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The Ventura County edition of *Prevention File* is published in cooperation with the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, Training, Health Promotions and Applied Research Division. Please address all comments to Kathy Staples, Training, Health Promotions and Applied Research Division, 300 N. Hillmont Ave., Ventura, CA 93003 or call 805/652-6096. Email: Kathleen.Staples@mail.co.ventura.ca.us

## Thousand Oaks and Cal Lutheran: Master Planning It Safe

**WHAT DO THE COMMUNITY AND CAMPUS LEADERSHIP HAVE IN COMMON** in this growing Southern California city of 124,000?

Both the city of Thousand Oaks and California Lutheran University are committed to promoting safe and healthy environments for students and residents alike through a master planning approach to the prevention of alcohol-related risks.

The city of Thousand Oaks, incorporated in 1964, has developed into a quality community, integrating effective planning and citizen involvement. Its world-class Civic Arts Plaza houses a Countrywide Performing Arts Center, City Hall, and a five-acre public park.



But master planning in Thousand Oaks is not limited to just physical design. It carries through into the organizing and staffing of city services. For example, the city, which contracts for police services

from the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, vies with the neighboring city of Simi Valley as the safest among all U.S. cities with a population of 100,000 or more, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual crime statistics.

Thousand Oaks is home to California Lutheran University. Founded in 1959, Cal Lutheran serves almost 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students in liberal arts and professional studies.

Two-thirds of the undergraduates, about 1,600 students, live in university residence halls, apartments and university-owned homes on or near campus.

Cal Lutheran's master plan for campus health and safety entails communicating standards and expectations to both incoming students and their parents, strict enforcement of campus policies, a "safe rides" program (see page 3) as well as support for a variety of student-sponsored recreational and social programming.

### Planning for Prevention in the Community

What accounts for Thousand Oaks' low crime rates? Its Police Chief Keith Parks says, "Thousand Oaks prevents crime better than many cities since it incorporates prevention as a central tenet" (*The Thousand Oaks Acorn*, Feb. 19, 2004).

Assistant Chief Ken Cozzens told *Prevention File* about the city's approach to crime prevention: "Alcohol is a significant (factor) and not just the person drinking. Underage and over drinking and driving under the influence are all tied in. Alcohol and drugs also figure in domestic violence."

Cozzens said that the creation of the Thousand Oaks Bar Task Force is an example of the city's commitment to community policing. According to Cozzens, the idea behind the task force is a reduction in calls for police service from alcohol outlets—and it has been successful in doing so. Its membership depends on the nature of visits and can include the city's building code enforcement staff, the California Highway Patrol and Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, as well as Ventura County's Animal Control and Fire departments. The task force deploys police bicycle patrols downtown and encourages officers in



patrol cars to look in on hospitality establishments. "Patrol officers get out of their cars and conduct bar checks to get to know the staff," Cozzens said, emphasizing that building relationships between the police and businesses can help prevent offenses that warrant more drastic enforcement responses.

"The idea is to have people going out and having a good time without worrying about fights" and other adverse consequences associated with alcohol sales and service, he said.

Thousand Oaks is also concerned with alcohol access by youths under 21 years of age. Bike officers work with decoys in "shoulder tap" operations. That's when underage volunteers ask adults to buy alcohol for them from an off-sale alcohol outlet. Bike team officers are in place to observe the transaction and issue citations to the adult purchasers as they complete the illegal transaction with the youths outside the store.

These efforts have been having an impact. "Bar fights and calls for service have dropped significantly. We're no longer sending four or five units to respond. Now, we're focusing on special events, such as Persian New Year in April, Conejo Valley Days, and the Fourth of July," said Cozzens.

### **Planning for Prevention on Campus**

California Lutheran University has instituted a number of steps to promote student health and safety. William Rosser, vice president for student affairs and dean of students, said that the scope and nature of problems confronting students include "binge drinking, off-campus house parties, and some local establishments."

"By policy we're a dry campus and we have been pretty effective on campus enforcement in residence halls. But we recognize that by being tough in our campus enforcement, we are forcing problems off campus."

But Cal Lutheran's master plan for prevention encompasses a variety of strategies to address both on- and off-campus environments. They include:

- **Meeting students' need for fun, inventive, and late-night socializing opportunities**

Between 10:00 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. every Thursday night, the Need Coffee House features late-night food and entertainment such as line dancing instruction, bands, or contests. One of the recent contests was Roommate Feud, loosely based on television's long-running game show "Family Feud."

"Every year, numerous students approach our staff and make program suggestions, volunteer to entertain, or otherwise contribute to the program. The budget for this event comes from student fees through the Student Programs Office. However, much of the entertainment for this event is provided by students and is therefore minimal in cost. The average student attendance is probably between 150 and 200 students each week," Robby Larson, Cal Lutheran's director of student programs, told *Prevention File*.

Students have also created Club Lu, literally a moveable feast that can take place in on or off campus venues. Larson says that Club Lu is "a fun, free activity to serve as an alternative event to drinking on Friday nights. It is in its fourth year. This event is co-coordinated by the Student Programs Office and two programming boards: Programs Board and Residence Hall Association of the Associated Students of California Lutheran University.

"A wide range of events takes place every Friday night during the school year," Larson continued, giving examples of past acts and events such as "hypnotists, casino nights, bingo, dance club nights, ice skating, roller skating, comedians, restaurant nights and improv," all under the umbrella of Club Lu.

Another student-generated event is CLW. "CLW stands for California Lutheran Wrestling. Three years ago, a student pitched the idea of having a professional-style wrestling show on campus, complete with ring, characters, choreographed moves and a script with intertwining story lines. He pulled it off, and it was one of the bigger events of the year. This year's show is billed as the last chapter in the greatest rivalry ever as the original student creator is graduating in May. Depending on the event, Club Lu usually lasts 1.5 to 3 hours," said Larson.

Cal Lutheran also has restaurant nights for students. "We rent out a local restaurant for 2 or 3 hours. We purchase a lot of appetizers for the students. We may bring in a DJ or karaoke so that there is some type of entertainment. If the restaurant is licensed to sell alcohol, then students may legally purchase drinks. However, we go to great lengths to ensure that only students 21 and older are drinking and that any drinking is done responsibly.

"We work with the venue's management prior to the event to help this process. We limit access to the bar to those who are 21. A campus administrator posted at the entrance to the bar usually controls admissions. To enter, students must show a valid ID that shows they are 21, and then the administrator will check a birthday list generated using the campus student database. The birthday list only contains the names of students who are 21 and older as of the day of the event and helps catch the occasional fake ID. Students that pass this screening point are given a wristband.

"Finally, alcohol must stay in the bar area. We won't allow students to take it to the other sections of the venue so as to further limit underage drinking. We also prohibit the venue from selling any pitchers at our events and don't allow students to leave and come back. The result is a fairly secure method for students to drink alcohol responsibly when they are of age. At these events we also encourage students to have a designated driver or use our Safe Rides Program through the Thousand Oaks Cab Company.

"During the 2003-2004 school year, we have had restaurant and club nights at Cisco's Mexican Restaurant on Arboles, Red's Barbeque in Westlake, Stuff Pizza in Thousand Oaks, and City Nights in

Camarillo. We usually have over 300 students at these events, and the price tag in student fee income ranges between \$25,000 and \$30,000."

• **Sanctions for infractions of the campus alcohol policy**

First-time offenders must complete an online course, Alcohol Response Ability, offered through BACCHUS-GAMMA ([www.bacchusgamma.org/alcoholresponseability.asp](http://www.bacchusgamma.org/alcoholresponseability.asp)). "Eighty percent don't come back to the judicial system," Rosser said. But when asked about student behavior changes, he replied, "We didn't get as much change as we hoped." BACCHUS-GAMMA receives 5 percent of its total revenue from the alcohol industry, according to executive director Drew Hunter.

• **Parents need to know and act**

In the summer before the beginning of the school year, Rosser sends letters (see sidebar) to the parents of all incoming students. The letter explains Cal Lutheran's expectations regarding alcohol use, processes for violators, and the policy of parental notification for second offenses if the two-time offending student is under 21.

• **Safe rides for all students**

Cal Lutheran provides all students a one-dollar cab ride back to campus when needed, no questions asked. This subsidized transportation is not just for alcohol-involved situations. It can also be a safer alternative for someone who opts not to be a passenger with another driver, for a date that just didn't work out, or for any situation in which a student feels unsafe. The campus spends a few thousand dollars to subsidize the service. Demand is heavier at the start of the school year and lighter during the balance of the year, despite year-round marketing, Rosser said.

• **Information sharing about irresponsible hospitality practices**

Rosser and his student affairs colleagues at Cal Lutheran keep their antennae up regarding problem alcohol sales outlets. "When we learn that our students are frequenting places that sell alcohol to underage buyers or [tolerate] lax

enforcement of ID checks or (overserving) too much, I communicate with the establishment. We then turn over information to the Thousand Oaks Police Department and the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. We have had some success, with our most problematic places going out of business when they lost their license. That's really good news, in my opinion, and sends a message to our students."

• **Keeping watch for high-risk promotions**

According to Sally I. Sagen, coordinator of residence life and area residence coordinator, off-campus establishments do target Cal

Lutheran students through various forms of marketing, especially club cards. Such marketing is contrary to campus policy, she said, since "no marketing that promotes the consumption of alcohol is allowed. When we do find unauthorized marketing on campus and in residence halls, it is passed along to (one of our administrators) who contacts the organization and deals with the violation of our publicity standards." □

**GETTING THE WORD OUT TO PARENTS**

*The following is an excerpt from last year's letter to the parents of Cal Lutheran's incoming students:*  
Dear Parents/Guardians:

Welcome to the great college community that is California Lutheran University. It will be exciting to walk with you through a new partnership as change, growth, challenge, and accomplishments occur for your son or daughter—and your family. This open letter is written to accompany the enclosed Parent's Handbook and to speak with you about a concern we may share—alcohol and drug use on the college campus. The handbook is intended to provide you with useful information and to be a concise guide to CLU during this first year of your son, or daughter's studies at the university. Now, I want to talk to you about a subject that is difficult, but necessary, to discuss—alcohol and other drug use on campus. Alcohol is the "drug of choice" among many college students, and that is true for some students at CLU. The possession or use of alcohol and other (illegal) drugs is prohibited on our campus, and the majority of students respect this policy. However, some do not and the university intervenes. When we do, our goal is the help students make choices that give them the greatest opportunity for academic success and personal growth while reducing behaviors that may be dangerous to themselves and others or disruptive to the campus community.

Relatively recent changes in federal legislation permit California Lutheran University to notify parents/guardians of students who are under 21 years of age about alcohol and other drug policy violations on campus. Accordingly, we want to broaden our base of support for students by communicating with you on this topic, giving you information that may help you and your family talk with one another about this issue and informing you whenever repeated problems may arise. We respond to alcohol policy violations in progressively stronger ways with students and minimum sanctions for initial and repeated violations are as follows. Please know that additional sanctions (campus improvement projects, counseling, assessment, etc.) or stronger institutional responses may be imposed as circumstances warrant.

Sincerely,  
William R. Rosser  
Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

# Q&A With Gabino Aguirre, Mayor of Santa Paula



*Thirty years ago Gabino Aguirre "stumbled" upon Santa Paula and immediately felt at home in what he regarded as a perfect community. He and his wife settled here and now, as mayor of Santa Paula, Aguirre considers the community*

*his hometown—something he never had as a migrant farmworker during his childhood in Texas. Born in Cd. Juarez, Mexico, Aguirre spent his youth working the fields across the western United States. After a stint in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam conflict, Aguirre enrolled in college and has earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of California Los Angeles, a master's degree in education from the University of Southern California, and a PhD in social science comparative education from UCLA. For the past 16 years he has been principal at Moorpark Community High School, an alternative high school that was recently designated a California model school.*

**For the past 16 years you've been principal at Moorpark Community High School. How do you think the environment in which your students live contributes to alcohol and other drug problems?**

**A:** Our school community is composed of various family types. Generally, one-third are single-parent homes, one-third have both natural parents in the home and one-third come from stepfamilies, these being the most delicate situations to work with. Because of the need for double incomes to support a family, a majority of our students are on their own after school without adequate supervision. These

kids are out on the streets more and are more susceptible to the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs, usually starting with tobacco. You need a strong family—not necessarily two parents but a strong support system—to keep kids on the right track. Besides providing this type of support and intervention at school, we are trying to limit the availability of alcohol and tobacco out in the community. Through Friday Night Live and other campus groups, we've conducted community surveys and entered numerous contests to graphically express our opposition to such counterproductive involvement and our advocacy of healthy lifestyles. We've also worked with the police department to conduct stings on tobacco sales.

**As a policy-maker, what strategies would you like to pursue to make lasting changes in Santa Paula as regards the wide range of problems related to alcohol and drug use?**

**A:** The Santa Paula City Council is identifying the number of liquor licenses in town and zoning areas where these businesses exist. As recommended by the local Friday Night Live group, we've moved to distance alcohol sales—and smoking—away from certain parts of town such as places frequented by children and families, near schools, and so on. Just last week, we approved an ordinance that prohibits alcohol consumption in city parks. In cases where liquor-selling establishments have closed or moved out of town, we're investigating legalities regarding how to restrict them or how to disallow their continuance. Our council generally agrees with me that there are too many liquor licenses in town. We are also working on a collaborative effort between churches, schools, city and social groups to identify risk factors, set goals and monitor the situation.

**What role do you expect community members, both youths and adults, in Santa Paula to play in changing community conditions that contribute to alcohol and other drug use and problems?**

**A:** Focusing on individuals really doesn't work. What's needed is taking ownership of our community as a whole. For example, some people in our community take a strong interest in the business of the city council; some do so only when it affects them; and some feel they have no control over what the city council does. Proactively, we've launched a number of planning processes reaching out to the community for engagement with planning the future of Santa Paula. We're out in neighborhoods discussing issues related to what Santa Paula is now and what it can and should be. We're emphasizing the concept that Santa Paula belongs to us all! We are working with the schools to involve the students, and we're having bilingual meetings in various parts of town so that everyone can understand what is going on. Also, we're providing simultaneous Spanish translation of all council meetings—we're one of only two cities in California to do this. This will provide information on all city matters to our residents in a language that is understandable to them.

**In the past, the city has made decisions to keep some facilities alcohol-free. For example, the Depot—which is used for city meetings, nonprofit functions, and private parties—has some explicit rules restricting alcohol use. What directions are you and the current city council taking to address alcohol and drug use in Santa Paula?**

**A:** We are trying to limit and isolate the availability of alcohol and tobacco in the city. As I recently asked in a council meeting, "What public benefit derives from drinking in public?" In our downtown area, beer and wine are available at several restaurants. Recently,

# PLANNING FOR SAFE GROWTH at Cal State Channel Islands

there have been requests for permission to sell alcohol for takeout at grocery stores that we've denied. Our thinking is that carryout of alcohol creates other problems such as consumption in parking lots and alleys or drinking and driving. Therefore, we're protecting the health and safety of our residents. We've asked the police department to help us crack down on businesses (i.e., bars) that have high rates of crime, are alleged to serve alcohol to minors, and/or are sites for prostitution and drug use. We're collaborating with the (California Department of) Alcohol Beverage Control officials to put these facilities on notice that these illegal activities will not be tolerated in Santa Paula. Since stepping up these patrols, we have closed down some of these establishments because of illegal activities. Concurrently, we're also promoting responsible business practices such as carding people buying tobacco and alcohol and minimizing posters and signage that promote these controlled substances.

**In a city like Santa Paula, which is focused on economic revitalization, how do you balance the need for economic growth and development with the desire to create a safe and healthy community?**

**A:** We're planning a city of the future that emphasizes a healthy environment for families. In this regard, we're limiting the availability and use of these controlled substances in Santa Paula. Therefore, we're looking for businesses that will enhance a safe environment for families to raise their children. More broadly, we're inviting developers that will provide good jobs for our residents: commercial, retail and light industrial jobs, as well as jobs in a variety of restaurants and other niche stores such as bookstores, stationery businesses, coffee shops and more. Currently, there is much discussion about new urbanism, mixed development and walkable communities and how they can potentially contribute to positive integration promoting the overall concept of "village" responsibility for the total community.

**CHANNEL ISLANDS IS THE NEWEST ADDITION TO THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY.** Its 670-acre campus in Camarillo is marked for steady buildup over the next two decades. Channel Islands began the 2003-04 academic year with nearly 2,500 students, including 810 who transferred from Cal State Northridge situated in adjacent Los Angeles County. The first freshman class made up 250 of that number. By the time they graduate in 2007, enrollment will be up to 4,000. By 2025, the university will serve more than 15,000 students.

In addition to a growth in population, Channel Islands is also seeing a buildup of academic buildings and residential development. University Glens, the adjacent university-owned residential area, features several different neighborhoods, including Loma Vista Village, an apartment complex that upon completion will house 353 students for the 2004-05 academic year.

Situated where University Glens and the campus intersect, a new Town Center will open in 2005. The complex will feature a market and several restaurants to cater to residents and commuters. The prospect of adding alcohol to the mix of businesses has prompted the university to engage in a planning process to ensure a safe and healthy environment for students and residents alike.

"We're just at the very beginning of identifying tenants," said Jeff Young, Chief of the CSU Channel Islands Police Department. University Glens and the Town Hall fall under his department's jurisdiction.

"There may be beer and wine sales, but no liquor store per se," said Young. He and other campus administrators have begun discussing

possible conditions on alcohol sales once the Town Center opens next year. In recent years other CSU campuses—Sonoma State, Cal State San Marcos, and San Diego State—have taken a role in state alcohol licensing and municipal hearings to add conditions on new alcohol outlets near campus. Such conditions can include early closing perhaps 10 p.m. rather than the 2 a.m. closing permitted under state law, prohibition of keg sales, and requirements for seller-server training (see page \_\_).

When the new business operators start to apply for alcohol licenses, "we'll be there right at the beginning to let merchants know we're aware of potential risks and want to work with them," said Young.

CSU Channel Islands has also formed a committee to address alcohol and other drug issues. "Sergeant Jeff Cowgill is the police department's





**It's not just police, it's not just student affairs, and it's not just the disciplinary system. At this campus, we're all working together on alcohol concerns.**

representative to the campus Alcohol and Drug Policy Committee. It meets on a regular basis. One of its first accomplishments was to develop a policy. We sent some of our committee members to Berkeley in January (2004) for (California Alcohol Issues Partnership) training. Since then, (committee chair) George Morten fine-tuned our policy and it's now going through the approval process," said Young. George Morten, PhD, directs Career, Health, Accommodations, and Personal Counseling Services or CHAPS at Channel Islands and led the campus-community team for the January training that also attracted 13 teams from other California campuses.

"It's not just police, it's not just student affairs, and it's not just the disciplinary system. At this campus, we're all working together" on alcohol concerns, said Young, who was formerly a commander and 23-year veteran with the Oxnard Police Department, joining the Channel Islands campus at its inception four years ago. Before then, he served on a Camarillo citizens advisory committee to help prepare for the creation of the university.

Channel Islands is unique within California public higher education due to the existence of the California State University Channel Islands Site Authority. The Authority exercises governmental powers including those of a redevelopment agency. It has land-use and financing powers and collects tax revenues. Within its land-use province, the Authority "determines the location and character of projects and makes the determination to acquire, construct, remodel, improve, furnish, equip, own, manage, operate, sell or lease property at the site," according to the CSUCI Web site. Through this unique authority, CSUCI is empowered to impose conditions on alcohol sales and service.

"A united front and shared resources are important," said Young. His department cooperates with city and county law enforcement agencies and the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

to stay on top of potential alcohol problems, drawing upon relationships he developed during 23 years with the Oxnard Police Department to counter "problem merchants." He also noted the active networking that takes place among the 23 campus police chiefs within the CSU system.


"We have a real good network between the chiefs. We have frequent contact and we meet twice a year at the chancellor's office [in Long Beach]. We exchange information about trends and successful programs. Fred Hardee, the chief at [CSU] Monterey [Bay], has shared his experiences working with the ABC and nearby city police departments on bar enforcement. We have seen informational films that highlighted SDSU's teamwork with five or six local and state agencies," Young said.

The current Channel Islands policy on alcohol is online at [www.csuci.edu/president/presidentscouncil/pc\\_documents/Policy\\_on\\_Alcohol.pdf](http://www.csuci.edu/president/presidentscouncil/pc_documents/Policy_on_Alcohol.pdf).

The entire CSU system is partnered with the University of California and relevant state government agencies in the California Alcohol Issues Partnership (see *Prevention File*, vol. 18, No. 2, Spring 2003). The CSU Board of Trustees adopted a new and sweeping systemwide alcohol policy in 2001 upon the recommendation of the chancellor and a committee comprising students, faculty and administrators. The main recommendation—the first in the country to be adopted by an entire university system—is for each campus to develop comprehensive alcohol policies and programs, with emphasis on consistent enforcement of policies, regular gathering and reporting of data, limits on alcohol vendor advertising, and collaborative efforts between campuses and communities, according to the CSU Chancellor's Office. The CAIP Web site with a link to the CSU systemwide policy is [www.atc.ucsd.edu/hec/CAIP/index.htm](http://www.atc.ucsd.edu/hec/CAIP/index.htm). □

# Social Science Research Center:

## Supporting Prevention Planning in Ventura County

 SURVEYS THAT REVEAL WHAT PEOPLE ARE THINKING OR WHAT THEY'RE DOING in one area of life or another have become a staple of the information age. They hold a mirror up to our society. The results often make headlines in the national or local news.

*But surveys satisfy more than our curiosity.*

Well-designed and well-conducted surveys provide a rich source of information about individual values, perceptions, opinions, attitudes and self-reported behavior. The information from surveys can define and measure the magnitude of public health problems. Equally important, they can identify the need for community programs, gauge public support for such programs and establish benchmarks useful for evaluating them.

Not all surveys produce reliable results. A survey that is poorly designed, poorly administered and poorly interpreted can be useless or misleading. That's why Ventura County's Behavioral Health Department turns to skilled professionals to produce survey data that will help it and its community partners to plan alcohol and other drug-prevention programs.

Gregory Robinson, PhD, director of the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at California State University, Fullerton, plays a key role in the county's effort to understand the nature and scope of behavioral health problems related to alcohol and other drug use in the Ventura population and to develop effective policies and programs in response. He

is an applied research and evaluation specialist, and under his direction, the SSRC is producing the research support the county needs to mount data-driven prevention programs. His Cal State center is providing technical assistance and training to build research capacity among behavioral health, alcohol and other drug prevention providers.

**Not all surveys produce reliable results. A survey that is poorly designed, poorly administered and poorly interpreted can be useless or misleading.**

To accurately describe public sentiment, Robinson is working with Kathleen Staples, manager of the Training, Health Promotion and Applied Research Division in the county's Behavioral Health Department, to design a large survey of Ventura County residents. He shuns the approach of "pollsters" who simply call as many unique telephone numbers as needed to accumulate the targeted number of completed interviews in a short time. "Polls like that tend to oversample persons more likely to be at home on a given day or hour, and more

likely to cooperate with the request to participate . . . These samples contain higher proportions of English-speaking older adults and a higher proportion of women and of persons who work routine schedules. Such results may not accurately describe the population," he says, "because the sample isn't really randomly selected."

Scientific survey research begins with a much smaller number of randomly selected telephone numbers, and it "works" this sample to produce a high response rate. Survey findings from samples like this can be used to support generalizations about the whole population, Robinson explains.

In addition to high response rates, the sample size must be adequate, and the questionnaire well designed. Increasingly in California, one cannot



**Surveys are only one tool in the research kit. Good applied research and evaluation uses multiple methods and data sources.**

purport to represent an entire population with a survey administered only in English. About a third of Ventura County residents are Hispanic or Latino, for example. More than 26 percent of the population five years of age and older speaks Spanish at home; and among Spanish-speakers, more than half speak English less than “very well.”

“That’s over 95,000 people, or about 14 percent of the county’s population five years of age and older—much too large a group to be denied a voice,” says Robinson. “We pay particular attention to producing both linguistically and culturally appropriate translations of survey questionnaires.”

Telephone surveys are one, but not the only, means of assessing public sentiment. “Face-to-face interviews are great for smaller neighborhoods,” says the CalState expert. He will be bringing to Ventura County a curriculum in Spanish and English designed to train neighborhood residents to administer surveys. It takes a lot of work to train interviewers and to make sure they adhere to a standard protocol, but the data they collect are generally of high quality because they can get through doors that outsiders can’t. Moreover, says Robinson, in neighborhoods where crime or gangs are a concern, “it’s generally easier to train motivated volunteers to collect good survey data than it is to teach well-scrubbed college kids how to be street smart.”

Surveys are only one tool in the research kit he advocates. “Good applied research and evaluation uses multiple methods and data sources,” he said in a *Prevention File* interview. “These sources may include census data, police dispatch and arrest records, public complaint files, medical records such as emergency room admissions, and geographic data identifying the location and concentration of alcohol outlets, as well as data from surveys.” When information from multiple sources points to a particular result, it boosts researchers’ confidence in the conclusions.

“Ventura County presents a rich set of opportunities for applied research and evaluation, because so many community-based prevention providers are actively engaged and are accomplishing positive outcomes. Our job is to back them up with applied research support and best-practice evaluation methods that assist them, and their county sponsor, to take credit for their successes,” Robinson says. □