



¿Que Pasa?

The newsletter of the Alamosa Community Coalition

San Luis Valley Mental Health Center

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The Dope . . .

March 21-27 is National Inhalants & Poisons Awareness Week

In rural America, the notion that "It doesn't happen here," sometimes keeps parents, teachers, clergy, friends and associates from understanding that inhalant use is a threat in their down-home communities.

This week The National Inhalant Prevention Coalition released some sobering facts.

- Most parents are in the dark about the popularity of inhalant use.
- Inhalant use is the intentional breathing of gas or vapors to reach a high.
- Inhalants are legal and include spray paint, glue, liquid paper, refrigerant, felt tip markers, air freshener, and butane.
- Children quickly discover that common household products are easy to get, hide and an

easy way to "get high."

- Inhalant use is a widespread problem and as popular as marijuana is with youth.



- Highest abuse rates are among whites, Hispanics and American Indian populations.
- Inhalants slow down the body's function, stimulate, cause less inhibition and/or loss of consciousness
- Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome is also an outcome which means the user can die the 1st, 10th, or 100th time using inhalants.
- Inhalants also cause damage to the heart, kidney, brain, liver, bone marrow.
- Inhalant use during pregnancy may cause similar results to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.
- Inhalants are physically & psychologically addictive and users suffer withdrawal symptoms.

See related stories inside.



Clarissa's Corner

By Clarissa Woodworth
Program Coordinator

Welcome everyone to the coalition. The success of our prevention programs is in-part due to the dedication of this coalition and the willingness of our community volunteers that dedicate their time to make a difference to our children and community. Research confirms that multi-sector, multi-strategy

approaches are most likely to lead to success in substance abuse prevention. Forming a coalition is hard work. However, the hard work has incredible potential to develop comprehensive solutions to unique issues. As a member of the Community Coalition, your participation and feedback is vital to reaching our goals. Thank you for your dedication.

Our prevention programs has positively impacted the young people and their families in prevention education, mentoring, violence

prevention and plan to continue this effort with expansion in areas to combat bullying, and helpful parenting modules.

Our funding this year has come from grants like Anschutz, Coors, Temple Hoyne Buell, Drug Free Communities, TGYS and 21st Century. These grants have provided the resources to allow the continuation of our established program. Our challenge is in establishing more multi-year funding.

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On a roll . . .

- Congrats to Jose Ortega, health educator at Ortega Middle School, and the tobacco prevention program for getting the Broncos and Rockies to donate prizes for the student essays against tobacco use. ☺
- Sí Se Puede & Mi Animo students and mentors enjoyed a few tumbles on the Monarch slopes in a most successful quarterly activity. No one broke any bones! ☺

¿Que Pasa? (newsletter) is published monthly at the San Luis Valley Comprehensive Community Mental Health Center. Your articles of interest to the drug-free communities are welcomed. Items for publication should be submitted by the first of the month for publication on the 17th. Email your submission to Nelda Curtiss (editor) at neldac@slvmhc.org You may also mail your submission to Mi Animo Prevention, SLVCCMHC, 8745 CR 9 South, Alamosa, Co 81101.



What can I do?



Juanita Ramirez, a student at Ortega Middle school, was recently matched with Rachel Vigil, a math major at Adams State College. Developing mentoring relationships like this one is one prevention method that works!

If someone you care about is huffing, the best action is to first remain calm and seek help. Agitation may cause the huffer to become violent, experience hallucinations or suffer heart dysfunction which can cause Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome. Make sure the room is well ventilated and call EMS. If the person is not breathing, administer CPR. Once recovered, seek professional treatment and counseling.

Treatment?

Treatment facilities for users

are rare and difficult to find. Users suffer a high rate of relapse, and require 30 to 40 days or more of detoxification.

Users suffer withdrawal symptoms which can include

- hallucinations,
- nausea,
- excessive sweating,
- hand tremors,
- muscle cramps,

- headaches,
- chills and
- delirium tremors

Follow-up treatment is important. If someone you know is seeking help for inhalant abuse, you can contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition at 1-800-269-4237 for information on treatment centers and general information about inhalants.

What do I tell the children about inhalants?

Inhalants are POISONS and TOXINS and should be discussed as such.

It's never too early, according to the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, to tell your children or students about the dangers of inhalants.

Users can be found as young as elementary age.

Inhalants including cigarettes are considered a "gateway" to further substance abuse.

Often, parents remain ignorant of inhalant use or do not begin to educate their children until it is too late.

Inhalants are not drugs. They are POISONS and TOXINS and should be discussed as such.

For more information on how to talk to children, visit <http://www.inhalants.org>



By Priscilla Ortega,
Program Leader
Mi Animo Prevention

Priscilla's Preview on Prevention

Mi Animo mentoring works! A recent article about middle and high school mentoring programs shows that pairing adults with a young person achieves positive results.

"Some of the most notable results are the deterrent effect on initiation of drug and alcohol use, and the overall positive effects on academic performance that the mentoring experience

produced," (reported in Public/Private Ventures, Nov. 1995).

Matches of adult role models with minority youngsters show that these children are

- 70% less likely to use drugs
- 1/3 less likely to be aggressive
- Skipped fewer classes
- Felt more competent doing schoolwork
- Showed gains in their GPA
- Improved relationships with

parents and peers. These results came from a study involving high risk youth

- 90% lived with one parent
- 80% lived in poverty
- 30% of families suffered domestic abuse
- 30% were emotional, physical & sexual abuse victims

If we each help one child, we can change the world for the better.



Mi Animo Prevention rocks! And draws! And skis!

Mi Animo Prevention activities have drawn more than 150 youth from across Alamosa to its activities in the last month.

In late February, a Mardi

Gras dance was held in partnership with Sacred Heart Church youth. Aaron Davis, youth coordinator for Sacred Heart, performed the Disk Jockey duties, even serving up a dance contest. Partnering with faith based or-

Children Equally (RACE) activities of Mi Animo, an "art avenue" project also served to give youth a voice in the design and expression of their local youth lounge. Future activities will include horses, automobile races, and astronomy.

The March Quarterly activity took 30 youth, mentors and prevention specialists to Monarch Ski Slopes for an all day adventure. Many students from the sister program, Sí Se Puede in Conejos County, were seasoned skiers or snowboarders.

Some of the others in the Mi Animo and Sí Se Puede programs enjoyed their very first times on



ganizations is part of the Mi Animo mission. As part of Reaching All



On March 6, Mi Animo & Sí Se Puede youth hit the Monarch Ski Slopes for all day (morning & afternoon) of tumbles, wind-bites and team-building recreation.



San Luis Valley Mentoring Circle gathers members

Tom Vigil, Prevention Specialist for Mi Animo, started the think tank known as the SLV Mentoring Circle where mentoring organizations from across the Valley have joined together to share ideas, solu-

tions and hear success stories.

Presenters have included Frank Sanchez (ASC) and Rachel Brown (Counselor for Monte Vista School District and a mentor for Mi Animo).

If you know of a group work-

ing with youth, let them know about our group.

For meeting times and more information, call Tom Vigil, 719-587-6978. or email him at tomv@slvmhc.org



Rachel Brown
"3 yrs & counting as a mentor"



Schedule change from March 23

Alamosa Community Coalition meets April 20

The Alamosa Community Coalition does not meet March 23. Instead the coalition will meet Tuesday, April 20 at 7:30 a.m. in the SLV Mental Health Center conference room. Breakfast will be provided.

For more information about joining or volunteering, contact Priscilla Ortega at 587-6973 or priscillao@slvmhc.org

Alamosa Community Coalition

Alamosa Community Coalition seeks a healthier community

The Alamosa Community Coalition goals and activities include drug-free education, tobacco prevention, suicide awareness, mentoring events and partnerships.

The coalition is composed of San Luis Valley Mental Health Center, Alamosa School District, San Luis Valley Community Connections, San Luis Valley Community Fund, Adams State College, Alamosa County Nursing Service, Get R!EAL youth coalition, State Representative John Salazar, Alamosa County Commissioners, The Valley Courier, suicide prevention advocates and local counselors. In our midst are also representatives from Mrs. Rivera's Kitchen, Domino's, Bresnan Communications, Wal-Mart, Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center, Sacred Heart Church, Alamosa Community Recreation Center, San Luis Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross, Van Gieson Construction, Alamosa Police Department, Sheriff's Department and Trinidad State Junior College—Valley Campus.

The next meeting of the coalition is April 20, 7:30 a.m. at the SLV Mental Health Center. All students, parents and mentors are invited to participate.

Mi Animo Prevention staff recruit , interview & train

Members of the prevention staff at SLV Mental Health Center are Clarissa Woodworth (program coordinator), Priscilla Ortega (program leader). Prevention specialists are: Tom Vigil, Anna Lee Vargas and Nelda Curtiss. Two mental health therapists are also part of the team: LeAnn Garcia and Rick Esquibel.

New mentor recruits and student nominations

come in by referrals from family members and teachers.

For students, the process begins with a nomination form.

For adults, an application, interview and an extensive background check—which helps us protect children from harm—starts the in-depth volunteer plan.

Call the center to talk with the prevention team at

719-589-3671



The most rewarding aspect of the mentoring programs is the actual match of the youngster with the dedicated adult. Interests are lined up so that the best possible connection can be made for the two. At the match dinner, contracts are read and signed and phone numbers are exchanged. The evening solidifies the friendship to come.

WOW! a kid . . . be a mentor!