

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 17 • March 2021



The March List

- Spring is coming. Warm weather and sunshine brighten our days.
- More people are getting vaccinated.
- Schools will open soon. Children will return to friends and classrooms.
- Life could return to 'near normal' by late summer, says Ventura County health officer.

March Awareness Calendar

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week®



March 22-28, 2021

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® links students with scientists and other experts to counteract the myths about drugs and alcohol that teens get from the internet, social media, TV, movies, music, or from friends. It was launched in 2010 by scientists at the [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#) to stimulate educational events in communities so teens can learn what science has taught us about drug use and addiction.

Teens may be seeking coping mechanisms to handle the increased stress that has come with many changes and challenges in their daily lives. Teens also need resources to develop the necessary skills to make informed decisions about their health.

Learn more:

[National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week®](#)

National Institute on Drug Abuse

Featured Agency: Promotoras y Promotores Foundation

Helping the Community

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 are featuring Maria-Felix Ryan, Executive Director/Promotora de Salud, Promotoras y Promotores Foundation (PYPF).



Promotoras y Promotores Foundation (PYPF) has served the Latino population in Ventura County for over 20 years. The

mission of Promotoras y Promotores Foundation is to outreach to identify individuals and families in their own communities who have health needs and link them with accessible, culturally appropriate and linguistically competent health services and to empower Ventura County's migrant, Spanish, Mixteco, and Indio individuals to improve their quality of life through education, preventive health care, and community action.

My personal experience as a Promotora brought me to Ventura County in 2005 supporting cancer patients in support groups and one-on-one listening to their concerns and advocating for them at the oncology clinic and St. John's Regional Medical Center. My passion has always been to assist those in need so they can have peace of mind, leading to better health outcomes. I know that Promotoras are the guiding light with knowledge of community, language, agency services, advocacy, and most of all communicating and listening to community and participant needs.

The past seven years focus of the organization has been to improve the wellness of families with the Conexión Program. They advocate for the participant; help find a medical home, food, shelter, clothing; refer to therapeutic services to manage their emotional state of mind; assist with paperwork and most of all accompany the person/family to appointments if necessary. They know that a warm hand-off is important because the person is afraid to attend alone.

The Paraprofessional Promotora provides emotional support one-on-one or in support group settings. They teach participants how to manage stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotions with breathing and physical exercises. They also use other methods to assist participant with problem solving and expression of emotions for themselves utilizing SODA and Conexión. Using SODA, the participant explores the Situation they are dealing with, explores Options by writing them down, discuss which of the options they feel will help with their situation and take Action.

This process has helped many individuals and families live healthier lives. Currently Paraprofessional Promotoras continue to provide support via telephone, in person visits and Zoom sessions.

Thank you Maria for sharing this wonderful resource with us!

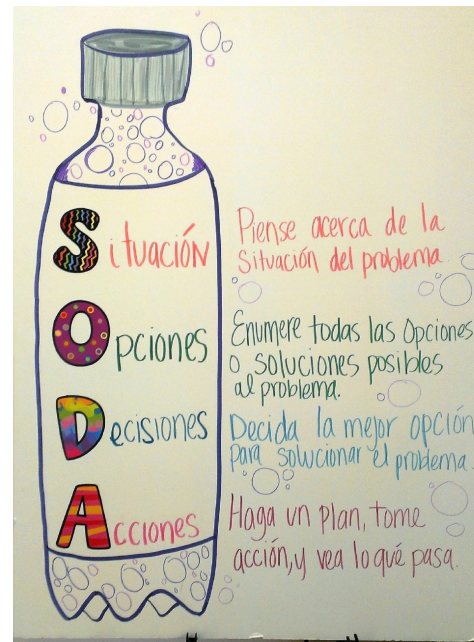
Learn more:

www.facebook.com/pypf01

Maria-Felix Ryan

Executive Director/Promotora de Salud

Promotoras y Promotores Foundation (PYPF)



Featured Resource: Truth Initiative

Youth Anti-Vaping Curriculum

A new national youth anti-vaping curriculum gives young people the facts about e-cigarettes and equips them with resources to quit.

Amid the nation's ongoing youth vaping epidemic, Truth Initiative launched a national youth anti-vaping curriculum called Vaping: Know the Truth, to guide teachers and empower teens who vape to quit, or to never start in the first place. The program is a 40-45 minute self-guided digital, interactive course with peer-to-peer instruction designed for high school students and available to teachers across grade levels.

Learn more:
[Youth Anti-Vaping Curriculum](#)
Truth Initiative
truthinitiative.org

Featured Resource: Mental Illness and Substance Use in Young Adults

Asking for Help



Millions of young adults are living with a mental or substance use disorder and many either do not realize they have one or are not paying attention to the signs and not seeking help. In fact, of the 8.9 million young adults who reported having a mental illness in 2018, more than 2 in 5 went untreated and of the 5.1 million with a substance use disorder, nearly 9 in 10 did not get treatment.

SAMHSA offers resources with information to help if you are concerned that you or someone in your life may have a mental or substance use disorder.

Learn more:
Wellness Every Day
www.wellnesseveryday.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov/young-adults
[See infographic](#)

Featured Partner: BRITE Connections

Expressions of Gender: Creating Safe Spaces for Youth

BRITE (Building Resilience & Inclusion Through Engagement) engages and educates Ventura County's youth on



BRITE
Building Resilience & Inclusion
Through Engagement

prevention and wellness topics. BRITE Connections, a free monthly livestream series open to youth ages 14+, brings together youth and adult experts in discussion on important issues. Expressions of Gender was the first BRITE Connections livestream event of 2021 and was held on January 28th. The event featured a performance of youth poetry and music titled “Stereotypes” and an expert panel of caring adults discussing gender expression and LGBTQ+ equity in schools within a Q&A format.

The event raised awareness about the negative effects on youth who feel excluded by and unable to express their gender identity due to the traditional binary views of gender roles and stereotypes that exist at home and at school. Youth that identify within this group are at an increased risk for many negative behavioral health outcomes including depression, suicide, and drug use. The event focused discussion on ways that teachers and parents can help support youth within this group.

Learn more:

[BRITE Connections - Expressions of Gender livestream event](#)

Event Review: 2021 Teens Kick Ash Conference

Erika Fernandez, SUS Prevention Services

The 2021 Teens Kick Ash Virtual Conference was held on February 23rd & 25th, this year's theme was Manipulation 101: Taking off the Mask. This conference is hosted annually by Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) in collaboration with Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH), Ventura County Public Health (VCPH), and BRITE for Ventura County middle school and high school youth on tobacco use education and prevention.



Teens Kick Ash is intended to develop the next generation of tobacco-free advocates by teaching youth about nicotine addiction and the e-product and tobacco industry's marketing strategies to attract young people. The keynote presentation was done by Bryan Coleman, from the Truth Initiative; two workshop sessions followed. Spanish and ASL translation services were offered.

The Truth Initiative is America's largest nonprofit public health organization committed to making tobacco use and nicotine addiction a thing of the past. Their representatives work with

today's youth to build a culture where young people reject smoking, vaping, and nicotine. Bryan Coleman, Senior Manager, Youth Leadership Development started the conference with some interactive activities to get the youth involved. His goal is to inspire and mobilize young people to serve as drivers of social change and empower individuals, coalitions, and organizations to act in their communities. The youth engagement team, Zina Ogunnaya & Zoe Moreau, shared the facts about smoking, vaping, and nicotine, the health effects, and tobacco industry's marketing strategies that attract young people and shared how youth can be advocates on these issues.

The second part of the conference was a collaborative presentation between Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) Substance Use Services-Prevention, Ventura County Public Health (VCPH) Tobacco Policy Program, and BRITE. I had the opportunity to give a short presentation on the risks of secondhand vaping. I talked about how secondhand smoke, in any form (smoking, vaping, tobacco, marijuana) can affect others; additionally, I shared our Vaping Historietas to highlight specifically how vaping can affect children and other family members.

VCPH Tobacco Policy Program then presented on the importance of Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing. They explained that healthy smoke-free apartments and condominiums are essential to good health for children and adults; and why a smoke-free policy is important for housing landlords and property managers to adopt. Lastly, BRITE presented on how youth can get involved locally and make a difference in their communities. They talked about their PhotoVoice project and the impact that it has had on students and the community. The work of several youth was shared as examples of what they can do to advocate on important issues in their community.

Learn more:

Secondhand Vaping historietas

English videos: www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Spanish videos: www.vapeoverificado.org

Shoutout: Look at You Being Awesome!

This month's shoutout goes to **Erika Fernandez**. Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator, presented at the Saving Lives Coalition in Camarillo this month, where the Chief of Police for Camarillo and several coalition members were present. Erika received praise for providing an excellent presentation on our VCBH Prevention Services community outreach efforts, substance use prevention information and the importance of cultural competency in reaching the community. She is a wonderful advocate for prevention and an invaluable



asset to the community.

Thank you Erika for your hard work and commitment in serving our community!

Helpful Resources

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 Limits

www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Responds

venturacountyresponds.org

Marijuana FactCheck

www.mjfactcheck.org

Vaping FactCheck

www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Social Determinants of Health

www.healthequityvc.org

Ventura County Behavioral Health

vcbh.org

Wellness Every Day

wellnesseveryday.org

Follow us on Social Media

www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits

twitter.com/vclimits

Ventura County Recovers - Vaccine Information

www.venturacountyrecovers.org/vaccine-information

Check out our Newsletters at

www.venturacountylimits.org/community-connections

www.healthequityvc.org/newsletters

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](#)

Calendar

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.

Equitable and Effective Enforcement of Smoke-Free Public Housing Policies

3/9/21, 2:00 PM, ET

Clean Air for All, Public Health Law Center, New York City Housing Authority.

[Register](#)

Understanding and Addressing the Social Determinants of Health in Prevention

3/10/21, 10:00 am, ET

CENTRAL EAST ATTC, MHTTC, AND PTTC WEBINAR

[Register](#)

Pain and Pot: The Facts about Opioids and Marijuana

3/10/21, 3:00 pm, PT

PTTC, Presenter- Roneet Lev, MD, FACEP

[Register](#)

Smoke Free Multi-Unit Housing Task Force Meeting

3/11/21, 11:00 am, PT

Contact: Shar.Busch@ventura.org

Connecting the Continuum - How Prevention and Social Determinants of Health Connect

3/24/21, 3:00 PM, ET

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

[Register](#)

Daily Cannabis Use During Pregnancy and Postpartum: Patient, Provider, and Budtender Perspectives

3/31/21, 12:00 pm, PT

NWATTC

[Register](#)

Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit Virtual

April 6-8, 2021

[Register](#)

Vaping: What Parents Need to Know

BRITE - contact BRITE to schedule a presentation

info@BRITEyouth.org

**There is much work
to be done to turn this
epidemic around.**

Register by
February 26 to
save \$150.



**Rx Drug Abuse
& Heroin Summit**

April 5–8, 2021

VIRTUAL

FEATURED PRESENTATION

Ready to be delivered live via webinar or in person!



Suitable for adults and families

VAPING

What parents need to know

Get informed about vaping facts, effects on our youth,
and the higher risk of COVID-19

Please contact BRITE to schedule this presentation, Spanish option available,
for individuals or groups: info@BRITEyouth.org or (805) 647-6422



**BRITE engages and educates Ventura County's youth & adults on
important health topics affecting our community. We are here for you.**

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 Us

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

Our newsletters are one way we stay connected to you. We have updated our websites and continue to add campaigns, publications, events and more, in hopes that you can bring back our Prevention messages to your agencies and communities.



Alma and Erika, our Community Outreach staff, continue to be in touch with you and we are working with our partners to share our work and efforts, despite the challenges we are all facing. Please continue to reach out to us, share your photos, Zoom meetings webinars and stories on how you are adapting and prospering in your communities.

Erika Fernandez, Erika.Fernandez@ventura.org

Alma Ixta, Alma.Ixta@ventura.org

Share your stories with us. Want us to feature you and your work in the community? Send an email to Alma or Erika!

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

STAY CONNECTED

