

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 2 • May 2020



## Connecting with our Community Making a Difference

We are involved in outreach in our Ventura County communities, educating and increasing awareness about the risks and realities of alcohol and drug misuse and abuse. Typically, we are out and about, meeting people in your communities, sharing our publications and giving presentations to community groups and parents. During this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, we want to continue our connection with everyone. Talking about substance use risks is important during these times and helping to connect people with resources. Please continue to contact us about ways we can meet and talk to each other, through phone contact, online meetings and more. This is a new way for us to stay in touch, and for you to have a way to share your stories and photos with us.

*Photos: Huntsinger Park by Roland Roberts. Healthy Habits campaign poster.*

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## Message from Alma

I know that everyone's lives have been impacted by COVID-19. It has impacted me in my personal life, my family and my work in the community. A

few months ago, everything seemed to be going smoothly, just the “normal” day to day challenges that we all face, and then my life was turned upside down it seems.

I began working from home, and then as of April 3rd, I was reassigned to work at the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) where I was involved as part of our county’s COVID-19 emergency response efforts. It really opened my eyes up to the impact on our county. I wanted to share my feelings and my story because like me, there are many others in our county whose lives have been changed and who have needed to find a way to cope and deal with everything going on around us. In my new role as a hospital screener I was scared, not so much for me but for my family. I feared getting infected and bringing it home to my loved ones. The last week I was working at the hospital I developed symptoms and was referred over to the hospital testing site. Thankfully, my test came back negative and I was sent back to my regular Prevention position.



That was my case, but I can only imagine the many essential workers that must continue their work in the front lines with the same fear as I had. I think that it is even more important now to share how we are coping, how our coping impacts our families, and how we can all help each other during these times. I urge everyone to please follow all rules imposed during these COVID-19 times. At times we may feel like it’s too much or that things are getting better, so we may stop following the rules. Truth is, no one knows when it will get better, but if we all do our part, we will get there sooner.

I miss the days when we all were out serving our community that we all care for and love, but now we need to get creative so we can continue helping and serving our most vulnerable populations. They need us in so many ways and as we get back to work and try to get used to our new “normal” let’s keep in mind our most vulnerable community that will need so much help to get back on their feet. We will need to be their advocates and find new and better ways to help and serve our community.

*Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinators at work.*

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## Message from Erika

As a Community Services Coordinator, I wrote last time about the

challenges with working from home as a parent with young children. Today I want to share the importance of medication safety.

We usually don't think of locking up our medication just as we would lock up a large amount of cash or expensive jewelry, but it is important to stop and think about where we keep our medications. Medication safety at home is an important subject to me because I have a 4-year old at home who loves to explore everything.

I grew up in a Mexican household where medication was easily available to anyone in the household, especially when my grandmother moved in with us, she had all her medications out in the open in the nightstand next to her bed. I never thought of this as being wrong or even dangerous until one day my daughter took a pill she found on the dresser, thankfully it was a Pepto-Bismol pill. At first, I panicked, then found the wrapper and second pill that comes in the pack; I quickly googled the side effects for a 2-year old taking Pepto-Bismol and was relieved to find out she would be completely fine. The pink pill looked like a candy to her and was at her reach. It was then when I came to the realization that I was being careless, that pill could have been something fatal for her, it could have been any of the very strong medications my grandmother takes for pain or anxiety.

We know pills are dangerous for small children and as parents we try to keep them safe; however, we live in a busy society where we are always in a rush that we forget about the small things: work, school, baseball practice, maybe a second job, etc. It only takes a few minutes to talk about it with your family and educate them on the dangers of pills and medication safety, not just for your small children but for your teenagers and all other family and friends. I don't have a lock box for our medication at home but we do have a designated place that is out of my children's reach and out of sight for my children and visitors; it is not easily available.

Check out our website to learn more about medication safety and disposal at [venturacountyresponds.org/en/safety-at-home](https://venturacountyresponds.org/en/safety-at-home)

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## Featured Website

Check out our Ventura County Responds website and share the "Let's Talk About Opioids" Video with your partners. This website is an overview of how we are addressing the opioid crisis in Ventura County.



Ventura County Responds website at [venturacountyresponds.org](https://venturacountyresponds.org)

Let's Talk About Opioids - Grandma video at

[vimeo.com/366332403](https://vimeo.com/366332403)

Let's Talk About Opioids - Grandma video (with Spanish subtitles)  
at [vimeo.com/366333279](https://vimeo.com/366333279)

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## Resources

**Building Healthy Habits - How are we coping?**

[habits.vcbh.org](https://habits.vcbh.org)

[habitos.vcbh.org](https://habitos.vcbh.org)

**For help to stop vaping call 805-201-STOP**

**For Substance Use Treatment Services call Ventura County  
Access Line at 1-844-385-9200**

**Ventura County Coronavirus Information**

[www.vcemergency.com](https://www.vcemergency.com)

**Learn how to cope during coronavirus**

[www.wellnesseveryday.org/coping-during-coronavirus](https://www.wellnesseveryday.org/coping-during-coronavirus)

**Vaping FactCheck Ventura County**

[www.vapingfactcheckvc.org](https://www.vapingfactcheckvc.org)

**Substance Use Resources**

[vcbh.org/en/information-resources/substance-use-resources](https://vcbh.org/en/information-resources/substance-use-resources)

**Ventura County Human Services Agency**

[www.ventura.org/human-services-agency](https://www.ventura.org/human-services-agency)

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## Featured Agency - Friday Night Live

**Continuing the Work - Even at a Distance**

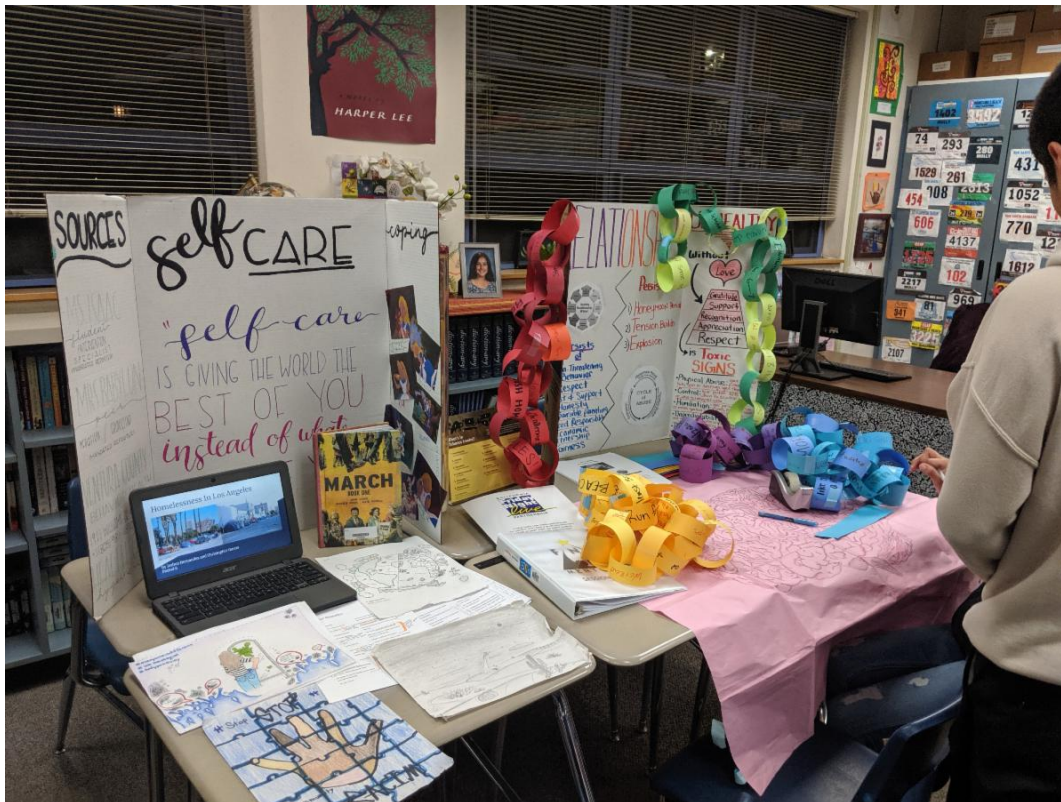
Friday Night Live (FNL) is a statewide program that provides opportunities for young people to build skills and create positive change in their schools and communities. Given current public health orders to Stay Safe at Home, all Ventura County School districts closed in March 2020, and will not be resuming classes for the remainder of the 19/20 school year.

With most of our Ventura County FNL chapters being school-based, this would certainly affect the ability of chapters to meet. However, our Ventura County Office of Education FNL staff and FNL advisors across the county quickly established alternate meeting and communication methods to allow youth work through FNL to continue. Utilizing virtual meeting environments, youth-led projects were able to continue to provide meaningful participation and opportunities for FNL youth. FNL chapter



meetings, special guest presentations, and high-level capacity building for youth have all been able to continue through online meetings and distance collaboration.

Gabe Teran  
Operations Specialist, Friday Night Live  
Comprehensive Health and Prevention Programs  
Ventura County Office of Education



**california FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE MEETING**

- ✓ **Welcome & Intros**  
- You are part of history!
- ✓ **Friday Night Live - Lived!**  
- Spotlight: MARIO
- ✓ **Chapters In Action**  
- Spotlight: TARA
- ✓ **Leadership Online**  
- Hint: We've been waiting for you
- ✓ **Closing Connections**  
- CYC, This is just the beginning

**CALIFORNIA Friday Night live PARTNERSHIP**

**FRIDAY NIGHT live**

**CYC Friday Night live**

## Upcoming Events

We will keep you posted on upcoming events, trainings and meetings in each Newsletter. If your agency is planning any type of online meetings, please send to us so we can post this.

## NAMIWalks Ventura County 2020!

May 30, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Virtual Program Begins at 10:00 am

[namiventura.org/walk](http://namiventura.org/walk)

## Webinar - Health at Risk: Policies Are Needed to End Cigarette, Marijuana, and E-cigarette Secondhand Smoke in Multi-Unit Housing in Los Angeles

Wednesday, May 20, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (CHPR)

[Register for the Webinar](#)

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## Share your Photos

Send us photos of Ventura County scenes (be sure to get permission if people's faces are in the images) and we'll share in future newsletters.

*Photo: Costco social distancing line by Roland Roberts.*



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## Contact Us

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STAY CONNECTED

