



THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND NEVADA

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VOLUME 1



WestCare Family,

I want to make myself perfectly clear when introducing you to the November issue of the Loop newsletter. This issue is based solely on giving thanks to some of the individuals whom in one way, shape, or form have willingly made personal sacrifices towards improving the lives of those around them.

Since much of the focus during the month of November is based on our military with tributes such as **Military Family Appreciation Month**, the **United States Marine Corps 246th Birthday**, and **Veterans Day**; I would like to begin by thanking our Veterans of all branches for their sacrifice and bravery exhibited towards keeping our country safe and strong. When it comes to our Veterans, the reality is that we can never thank them and their families enough for their sacrifices and service.

This issue also includes a column regarding **Native American Heritage Month**, another Community Action Council member spotlight, a recap of the NV Housing Conference, the opportunity to meet one of our employees, Ms. Nanette Lukban, LPN, who has served our country and now serves our clients at the Community Triage Center, and you will also be able to read two testimonies of women who have participated in our Women Warriors shelter program at our Women and Children's Campus.

I would also like to align myself with our 4th Annual Thankful Thursday event by giving thanks to those around me and those who have positively influenced my life. First to our Sr. Leadership Team beginning with our President and CEO, Mr. Richard Steinberg. Thank you for providing the guidance and direction towards making WestCare a successful organization and for allowing those of us employed in Nevada the opportunity to grow, flourish, and serve this community. Thank you to our WestCare Nevada employees, interns, volunteers, and stakeholders for making the work that we do for others so rewarding and successful, and for continually Uplifting the Human Spirit.

Finally, I want to give thanks to our clients. We are honored and privileged that you have entrusted us with the opportunity to serve you and guide you in this process of change. Personally, you are my heartbeat, and I can honestly say that because of you and this opportunity to serve you, I consider myself to be an extremely blessed man.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart, and I hope and pray that you have a Happy Thanksgiving.



Leo Magrdichian

Leo Magrdichian, LCSW, LCADC, Vice President



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Program Spotlight: Women Warriors Unit

By Sashia Whitmire, Program Supervisor, WestCare/VA Women Warriors Unit



The **Women Warriors Unit** is located at the WestCare Women and Children's Campus in Las Vegas, NV. The program serves Veteran women and their children for a program stay of up to 90 days. Upon entry, the women are assessed by the case manager and a service plan is created to help achieve successful transition into stable

housing and a continuity of care. Throughout their stay, the women are required to meet weekly with their appointed Veteran liaison and the case manager to build on the service plan, get support, and check off completed goals and tasks.

Supportive services include referrals and resources within the community such as work force development, clothing and haircuts, childcare, linkage to other behavioral health and human services, Veteran peer support, equine therapy, self-help classes, and meetings. Some services are rendered on campus. WestCare also offers chaplain counseling. The case manager is always happy to help with creating budgets, resume building, computer assistance or just lend a friendly ear when needed. In rare cases, some financial assistance has been provided for special needs. Transportation is provided as well whether the clients are offered bus passes or taken in vehicle.

It has been a privilege to watch the women come into the shelter feeling so hopeless only to then see them succeed in so many positive ways. It's a huge joy to watch them smile with pride and feeling accomplished. WestCare is so grateful to honor our Veterans not only on Veterans Day, but every day.

A Women Warriors Unit Progress Story

Hello,

My name is Yolanda. I grew up moving all over the states. My dad was in the Air Force and I truly loved all of the places we lived - especially traveling overseas. I think that I knew then that I wanted to be like my father even though he told me I should try the Army. And I did. I loved my time in the service from 1980 to 1983. I did my basic training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina and served in Hanau, Germany. I met all walks of life because of my time in the military. Sometimes, I wish I had never left, but because of the military, I had some advantages that others may not have had.

Recently, I found myself thrust out of my apartment all of a sudden at no fault of mine, but with no money to pay rent. That said, I do not know where I would be if it weren't for WestCare's Women Warriors Unit at the WCC. I would be living on the streets. Now I have a roof over my head, food, and the resources to get my life back on track, which I hope will be soon. I am truly thankful for a place like WestCare, not just for Veterans, but for people who truly need help and for this reason, I am thankful.

Sincerely,
Yolanda P.



A Journey Deferred A VETERAN'S STORY

By Elle Black

My journey is long from over. But it starts with an abusive husband. One that figured out how to control me financially and mentally. It took a long time for me to realize that the toxic cycle that I felt trapped in was not love, despite the few good times that we had and all of the, "I'm sorry," talks I received. One warm day in June after an argument so bad that my drunken husband had risked the lives of myself and children with his senseless anger, I finally gained a fleeting moment of courage to leave. I secured a personal protection order (PPO) and the court's permission to move out of state for the safety of my children and to be closer to my support unit, but without a solid plan. I just knew that I wanted to get my life back.

I wanted my success back that I'd worked so hard to achieve and obtained my bachelor's degree in hopes of working in the field that I love. It was time for me to stop allowing my husband to use my intelligence against me and make me believe that I was completely worthless.

After driving for five days from the state of Michigan with three children, a truckload of all our possessions, and a heart full of dreams and goals that I was determined to check off my bucket list, I had arrived in Las Vegas. I had nowhere to go and my parents didn't have any contacts that could help me. The only thing I that remembered was that I could always go to the VA for help.

I was connected to the WestCare community through the Northwest VA Clinic's Homeless Veterans Program. WestCare staff introduced me to Sashia Whitmire and the Women Warriors program at WestCare. They gave me and my children a roof over our heads, fed us, asked me what my goals were, and promptly got to work in setting me up with all the referrals that I needed for housing, employment searching, and resume preparation. The most important thing is that they have always been there for me to vent to when my confidence began to fade. They told me that everything was okay and reminded me that I was doing what was best for my children. They helped keep me from giving up.

They have been a Godsend and I can honestly say that without the WestCare community and staff, I definitely would not have been as successful in this journey as I have been thus far. I am thankful to this community and for all they've done for me and my family. I have been able to regain some confidence in myself and obtained full-time employment with the help of a WestCare referral to a Veterans reemployment program. I received clothing to wear for work and business meetings thanks to a referral to Dress for Success. They even helped with the process of getting my HUDVASH housing voucher ported to the area and assisted with my housing search by providing me with realtors that they knew had the ability to work with Veterans and were able to accommodate my timeline. It felt good to feel truly cared about and noticed.

"She was powerful not because she wasn't scared but she went on so strongly despite the fear."

- Atticus



Get in touch with the Women Warriors Unit at the Women & Children's Campus

A team member is ready to answer questions about our program and ways to support



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National Native American Heritage Month: A Brief History of Our Indigenous Communities

By Andrea Lopez, Navajo, Táchii'nii Clan, CDC, Quality Assurance Specialist

As of 2019, Indigenous peoples made up 2.09% of the U.S. population at a census of 6.9 million, with 78% of this population living outside of tribal areas. Currently, there are 574 federally recognized Native American tribes. Despite the significant presence of our Indigenous community, Native Americans were not granted citizenship until 1924, less than 100 years ago, after the passing of the Indian Citizenship Act. This single fact symbolizes the trials and tribulations of our Indigenous population throughout history. Much of the plight of Native Americans of North America has come to light just recently and many hurdles remain in the path for this population to reach true equality in our current society.

Indigenous groups of North America had settled long before European colonization began in the 15th Century. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, Indigenous tribes had continual encounters with foreign settlers, with the nature of these interactions varying from docile to hostile. By the 19th century, Indigenous populations had decreased significantly and their territories greatly diminished following the Indian Removal Act. This Act allowed the U.S. Government to force tribes to vacate land that they resided on for generations and relocate to territories designated by the federal government. Tribes were forced to "Indian Territory" by the U.S. Army and were made to travel by foot with almost no food or supplies necessary for survival. The Cherokee tribe, in particular, were forced from their homeland in Georgia, and made to walk 1,200 miles, with approximately 5,000 Cherokee dying along the way from whooping cough, typhus, dysentery, cholera, and starvation. These events are known today as The Trail of Tears. By 1840, thousands of Indigenous tribes had been relocated with their new continuously diminishing in size as white settlement expanded.

Poor treatment of Native American tribes continued since the Indian Removal Act. Many officials of the early U.S. Government along with white settlers attempted to, "solve the Indian problem" by "civilizing" Indigenous populations, with tactics including assimilation of indigenous children. This practice involved removing Native children from their homes, placing them in residential boarding schools, and imposing the abandonment of their customs and traditions. They were not only discouraged, but punished, for speaking their native language or wearing traditional clothing. Army Officer, Richard Henry Pratt and founder of the first federally run boarding school, summed up this system best with his infamous philosophy of, "kill the Indian, save the man."

During the operation of these boarding schools, thousands of children experienced every form of abuse at the hands of school faculty and were heavily neglected. Cases of abuse and neglect were largely ignored at the time. The reported number of deaths of Native children on school grounds was largely falsified, with current investigations into the grounds of former Canadian boarding schools uncovering the remains of over 1,000 Native children. Additional investigations into Canadian and U.S.-based boarding schools are currently underway.

The historical mistreatment of Indigenous peoples is extensive. Currently, Native Americans still face issues of equality. For instance, in comparison to the median household income of \$65,845 for non-Hispanic white households, Native Americans and Alaska Natives have a median household income of \$45,448. In comparison to the 9.6% of non-Hispanic whites living at the poverty level, 21.9% of Native Americans live at the poverty level as of 2017. Further, the rate of domestic violence and murder against Indigenous women sits much higher than other groups, with inconsiderable recognition by major media outlets or federal and local law enforcement agencies. One of the most notable issues among the current Native American population is the rate of suicide. In comparison to other groups, American Indian and Alaska Natives hold the highest rates of suicide and have faced the largest increases in the past 20 years. According to the CDC, there has been an overall increase rate in suicide of 33%. Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native men experienced a 71% increase during this time period, which was the largest increase among men. Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native women had the highest increase of all during this time period, with a 139% increase in suicide.

Despite the degree of maltreatment suffered throughout their history and even today, Indigenous peoples have served a pivotal role in our history and have made countless contributions to our society that are still prevalent in our daily lives. Some notable contributions include the following:

- *In World War II, members of the Navajo tribe played a substantial role in military operations. The Navajo language, due to its rarity and complexity, was deemed the "the unbreakable code." For this reason, Navajo code talkers used their native language to transmit messages that the Japanese armed forces could not break, providing the U.S. and its Allies a major advantage.*

- *The Navajo Code Talkers were classified until 2002 when the U.S. Congress passed the Code Talkers Recognition Act, with the act stating "... at a time when Indians were discouraged from practicing their native culture, a few brave men used their cultural heritage, their language, to help change the course of history."*
- *Tribes including the Sauk, Fox, and Assiniboine developed a recreational game called "shinny" in which a ball was hit down field using a curved stick and was even played into the winter over ice. This game was the origin for the sport of hockey. Many major sports that are played and celebrated today originate from Native American and Indigenous groups including canoeing, lacrosse, and relay races.*
- *Some of the major staples in our current diets were the result of edible plant domestication by Native Americans including corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, peanuts, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, papayas, avocados, pineapples, guavas, chili peppers, chocolate, and beans. In fact, approximately 60% of our world's current food supply comes from Indigenous peoples.*
- *The League of Iroquois has served as a model for democracy, with the U.S. government emulating the system that the Iroquois developed, with distribution of power among the federal and state governments.*

Our society has taken significant strides to promote the equality, recognition, and appreciation of Indigenous populations in the U.S. and abroad. However, there is still a great need to amplify and continue these measures to help overcome the current barriers for equality. WestCare staff from our outpatient and residential facilities have already made an effort to support Indigenous peoples. Marybel Ramos, Jillian Lund, Cassandra Singh, and Chabrian Tanguay participated in the I Will Run for Them 5k, a part of the national effort to bring awareness to domestic violence against Indigenous women and honor cycle breakers. In honor of National Native American Heritage month, some ways that you can promote your Indigenous communities include supporting local and national organizations such as the National Congress of American Indians and the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women; supporting local Native artists with purchases of hand-crafted art, jewelry, and home goods; and celebrating and promoting major holidays and events such as Indigenous People's Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day), Native American Heritage Day, and National Native American Heritage Month/American Indian and Alaskan Native Heritage Month (November).

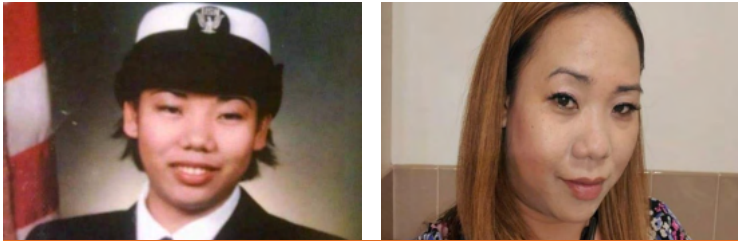
Photo: From left to right, Marybel Ramos, Therapist, WestCare CIC; Jillian Lund, Counselor, WestCare CIC; Cassandra Singh, Therapist, WestCare Harris Springs Ranch/Women and Children's Campus; Andrea Lopez, Quality Assurance Specialist, WestCare CIC; not pictured: Chabrian Tanguay, Research Assistant, WestCare CIC

Representing at the Veteran's Resource Fair 2021

By Rhonda Davisson, Transitional Coordinator, WestCare Women and Children's Campus

In November, WestCare was represented at the Veteran's Resource Fair 2021 held at the Heritage Park Senior Center in Henderson, Nevada and sponsored by the City of Henderson. We were proud to be on hand to share information on our programs along with other providers including the VA Southern Nevada HealthCare System, Justice for Vets National Mentor Corps, The Las Vegas Vet Center, and Women Veterans of Nevada among many others. There was also a tasty buffet lunch served as well as a raffle sponsored by various local merchants in support of our local Veterans!





Veterans Day: A Testimony from a Veteran Staff

By Nanette Lukban, LPN, Charge Nurse/Nursing Supervisor, WestCare Community Triage Center

I served active duty in the U.S. Navy, working in an administrative and leadership capacity in their naval aviation department. I worked with our fighter jet maintenance department as my main job and also served as a urinalysis coordinator, drug and alcohol program advisor, and sexual assault victim advocate on top of the main job title while I was in the service. This is the beginning of my journey to being who I am now and where I work today.

I currently work at WestCare's withdrawal management facility and at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Southern Nevada Healthcare System's Las Vegas VA Residential Recovery and Renewal Center (LVR3). Both jobs deal with substance abuse treatment with underlying mental health issues as a major focus. I have a passion for dealing with these types of settings. I want to be able to help the clients regardless of the type of population and position in their life to take control of their lives once again after the substance problems are well taken care of.

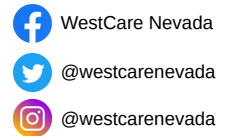
The military taught me how to deal with clients that lack coping mechanisms, instilled discipline with me, and has allowed me to deal with a high-stress environment. I will continue to use my knowledge and skills to make sure that my role as a nurse can benefit everyone and that I can teach my clients how to surpass the hurdles that they have in their lives.

"True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost." – Arthur Ashe

Continue the journey online!

Follow WestCare Nevada on social media to learn more about our team and the work we're doing in our local community!

#WestCareNevada



Nevada Community Action Council (CAC) Member Spotlight: Russel Swain

Russ grew up in the insurance business and learned from his father, Rusty Swain, a partner at George L. Brown (GLB) Insurance. He joined GLB full time in 1979 after graduating from Western High School. He then joined the Fireman's Fund Insurance as an underwriter trainee from 1981 - 83 in Sacramento, CA. Swain returned to GLB and became a partner in 1988 and then president of the firm in 2002. Russ led the successful mergers of Holmes-Caldwell in 2000, Atkin & Prater in 2004, Harley Harmon in 2016, and formed GLB Insurance Group of Nevada, founded by George L. Brown in 1941. GLB then joined the Alera Group in 2018. He is a shareholder of the firm. Swain obtained his Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) designation in 1997.

Swain served as President of the IASN from 1990 - 91 as well as the State President of the Nevada Independent Insurance Agents (NIIA) from 2007 - 08. From 2008 – 2009, he was President of the Las Vegas Rotary Club and had been a member since 1994.

Since 2008, he has served on WestCare's board of directors as well as the Samaritan House's board. In addition, he has served on the executive board for the Boy Scouts of America's Las Vegas Area Council.

In his free time, he enjoys hiking, skiing, boating, motorcycles, bird hunting, camping, attending UNLV and Vegas Golden Knights Games, and spending time with his family.

The 2021 Nevada Housing Conference

By Andrew Moran, Development Director, WestCare Foundation

WestCare's development team was in attendance at the 2021 Nevada Housing Conference presented by the Nevada Housing Coalition at the Culinary Academy of Las Vegas.

This conference was held to address the urgency for securing housing for our fellow Nevadans. Per the Nevada Housing Coalition, "Every state in the U.S. lacks a sufficient supply of affordable housing for the lowest income residents, but Nevadans, more than any other state population, face the greatest challenge in finding affordable and available homes."

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, "There are only 20 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income renter households in Nevada."

Our planned transitional housing facility, The Village at the WestCare Nevada Women and Children's Campus, will help the current situation by housing as many as 84 women for up to two years with or without children as they secure permanent housing. The facility is slated to break ground in early 2022.

By attending the conference's breakout sessions, we learned about zoning, bonds, and how cities and states can pass housing-oriented measures to target high priority local needs. We were also able to network with dignitaries on-hand as well as local developers and architects that build affordable housing for non-profit organizations.

We would like to thank Christine Hess, Executive Director of the Nevada Housing Coalition and Bill Brewer, Chairman of the Board, for welcoming WestCare into their coalition. We look forward to partnering on upcoming projects and achieving many great things together in the future!

It takes a village to create a community. Interested in learning more about The Village at the Women & Children's Campus?

Let's talk
PARTNERSHIP



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Connect with us in Nevada

Get in touch with our Marketing Department to learn more about what is happening in WestCare Nevada at marketing@westcare.com