

**Contra Costa County Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs Raise
Community Awareness about Marijuana Issues During Red Ribbon Week
October 2015**

Contra Costa County environmental and education prevention programs participated in Red Ribbon Week 2015 (RRW) activities with specific topic focus on marijuana. Adult and youth coalition coordinators worked with eight city councils in the cities of Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga, Concord, San Ramon, Danville, El Cerrito and Pittsburg to pass proclamations honoring RRW. The proclamations were used to remind the councils about the AOD prevention work they are doing in their jurisdictions relating to marijuana. All projects emphasized marijuana access and its impact on their communities in their proclamations.

A highlight of our County RRW activity was our prevention team receiving a proclamation of RRW from the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. Three of our youth led programs, Discovering the Reality of our Community (DROC), Friday Night Live (FNL) and Youth Leadership for a Healthier Richmond (YLHR), received the proclamation on behalf of the team and gave a brief presentation to the Board. Nine youth attended the presentation, five speakers and three for support. Their presentation focused primarily on marijuana, emphasizing the need to curb youth access and address the low perception of harm among their peers. The YLHR project, spoke about the marijuana perception of harm survey they collected from two hundred peers and adults last year. DROC's presenter highlighted marijuana's negative effect on the young brain and the concerning access youth have to marijuana in West County. FNL informed the Board about their marijuana perception of harm campaign launching at their school sites this year. They concluded by inviting the Board to the Youth-Led Marijuana Policy Summit in April. The focus of the Youth-Led Policy Summit will be to showcase the community marijuana projects they are working on this year and to present their marijuana prevention policy recommendations to policy makers. As a token of RRW youth handed the Board members red ribbons and asked them to wear them as a gesture of support. All of the youth who presented spoke with passion and poise which was acknowledged by Board members. Two of the Board members personally thanked the youth for attending, praised their leadership and expressed their appreciation for the work they are contributing to reduce the negative impact alcohol and other drugs have on Contra Costa County youth.

Our education based providers incorporated RRW activities into their prevention curriculums. REACH (Positive Action) added RRW information in their workshops which included the purpose of the week, its relevance and background. At Project SUCCESS school

sites, project coordinators worked with students to: hold a RRW assembly, create RRW posters to put up at the schools and to hand-out information to students and parents about RRW. The content of their activities focused on deleterious effect of marijuana on the teen brain and the lungs. Botvin Life Skills facilitated a discussion group with parents about their children's experience of RRW and what parents can do to support the week.

Beyond our focus on marijuana during RRW, as a prevention team we have formed the Contra Costa County Marijuana Prevention Action Team (MPAT). Our goal is to raise awareness of the health, social and environmental impacts of marijuana use in Contra Costa County. MPAT's efforts will increase the public understanding of marijuana to shift favorable perception of marijuana use for recreational purposes in preparation for a legalization of marijuana ballot measure in 2016. MPAT is collecting data related to youth and parent perception of marijuana to inform and drive the work of the collaborative. Our adult coalitions are engaging parents and local community leaders in discussion about marijuana harm and its impact on communities. Youth advisors/coordinators are discussing marijuana use and policy with their youth-led projects. Youth Leadership for a Healthier Richmond (YLHR) is the youth lead and the rest of the AOD youth led programs are supporting the effort of the YLHR group. Youth are collecting peer perception of harm surveys to identify areas in need of intervention. They are also working with the adult coalitions to educate policy makers about youth specific policy needs relating to marijuana.