

Promoting Health Equity

Issue 24 • May 2022



**May is Asian American & Pacific Islander
Heritage Month**

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

During Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, our Nation recognizes the innumerable contributions, vibrant cultures, and rich heritage of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AA and NHPIs). As some of the fastest-growing racial and ethnic groups in the Nation, AA and NHPI communities represent a multitude of ethnicities, languages, and experiences that enrich America and strengthen our Union.

This month, we celebrate our fellow Americans from AA and NHPI communities and pay tribute to all they have done to help fulfill the promise of America for all. Together, let us recommit ourselves to building a country in which every American – regardless of who they are, where they come from, or what they look like – has an equal opportunity to thrive.

—President Biden, The White House, [*A Proclamation on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, And Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2022*](#)

Learn more:

[Fact Sheet: Celebrating Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2022 | HHS.gov](#)

[Asian Pacific American Heritage Month 2022](#)



Driver of Change: Interview with Elvia Hernandez, Project Esperanza



Every issue we feature stories of individuals and agencies that are making a difference in their communities. Today we are talking with Elvia Hernandez, Project Esperanza Coordinator. Elvia is a valuable and effective community health liaison and has been affecting change in Santa Paula for years now.

When did you get involved with your work at Proyecto Esperanza?

Elvia: In 2009 I was invited to work at Proyecto Esperanza. I didn't have much knowledge of this organization, but when they explained to me how important it was to take care of one's mental health, I became very interested. With the help of the team at the program, we began to prepare the plan to serve the Latino community. This project was based on the importance of focusing on the mental health needs in the Latino community.

What is your passion for working in the community?

Elvia: I believe we all have a mission in life, and mine is to help my community. I am passionate about helping the community and full of pride that I can do this. As human beings we must take care of each other and lead by example. Gaining people's trust is very important. I am interested in helping children, especially those

with special needs, and the elderly. For over 30 years I have worked with many people from whom I have learned something new every day.

How are you making a difference?

Elvia: Proyecto Esperanza has prevention programs for children, adolescents and the elderly. There is a commitment to educate our community on the importance of mental health. By creating workshops that explain how to identify when someone is experiencing symptoms of mental illness, we can encourage people to get help and to live a better quality of life. During the past two years of the pandemic we never stopped working in our community, using text, zoom, and phone calls. We offered vaccine clinics, masks, COVID tests, and support to the community.

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

Elvia: I would like to help break down the barriers that exist for people who speak Spanish, and to help people to ask for help when they need it most.

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

Elvia: My brothers came to this country, and eventually brought my parents and family members in the 1980's. I have three daughters and five grandchildren.

If you could give a closing remark for or words of inspiration for the community during this time, what would it be?

Elvia: When we work in benefit of the community, we must do it in an honest way and from the heart. People need to feel that they are important to us and to themselves. If we work together, and we join to help each other we can overcome any adversity. We are still going through difficult times in this pandemic, but it left us with a great lesson, to value our loved ones more and never forget the people who are no longer with us.

Thank you, Elvia, for sharing your experience with us. You are an inspiring Driver of Change!

Learn more:

[Project Esperanza](#)

Project Esperanza is at the service of the people of the Santa Clara Valley (Santa Paula, Fillmore, and Piru) helping you to connect to resources from the smallest to the greatest needs.



Spotlight: Just Not Worth It

Prevention Campaign



The newly launched “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.

View the websites and videos:

[English](#)

[Spanish](#)



May is Mental Health Awareness Month



Often, we think of health in physical terms, but mental wellness is just as important. Mental health plays a big role in our day-to-day mood and quality of life, which becomes very obvious when we're feeling sad, stressed, or anxious. But it also is apparent when we're feeling happy, calm, and confident.

So, this May, let's celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month by paying closer attention to our mental health, and doing more of the things that keep us mentally well!

Learn more:

[Wellness Tips - Wellness Every Day](#)



Partner Resources

Black D.C. neighborhoods have greater marketing for flavored tobacco products, including cigars

Research found young people living in areas with lower incomes, higher proportions of racial and ethnic minorities, and higher smoking rates had more than seven times higher odds of being exposed to flavored tobacco marketing and nearly triple the odds of seeing any tobacco marketing compared to those living outside such communities.

Read the article:

[Truth Initiative](#)

HHS's New Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefit Resources Will Help People Seeking Care to Better Understand Their Rights

"The parity law is a critical component to accessing lifesaving treatment for those with mental health conditions and substance use disorders, and the publications issued today will help ensure that individuals are aware of this important law and its protections," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh.

Read the article:

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)



Stay Connected

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

Social Determinants of Health

www.healthequityvc.org

Ventura County Limits

www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Behavioral Health

vcbh.org



Nominate a Driver of Change

To nominate a community member or colleague for recognition for exemplary work in the community please use the button below. You may also nominate yourself! We would love to hear your stories of community change, what inspired you, and how you are making a difference.



Learn more:

Social Determinants of Health, Drivers of Change

www.healthequityvc.org/drivers-of-change

About Us

Supporting Health - Preventing Harm

Ventura County Behavioral Health, Substance Use Services - Prevention, 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 and community-based organizations.



Contact Us

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STAY CONNECTED

