



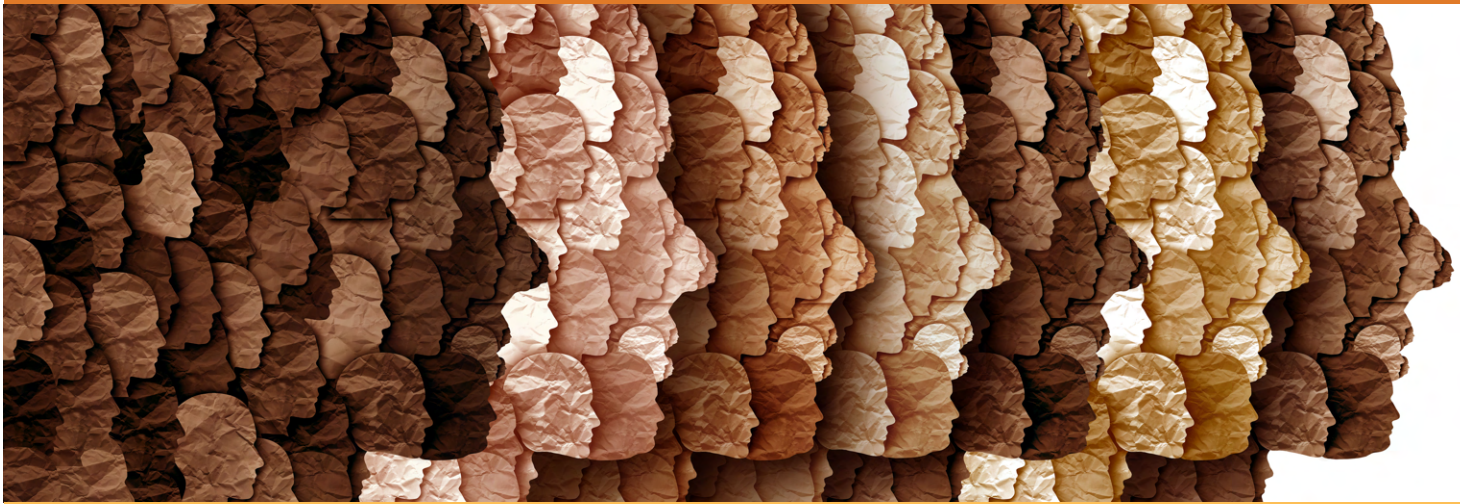
THE LOOP

A COLLECTION OF STORIES FROM AROUND CALIFORNIA

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Even though February is the shortest month of the year, here at WestCare, we have so much to celebrate! We are celebrating the **Lunar New Year** as we embrace its rich history amongst East and Southeast Asian cultures, including Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities - among others. One of the traditional activities includes the deep cleaning of homes as a symbol of cleaning out all bad luck from the previous year as the new year is welcomed.

Additionally, ever since February was first officially recognized as **Black History Month** in 1976 by President Gerald Ford, this important month has been dedicated to celebrating the achievements as well as recognizing the sacrifices of African Americans who have helped shape this nation of ours. As we enter the third year of this pandemic where minority communities have been disproportionately affected - this year's theme of "Black Health and Wellness" honors medical scholars and health care providers. As a leading provider of behavioral health and human services, we continue to do our part through empowerment, growth, and healing.

Celebrating the Lunar New Year and Black History Month not only unites all who participate but also promotes diversity as we work towards becoming more inclusive. This aligns perfectly with the WestCare-wide mission of the **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Staff Workgroup** as we seek to facilitate the organization's ongoing and continuing efforts to foster a culture and atmosphere of mutual respect, and to attract, retain, and promote outstanding staff from all backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. On a state-wide level, I would like to now welcome a statement from our Director of Operations, Dayatra Latin, on behalf of WestCare California's **Cultural Diversity Committee** and how you can be a part of their efforts!



Mary Ann Khoi, Vice President, WestCare California

The work continues OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Thank you, Mary Ann, for allowing the space to make a statement on behalf of WestCare California's **Cultural Diversity Committee**! The mission of the committee is to promote and foster a culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout WestCare California and the diverse communities that we serve in order to achieve our highest potential. We all understand the importance of diversity in the workplace and how it can directly impact the effectiveness of the services that we provide to our clients. We meet to facilitate networking and communication as it relates to cultural diversity and inclusion and to foster an environment that enables staff and clients to feel empowered, valued, respected, and safe.

The Cultural Diversity Committee has been created to evaluate and design activities to meet the needs of minorities at WestCare in a proactive manner and we cannot do that without you because when we all can work together - we will all be uplifted by these efforts. We meet quarterly and you can contact your supervisor or myself to learn more about this wonderful committee!



– Dayatra Latin, Director of Operations,
WestCare California



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Program Spotlight: HOPWA

WestCare California, Inc.'s **Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA)** program, provided through **The Living Room**, offers Short Term Rent Mortgage and Utility Assistance (STRMU), housing, case management, and supportive services to individuals who are HIV positive.

Individuals who identify with the three following conditions may be eligible: a documented medical diagnosis of HIV/AIDS, are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and have a documented status of low income. Upon entering the program, consumers will be assigned to a Case Manager who will help them develop short and long-term goals, practice healthy living skills which could include money management, housekeeping, menu planning, meal prep, tenant rights, responsibilities, and provide linkages to care. The case manager will also assist with lease and rental agreements with landlords.



Kudos to Ashley Morris, HOPWA Case Manager

"Ashley Morris is our new case manager for our HOPWA STRMU (Short Term Rental and Mortgage Assistance) program. Upon joining the team, she has been able to jump right in and share her knowledge, skills, and compassion to support our mission, the community, and the consumers we serve. She has proven to be a vital part of our HOPWA team and treats every client with dignity and respect while Uplifting the Human Spirit!"

– **Carlene Mendez**, Program Director, The Living Room

A Testimony featuring Greg

"Greg was referred to substance use disorder treatment by our team and entered our MLK Residential program in February of 2021. After successfully completing his intensive residential treatment phase in April he enrolled into outpatient treatment. He moved into our recovery residence program and faithfully attended his outpatient groups/commitments. In October he was granted a request to extend his stay for an additional six months. Throughout this entire time, our HOPWA team provided him with support, resources, and case management. Greg was able to secure full-time employment, maintain his commitments to both HOPWA and his recovery, and on January 3rd, was placed into HOPWA transitional living. After only less than a month, he applied for and was approved for his very own apartment! He has truly been a voice of hope and encouragement to others in the program. Through resilience and hard work, he was able to overcome significant challenges and is on his way to a healthy, full, and meaningful life! He is a beacon to the community and remains consistent in working with our staff in pursuing his own personal life goals while continuing his HIV care and treatment. We look forward to continuing to support him through the next phases of his journey!"

The staff of The Living Room are currently seeking donations of:

- New socks and underwear
- New or lightly used furniture for our transitional living spaces
- A BBQ pit for summer cooking for client lunches
- Fast food gift cards
- Water bottles
- Wall art or décor for our transitional living space
- A new stereo for our clients that come and enjoy the living room
- New pots and pans

If you would like to make a donation, please call 559-486-1469.



2.7 - The Living Room Promotes Awareness and Self-Care!



In observance of **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**, the staff of **The Living Room** organized a resource fair with help from **Behavioral Education And Treatment (BEAT)** and our friends at the **Fresno EOC Sanctuary LGBTQ Resource Center!** We'd like to thank everyone who attended or played a part in organizing this wonderful event!

However, awareness doesn't stop with just one day and it ultimately begins with you! So, if you'd like to know your status, please contact The Living Room at 559-486-1469 to schedule your free/confidential HIV test!



2.2 - A Special Thank You for Going Above and Beyond!

In February, the staff of **MLK Residential** received a special morning surprise of breakfast burritos for stepping up and working extra hours to assist the individuals, families, and children that they serve while the facility was under quarantine to stop the spread of COVID-19 infection. This special treat was organized by our Director of Operations, **Dayatra Latin**, and prepared by our community partners at the Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)!



1.27 - Bakersfield Receives a Surprise Gift from a Partner in Recovery!

Our team at **Bakersfield Residential** recently received a special delivery from their friends and community partners at **Bakersfield Recovery Services**, whose Executive Director, Eric Sanders and Quality Assurance Assistant, Steve Kruitbosch, took the time to deliver 113 cases of hand sanitizer to the program!

In response to the many thanks from our team, Steve commented, "Bakersfield Recovery Services is grateful for the relationship that we have developed with WestCare throughout the years. We appreciate the partnership and camaraderie that is shared between our agencies. We are all working together to achieve the same goal."

On behalf of our team and those that they serve, thank you for joining us in Uplifting the Human Spirit!



2.11 - CCTRP Stockton Introduces the Pom-Pom Village for Valentine's Day!

In celebration of Valentine's Day, the staff of our **Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program (CCTRP)** program in Stockton recently came up with a fun activity for the women that they serve!

Their bookkeeper, **Angela Wheeler**, suggested a super cute idea for their participants to create Valentine's Day pom pom characters and to write a short story to go along with it! Their staff then voted on their favorite pom pom character with the winner winning a makeup bag, a candy bar, and a day planner. Thank you for your service and creativity, Angela!

Please see below for the bio for their winning entry, Valentino Garland!

Tinder Profile: Valentino Garland	Eyes: Black
Height: 3"	Hair: Red & silver
Weight: .05oz	

Valentino is the child of Christmas Garland. He has his father's eyes and his mother's heart. He likes long walks on the beach. He is looking for a Valentine to "Be mine."



1.24 – WestCare and United Healthcare Partner Against COVID-19!

In January, our amazing community partners from **United Healthcare** visited our **MLK Residential** facility in Fresno to provide COVID-19 testing for 120 individuals that we serve and 13 of our staff! The event was organized thanks to our Case Managers, **Stephanie Chadwick**, **Marisela Velasquez**, and **Sharon Chavez**, whom also provided coverage on the day of in all of the facility's units!

We'd also like to send thanks to our Director of Operations, **Dayatra Latin**, for bringing donuts to everyone who tested as a special incentive for their participation!

As we continue to take the precautions needed to ensure the continued safety of our staff and those that we serve - we'd like to thank everyone who helped make this event possible!



In Memoriam Virginia Sparks (1968-2022)

"WestCare Family,

It is with great sadness that we mourn the recent loss of a dear friend and a champion in the Central Valley for recovery, mental health, and criminal justice services – Virginia Sparks.

Virginia first joined our family of programs and services in March of 2001 and would serve in various roles including Counseling Supervisor and in September of 2014, Deputy Administrator of Criminal Justice Services. In this role, she would help lay the foundation for the various in-custody treatment contracts that we operated within California correctional institutions in the years that followed. In September of 2016, we said farewell to Virginia as she accepted a position with Kings View Community Services, Inc. to oversee their Blue-Sky Wellness Center and not long after serve as their Regional Director. In May of 2018, we applauded our friend as she received her certification as a Licensed Marriage and Family therapist and would go on to open a private practice of her own.

Outside of work, Virginia was a loving mother, grandmother, and a longtime member of our WestCare California Alumni Committee. She could often be found spending time and going on trips with her WestCare family who had become just that - family. Her sense of humor and understanding of the populations in which we serve was unmatched and her passion for this work could be found in every word. She had truly found her calling in this field and as a result, countless individuals and families' lives were changed for the better through her service.

To her family and the many who are mourning the loss of this truly beautiful soul – we send our most heartfelt condolences and stand beside you during this difficult time."

Shawn Jenkins

Chief Operating Officer, WestCare Foundation – Western Region



Michael Mygind was promoted to Director of Marketing for California & Nevada



Ricardo Rivera was promoted to Program Coordinator of BEAT

April Hawkins, APS Home Safe - Case Manager, Housing Services



In February, our Medical Director, Dr. Herbert Cruz, took the time to recognize April with a staff recognition token for going out of her way to disinfect all doorknobs and doors at our Gateway Administration and Housing Services office! Thank you, April, for keeping the continued health and safety of our fellow staff first!

Vartanush Mesropyan, Receptionist, Administration



Additionally, Dr. Cruz also presented a staff recognition token to Administration's Receptionist, Vartanush, for her stellar work and diligence in covering the front desk alone for two weeks! Thank you for always giving your all, Vartanush! We appreciate you so much!

Joslynn Davis and Lynn Stevens, STOP: Area 3 - Fresno



In preparation for Valentine's Day, STOP Area 3: - Fresno's Community Service Specialist, Joslynn Davis, and Receptionist, Lynn Stevens, decided to share the love with some thoughtful decorations! Thank you, ladies for always bringing positive energy with you wherever you go!



Connect with us in California

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