

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 13 • November 2020



Autumn is here

The cool autumn air and changing leaves give us a break from the heat of the summer and the fires. As our county opens, communities depend on our agencies for mental health services, substance use treatment, naloxone distribution, food share donations, housing assistance, vaccination clinics and more. We continue to serve those in our community who may need our help. Read about our many campaigns and projects and ways that you can stay involved.

Message from Alma: Finding a New Way

Sharing Gratitude

Everyday life has changed for me. Grocery shopping is not the same, getting a haircut, a manicure or even a doctor's appointment takes much planning and research now. I can't help but think that if I am having such a hard time adapting to all

these changes, it must be even more challenging for other members of our community.”

I am not a computer expert and I struggle with technology sometimes, so I can't begin to imagine what some of our Spanish-speaking families maybe going through. Families are struggling with jobs, housing and affordable internet now along with the demands of remote learning.

This made me wonder how I can help someone in need. I am very grateful for what I have and the support in my life. With the holidays coming, if we know a family that is struggling we can offer to help in a small way, something that will have meaning for them. I am trying to find ways to share my gratitude with others.

If there is something I have learned from this pandemic, it is that our loved ones and connections with people are more important than anything else. I miss traveling, visiting family that live far away and that personal touch of a handshake or a hug.

It has been seven months since we have done our in-person community outreach events and we hope that our newsletters are helping you to stay connected. I look forward to seeing everyone in the future.

Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinators, pre-COVID-19.

Snapshot: A BRITE New World

Expanding Youth Engagement

Every issue we feature stories of Prevention contract providers that are making a difference in their communities during this time of COVID-19.



BRITE (Building Resilience & Inclusion Through Engagement), is excited to introduce you to **BRITE World!** Since the start of the pandemic, our team scrambled to adapt our in-person youth workshops and youth advocacy projects for distance learning. Focused on youth engagement, BRITE wanted to find ways to make distance learning, well, less distant.

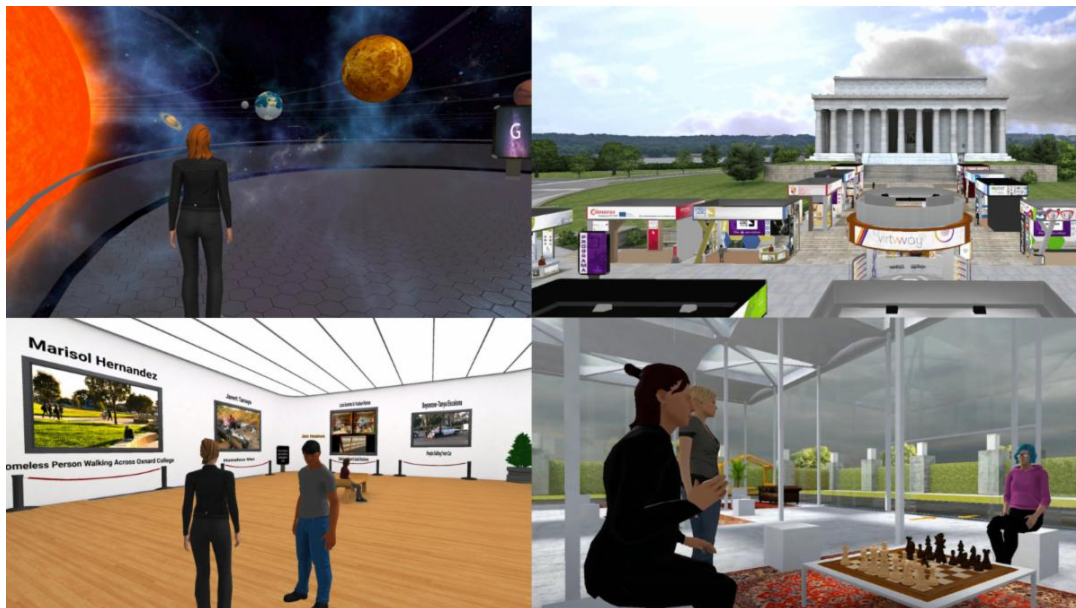
BRITE World is a 3-D virtual environment where participants can interact in avatar form safely from wherever they are. "BRITE World offers infinite possibilities for how we can interact with youth and engage them in community outreach around the prevention and health issues impacting them, especially during COVID-19," states Katherine Kasmir, Founder and CEO of BRITE. "BRITE World has created a forum where students can

share their artwork and photography in an art gallery, their writings can be read in a library, and their video advocacy projects shared on screens in community spaces. Students are guiding the development of wellness centers and planning 3-D conferences and health fairs."

BRITE World provides spaces for youth to just 'hang out' and socialize. Kasmir explains, "BRITE World is also a teen center where their avatars can fly around the solar system finding prevention content or engage with friends in a 'wipe-out' challenge or escape room, play chess or build mazes. There are so many possibilities."

Our first 3-D virtual community event will be a BRITE World Open House in December 2020. Participants will include middle- and high-school students, their parents, and health and prevention advocacy partners. Want to get involved? Please reach out to us at info@briteyouth.org.

BRITE shares our community's values of celebrating the diversity of all persons, being respectful and inclusive of everyone, and to improve the overall health of everyone in our county. We also value our community partnerships and look forward to continued collaboration with our schools, organizations, leaders and partners. See images of BRITE World below.





Interview with Ashley Nettles: Overdose Prevention Program

Making a Difference

Every issue we feature stories of individuals and agencies that are making a difference in their communities during this time of COVID-19.

Today we talk with Ashley Nettles, Overdose Prevention Program Coordinator, VCBH and Give an Hour.

How did you get interested in the field of Overdose Prevention?

Ashley: I began to work on the Overdose Program for Project SAFER in 2016. It connected with my personal family life at that time, and caused me to be more interested and passionate about overdose prevention.

What is your passion for working in the community?

Ashley: I believe that opioids and substance use issues affect families and our communities a great deal. Making sure that life-saving naloxone is available, and offering prevention and education about the risks of opioid misuse and overdose is extremely important.

What are the areas that you hope to make changes in?

Ashley: Helping to educate families on overdose prevention and especially those at high risk in our communities. Many families don't know what opioid misuse is and don't understand what they are dealing with. For myself, I had no idea what I was dealing with in my family, and people often assume that if a doctor prescribes



a medication than it must be okay. Many are watching the deterioration of a family member and not knowing what to do. By offering resources and help to those experiencing the devastating effects of opioid misuse in their families we can make a difference.

Tell us one thing about you that helps us get to know you better?

Ashley: I am a single mom. My personal interest is my kids and especially now having to manage this new world is a top priority for me. I am passionate about my work and am busy navigating the challenges of parenting during this time of remote learning.

If you could give words of inspiration during this time, what would it be?

Ashley: I would say to give yourself grace, do the best that you can do with what you are given, and ask for help when you need it. Don't be too prideful and get the help you need.

Thank you, Ashley for sharing your experience with us.

Learn more:

Overdose Prevention Program

www.venturacountyresponds.org/preventing-overdose

Featured Video: Overdose Prevention Program Saving Lives



"My cousin wouldn't be here today if naloxone hadn't been there for us at that time and place. It saved his life – and then it kick-started me to sign up for my own treatment the next week."

– Ventura County resident in treatment

The Overdose Prevention Program was launched in late 2014, as a pilot project of the county's Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup. The program targets individuals with an elevated risk of experiencing an opioid overdose or those who are likely to encounter someone who may experience an overdose. Since then, the program has expanded to over 35 distribution sites across the county, and eight participating law enforcement agencies, providing overdose prevention, recognition, and response.

In October of 2018, VCBH was awarded a federal grant, that in collaboration with multiple agencies, including Public Health, Emergency Medical Services, Ambulatory Care, Sheriff's Office and the Medical Examiner's Office, has allowed for more innovative ways to address the crisis. In October 2020, we expanded our overdose awareness campaigns in the community so that more people learn about the risks of an overdose and can access naloxone.

Learn more:

Overdose Prevention Program

www.venturacountyresponds.org/working-together/overdose-prevention-program

COAST Data Dashboard

www.coastventuracounty.org

Featured Agency: Proyecto Esperanza

Engaging Children. Staying Connected.





Proyecto Esperanza at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, offers services to residents of the Santa Clara Valley of Fillmore, Piru and Santa Paula. Proyecto Esperanza is a contract provider with Ventura County Behavioral Health. They provide piano, guitar and painting classes for ages 3 to 18 years of age.



Elvia Hernandez, Program Coordinator, states “it has been a joy to continue offering the services of Proyecto Esperanza even in times of a pandemic. At first it was difficult to adapt to this new way of working with our community, since everything was through text messages and virtual classes. This was something new for our community since many are unfamiliar with technology. We had 20 people in our parenting classes through Zoom, for ten sessions for five weeks.

In our virtual piano and taekwondo classes, parents helped their children take these prevention classes at home, which helped to lower their stress levels while being at home more. Our prevention classes are held outdoors and we are following all social distancing requirements. These classes are a great success and we are helping the children’s emotional health by balancing their stress and anxiety.”

Learn more:

Elvia Hernandez, Program Coordinator

esperanzaproject.sp@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/esperanzaprojectsantapaula

Snapshot: Finding Balance in the "New Normal"

Living Life in New Ways



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, everything changed - how we work, if we work, how our kids attend school, how we shop, where we can go, and what we can do. And it all happened almost instantly. No time to plan and little choice in the matter. We all gave up our old lives and we all gave up control. That's a big-time recipe for STRESS.

And so here we all are, living life in new ways. Perhaps wishing things could be the way they were. Right now, we can't go back to the way we lived but we can get back to how we felt. We can take back some control of our lives; we can find happiness, connection and relaxation.

And that is not just good for you - it's good for your family, your friends and your community. Learn some tips for feeling back in control.

Finding Balance in the "New Normal", Wellness Every Day
wellnesseveryday.org/news/finding-balance-new-normal-covid-stress

Around Town & Elsewhere

Our List

Every issue we like to feature stories of individuals and agencies that are making a difference in their communities during this time of COVID-19. Sometimes we just want to give a shout out to the work you are doing, and make a list so everyone knows.

Checking in with our partners around the county:

- In Oxnard, there are monthly Oxnard Police Department Community Outreach Meetings. They share what is timely in the community. Meetings are the first Wednesday of every month at 10:30 am. teresa.telles@oxnardpd.org
- Food Share delivers food to Ventura County residents. Download their app to find pop-up locations. foodshare.com/app
- The naloxone distribution program continues to outreach to community partners and provides overdose rescue kits to those in need. Learn about overdose prevention and how to get an overdose rescue kit at www.venturacountyresponds.org/preventing-overdose
- In Fillmore, there are monthly Circle of Care Meetings. They share what is timely in the community. Meetings are the first Wednesday of every month at 1pm. Contact Joe Ramirez at jramirez@myonestep.org.

What is the latest in your community? Send us a line and we'll add you to the list!

Find out more. Or just check it out.

If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, tips, latest research, blogs, publications and more.

Ventura County Responds
venturacountyresponds.org

Marijuana FactCheck
www.mjfactcheck.org

Vaping FactCheck
www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Ventura County Limits
www.venturacountylimits.org

Social Determinants of Health
www.healthequityvc.org

Follow us on Social Media
www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits
twitter.com/vclimits

Finding Balance in the "New Normal"

Need Help?

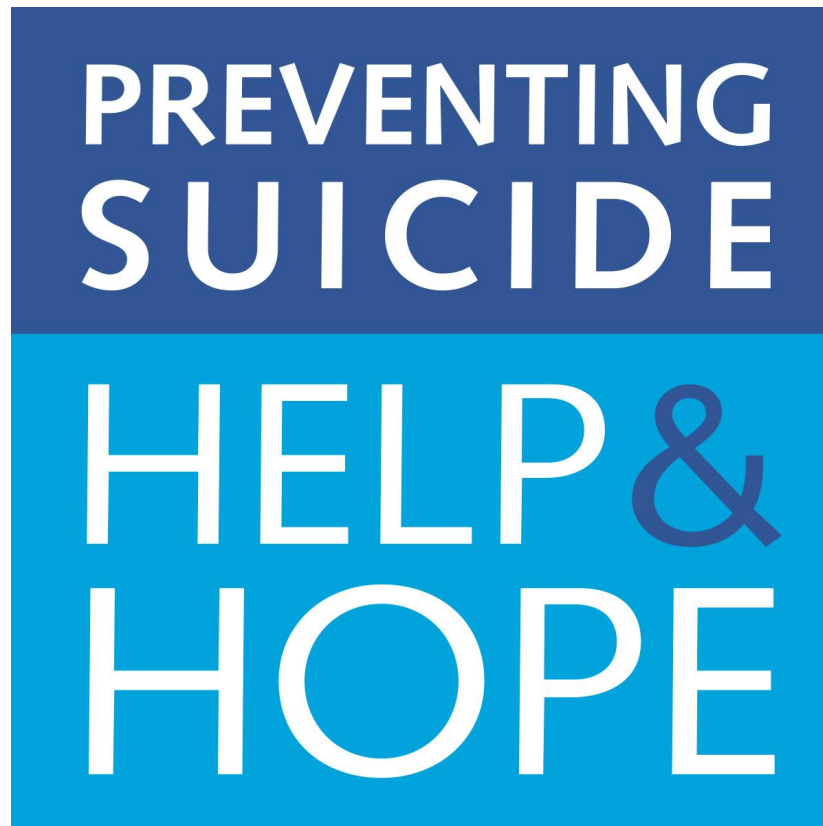
If you or a family member are struggling with addiction, talk to your healthcare provider or call the confidential 24/7 Access Line: 1-844-385-9200.

> [Learn about Substance Use Treatment Services.](#)

Happenings

We will keep you posted on upcoming events in each newsletter. If your agency is planning any online meetings, please send us the information so we can post it.

SAVE THE DATE for the 5th Annual Preventing Suicide: Help & Hope Conference, which will be held online Thursday, December 10 at 9am. Keynote Speaker Pablo Campos from Active Minds will share his insights about struggling with depression and addiction - and his road from attempting suicide to recovery. QPR Suicide Prevention Training will be available in English and Spanish. Registration coming soon.



Got Photos?

Send us your photos of Ventura County scenes and we'll share in future newsletters. As the county continues to adapt, we want to capture the changing landscape of our communities. We will give you credit too!



About

Supporting Health — Preventing Harm

Prevention Services works upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. Initiatives are aimed at limiting harms related to impaired driving; underage and binge drinking; marijuana and vaping, especially as it relates to harms to youth; prescription drug abuse; and addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations.

A primary goal is to delay the onset of first use of alcohol and or other drugs by youth. We collaborate with schools, parent groups, government agencies, medical partners, law enforcement, community-based organizations and more.

Contact Us

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*Erika is currently out on
maternity leave.*

*Share your stories with us.
Want us to feature you and*

*your work in the community?
Send an email to Alma!*

*Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez,
Community Services Coordinators,
pre-COVID-19.*



STAY CONNECTED

