

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 42 • Fall 2024



Plática con Café: Breaking Cycles



In this episode of *Plática con Café: Breaking Cycles*, Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator, sits down with special guest Nicole Carrillo to talk about the power of substance use prevention through education,

outreach, and representation.

Nicole shares her inspiring journey of being accepted to medical school and becoming part of the 2% of Latinas in medicine—a testament to breaking barriers and paving the way for others to pursue their desired path to support community health outcomes.

They dive into how individual experiences and culturally relevant support can help disrupt cycles of substance use that often impact generations, empowering communities to create healthier futures.

So, grab your cafecito and enjoy!

YouTube

- www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4rXNL4ijM4ORKGKcHJ6vq5-D_Osimrc6
- www.youtube.com/@VenturaCountyLimits

Website

- www.venturacountylimits.org/community-conversations
 - www.venturacountylimits.org/platica-con-cafe
-



Words from Erika: Connecting with the Community

Sharing, Talking & Building





By Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator

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.

We offered presentations throughout the county on various prevention topics including opioids and fentanyl, marijuana and vaping, and alcohol and youth.

A few of the places we attended were: 50 Plus Expo, VCOE; 9th Annual Suicide Prevention Event; Adelante Comunidad Conejo; City of Thousand Oaks Safety Fair; Back to School Nights at Curren School, Richard Bard Elementary School, E.O. Green Junior High School, Sierra Linda Elementary School, Gateway Community School, and Ocean View School; Jornada Sabatina Mexican Consulate; La Cosecha Education and Mental Health Fair; Many Mansions Resource Fair; MICOP Comunitario Resource Fair; National Night Out Event, Santa Paula; Nyeland Acres Bike Rodeo; Swapmeet Justice, Oxnard College

You can stay in touch with us by watching our [Community Conversations video podcast series](#) and [Plática con Café](#).

Here are some Highlights:

During this quarter we slowed down a bit in our community outreach due to the summer and schools being out on break. I got to attend the **Nyland Acres Bike Rodeo** again this year and it was a great event. We had a lot of families that attended and stopped by our table to get information on vaping and medication safety. Another great event was the **Santa Paula National Night Out** on August 23rd. This event was very successful and many families attended. They had many resource tables, games for the kids, and free food for everyone. We were able to share information on marijuana, vaping, opioids, fentanyl, and medication safety.

For the month of September, we started attending several back-to-school nights and it was so great to be back full time in the community. One of the questions I get asked in the community is why we offer substance use prevention resources at our elementary schools. What I say is that we need to start our prevention conversations at a young age because substance use prevention is a process, it's not just that one talk we have with our kids about drugs and alcohol before they start middle school or high school, it's all the conversations we have with them about safety and coping skills since they are young.

I was able to witness such a great moment between a mother and daughter during one of the back-to-school nights this past month which reminds me of why I love being at community events. A middle school girl came up to my table with her mother and started to talk to me about the negative effects of vaping and how bad the vaping situation was in her school and shared some stories of her coming across friends that had offered her to vape. While her mom was looking at our resources she overhears her daughter talking about her experiences and looks at her with a surprised and worried face, because her daughter had not shared those experiences with her. The mother looked at me and said I will be taking these materials because we will talk about it more at home!

I was so happy that I was able to witness this because as parents we get caught up in the everyday parenting life routines and forget to have those small conversations with our children about how was school and what is going on at school and let's talk about your concerns.

These small everyday conversations are very important because that is where the prevention process starts.



Featured Partner: Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition

Opioid Awareness Memorial Walk Brings Community Together



August 4th marked a powerful moment of remembrance and action as the **Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition** teamed up with the Camarillo Marathon for the first **Saving Lives Opioid Awareness Memorial Walk**. This meaningful event not only honored the lives lost to opioid-related tragedies but also raised critical awareness of the ongoing opioid crisis.

Saving Lives Camarillo hosted an educational booth throughout the entire day at the Camarillo Marathon. Coalition members engaged in deep, meaningful conversations with attendees, fostering a connection with the community

and educating individuals on the dangers of opioid misuse. The event also marked the beginning of a new campaign for Saving Lives with the distribution of DETERRA at-home drug-disposal kits—a simple and safe method for disposing of unused, expired medications.

Under the warm California sun, the Saving Lives Camarillo team arrived in high spirits, proudly sporting custom event t-shirts, ready to take on the 5K walk. Their determination and dedication to the cause were evident as they crossed the finish line, securing a silver medal in the Team Competition and proudly claiming the team title of NUMBER ONE overall.

“This was more than just a walk,” said Szonja Vidosa, coalition coordinator for the Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition. “It was a tribute to those we’ve lost and a call to action for all of us to step up and confront the opioid epidemic head-on.”

The Coalition's message is straightforward: **Secure your medications and properly dispose of unwanted pills to promote a safe environment and healthier community!**



DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day October 26

Preventing Medication Misuse

The drug overdose epidemic in the United States is a clear and present public health, public safety, and national security threat. DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day reflects DEA's commitment to Americans' safety and health, encouraging the public to remove unneeded medications from their homes as a measure of preventing medication misuse and opioid addiction from ever starting.



Learn more:

www.dea.gov/takebackday

www.coastventuracounty.org/



October is Substance Use Prevention Month

Prevention Works!

- We aim to prevent substance use in the first place, prevent the progression of use, and reduce harms. And we have the prevention playbook to do so.
- Prevention science shows that prevention works.
- Prevention strengthens protective factors and reduces risk factors – in individuals, families, schools, communities, and society.
- Prevention helps us get ahead of substance use and mental health challenges – so that youth, families, and communities can thrive.
- Prevention Month lifts up the national conversation – to showcase prevention's positive effects on communities across the country.



Learn more:

A Proclamation on National Youth Substance Use Prevention Month. The White House, September 30, 2024. www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/09/30/a-proclamation-on-national-youth-substance-use-prevention-month-2024/

SAMHSA. www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/observances/substance-use-prevention-month



Champurrado - Holiday Treat

Seasonal Deliciousness



By Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator & Chef Extraordinaire

As the holiday season is approaching, parties, family gatherings, and many emotions and feelings arise with these months, it is important to continue to remind our loved ones what this time is really about. As parents, we have to stay on top of everything and make sure we have options and healthy alternatives that will make our holiday season fun, memorable, and alcohol and drug free.

Growing up my home was the house to be at, all my friends enjoyed coming over and hanging out all the time. The reason for this was because my house

was the house with the **best food**. My mom and aunt, who lived with us, always had something delicious, and my friends loved it. Now, as a mother, I strive to be that house, where my kids and their friends can have a safe, alcohol and drug-free place to have fun, hang out, and eat some amazing food. So if you are also trying to think of ways to keep that communication open with your kids and pride them with fun, healthy memories try out one of my favorite holiday drinks.

Champurrado is a traditional warm Mexican drink made with masa harina, milk, Mexican chocolate, piloncillo, and cinnamon together. When it's ready, champurrado is smooth, thick, chocolatey, and creamy! This seasonal drink is enjoyed during the holidays for breakfast or on a cold winter night. It is paired perfectly with some tamales or Mexican buñuelos.

Ingredients

- 4 cups of milk
- 2 oz of piloncillo or brown sugar
- 2 discs Mexican chocolate (I use the brand Abuelita)
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1½ cups of warm water
- ½ cup masa harina
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 pinch of salt

Instructions

- Add milk, piloncillo, Mexican chocolate, and cinnamon stick to a pot. Heat over low-medium heat until the piloncillo and chocolate have completely dissolved. Stir frequently to make sure nothing sticks to the bottom of the pot.
- Remove and discard the cinnamon stick, using a strainer if it has broken into pieces.
- In a bowl, add warm water and masa harina. Whisk together until the mixture is smooth.
- Add the masa harina mixture, vanilla extract, and salt to the saucepan. Whisk to combine.
- Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to low, and continue to cook, whisking frequently, for about 25 minutes or until it is thick, creamy, and smooth.

Now Go and Enjoy!



Staying in the Know - Some Research in the Field

Commercial interests contribute to drug use and addiction

- Commercial interests are an important component of the social determinants of addictive behaviors and disorders. Three of the four biggest industrial contributors to worldwide morbidity and mortality are alcohol, tobacco, and ultra-processed foods (the fourth being fossil fuels).

Learn more:

NIDA. 2024, September 26. Commercial interests contribute to drug use and addiction. Retrieved from nida.nih.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2024/09/commercial-interests-contribute-to-drug-use-addiction

Sober-Curious Young Americans May Be Changing the Conversation Around Alcohol

- According to data from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 68% of adults ages 21 and older in the United States drink alcohol. At the same time, researchers believe that the recent “sober-curious” movement may be encouraging some people to reevaluate their relationship with alcohol and the impact that drinking can have on their health.

Learn more:

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
www.spectrum.niaaa.nih.gov/fall2024feature

Recovery Month - 35 Years of Celebration and Commitment

By: Tom Coderre, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary



Read more:

www.samhsa.gov/blog/recovery-month-35-years-celebration-commitment



Highlight: Speak Up on Meth Campaign



Calendar - Care to Join

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

- **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 Informed



If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, campaigns and more.

Websites

- [Ventura County Limits](#)
- [COAST Ventura County](#)
- [Cannabis FactCheck](#)

Follow us on Social Media

- www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits
- twitter.com/vclimits

Check out our Newsletters

- [Community Connections 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!

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STAY CONNECTED



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