

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 47 • Winter 2026



Plática con Café Podcast Series



Episode 9: Naloxone or Narcan? Prevention with Care

Our community is facing ever-shifting drug trends that may harm those we care about. We sit down to review commonly asked questions and how best we can respond as a community. Join the conversations and stay informed!

In this latest episode of **Plática con Café**, we talk about how to recognize an overdose, how to use the lifesaving drug naloxone (Narcan®), and why it's important to act without fear or stigma. It's an honest conversation that seeks to raise awareness and offer tools to support our communities.

This episode is in Spanish, with English subtitles available.

So, grab your cafecito and enjoy!

Learn more:

English: positivepaths.venturacounty.gov/platica

Spanish: positivepaths.venturacounty.gov/es/platica-con-cafe



Out & About With Alma & Ignacio & Erika

Connecting with the Community



By Alma Ixta, Ignacio Ixta, & Erika Fernandez, Intensive Services Coordinators

Photo above from One Step A La Vez on January 13: "We're grateful to Alma and Ignacio for taking the time to present to the One Step A La Vez staff about Prevention and Substance Use Services offered by Ventura County Behavioral

Health. Our team truly appreciated the valuable information shared which helps us better understand available services and strengthens our ability to support the needs of our teens and their families. Thank you for your partnership and commitment to community well-being!

Community outreach involves being in the community and learning from you about what matters, what concerns you, and the ways in which we can best work together to educate and strengthen our communities. We share our prevention messaging, informing families about the risks of marijuana, vaping, opioids, fentanyl, meth, and alcohol to help prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related issues in our county. We strive to develop relationships with partner organizations and members in the community for collaboration and support regarding substance use prevention.

Words from Alma:

Last quarter started very busy and as we approached winter break we had a slower ending. There was much interest in parent presentations regarding opioids, fentanyl and vaping at several schools in our county. We provided presentations at **Barbara Webster School, Channel Island High School, Pacific High School, and Oxnard Adult Education**. We attended several community events providing very valuable information regarding our prevention efforts.

I must say that I enjoy doing presentations for parents in our county. I find that to be the most rewarding because I can see parents' eyes light up when I'm sharing all this important information that helps them understand what their children can be exposed to when they are away from their homes. I provide parents with tips that can help them start a conversation with their kids about the different substances. It is gratifying for me to be able to bring awareness to parents and see how grateful parents are that we are doing this kind of work.

I enjoy the face-to-face interactions with parents, their questions, concerns and their comments when they ask "are you the lady from the videos on Facebook?" It warms my heart that they find value in what we do and that makes my job so rewarding.

You can stay in touch with us by watching our [**Plática con Café Podcast Series**](#).



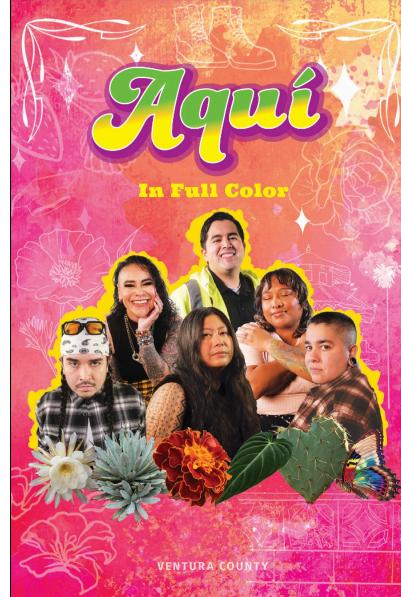
Featured Campaign: Aquí: In Full Color

Local Community Voices, Shared Strength

Aquí is a grassroots campaign in Ventura County that uplifts the real stories of people too often left out of traditional prevention messaging. Centered on the

intersection of queerness and culture, the campaign highlight's themes of self-discovery, resilience, and shared experience serving as both a celebration and a community resource.

On Sunday, November 17, 2025, the **Aquí Celebration & Showcase** took place at the Oxnard Performing Arts Center, featuring remarks from key contributors and community partners. The event welcomed approximately 30 attendees, including friends and family of campaign participants, who shared gratitude for being part of a one-of-a-kind initiative uplifting local voices and addressing critical gaps in behavioral health messaging.



The gathering fostered meaningful dialogue, connection, and pride in representation. It marked an important milestone in continuing conversations, sharing resources, and addressing support needs in Ventura County. With the increased media scope and positive momentum from the event, the **Aquí** campaign transitioned into its next phase of expanded visibility and community engagement, supporting VCBH Prevention goals focused on promoting health and preventing harm.

The campaign sparks dialogue, challenges stigma, and fills critical messaging gaps around substance use, mental health, and belonging. By reflecting people's full identities with cultural relevance, **Aquí** strengthens community connections and expands access to supportive resources.

We invite community partners, leaders, and organizations to join us in extending this visibility. Materials are available at no cost to help you share **Aquí's** message of acceptance, hope, and joy.

Learn more and share MeAqui.com
Outreach materials can be requested [here](#).



Contractor Highlights

Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition



Saving Lives in Every Step. How one coalition is turning awareness into action, and changing the future of Camarillo.

- **Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition** organized its **Second Annual Opioid Awareness Memorial Walk**, bringing together community and local leaders for a day of remembrance, unity, and hope. The Saving Lives Camarillo team rose to the challenge, proudly claiming the Team Competition trophy for the second year in a row. This victory wasn't just about winning, it was a symbol of the coalition's mission to protect lives and strengthen families.
- Leading the charge was Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko, the team's captain. His words of encouragement before the walk energized every participant, reminding us all that leadership, partnership, and collaboration are the keys to tackling the opioid crisis together. Families visited the coalition's educational outreach booth, receiving free medication lockboxes and at-home drug disposal pouches, along with life-saving guidance on medication safety and overdose prevention.
- Saving Lives Camarillo distributed 524 medicine lockboxes to local families in 2025, helping to protect families from accidental medication exposure.

Learn more:
savinglivescamarillo.net

Contractor Highlights

Did you know BRITE has a 3D Prevention Platform?

Many people know BRITE for their live workshops, youth leadership programs, and creative prevention campaigns, but few realize that BRITE also designs immersive digital prevention experiences. One of those is **BRITE World**, a 3D, game-based environment where youth explore virtual spaces, work in teams or individually, and engage with prevention concepts through quizzes, puzzles and collaborative play.



BRITE World reflects the same youth-centered, education and arts-based philosophy that guides our in-person work, translated into an interactive digital format that resonates strongly with today's students. This week, select **BRITE World** scenes are being made available to explore and experience firsthand.

What makes **BRITE World** different:

- Prevention concepts are embedded into exploration and gameplay
- Youth collaborate in teams and earn points on shared leaderboards
- Experiences are adaptable for school-day and after-school settings or even for families

Explore sample BRITE World scenes and see how prevention comes alive in 3D.

[BRITE World](#)

BRITE stands for Building Resilience and Inclusion Through Engagement and focuses on supporting youth and young adults (ages 12–25) through writing, art, photography, video production, social media campaigns, leadership, and spokesperson opportunities around issues they care about.

BRITE is made possible through funding from the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, Substance Use Services.

briteyouth.org

Featured Campaign: Just Not Worth It



The “Just Not Worth It” prevention campaign is targeted toward teens and young adults who may be at risk for trying and continuing to use drugs illegally. This encompasses both illicit drugs (like heroin and meth) legal drugs taken illegally—typically cannabis and prescription medications.

The goal of the campaign is to educate teens and young adults on the risks to their health, well-being, life-opportunities, and relationships. However, as a critically important component of any campaign targeting young adults, the mood and method of the messaging is purposefully constructed to avoid triggering the reflexive opposition so common to young adults. Instead, the campaign’s messaging allows them a way to choose a different path without losing face.

Instead of blame, the campaign addresses the issue from the perspective of friends that love and miss the person that is currently using. By showing only love and despondence on their friends’ part, there is no negative accusation to push back against.

As a secondary goal, the campaign serves as a discussion platform for adults to discuss illegal drug use with young adults in their care.

Watch the videos.

positivepaths.venturacounty.gov/youth/just-not-worth-it



Awareness Month Highlights



This January, SAMHSA observes Substance Use Disorder Treatment Month. They highlight resources to help people throughout the U.S. find their path to treatment and recovery. Substance Use Disorder Treatment Month serves to support:

- People contemplating or seeking help for their substance use
- Practitioners treating or considering treating substance use disorder
- Friends, family, and loved ones of those with substance use conditions

By raising awareness of treatment, including medications to treat substance use disorders, SAMHSA seeks to:

- Eliminate stigma surrounding treatment, including medications used to treat substance use disorders
- Encourage those on their treatment and recovery journey

- Promote best practices such as screening, intervention, and treatment of substance use disorders by health care providers

Learn more:

www.samhsa.gov/about/digital-toolkits/substance-use-disorder-treatment-month



Staying in the Know: Latest Research

Reported use of most drugs remains low among U.S. teens. Abstention from drug use remains at historic high, NIH-supported survey finds.

December 17, 2025

- For the fifth year in a row, use of most substances among teenagers in the United States has continued to hover around the low-water mark reached in 2021. The findings come from the latest report of the Monitoring the Future Survey.
- “We are encouraged that adolescent drug use remains relatively low and that so many teens choose not to use drugs at all,” said Nora D. Volkow, M.D., director of NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). “It is critical to continue to monitor these trends closely to understand how we can continue to support teens in making healthy choices and target interventions where and when they are needed.”

Learn more:

nida.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/2025/12/reported-use-of-most-drugs-remains-low-among-us-teens



Calendar

Community Meetings

- **Circle of Care Monthly Meeting**

One Step A La Vez

1st Wednesday of every month at 1:00 PM

- **Outreach Coordinator Meeting, OUHSD**

1st Wednesday of every month at 10:30 AM

Contact: [**teresa.telles@oxnardunion.org**](mailto:teresa.telles@oxnardunion.org)

- **Santa Paula Social Services Coalition Meeting**

3rd Thursday of every month at 2:00 PM

Contact: SPSocialServiceCoalition@gmail.com

Santa Paula Social Services Coalition

- **Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) Prevention Committee Meeting**

4th Tuesday every other month at 3:15 PM.

BHAB Prevention Committee



Stay In Touch

Websites

- [Positive Paths](#)
- [COAST Ventura County](#)
- [Ventura County Behavioral Health](#)

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- www.facebook.com/PositivePathsVC/
- x.com/PositivePathsVC

Check out our Newsletters

- www.positivepaths.org/newsletter



About Us

Supporting Health — Preventing Harm

Prevention means working upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. We are involved in outreach in our communities, educating and increasing awareness about the risks and realities of alcohol and drug misuse and abuse.



Contact Us

Interested in presentations or publications to share with your communities? Contact Us!

Alma Ixta: Alma.Ixta@venturacounty.gov

STAY CONNECTED



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