Transfer, and watching his grandfather **Mike Lavin**, Senior Vice President-Operations.



THE GREEN CORNER: *Volume Seven*

Earth Day...by the Book

Local schools were invited to participate in the “*Waste Management Books for Buddies*” book drive in honor of **Earth Day**. Instead of adding to burgeoning landfills, students from each of the participating schools collected a total of 5,277 books over the course of the campaign, which were then donated to WestCare California’s Martin Luther King residential treatment facility and the Poverello House. The winning school, Malaga Elementary, collected 2,163 books and made a generous donation of 2,500 books to the women and children of WestCare!



NEVADA: *Focusing on the Military Child*

By Jennifer L. Hilton, WestCare Foundation

Programs in several WestCare states observed *Month of the Military Child* in April, including Iowa and Nevada.

According to the Military Child Education Coalition, military and veteran-connected kids number over four million, and 75% of them are school-age. More than 80% attend public schools in every school district in America. They move six to nine times during their K-12 years. 40 percent of military kids will continue their family's legacy of service and decide to enlist in the armed forces someday.

In support of these amazing individuals, WestCare Foundation and WestCare Nevada took part in **KEEP CALM and PURPLE UP! for MILITARYKIDS** on April 17th.

We encourage everyone to make a difference in the life of a military child by seeking out opportunities to acknowledge their sacrifice, volunteering for organizations that support them, and recognizing their contribution to the nation.

Here is a link to some amazing stories from Military Children:

<http://www.militarychild.org/news-and-events/april-is-month-of-the-military-child>



FAVA Staff in Iowa proudly supports Military Children



Foundation Staff showing their purple colors

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



Maureen Kempa
Guidance/Care Center, FL

Maureen Kempa, Regional Director of Clinical Operations for GCC was honored at the Department of Juvenile Justice 12th Annual Youth Success Luncheon. Superintendent **Vinnie Vurro** of the Monroe Regional Juvenile Detention Center presented GCC with an award for its unique partnership to provide mental health counseling and psychiatric services to detained youth. Maureen has been the Designated Mental Health Authority for this facility for over 9 years. She received a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a snorkeling trip for 2!

WestCare Wisconsin's outreach efforts continue to help improve the once downtrodden Harambee North neighborhood in Milwaukee. Excellent work by our staff to facilitate a community Easter egg hunt that had been threatened with cancellation.



WestCare Wisconsin Staff
Milwaukee, WI



Claybaker DUSTOFF Foundation
St. Petersburg, FL

The **Claybaker DUSTOFF Foundation** has donated ten CDF Survival Packs to WestCare's Mustard Seed Inn in St. Petersburg to help homeless veterans as well as transitioning vets. **Support the Troops** (<http://ourtroopsonline.com>) has graciously partnered with CDF to donate much of the contents. The CDF backpack and any items purchased in addition to those donated by Support the Troops are currently averaging a cost of \$20.00 per backpack.

KUDOS! *Our Monthly Shout-Outs to Exceptional People (Cont.)*



Mollie Duncan
Wyoming

At WestCare Wyoming, her co-workers just can't stop heaping praise on Business Manager / Mother / Superwoman / "Office Therapist" **Mollie Duncan** and how thankful they are for everything she does for all of her "kiddos."

You have one of those superstars in your area you'd like to nominate? Let us know.

Staff at WestCare California's administration building in urban Fresno got a surprise visitor, a hen they named **Sally**, and delegated her for the job of Gate Security for the day. Thank you Sally for your service. (Hey, we're easily impressed)



Sally the Hen
Fresno, CA

How precious is THIS?!

Three year old **Sanvi** with her new baby brother, five week old **Jovan Krishan**, the newest addition to the family of California Data Systems Director **Jitin Brar** and his wife **Mandeep**.

In 3, 2, 1.....awwwwww!



The Brar Family
Fresno, CA

WISCONSIN: Harambee Youth Urged to Get Involved

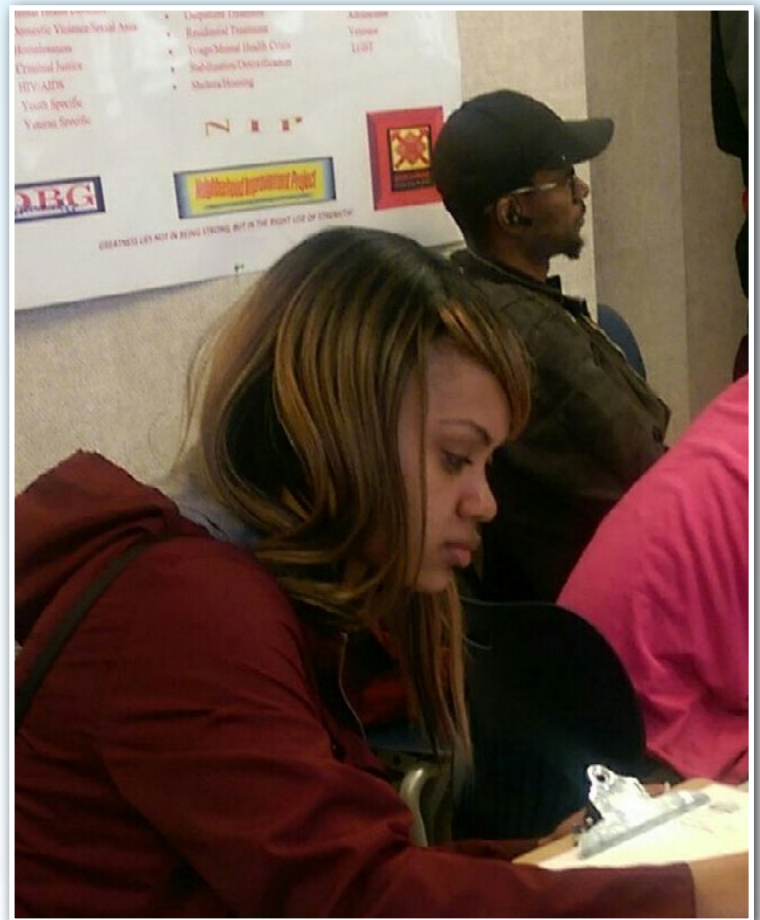
By Auriea Mosley-Sanders, Community Coordinator



Judge Mosley, Auriea, and Mr. Fields

From the very introduction of Judge Mosley, the energy of the youth filled the room. He was very engaging and informative, so much that Government 101 turned to Crime 101, as the more he spoke to the youth the more involved they became. The Judge stole the show, but Mr. Fields also had quality time interacting with the young ladies and gentlemen.

On April 18th, the WestCare Wisconsin Harambee Community Involvement Center invited two special guests to speak to the youth of the *Face Forward* program, former State Representative **Jason Fields** and Judge **Derek C. Mosley**.



Face Forward participants

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: *The IT Corner*

By Sean Harrigan, Director of Systems Administration

New Positions and Promotions in IT

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Tiffany Johnson has moved over and up into the Software Development team to replace **Katina McKenzie** in the Business Analyst/Quality Assurance position. Tiffany has been with us for almost four years working on the help desk, and we all think she'll do a fantastic job in her new position. Of course, this means you'll no longer be talking to Tiffany for IT support on the helpdesk.

Formalizing her excellent leadership of the software development team throughout the years, **Diane Ludens** is now WestCare's Director of Software Development. Diane has been with WestCare for 11 years, and we look forward to her continued leadership of the software team for many years to come.



*Tiffany Johnson (Business Analyst / QA),
Diane Ludens (Director of Software Development),
Jason Rider (Programmer), and Danny Kovene (Programmer)*



*Josh Brahms (Helpdesk Tech), Rolando Castellano (Systems Admin),
Ian Johnson (IT Tech), Josh King (Helpdesk Tech),
Sean Harrigan (Director of Systems Administration).
Not Pictured: Leo Martinez (FL IT) & Philip Valles (CA IT)*

ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT TEAM

One Josh just wasn't enough for us, so **Joshua King** will be replacing Tiffany on the helpdesk. Josh brings a wealth of technical knowledge and an unending aptitude and curiosity for all things technical. We're sure Josh is going to serve us all very well in his new position.

Replacing **Matthew Sullenberger** at the head of IT administration and support is me, **Sean Harrigan**,



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: *The IT Corner (Cont.)*

in the position of Director of Systems Administration. I've been with WestCare for almost 4 years, but I bring with me 20 years of experience working in IT. I'm proud of the team that Matthew and I began building together and I look forward to many more years contributing to the success of WestCare Foundation.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

We're currently in the final stages of hiring my replacement in the position of Senior Systems Administrator. This person will provide high level technical guidance and mentorship for our support and administration teams, as well as help to administer software and hardware solutions throughout our network.

We'll also be adding a 'Head of IT' to our growing team. You may have seen the requisition already. This person will provide overall leadership and big picture guidance for our department, and for WestCare as a whole. We're looking forward to meeting this person, and to working with them to improve our service levels and to solidify our wider objectives.



DID YOU KNOW? *May is Mental Health Month!*



Millions of Americans face the reality of living with a mental health condition. In fact, about 1 in 4 U.S. adults suffer diagnosable mental health disorder in a given year.

For the month of May, organizations around the country aim to bring awareness to mental illness. Help promote awareness and fight the stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for equal care!



WESTCARE CALENDAR OF EVENTS: *May 2015*

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Monthly May Observances

- Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- Employee Health & Fitness Month
- Family Wellness Month
- Go Fetch! Food Drive for Homeless Animals Month
- Hepatitis Awareness Month
- International Civility Awareness Month
- Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection & Prevention Month
- Mental Health Month
- National Hamburger Month
- National Military Appreciation Month
- National Salsa Month (the food)

May 5-7

CA - Native American White Bison Training (3 Day Training)
Fresno, CA

May 12 (3pm-4:30pm PT / 6pm-7:30pm ET)
FLGC - CAC Meeting

May 13-15

Sr. Management Training
@ WestCare FL, Miami Office

May 15 (1:30pm-2:30pm PT)
CA - CAC Meeting
@ Fresno Administrative Office

May 16 (8am-12pm PT / 11am-3pm ET)
Foundation Board of Directors Meeting
@ Henderson FND Office - NV Conference Room

May 19 (8am-9am PT / 11am-12pm ET)
Executive Committee Teleconference

May 21 (6pm-7:30pm PT)
CA Spring Graduation
@ Tower Theater / 815 E. Olive Ave., Fresno, CA

May 22 (11am-12pm PT / 12pm-1pm MT)
WY - TAC Meeting
@ Panhandle Mental Health Center

May 25 - HOLIDAY - Memorial Day

May 27 (4pm-5pm PT/AZT)
AZ - CAC Meeting
@ Bullhead City, AZ