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***Cinco de Mayo* at Del Sol Park is a family affair. People dance traditional Mexican dances, listen to live Mexican music, and watch their children play.**

Taking Back

CINCO DE MAYO



CINCO DE MAYO means different things to different people.

To the Latino community, it is a celebration of cultural identity, ethnic pride, and freedom. It commemorates the Battle of Puebla, a city in central Mexico, where on May 5, 1862, the outnumbered Mexican Army defeated the French. Although the holiday is not a major celebration in Mexico, it has become an American tradition.

To the alcohol industry, *Cinco de Mayo* is an opportunity to sell its products. The holiday is the cornerstone of a marketing campaign that targets Latinos. In recent years, the domestic alcohol industry has developed a strategy that promotes *Cinco de Mayo* and increases advertising in Spanish—language media, including radio, television, magazines, and neighborhood newspapers. Mexican brewers, such as Tecate, have also invested significant amounts of money in *Cinco de Mayo* advertising, according to Vicky Gonzales, program coordinator for Oxnard's Coalition for Community Development in the La Colonia neighborhood.

"The alcohol advertising associated with *Cinco de Mayo* saturates the Latino community and demeans Latino culture. In addition, she says, the advertising exacerbates alcohol-related health problems that Latinos experience in today's society. Some of these problems include liver disease and cirrhosis of the liver, which are the sixth and seventh leading causes of death among Latinos," says Gonzales.

In an effort to "take back our holiday," community leaders in La Colonia—including representatives of the Oxnard Police Department, Latino churches, Friday Night Live, and others sponsor an alcohol-free *Cinco de Mayo* celebration. It takes place in Oxnard's Del Sol Park, in the heart of La Colonia, and it has been a fixture in the area since 1993.

"We want to give people an alternative," says Gonzales. "We want get away from the stigma of every party being a drinking party." Not only is the celebration an alcohol-free event; organizers also ask people not to smoke.

Cinco de Mayo at Del Sol Park is a family affair. People dance traditional Mexican dances, listen to live Mexican music, and watch their children play. They visit information booths where they learn about preventing social ills such as AIDS, teen pregnancies, and alcohol and other drug problems. They can also purchase Mexican food from non-profit organizations that are invited to use the *Cinco de Mayo* celebration as a fund-raiser. A children's parade is part of the festivities.

Coalition members promote the celebration by passing out fliers in the neighborhood and by using word of mouth. They also advertise with a local

**FRIDAY
NIGHT**

Live

Latino radio station. The first year the event drew 1,000 people, and attendance has climbed every year since. The Coalition estimates that 6,000 to 7,000 people came to the celebration last year. A survey showed that people came from as far away as Los Angeles, Simi Valley, and even Orange County. At first, the alcohol-free celebration was in competition with a *Cinco de Mayo* event sponsored by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. According to Gonzales, the Chamber of Commerce was a "full-blown" carnival. It featured music on two stages, alcohol, Mexican food, and even carousels and bumper cars.

"They had alcohol and they had problems associated with it," says Gonzales. "They had to limit drinking to beer gardens to keep it under control."

Gonzales describes the process of getting people to support an alcohol-free celebration.

"We went toe-to-toe with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce," she says. "It was: 'who could get more people at the event?' We did ours for one reason—to let everybody know that you don't need alcohol, especially at cultural events."

The Coalition's celebration has been such a success that the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce no longer organizes a *Cinco de Mayo* celebration.

The success of Santa Paula's alcohol-free *Cinco de Mayo* last year has encouraged the Santa Paula Family Resource Center to make it an annual event. Over 250 people showed up for the family-oriented celebration. Center director Martin Hernandez says that the idea is to keep ticket prices low so that all community members can enjoy the event.

The experiences in Santa Paula and at Del Sol Park in Oxnard are not isolated events in the state of California. Many communities have decided that this important holiday has been marred by such negative factors and opted to plan alcohol-free *Cinco de Mayo* events in their communities for the past several years.

Leaders of numerous organizations have joined together to form a statewide campaign called *Cinco de Mayo Con Orgullo: Nuestra Cultura*

safe place for families to celebrate *Cinco de Mayo*.

In addition, community activists in Pomona, California, a city east of Los Angeles, have participated in the statewide campaign since 1998. The Pomona Community Wellness Partnership helped organize a grassroots mobilization effort that included community education, media advocacy, alliance building, and lobbying the local government. For a detailed report of the Pomona experience, see *Case Histories in Alcohol Policy*, a publication of the San Francisco-based Trauma Foundation. Supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Case Histories* is available at no charge online at www.tf.org/tf/alcohol/ariv/ or by calling the Trauma Foundation at 415/821-8209.

The California Friday Night Live Partnership has joined the *Cinco de Mayo Con Orgullo 2001* campaign and is funding Friday Night Live programs in three counties to initiate a youth-driven process to plan and organize alcohol-free *Cinco de Mayo* community efforts. The project is intended to demonstrate and test youth development principles directed toward this specific purpose. Activities are youth led and driven and conducted in partnership with other community efforts.

Friday Night Live is a statewide program that partners young people with adults to engage youths as active leaders and resources in their communities. FNL provides supportive environments and meaningful opportunities to assist young

people in becoming *problem-free and fully prepared*—free of alcohol, tobacco, and drug-related problems, and fully prepared as competent and healthy adults.

Annette Preciado works with Friday Night Live as a project specialist with the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office. She says that youth involvement with the alcohol-free *Cinco de*



Mayo celebrations is ongoing, "not just for the day." Youths are encouraged to participate in organizing and promoting the celebrations long before *Cinco de Mayo* arrives. They enter into partnerships with a community agency and work together in planning an alcohol-free event. This gives them the opportunity to build leadership and advocacy skills through organizing, planning, and public speaking.

FNL youths partner with the Oxnard Coalition in organizing their annual *Cinco de Mayo Tardeada*. And coalition members are helping the youths in a media campaign, which includes writing letters to the editor, producing public service announcements for television and radio, and making presentations to community groups. Youths will engage their teachers and peers in the issues surrounding *Cinco de Mayo* and alcohol. There is even a youth council where the teenagers exchange ideas and then act as representatives to the community.

"It's all about youth development," says Preciado. "Many think that youth are usually the problem. We want to show that they can be resources themselves."

One goal of the statewide *Cinco de Mayo con Orgullo* campaign is to convince city governments to proclaim an alcohol-free day on *Cinco de Mayo* and to ban alcohol from public parks on that day. In April, the youth from Friday Night Live will speak in front of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in an effort to get the legislation approved.

Preciado believes that youth advocates are effective.

"I think with the students in the forefront, people are going to have to listen. These are our kids talking," she says.


Gonzales welcomes them. She and others in the Coalition are anxious to work with the statewide campaign. They are hopeful that alcohol-free *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations become common.

"We don't want *Cinco de Mayo* to turn into another St. Patrick's Day," she says.



no se Vende (*Cinco de Mayo* with Pride: Our Culture Is Not For Sale) to bring back respect for the holiday. The CalPartners Coalition, California Latino Leadership United for Healthy Communities, and many other local organizations from around the state are working toward an environmentally

WHAT'S THE MESSAGE . . . OUTDOORS?

 THE CITY OF MOORPARK has decided that children on the way to school should not have to look at billboards advertising alcoholic beverages. The city of Oxnard has been asked to adopt a similar policy to keep jumbo-sized messages about alcohol from the eyes of kids.

Alcohol advertising on billboards has become an issue in Ventura County just as it has in many other parts of California and the nation.

Moorpark adopted a billboard ordinance in 1999. A similar proposal has been pending before the Oxnard City Council since late last year, reflecting a growing impatience with the kind of messages beamed from billboards in areas where children congregate. Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego all have adopted restrictions on billboards advertising alcohol or tobacco or both.

Billboard ordinances have not had smooth sailing, encountering resistance from the outdoor advertising industry and from alcohol and tobacco companies. Court decisions over the years have sought to clarify how local government powers can be used to restrict exposure of children to alcohol and tobacco ads without creating conflicts with principles of free speech that apply to advertising.

Antonio Garcia, an alcohol environmental spe-

cialist with El Concilio del Condado de Ventura, believes fear of a lawsuit has dampened enthusiasm for the ordinance before the Oxnard City Council. Garcia says the proposed ordinance is an outgrowth of a conference held in March 2000 to identify alcohol and other drug problems in Ventura County and devise strategies to reduce them. The conference brought together community members and representatives of agencies and organizations concerned with health and social services.

Underage drinking was identified at the conference as a major problem in the Oxnard area.

Police have found in "decoy" operations that one out of three alcohol outlets in some neighborhoods is willing to sell alcohol to minors. Drinking is also highly evident

among youths in gangs. Research has shown that advertising shapes the attitudes of children toward alcohol even before they have an opportunity to try it.

"There is support on the Council for the ordinance, and the mayor is very supportive," says Garcia. "But there is a fear that the city might be sued if the ordinance is passed.

"The proposed Oxnard ordinance is similar to those in some other cities in that it would ban advertising of alcoholic beverage on billboards within 1,000 feet of schools, playgrounds, places

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of worship, childcare centers and other places where children congregate. It goes a step further, however, in extending the restrictions of billboards 1,000 feet from agricultural fields."

What prompted extending the proposed ban to agricultural areas, Garcia says, is the presence of Spanish-language billboards advertising a Mexican beer and referring to its "vitamin" content, "These workers get tired and thirsty working in the fields all day and are being told by these billboards that beer will be good for their health," he says.

El Concilio del Condado de Ventura is a non-profit Latino advocacy and service organization devoted to improving the quality of life of the Ventura County Latino community and the community at large. Its alcohol and drug-prevention work is funded in part by Ventura County's Alcohol and Drug Programs and by a grant from the California Endowment.

Moorpark, a city of 30,000 population in south-east Ventura County, has an ordinance on the books that bans outdoor alcohol and tobacco advertising within 1,500 feet of school playgrounds, recreational facilities, childcare centers, and other places where children gather. Patrick Hunter, the mayor of Moorpark, says he wrote the ordinance himself and it sailed through the City Council with no opposition.

"The fact is that we had only one billboard in our city," he says. "Children would have to walk past the billboard to get to school, and alcohol and tobacco ads would rotate on the billboards. We were sending the kids an inconsistent message. On the one hand, they receive the DARE program in our fifth and eighth grades at school to help build their resistance to drugs and alcohol, and on the other hand, they were walking past this billboard telling them that alcohol and tobacco were great things."

The Moorpark City Council not only voted to adopt the billboard ordinance but for good measure took the necessary legal steps to remove the city's only billboard altogether. After an independent calculation of what the billboard was worth to

the company that owned it, says Mayor Hunter, the city paid for it and tore it down.

As local governments explore ways to reduce exposure of children to alcohol advertising, research has been accumulating which bolsters the argument that this is a worthwhile endeavor. Laurie Lieber, director of the Center on Alcohol Advertising in Berkeley, testified before the Los Angeles City Council that alcohol ads are worming their way into the consciousness of youngsters.

A 1996 survey by the Center found that more children to 11 years of age could recall the slogan associated with the Budweiser frogs than that for Smokey the Bear or Tony the Tiger. In a 1998 study asking 800 children aged 6 to 17 about their favorite TV commercials, more of them named commercials for Budweiser beer than any other. Still another study found that children with the greatest awareness of beer advertising had more favorable beliefs about drinking, a greater knowledge of beer brands and slogans, and increased intention to drink as adults.

Q&A WITH ED MACIAS

Ed Macias is the regional director of the Santa Barbara Office of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, which has jurisdiction over Ventura County and the southern part of Santa Barbara County

How can community groups get involved with the ABC in order to gain some control over alcohol outlets in their neighborhoods?

A. ABC is just a phone call away. Once the group has taken the time to review what we send them and if people still have concerns, then one of our investigative personnel or I can meet with them to educate them on a personal basis. They usually want to discuss a number of different scenarios. As things move along, maybe they will protest one or two situations. They may not win, but they'll get an idea of how the process works and discover that there are places where they can be heard. Sometimes, they can actually see a result for their efforts. Maybe both parties can come to the table and find a mutual area that they all agree on.

We have limited investigative personnel at ABC—we're not a very large organization. We have to rely on the eyes and ears of others in order to identify problematic locations. The most useful is the local police department. But, like many things in law enforcement, resources are spread pretty thin, so then we have to rely on others, such as coalitions and the folks who live in neighborhoods 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Some people complain and stop at that. Others get organized and find that there are rules and regulations available to them, so they can do more than just call the police. In some cases, the problem is just a licensee who does not know that he's causing a problem for the neighborhood. In those cases basic solutions involve a contact from the ABC explaining that this is not just the complaint

of one person, it's the complaint of a community. Sometimes that first contact is all that is needed to take care of the problem, but other times it has to be taken one step higher.

We find that if one coalition learns the process and becomes a success story—they dedicate all their resources to ensuring a place gets denied a license and they win—other communities see those success stories and identify with the same problems. We see a domino effect. It empowers groups to know that they have a voice.



What kind of information does the ABC need in order to control certain outlets that are already established and are problems for the community?

A. Once we evaluate what the problem is, we may ask the community for additional documentation and paperwork, although not all instances require documentation. It becomes part of the training process, learning what documentation is necessary. What is most important is to make sure that we're all on the same page. It's not uncommon for us to meet with neighborhood groups at a home and explain the whole process so they all can get the same paperwork and use the same approach.

When community members become part of the process, they become strong advocates for us. At

the same time, the community has to realize that the government agencies like ABC and the police can regulate alcohol outlets, but can only go so far. We need the support of the community. We all would like to have problems taken care of. Unfortunately, due process is time consuming, so some of our training explains those requirements so communities don't have unrealistic expectations. Those who come to understand the process understand our limitations.

How does the ABC treat special-event licenses?

A. One of our primary missions is to administer the provisions of the ABC in a manner that fosters and protects the health, safety, and welfare along with the economic well-being of the community in which that event is going to be held. To achieve that goal when a special event is scheduled, first we work with the local law-enforcement agency to ensure that the resources for the event are available.

We also turn our attention to community coalitions. One good example is the Ventura County Strawberry Festival. I've seen it grow from a little bazaar on the Peninsula to a two-day event that draws at least 200,000 people to College Park. Community groups and local authorities become very involved in this event.

In Oxnard a law enforcement/community partnership received a grant to offer training to the licensees of these large events. Now anyone who will be serving alcohol, hired or volunteer, must go through server training taught by the city that is hosting the special event. The city has developed their own program based on the ABC server-training program, modified to suit their needs. For example, training they developed is taught in Spanish.

The number of specialevent permit requests in Ventura County is quite high. We have noticed that communities have a heightened awareness of these

events. While residents realize that economically it's great, they also know that events do present problems, including people who enjoy themselves and fail to be responsible about drinking and driving. So, they have mandated that event organizers train servers to give them the tools they need to judge when to stop serving. The groups that support these programs help out the local law-enforcement agency as well as protect themselves.

The community needs to reserve some patience and choose their battles. They just need to stay educated.

In what other ways have the ABC and community groups worked together to reduce problems?

A. Some coalitions have asked us to deal with specific problematic locations for things such as noise. Residents identified premises that weren't totally bad but were heading in that direction. We contacted

locals to confirm that the locations were becoming a problem, so we put some of our resources there and stopped these operations from getting out of control.

We've had a few of these success stories, as I call them. When you review the paperwork in the file, you can see that it originated from a coalition informing us about a particular location. Coalitions do a lot of other things. They work hard to control the areas that are highly concentrated, with licenses and, in a sense, patrol the area. They become the eyes and ears for the local law enforcement and us. The same licensee that knows that the ABC can't be there all the time also knows that they have a community to work with. That keeps them on the straight and narrow.

We have even seen coalitions develop because of one particular problem. We would confront their problem and solve it and then the coalition would disappear. But now groups stay intact. It's helped us educate not only that coalition but also the people they are in close contact with, like those who live in the same household or neighborhood. It's a good idea to get the community involved in

problem solving. When they do get involved, they understand the limitations of the agencies that are there to help them. At the same time, they find that the ABC is not there just for them—we have to pay attention to those applying for the licenses, too. The community needs to reserve some patience and choose their battles. They just need to stay educated.

Ventura County has participated in the Geographic Information Services mapping project to identify the locations of certain alcohol-related problems, such as arrests for public intoxication and driving under the influence. Has the ABC used GIS maps to identify problematic locations?

A. Maps of problems have helped out with pointing out concentrations of alcohol-related arrests. Sometimes the maps just confirm what everybody already knew, which helps create a basis for any action that needs to be taken. Other times, the maps tell us something we didn't know. Overall, such maps make people aware of the big picture.

ABC is governed by an overconcentration statute based on the government's ratio of off-sales locations to population; the total number of off-sales locations to the total number of people living in that census tract, which is a portion of the county, must be no more than a ratio of 1:500. Based on the number of licenses Sacramento has registered, if the ratio is over what it should be, then the area is overconcentrated. Applicants for that area must go to the city council or board of supervisors to get a letter of public convenience for necessity.

GIS maps give a different view. They let us see things much closer at the neighborhood level. Otherwise we have to live by certain dictates and statutes and that's just dealing with numbers and papers. All these measures filter down to knowing what is going on and taking preventative measures. In an effort to save a lot of time and resources, we'd like to prevent problems before we have them.

Working to Improve

the Environment for Ventura's Gay and Lesbian Community

 FIVE YEARS AGO THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY CENTER IN VENTURA COUNTY formed a

LesBiGay Coalition to address environments within their community that contribute to alcohol and other drug-related problems. With funding from the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department's Alcohol and Drug Programs, the Coalition has taken on a range of issues, from home party policies to fund-raising policies of gay and lesbian community-based agencies.

It has also tackled problem alcohol outlets that cater to gay, lesbian, and bisexual clientele, especially those nearby the GLCC. Coalition members worked with owners and managers of gay bars encouraging them to implement responsible hospitality policies aimed at reducing problems related to alcohol sales and service. Additionally, they set up and implemented a series of policies to make local Pride festivals "alcohol-safe" events. Putting their money where their mouth is, the GLCC also implemented a no-use policy for events held at the Center.

For the last year and a half, the LesBiGay Coalition has worked to improve the school environment for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered youths. Faced with a homophobic and often hostile environment, these youths are at risk for a number of problems, including alcohol and other drug use, dropping out, and even suicide.

"We have a high rate of school dropouts, usually the result of harassment and violence at school," said Bruce Bradley, public relations and

policy director of the GLCC and the LesBiGay Coalition Coordinator. "The stress that comes with this environment leads many youth to alcohol and drugs"

According to Bradley, a recent survey by GLCC of gay and lesbian youths found that 69 percent began drinking before age 16, nearly half have tried crystal meth, and 40 percent have tried cocaine. The survey also found that 63 percent have been harassed in school, with 40 percent experiencing physical harassment. At one point the majority of the GLCC youth group have dropped out of school, saying that ongoing harassment was a primary reason for their decision to leave school.

"In the past, most of these kids did not report this harassment," says Bradley. "They usually just dropped out of school and withdrew into unhealthy lifestyles. We need policies . . . enforced policies that create safe and harassment-

free environments for all students. We want GLBT kids to be free to learn and grow and mature in a safe school setting."

GLCC helped current and former students form a group to work against discrimination. Called the Youth Empowerment Project, over 150 high school students and recent graduates in Ventura talk weekly about their experiences—at school, at home, and in the community.

And starting on January 1, 2000, a new law in California meant that things would start to change for gay and lesbian students, who were

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afforded the same protections from harassment, either verbal or physical, as other groups of students. AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, says, "all students of public schools have the inalienable right to attend campuses that are safe, secure, and peaceful."

AB 537's authors said: "As a society we all pay the price when young people are assaulted and told in subtle and not-so-subtle ways that their lives are worthless. This bill simply ensures that all students have access to an education free from intimidation, violence, and fear." They pointed out that violence is the number one cause of death in California's young people, and that the fastest-growing violent crime is hate crime. Thus, "it is incumbent upon us to ensure that all students attending public school in California are protected from potentially violent crime." It continues with a list of protected categories, including sexual orientation.

Once the legislature passed the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, the focus turned toward alerting schools of the changes and helping them integrate the provisions of the new law into their administrative and school-board policies.

"That (AB 537) really gave us a tool that we could use that would make school districts more willing and cooperative in making changes," said Bradley. "Without that law, I don't know that we could really do much. With AB 537 our job is to make sure that it's implemented."

"It's a long process. You can't change the school climate overnight," Bradley said. "But we are taking steps to do that."

Don Austin, a lawyer and employee of the Ventura Unified School District who provides general counsel for legal issues, is also working to implement change, in his case, from a legal standpoint. As the Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act has been in effect for over a year now, schools that fail to comply with their new responsibilities, especially once advised, leave themselves vulnerable to legal action.

"As part of our normal anti-harassment training in our school district, we go around to each school and do harassment and anti-harassment training in all categories—race, religion, gender—making a special point to discuss why sexual orientation is a legal problem for schools," Austin said. "The reason it's a problem is that with the other protected categories I think, generally, schools nationwide do a fairly good job of taking care of kids."

In May 2000 the LesBiGay Coalition conducted a five-hour diversity workshop focusing on GLBT harassment in Ventura County School and how it relates to alcohol and other drug use and related problems among gay and lesbian students. Over 30 people representing six high schools, four youth agencies, and the County Superintendent of Schools attended the workshop. This meeting opened the door for more work within the Ventura schools.

Safety became the most important priority for the principal of Ventura's Buena High School when a student interested in starting a campus club for gay and lesbian teens approached him. The principal, although supportive, turned to the school district to find out if such a club was permissible and, if so, what the parameters were.

It was allowed, although every step is closely scrutinized by the administration. The group is named Spectrum. Administrators feared there would

be backlash if it were called Gay-Straight Alliance. It meets weekly during the lunch hour with the supervision of a teacher-facilitator, Karen Powers. Other teachers have positively responded to the group.

"The majority of the other teachers have been incredibly supportive," Powers said. "I've had people come out of the woodwork and ask me how it's going. The first meeting we had more teachers than we had students. They just came to show their support."

GLCC encourages the schools to do four things. First, it asks schools to survey the student body about harassment based on sexual orientation, creating a starting point from which to measure future progress. Next, the schools are requested to require mandatory staff trainings to explain the law and the school district policies and to teach school employees what to do when these rules are broken. The GLCC also calls for mandatory assemblies to make clear for students what behavior is not acceptable and the consequences of these actions.

Once approached about the implications of the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, schools are eager to be proactive. Ventura Unified School District, representing the city of Ventura, and Oxnard Unified School districts, are committed to making their schools safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation.

According to Bradley, the atmosphere at schools is changing for the better. "Now the majority of youths in our program are still in school. We think that this is a testament to the progress that we are making in public schools in Ventura to reduce harassment and hostility toward kids because of their sexual orientation," says Bradley.

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