

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Santa Ynez Valley Youth Coalition

**VALLEY YOUTH COALITION RECEIVES AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (AMA)
GRANT TO COMBAT ABUSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

Solvang-The Santa Ynez Valley Youth Coalition (Coalition), in collaboration with the Buellton Medical Center, is one of thirty community based organizations across 19 states that recently were awarded an \$8,000 grant by the American Medical Association.

This "Healthy Living Grant" from the AMA is designed to address the serious threat across the nation and in our own community that is posed by the misuse of prescription medication.

Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the United States according to a 2012 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mary Conway, Valley Youth Coalition Director, said that, "(M)any local residents think that prescription drug abuse by youth is a problem in other communities but not here. However that is clearly not the case. A recent Coalition survey of teens conducted at the local high school showed that 66% of those surveyed, believed that their peers are using prescription drugs to get high. When asked why they thought teens might use these drugs, the most frequent response given by those surveyed was 'to relieve stress and to have fun'."

Conway said that Lois Craig, former Director of the Coalition, has been engaged to coordinate the work to be performed under the AMA grant. Craig will be working very closely with Myra

Howard, Family Nurse Practitioner and owner of the Buellton Medical Center, and the Center's staff. This collaboration with the Medical Center is intended to strengthen efforts to recruit the Valley's medical professionals to the effort of educating both youth and adults regarding the harmful effects of Rx drug abuse.

“(I)t is critical to our local drug abuse prevention efforts that our community leaders in the Coalition and local doctors are on the same page in regard to the harm prescription drugs can cause when used inappropriately, stated Conway. We want to furnish our youth and their families with a consistent message to educate and prevent this harmful form of drug abuse.”

The AMA Healthy Living grant provides funds for the Coalition to create and run public service announcements on local English and Spanish radio stations and on social media outlets.

Additionally, the Coalition will produce informational materials that will be distributed to parents, schools, and the medical and faith communities.

The grant will also provide funding to produce a local conference, scheduled in late spring, designed to provide information, intervention strategies, and referral resources for the prevention and treatment of underage prescription drug abuse. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for professionals will be offered for those attending the conference.

The Youth Coalition is operated under the auspices of People Helping People and focuses on reducing underage substance abuse in the Santa Ynez Valley. The Buellton Medical Center is a locally owned, full service family medical practice. For more information, please contact Mary Conway at 686-0295 or email Mary@syvphp.org.