



Rachel Jelenic

Rachel Jelenic represents veterans and their families on the board of directors for the Nevada Lifespan Respite Care Coalition (NLRCC). She joined the Coalition when she started work at the Nevada Department of Veteran Services (NDVS) as the Veterans Healthcare Champions Program Manager. She has a degree in Community Health Science with an emphasis in Public Health. Hired in 2020 amidst the COVID restrictions, her college internship with NDVS prepared her for working through the challenges.

Rachel is a people-person. She can work independently but loves how she can team up with others in creating community solutions for veterans and their families. While her focus is on veterans' physical health, others at NDVS bring expertise in suicide prevention, data analytics, and special projects. State liaisons, program managers and administrators at the VA homes help support her physical health, mental health, and connectiveness programs. Getting everyone's buy-in allows the team's efforts to have real impact on the lives of veterans and their families.

The VA has a caregiver support program, but their eligibility requirements are very narrow. Respite services for veterans through the VA serve a very small population of caregivers in Nevada who qualify. However, Rachel and her team are working with communities on creating veteran spousal support groups and veteran adult day healthcare facilities that could help.

Rachel has learned that adaptability and flexibility are needed in each community the VA works in. Every community in Nevada has specific ways they like things done. Veterans are the same. It can be intimidating to have ideas rejected but finding ways to move forward with a different idea and a different group of people to achieve something that works in that circumstance means Not Giving Up.

Luckily, Rachel loves to travel. As she works with veterans throughout Nevada, she travels among urban cities and rural towns, enjoying and discovering new places as she goes. This love of travel began with her family and now includes groups of friends who travel with her to places like Costa Rica. Packed is how she likes to live her life - a travel bag ready, a full trip itinerary, and both working full-time and going to school full-time as she works on her master's in Public Health.

She also has an affection for all her "babies" – her houseplants. An expert at decorating with plants, she makes rooms look great and keeps plants healthy and growing. Call her a "Serial Planter" when she adopts yet another one!



Sharifa Wahab

Sharifa is from Afghanistan and speaks several languages. She graduated very young as a dentist and loves helping clients get a good result on their treatments. Because licensing in Nevada is expensive, she works as an office manager for a dental clinic. When free dental services are performed, patients are encouraged to help others and report back what they did to help someone else in need. Sharifa believes that no one would be needy if everyone would find a way to help.

After coming to the United States, she has taken jobs that a social worker might do, although she is doesn't yet have a degree in social work. She stepped into roles that needed to be done, despite staff shortages, and is now looking at pursuing an education in social work. She is also the director of First Las Vegas Homecare, serving immigrant families in the Las Vegas area.

Sharifa loves to volunteer! Besides serving on the Nevada Lifespan Respite Care Coalition, representing organizations that provides caregiver support services to family caregivers who care for someone over the age of 18 and organizations that provides caregiver relief such as palliative care, personal care, or other in-home services, Sharifa is President of the Nevada Peacemakers Community Foundation, President of the Nevada Peacemaker International Lions Club, serves on the American Afghan South Asian Chamber of Commerce in Las Vegas and the American Pacific Islander Community Commission of Clark Co., and provides free language interpreter services for Legal Aide of Southern Nevada.

She sees all her work and service as a way to give back to the community - to see needs and help people. She loves to learn and gather information and resources she can share. She feels she does something good and right when people thank her for helping them solve their problems.

What you might not know about Sharifa is that she is a published author, having penned a book in the 6th grade called "Red Flower" that was published in Afghanistan. She also designs and sews her own clothes. Because of her experience in enjoying the foods of many different cultures, she has gathered recipes and become a good chef at baking and cooking foods from many of them.