



WESTCARE EXPRESS

SEPTEMBER 2016

THE WESTCARE EXPRESS NEWSLETTER

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SEPTEMBER: *Suicide Prevention Awareness Month*

Two Ladies: Can We Talk?

By Susan Decker, MPA - Electronic Communications Coordinator

"We need to create an environment where it's safe to talk about suicide," says **Heather Shoop**, WestCare Foundation's Director of Accreditation. *"It's about us all taking care of each other, co-workers, friends, and family as well as clients."* To get the conversation going, Heather and **Krystal Ellison**, a Behavioral Health Technician at the Women and Children's Campus in Las Vegas, chose to share their personal stories. Krystal says that once she opened up about her struggles and successes, *"I found support in places that I never knew I had!"*



Krystal and son Matthew

Krystal knows first-hand what it's like to deal with loss and trauma. Now, she seeks to help people become aware of their past experiences, emotions, and

FEATURE STORY: *Two Ladies: Can We Talk? (Con't.)*

pain. Loss and trauma are two common risk factors for suicidal thoughts and actions, and Krystal has experienced both throughout her lifetime, including being bullied in school, the deaths of her mother and grandmother, and a miscarriage. Additionally, as a teenager, she was also discovering her sexuality and doing her best to cope with undiagnosed mental health issues. The burden of dealing with all of these painful experiences led to self-harm and attempting suicide.

People in Krystal's life blamed her for how her behavior was affecting them, rather than offering help, which caused further pain and isolation. As a young adult, Krystal joined the military where her mental health issues were identified. This led to proper help and medication, and later, relief from her anxiety attacks and depression.

"Things got better, and I discovered it's okay to be happy even though it feels weird!" Krystal exclaims. She's been happy and enjoying her son, work, and life for the last four years. She wants people to know that things can and do get better.

Heather's personal experience with suicide goes back many years. As an adolescent, she experienced thoughts of suicide. As a young adult, she intervened when a family member attempted suicide. While her relative recovered from the attempt, Heather found herself dealing with unanswered questions, trauma, and anger. She



subsequently experienced the loss of a friend, a coworker and two former clients, all to suicide. After healing from the grief and trauma, these experiences sparked Heather's passion for suicide prevention.

Today she serves as Chair of the Nevada Coalition for Suicide Prevention and on the State of Nevada Committee to Review Suicide Fatalities. She also provides ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and SafeTALK training. Heather says suicide and mental health issues often go hand in hand. Too often people who are suicidal don't see that life can get better. She's doing all she can to dispel stigma and educate WestCare staff and the general public about how to be alert to suicide warning signs and connect people to help.

While it's critical to help those with suicidal thoughts, Heather and Krystal stress it's also important to help those who have been affected by suicide. For every suicide death, there is an average of 25 loss survivors, and loss survivors have an elevated risk of suicidality themselves. Heather recommends all WestCare staff attend SafeTALK training at least every three years. Training helps reduce the stigma associated with suicide, initiates conversations, and prepares us to help each other in times of need. Suicide prevention awareness can't be placed on the back burner. It's a matter of life and death, so it needs to stay present every day, say these two incredible women. ***Let's do it!***

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS: *Warning Signs and Resources*

According to research, 5% of the population has thoughts of suicide in any given two week period.

Suicide is preventable. Help is available.

The more we have open conversations about suicide and the reasons someone may have for wanting to die, the more opportunities we have to link someone with life-saving resources.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline lists the following as common warning signs that someone may be thinking about suicide:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online or buying a gun.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

If you are worried about someone or struggling yourself, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **800-273-TALK (8255)**.

Other crisis resources:

- Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-TALK (8255), press 1
- Veterans Crisis Textline: Text to 838255
- The Trevor Lifeline: 866-488-7386 (for LGBTQ young people up to age 24)
- Trevor Text: Text "TREVOR" to 1-202-304-1200

For information or to get involved:

- American Association of Suicidology
www.suicidology.org
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
www.afsp.org
- Suicide Prevention Resources Center
www.sprc.org
- National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
www.actionallianceforsuicideprevention.org



September is National Suicide Prevention Month. What will you do this month and throughout the year to get involved in preventing suicide in your community?



FLORIDA: *Focusing on the Early Years*

By Anslie Stark, PsyD - Clinical Director

The Village South, a center providing family treatment services in Miami, FL, has created a Children's Services Center to specifically meet the developmental needs of children, ages 0-5. All aspects of the program, including therapeutic daycare, case management, medical and dental assistance, assessment and therapy, have been designed to meet the specific needs of children.



Special Populations

The Children's Services Center serves all children living on the residential campus no matter their developmental level at the time of admission. The program serves a high proportion of African American (39%) and Hispanic (39%) children as well as newborn infants (25%), many of whom are involved at some time in the child welfare system. Attachment, safety and building resiliency are the main focuses of the program.



Shajuana Williams, Childcare Director

Impact / Results

100% of the children served leave with a medical and dental home. 100% of children have received the necessary developmental framework and leave the program with referrals and linkages to continue their developmental progress. According to the [*Child Behavior Check List*](#) (CBCL), pre- and post-test results show that 89% of the children between ages 1 and 5 leave the program with improved resiliency levels.

(Note: For a complete summary of this program, including replication tips, policies and strategies, please contact Dr. Stark at WestCare's Village South Children's Services Center)

FLORIDA: *Nuestra Familia es tu Familia*

Submitted by Heather Baker, MS, CLC, CPST - The Village/Westcare, Healthy Start Program Director

The family arrived from Venezuela on a medical visa for their six month old baby, who had a severe seizure disorder. He had brain surgery and was expected to remain in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for several months. Due to language barriers, his mother did not understand the baby's condition and care. Healthy Start communicated with NICU nurses, doctors, and social workers to ensure that she was provided with all necessary medical information and instructions in a language she could comprehend.



Due to the baby's rapid progress, he was discharged from the hospital two months earlier than projected. Mother and baby had arrived with extremely limited resources

and had no stable housing or source of food for the baby other than the hospital, and did not have a crib, car seat, or access to formula. Healthy Start provided an age appropriate car seat and playpen and linked the family with WIC for formula.



Healthy Start also worked with the mother on the best use of her limited resources to secure short term housing until more stable housing arrangements were made.

At this time, the family has an apartment which is secured for one year, formula through WIC, and a scheduled appointment with Early Steps. Mother has also developed a broader network of social support, including friends who are assisting her with food and additional baby items.

It's a beautiful thing to see it all come together.

NEVADA: *WestCare... In the News*

(Editor's note: The southern Nevada publication, *VEGASINC*, recently carried a wonderful story about our successful *Vivo* outreach program. For a link to the full article beyond these permitted excerpts, please visit the link below.)

<http://vegasinc.com/news/2016/jul/31/finding-an-exit-from-a-life-on-the-streets>



It's early June, and the suffocating mid-summer heat hasn't yet consumed the valley like an angry, perpetually plugged-in blow dryer. It's warm, but bearable. At least, for those who can gain reprieve from the moderately high temperatures.

But for people who live on the streets of Las Vegas, summer can be deadly. WestCare Nevada employee **Rick Denton** has seen what the heat can do to those living in

the tunnels, on sidewalks or camping in empty lots. *"It's definitely a concern, and it's something we try to address when we do our outreach,"* he said.

Denton leads the WestCare *Vivo* team, a group designed to help homeless veterans get into permanent housing. According to Denton, the team's outreach targets chronically homeless veterans who have been dismissed from military service with other than an honorable discharge. Most of



NEVADA: *WestCare... In the News (Con't.)*

these men and women are struggling with both substance abuse and mental health problems.



According to Denton, many homeless people are wary of outsiders, and don't often give accurate information in the search for one of their own. *"They have it rough and they've learned how to cope and adapt on the streets,"* he said. *"Part of that is trusting nobody."*



The man they're looking for is nowhere to be found, but the team does come across a young couple, both under 21

years old, both addicted to meth and heroin, who have lived in the tunnels for four years. Denton and team member **Leslieann Farrell** convince the couple to join the team just outside the tunnel, the afternoon sun beating down on them as the young woman prances, rubbing her arms incessantly. The young man listens to the options that are available to them. He seems more agreeable to the idea than the woman, who is friendly but easily agitated by any mention of sobriety.



The team returns to the van, still in good spirits. Team member **Luther Kendrick** reveals that the couple has agreed to come to a WestCare facility later that day and explore the options for potential housing. But he's not convinced that the woman is ready to get clean.

"The guy might be ready, but I don't think he will come without her, and she is not ready to give up her addiction," he said. *"We can hope, but we also know what being done looks like. This isn't it. There's a lot more to do today, lots more outreach and visits to make. Overall this hasn't been a bad morning. I think we will call these visits a win."*

CALIFORNIA: *Conference at the Capitol*



Staff from Administration, Marketing, San Joaquin Valley Veterans, Housing Services, HERO Team and MAP Point attended the 2016 National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Conference in our nation's Capitol. There they learned the progress that we have seen nationwide with ending chronic and Veteran homelessness and what more can be done on the part of community-based providers and collaborative partnerships.

Our Director of Marketing, **Gabriela McNiell**, took our marketing efforts on the road to meet with congressional representatives on Capitol Hill and discuss the many services that we provide. Amazing work, team!





LGBT COUNCIL: *Be Part of the Conversation*

Be part *of the* Conversation

Help shape WestCare's first national LGBT Council

Sign up today

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LGBTCouncil>



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LGBTCouncil>

This Month's Question: *"What item in your possession could you absolutely not do without?"*



Erin and her husband Cleadus

"My insulin pump. That is my lifeline, and I would absolutely be devastated if I had to do without it. Of course, I would still be able to take insulin injections. However, having the pump makes me feel somewhat 'normal' to not have to worry about having enough syringes and insulin with me at all times. I'm thankful every day that I have this awesome piece of technology on me, and I'm extremely grateful to have a job and insurance so that I can have this pump to better control my diabetes and live a long healthy life."

Erin Shelton, *Administrative Assistant, LTOP*
Central California Women's Facility

For October: *"Cat? Dog? Other pet? Who's your favorite?"* Send us a picture of the **two** of you by Tuesday, **September 20th** to john.wallace@westcare.com.



PACIFIC ISLANDS: *Veterans Health Conference*

A select group of military veterans over the age of 80 were among those honored at WestCare's annual Veterans Health Conference. The third annual event was a great success, and organizers had a chance to give credit to a hardy breed of patriots.

Distinguished veterans are Guam's "*Manamkos*" (elderly individuals) who have maintained a positive and healthy lifestyle and who continue to play an active role in mentoring and guiding the younger generations of Guam. We thank them for their long and remarkable service to our nation, and to our communities.



NORTH CAROLINA: *Caregivers Take Care*

Submitted by Deborah Harrison-McKevie

It is a well-known fact that it is difficult to give care to someone else, if the caregivers aren't taking care of themselves. With a young energetic clientele, maintaining good health is a must for the staff at the WestCare North Carolina *Girls Program*.

Exercising to maintain a healthy weight, nutritional meals with healthy snacks, drinking at least 8 eight-ounce glasses of water daily, and having blood pressure checked regularly is only the beginning of "*Staff Health Check Day*" on the campus.



WestCare NC Nurse, Deborah Harrison-McKevie, checks the blood pressure of Program Manager, LaTonia Glover while Nancy Snyder, Melissia White and Wanda Coleman wait their turn.

EASTERN OFFSHORE: *The Caribbean Connection*

By Kendall Tutein – Regional Vice President, U.S. Virgin Islands

The Village - U.S. Virgin Islands was so happy to welcome volunteers from the *GUARA BI* programs in Puerto Rico for two weeks of partnership. Senior Vice President **Cristian Duarte** extended a helping hand after his visit earlier in the year.



After reviewing the needs of the facility, Cristian selected the volunteers with the necessary experience, and upon arrival they all focused on getting the job done. Everyone broke out into work crews and provided support to our Maintenance Supervisor, **Jose Rivera**, with landscaping, electrical work and painting.



The volunteers worked tirelessly each day, only stopping for lunch to ensure that all the work was completed in the 2 weeks they were here. All of the staff at Village Virgin Islands was very happy to see *Sion Hill* come to life, with the buildings being pressure washed and painted, and the grounds looking neater, and the installation of the new signs, one at the facility entrance and the Administration Building.

Thank you, Cristian and the BI volunteers!

GEORGIA: Collaborating with the Court

By *Miltina Fraser* - Outreach Coordinator

The Youth Department I.C.E. (*Individuals Choosing Empowerment*) program was included in a special segment for Channel 2 Action News in Atlanta (ABC) that highlighted the DeKalb Juvenile Court Rebound Program.

Run by Chief **Judge Haynes**, it is noted as the best diversion juvenile drug court program in the State of Georgia. WestCare's youth department has been in partnership with DeKalb Juvenile Court for the past seven years. The team was included in the segment conducting a "What Do I know about HIV" group, along with being part of the weekly court meeting discussing matters regarding the Rebound participants, from behavior at school, to home and the community.

It was a very exciting and humbling experience to be in collaboration with a program that provides the top care for our young people.



Miltina Fraser and Sainabou Njie

Uplifting Thoughts

"If you feel you must harbor ill will, do so in a short-term marina."

- **John Wallace**, Foundation

Do you have an original, one-sentence contribution? Please send to john.wallace@westcare.com by September 20th.

INDUSTRY NEWS: *Any Questions?*

By Marcia Taylor - President / CEO of Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

With the changing drug landscape, today's kids ask their parents very specific – and challenging – questions. To mark our 30th anniversary year, this week we're launching "Fried Egg 2016," a new campaign which is a nod to our iconic TV spot from the 1980s and is re-envisioned to reflect parenting today.

The TV PSA focuses on the litany of drug questions that parents face from their teens, and how the Partnership is here with answers, guidance and solutions.

We are exceptionally fortunate that our new "Fried Egg 2016" TV PSA features a voiceover from Emmy-Award winning actress **Allison Janney**, who not only portrays a mother in recovery on the CBS sitcom, "Mom," but whose own brother struggled with substance use for many years before he ultimately lost his battle with addiction and depression.

While we remain focused on driving awareness through our PSAs, we also recognize that families need direct service. That's why for more than 15 years we've offered comprehensive resources online for parents at drugfree.org and since 2010, a Toll-Free Helpline (855-DRUGFREE) for families to call for support.

As we enter our fourth decade, we continue to be a place where families can find the information they need and get support for a child struggling with substance use.

KIDS HAVE QUESTIONS. PARENTS NEED ANSWERS. FIND THEM AT DRUGFREE.ORG

Partnership
for Drug-Free Kids
Where families find answers

The Partnership is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization. © Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

We are not just helping parents address difficult questions; we are helping families find answers.

Visit www.drugfree.org or
call the Toll-Free Support Helpline

(855) DRUGFREE

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



The **Bullhead City Elks** lodge donated \$2,500 to the WestCare Arizona homeless Veteran's Service Center for refurbishing and furnishings. The shelter will house up to 20 veterans and is due to open in mid-2017.

Congratulations to Wisconsin Regional Vice President **Elizabeth Coggs** who received a high community honor. She was selected as one of *40 Beacons of Light* by the Milwaukee Community Journal for her work in guiding successful WestCare programs in that city. She was honored at the recent 40th annual event.



Take a look at this handsome and beautiful couple! Wisconsin Case Manager **Nathan and Jenean Shorter**, "*jumped the broom*" this summer. Our love and best wishes for a long and loving marriage.



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



Congratulations to the *newest graduates* of the 15-week *Nurturing Parenting* class held at the Fresno, California residential facility! This class aims to not only improve parenting skills for mothers who are currently helping themselves in residential treatment, but also strengthen the bond between them and their children. Great job, moms!



September is National Recovery Month

<p>JOIN THE VOICES FOR RECOVERY: OUR FAMILIES, OUR STORIES, OUR RECOVERY!</p>		<p>National <i>Recovery Month</i> Prevention Works - Treatment is Effective - People Recover SEPTEMBER 2016</p>
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September is *National Recovery Month* (www.recoverymonth.gov). It is a national observance that educates Americans on the fact that addiction treatment and mental health services can enable those with a mental health and/or substance use disorder to live a healthy and rewarding life. Recovery Month spreads the positive message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover. Let's all participate and get the word out!

ARIZONA: *Safe House: A New Beginning*

Submitted by Michelle Keunen – Colorado River Women's Council



The Colorado River Women's Council – Leadership Class

“It takes a community to raise a child,” I said as I began the arguments of my presentation, to transform the WestCare Safe House backyard as the project of choice, to my classmates. *“The project goal is to focus on creating an environment that is welcoming, loving, safe and happy. We will breathe NEW LIFE into a dark and dreary backyard, giving these children a sense of hope during a very scary and abrupt transition in their lives.”* I wanted to inspire my 16 classmates to choose this project.

The Colorado River Women's Council is a dedicated group of leaders who are committed to the growth of this community in many ways, such as sponsoring and leading the *Leadership* program.

Each year the Leadership class is required to complete a project by the end of the 9-month program. Our class

chose the backyard of WestCare's Safe House over seven other project ideas.



Each student took on a role that was essential to this transformation and so we called ourselves *“the Transformers”*. We were so blessed by the overwhelming support and generosity of the community. Almost everyone we asked for support, either financially or materially, jumped on board!

ILLINOIS: *All Things Recovery: Educating & Providing Options*

By Kathryn Chiplis - Clinical Supervisor

At the Sheridan Correctional Center, WestCare has recently implemented a new mutual self-help curriculum, designed to educate and provide clients with different recovery options.

The curriculum is designed to last 16 weeks and introduces a variety of alternative groups and programs that clients can take advantage of when they discharge from our facility. The first few weeks educate them on what a self-help group is, the importance of self-disclosure, and specifically how it is a “peer-participatory” model where they can help empower each other and learn to control the problem in their own lives (their addiction). They are also educated on different types of mutual self-help groups, their prevalence in society, and their effectiveness.

The rest of the curriculum outlines several different types of recovery programs and how they work so that clients can educate themselves and make choices in their own recovery. They learn about *Narcotics/Alcoholics Anonymous, SMART Recovery, Wellness, Moderation Management, Secular Organizations for Sobriety, and LifeRing.*

Counselor **Nellie Booker** says that she has framed the material around a common question that she asks her group: *“What sacrifices are you willing to make in order to maintain sobriety?”* She says this helps her clients understand the importance of making a meeting and



Staff members Nellie Booker and Kathryn Chiplis

keeping their priorities in order so that they can continue in their recovery.

So far, this new curriculum has already seemed to make clients more receptive and invested in treatment. They like the fact that they can make their own informed decisions about what will help them succeed. Clients who have been through prior treatments also seem involved, by sharing their experiences in different types of meetings or programs. Many still seem to relate the most to the traditional NA/AA materials; however, they like being able to learn, discuss, and choose which type of meeting or program makes the most sense to them. It empowers them to be able to identify their own needs and make their own choices in recovery.

ILLINOIS: *Making a Huge Impact*



Praise and success stories are becoming the norm for the *Impact Incarceration Programs (IIP)* in Illinois. **Jason Hall**, Superintendent of the Dixon Springs IIP, shares that he receives regular letters and phone calls complimenting the program and its staff. He says the work that WestCare staff does and the efforts of **Cheryl Jackson** with the women are *“simply amazing.”* He describes Cheryl as passionate, respected, respectful, and admired by all. Her program participants “are so motivated they would rather go to class than work outside in a park for the day!”

One of Cheryl’s success stories is a woman who recently graduated from the program. This woman credits her success to WestCare and the IIP. Until Cheryl came into her life, she had never opened up to anyone about

her troubled childhood which included substance abuse, selling drugs and many failed attempts at therapy. She says Cheryl was *“the first counselor ever to get her to open up, realize her potential, and take an interest in her childhood, substance use, and life in general.”* Thanks to the program’s combination of physical training, encouragement, and building self-esteem, she now sees what she has done and is capable of doing in the future. This graduate now wants to finish college and work as a therapist to help under-privileged children.

Other success stories are also out in the community. Superintendent Hall says one day a graduate approached him in public to say thank you for the program. She was all smiles as she told him she is now substance-free and working in a doctor’s office. She says this is the result of the IIP and the skilled, caring WestCare staff in particular.

Mr. Hall also compliments the program. He says: *“I believe we have come leaps and bounds in programming at Dixon Springs IIP, and can only assume it will continue to improve. I just want to say thanks for what WestCare does. I look forward to the continued success of DSIIP and the Boot Camps as a whole!”*

With so much support from the prison’s administration and staff, and success stories from clients, it’s obvious Cheryl and all of WestCare’s staff at the IIPs deserve a giant thank you for a job well done to *Uplift the Human Spirit!*

EXPRESSIONS: *Just One Friend Like You*

My name is **Danny R.** I am a resident of WestCare California MLK. I have volunteered for many community events, and most recently I volunteered my time for a no-kill animal rescue center.



I have been assisting at this facility for over a month, and all that I can say is how happy and grateful I am to be given the chance by WestCare and the remarkable people at this rescue center who have given me an opportunity to help and heal, not only these animals, but myself.

You see, I know the feeling of being locked away in a cage. I know the feeling of being lonely, scared, away from my loved ones and many times without hope. 36 years of experience. 36 years of not seeing a sunrise; being without my family and not being able to touch and play with a dog or a cat. The volunteer work at this rescue center was only a dream. Now, I get up early every morning to watch and enjoy that sunrise,

I am in touch with my family every day and I get the gift of petting, playing with and taking care of these dogs and cats.

As a former Marine, I'm familiar with hard work, dedication, determination and the courage to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. I know what it's like to be caged up, to feel unwanted, unloved and hoping that someone would give me a second chance; so it's gratifying to me to help these animals and to be able to give back to society, from which I've taken so much. It is hard living with the knowledge that in one moment in time, my careless behavior affected so many people in a negative and ugly way, and that I could never undo the terrible act I committed.

There is a small staff at the rescue center and all volunteer work is appreciated. I guess you can say it's been a long time since I've been appreciated for kindness, gentleness and willingness to give to others in need. My loneliness heals with every day that I volunteer and I can only pray that the love and compassion that I bring to these animals will heal their pain and loneliness.

JUST ONE FRIEND (by Danny R.)

*If life gives only one true friend
One who is faithful to the end,
Then life has given more than gold
The greatest joy a heart can hold.
If just one friend is sure to share
To understand, believe and care,
Then life is sweet, complete and true,
to have just one friend like you.*

**ADOPT A PET.
THEY BECOME A TRUE FRIEND.**



1st Place: WestCare Nevada Movie Theme Contest - Baywatch (Harris Springs Ranch)



2nd Place: Pirates of the Caribbean (Women & Children's Campus)



3rd Place: Wizard of Oz (Foundation Accounting)

WESTCARE SNAPSHOTS (Con't.)

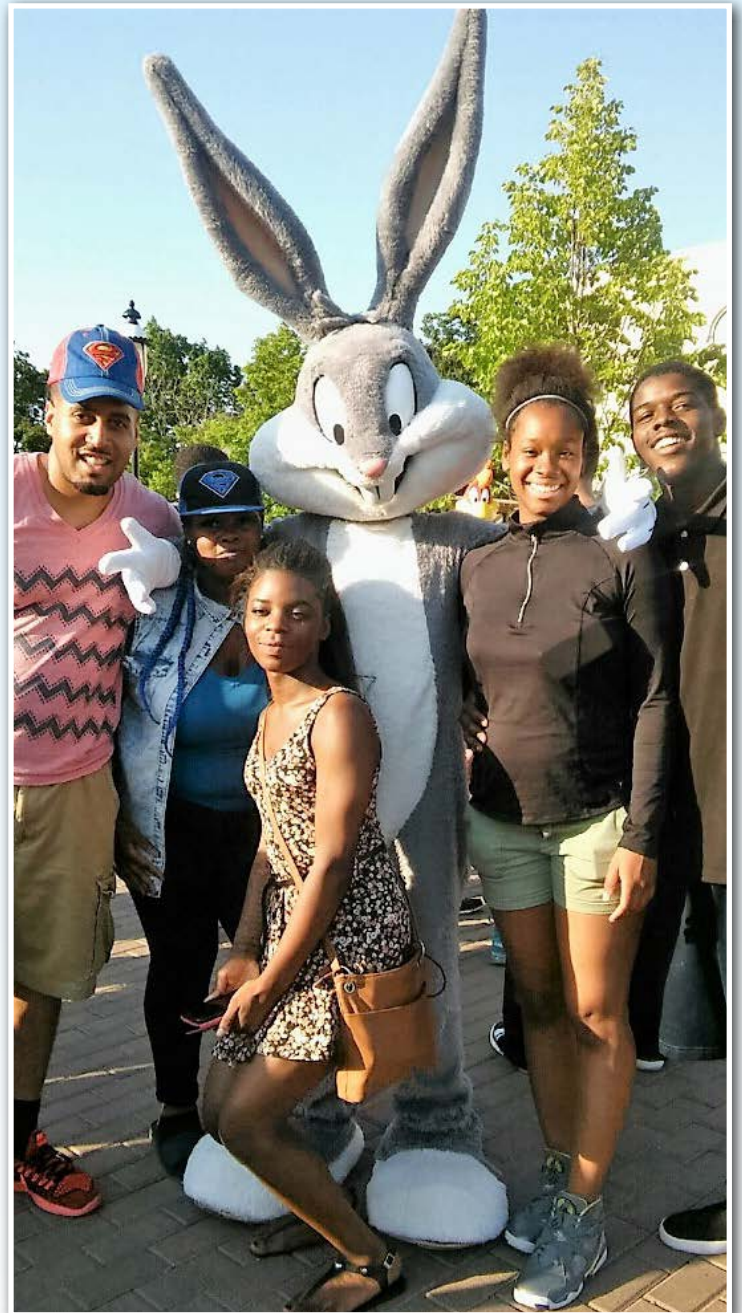


Not a direct tie to our programs. But it could be. And it sure is cute.

Credit: Official U.S. Marine Corps photo by Corporal Charles T. Mabry II

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/mabryusmc/4544045156>

WestCare Wisconsin Youth Action Council leaders enjoy a day at Six Flags in Gurnee Mills, Illinois.



WESTCARE SNAPSHOTS (Con't.)



Pretty much the entire *Family Alliance for Veterans of America (FAVA)* staff is in one place at the same time! Here, at the Iowa State Fair Military Parade. It's an annual tradition that features military bands, floats and many other activities to honor Iowa's veterans.