Research indicates that participation in a religious community is one factor that can help reduce young people's risk for substance abuse. A strong faith upbringing, however, cannot ensure that youth will make wise choices about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) amid strong peer pressure, media influences, and cultural norms that often promote alcohol and drug use. The integration of science-based prevention strategies into youth programs within faith-based organizations has been gradual, due in part to the lack of resources for prevention education and training of youth leaders.

In October 2000, Community Service Programs, Inc. (CSP) and the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT) presented a workshop entitled Involving the Faith Community in Prevention, attended by Orange County prevention providers and representatives from the faith community. Following this workshop, participants agreed to meet monthly to continue the conversation, and the Faiths and Institutions Together for Health (FAITH) Coalition was established. “This was ground breaking. It was the first prevention outreach to the faith community in Orange County,” said Lourdes Gutierrez, Project Coordinator, CSP-Project Faith in Youth. “The FAITH Coalition has now been meeting monthly for the past nine years.”

The FAITH Coalition, co-chaired by Gutierrez and Joanne Lambert, Youth Minister at Santiago de Compostela Church, is a partnership of religious leaders representing diverse faith communities and ATOD prevention providers in Orange County. Members respect one another’s faith beliefs and work toward a common goal of promoting and enhancing the health and well-being of youth and families in the county. The monthly meetings include a training component highlighting prevention programs and available resources.

Project Faith in Youth
Project Faith in Youth, funded since 2005 by ADEPT, offers resources, training and mini-grants to fund ATOD prevention activities in the faith community. Any faith organization with a youth component can apply for a mini-grant. Grant applications are reviewed in September each year and three grant recipients are selected. The grant provides funding, technical assistance, professional resources, trainings and mentoring for youth leaders to strengthen existing programs that promote and encourage...
Gutierrez and Stephan Lambert, Project Faith in Youth Health Educator, meet with each current mini-grant recipient monthly to provide technical assistance and mentoring. They help youth leaders develop action plans that incorporate prevention messages and activities into existing programs. FAITH Coalition meetings and educational workshops are open to all faith and community organizations; technical assistance is provided upon request to youth leaders of faith organizations countywide.

“Even in faiths that prohibit the use of alcohol and drugs, youth leaders are supportive of prevention activities and some have applied for a mini-grant. They recognize their youth are exposed to high-risk behaviors at school with their peers and in the community,” Gutierrez said. “Youth leaders see the need in their congregation for youth programs to have a prevention component.”

“The mini-grants provide the financial resources that allow the recipients to integrate prevention into their specific youth program activities. Project Faith in Youth has awarded $68,000 in mini-grants to 17 faith-based organizations since 2005. As we talk with previous mini-grant recipients we are finding that many are sustaining their emphasis on prevention,” said Gutierrez.

**PROJECT FAITH IN YOUTH MINI-GRANT RECIPIENTS 2005 - 2009**

- Christian Latino Association for Musical Arts, Anaheim
- Community Christian Church, Anaheim Hills
- First Presbyterian Church, Santa Ana
- Helping Others Prepare for Eternity/Village Bible Church, Garden Grove
- Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Santa Ana
- Islamic Shura Council of Southern California, Anaheim
- La Purisima Church, Orange
- Mary’s Shelter, Santa Ana
- Orange Seventh Day Adventist Church, Orange
- Saint Callistus Catholic Church, Garden Grove
- Saint Marina Coptic Orthodox Church, Irvine
- Saint Nicolas Church, Laguna Woods
- Saint Polycarp Church, Stanton
- Saint Verena & Three Holy Youth Coptic Orthodox Church, Orange
- Santiago de Compostela Church, Lake Forest
- Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Santa Ana/Tustin
- Word of Life Orange County, Santa Ana

**BRIDGING THE GAP**

When Dr. Mary Mikhail, Executive Director of Santa Verena Charity, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles, learned of the Faith in Youth mini-grant project to fund prevention activities for youth, she immediately consulted Marcelle Yacoub, Youth Programs Coordinator at Saint Marina Coptic Orthodox Church in Irvine. “We met to discuss how to integrate ATOD prevention into our family and youth programs. We created a wish list of activities,” said Yacoub. “When we received the mini-grant, we knew we planned more than we could achieve in a year.”

Guided by Mikhail and Yacoub and mentored by Gutierrez, the St. Marina parish youth leaders developed an intergenerational ATOD prevention program to build and nurture stronger families through increased knowledge, communication and understanding. Program activities were planned to address the cultural and generational gaps that exist in the congregation. Most of the adult parishioners were born and attended school in Egypt and immigrated to the United States as adults, bringing with them the social and cultural norms of their youth. Their children have been born and raised in California where the social and cultural norms among the youth are vastly different from those experienced by their parents.

“Parents need to understand what youth experience everyday in their life outside of their home and church,” said Yacoub. “We believed if we could close the cultural-generational gap, our families would be stronger and the children would not feel so isolated.”

“As we planned how to integrate the Project Faith in Youth elements into our parish activities, we became aware that in our conversations about making healthy life choices, we never addressed the use of alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs were words we did not use. As such, we designed our program to address the most crucial age group, youth age 12-17, and their parents,” said Mikhail. “I was surprised how
open and receptive parents were to prevention education. They acknowledged being unaware of the social and behavioral challenges their children encounter in their daily life.

Youth leaders, of college and high school age worked with Mikhail and Yacoub to plan and implement the program activities. “Our first intergenerational Family Night event was amazing! More than 150 parents and youth attended. The information provided on ATOD abuse, addiction and illicit drugs was eye-opening for the parents,” said Yacoub.

“The Project Faith in Youth mini-grant has been inspirational for us. It opened a world of opportunities. The parents in our parish have been engaged and supportive of our program from the beginning, and they encourage the youth to participate. The parish has contributed more than 30,000 volunteer hours and an undetermined amount of financial assistance to their ATOD prevention programming,” said Yacoub.

“The resources Project Faith in Youth provided allowed us to build our program. We have Family Night events and leadership trainings planned for 2009-2010. We also plan to include violence prevention in our future curriculum,” said Mikhail. “My goal is to implement ATOD prevention in the youth programs throughout our Orange County diocese. Youth leaders can use our model and we will mentor them to initiate a program that addresses the needs of their parish communities.”

Sustaining a Youth Ministry

Joanne Lambert, Santiago de Compostela Youth Minister and Friday Night Live (FNL) Advisor, credits participation in the FAITH Coalition as her source of inspiration and knowledge to guide parish youth to incorporate their faith and ATOD prevention in their daily life. The FNL Partnership program, administered by the Orange County Department of Education, fosters healthy youth development and encourages youth leadership to address alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence issues in their schools and communities.

“I previously worked as a community mental health nurse in San Francisco. I was well-aware of the challenges facing youth regarding alcohol, tobacco, drugs and violence when I was invited to a FAITH Coalition meeting in 2000,” said Lambert. “The FAITH Coalition became an important resource in building our youth program.”

“In the spring of 2005 we integrated an FNL chapter with our Youth Prevention Team and began to incorporate ATOD prevention messages into our activities. In the fall of 2005 we received a Project Faith in Youth mini-grant,” said Lambert. “In youth ministry even a small amount of money is helpful. The mini-grant allowed us to reach out to all our students through FNL sponsored activities and events.”

“Our FNL youth have been very successful. They are empowered to identify a problem and develop strategies for a solution. They are committed to being role models and to projecting a positive image of youth,” said Lambert. “Now they are invited to conduct trainings and other events for their school and in the surrounding communities.”

“The mini-grant inspired our youth ministry. It allowed us to leverage our activities to apply for other grants to expand our program and activities,” said Lambert. “The FNL program provides the framework and empowers youth. Our youth are informing their peers and adults how to integrate ATOD prevention and faith into their lives.”

For information on the FAITH Coalition and the CSP-Project Faith in Youth, please contact Lourdes Gutierrez, 949/757-1096 extension 288, email: lgutierrez@cspinc.org or Stephan Lambert, 949/757-1096 extension 226, email: slambert@cspinc.org.
Discussing alcohol and other drug (AOD) prevention projects with Keystone Club teens at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Capistrano Valley is like watching the space shuttle launch: a lot of energy, noise and great ideas. In just two years, this dynamic group of 15 teens has initiated several AOD prevention activities, demonstrated their leadership skills and implemented an award-winning prevention project.

Keystone Club is a youth leadership and development program of the Boys & Girls Club of America for youth 14-18 years of age, and is funded nationally by the Taco Bell Foundation. The primary areas of focus for Keystone teens are community service, career preparation and academic success. Keystone members elect officers, plan their activities, and implement community service projects.

Keystone Club teens were introduced to AOD prevention in 2007 when Laurie Rodriguez was hired as Teen Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley. She had worked in AOD prevention programs previously and wanted to bring similar programs into this Boys & Girls Club. For assistance, Rodriguez contacted Mary Pham, Health Educator, County of Orange Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT).

Rodriguez’s timing was perfect as Pham was seeking a third youth organization to participate on a Youth Advisory Committee to develop and design a Red Ribbon Youth Calendar. The Youth Calendar, tailored to middle and high school youth, features monthly AOD prevention topics, a menu of prevention activities for each topic, and a systematic implementation process for each activity.

Each year Red Ribbon Week is held in mid-October bringing millions of people across the country together to raise awareness of the need for alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence prevention, early intervention and treatment services. The Red Ribbon Youth Calendar encourages youth organizations to continue Red Ribbon activities throughout the year in their communities and schools.

“When I extended the invitation to be part of the Youth Advisory Committee, the Keystone Club accepted immediately,” said Pham. “They brought a unique and valuable perspective to the project because the other youth groups working on the Youth Calendar had previous Red Ribbon experience. It was entirely new to the Club teens. Their assessment of proposed prevention activities and messages to address their peers was extremely helpful.”

“Participation in the Red Ribbon Youth Calendar was the first AOD prevention activity at the Boys and Girls Club of Capistrano Valley,” said Rodriguez. “They were thrilled when the work of all the youth came together and the Calendar was published in the spring of 2009.”

Next, the Keystone Club teens volunteered to partner with ADEPT to present the annual Red Ribbon Week Youth Training, held September 2009 in Placentia, for youth throughout the county. Club members collaborated with Pham to identify the workshop topics and speakers, plan the agenda, invite exhibitors and develop special activities for the participants.

“I worked with them to identify the workshop speakers. Then, I called half the names on the list and a club teen, José Zamarripa, called the other half” said Pham. “Nearly everyone I called said no, almost everyone José called said yes!”

On the day of the training, the entire Keystone Club attended to coordinate the event, introduce the workshop speakers and facilitate group activities. “The Keystone Club teens were the energy and creativity behind the training,” said Pham. “The energy level was through the roof. They did all the work to present the training and did a fantastic job.”
The Red Ribbon Week activity for the Boys & Girls Club of Capistrano Valley, spearheaded by the Keystone Club teens, was open to members of all ages. They painted their handprints on the windows of the clubhouse and signed their names taking a pledge to be alcohol and drug free. The handprints and pledges remained on the windows for two weeks.

Boys & Girls Club of America has acknowledged the AOD prevention outreach accomplishments by Rodriguez and her Keystone Club teens. Their Red Ribbon Youth Training project was awarded first place in the Teen Community Outreach competition at the Pacific Regional Conference in the fall of 2009. In March 2010, Rodriguez was named National Keystone Advisor of the Year.

“Keystone teens have embraced AOD prevention outreach. They have such a good time planning and implementing activities,” said Rodriguez. “They planned and facilitated a town hall meeting for youth and adults to discuss issues of concern to teens and community-wide solutions, and initiated a merchant education project with local pharmacies to raise awareness of prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse.”

“The Keystone Club teens are very inclusive. When they identify an issue, they want to include youth from throughout the county. They have a holistic approach to prevention,” said Pham. “In just two years they have gone from no AOD prevention activities to receiving a first place award for one of their projects.”

For more information, contact Laurie Rodriguez, 949/240-7898, email:lrodriguez@bgccapo.com or Mary Pham, 714/834-4194, email: MEPham@ochca.com.

**IT ONLY TAKES ONE**

The Friday Night Live Partnership (FNL) Program is administered by the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) and funded by the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team (ADEPT). FNL fosters healthy youth development and encourages youth leadership to address alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence (ATODV) issues in their schools and communities. The influence that just one individual can have on a larger population is demonstrated by the actions of Steven Bui. When Steven transferred to Westminster High School during the 2008-2009 school year, he recognized a leadership opportunity. Steven had been an active member of the FNL chapter at his previous school, but FNL was not offered at Westminster High School.

“I received a call from Steven during the spring of 2009. He indicated that he and a few other students were interested in starting a FNL chapter at Westminster High School and requested our assistance,” said Sheila Walsh, Project Consultant, FNL Partnership Program, OCDE. “We scheduled a meeting after school at a nearby coffee shop to discuss the steps required to establish a new FNL chapter. It was the last week of school, and when I arrived Steven was there with 15 of his peers. It was amazing; we had to move outdoors to accommodate everyone. The students were eager to have a leadership program to address ATODV prevention at their school.”

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The college years are a time for personal growth, to explore new opportunities and set goals for academic achievement. It may also be a time of new-found independence that can challenge student values and behaviors. These factors can contribute to a high level of alcohol use and a range of problems associated with drinking among college students on college and university campuses nationwide.

In 2002, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Task Force on College Student Drinking issued a Call to Action challenging the research community to identify more effective prevention and intervention strategies to reduce alcohol consumption by college students. In response, Prevention Research Center (PRC) of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation in Berkley, California initiated a 10-year comprehensive alcohol prevention study, Safer California Universities Project. PRC, founded in 1983, is one of sixteen research centers sponsored by NIAAA, and is the only one that specializes in alcohol and drug prevention research.

Fourteen campuses from throughout the University of California and California State University systems are participating in this PRC research project. The two-phase project uses a randomized, intervention vs. control-group experimental design to examine how educational and environmental-risk management strategies can work independently and together in a campus-wide alcohol prevention effort. The project strategies address students’ misperception of drinking among their peers and high-risk drinking behaviors, such as underage and binge drinking and alcohol-impaired driving.

Environmental-risk management strategies are designed to reduce the potential for students to engage in problematic alcohol-related behavior. These strategies identify the factors that contribute to students’ high-risk behavior and change the circumstances (social environment) so the risky behaviors are less likely to occur. For example, an increased presence of law enforcement at major campus events has been shown to reduce student consumption of alcohol and related high-risk behaviors.

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) and University

Shortly after the start of school in the fall, Steven contacted Walsh once again to request she meet with the Activities Director at his school. When Walsh arrived for the meeting, Steven and six other students were there to participate. At the conclusion of the meeting, permission was given to establish a FNL chapter on campus. For the next three months, Steven and his peers worked on the chapter constitution and identified a staff member as the chapter advisor. The Westminster FNL chapter held its first meeting on January 8, 2010, less than a year from the initial contact with Walsh’s office.

“The Westminster High School FNL chapter is the third new chapter in the county started by students over the past year and a half,” said Walsh. “This is a testament to the advisors of the FNL clubs, that students feel empowered to start new chapters in their schools.”

For information visit the OCFNL Partnership web site at ocfnl.org, or contact Sheila Walsh, 714/966-4287, email: swalsh@ocde.us.
of California, Irvine (UCI) are Orange County’s participants in the Safer California Universities Project. During Phase I of the project, 2003 through 2008, CSUF and UCI were two of the project’s seven-campus control group. Universities in the control group maintained their existing campus alcohol prevention programs and provided baseline data on student drinking and drinking-related problems to the project through annual student surveys.

CSUF, UCI and the other five campuses in the control group transitioned to Phase II of the project in mid-2009 with the implementation of the study’s environmental-risk management strategies. The project protocol identifies specific activities to be implemented by the universities to increase law enforcement visibility, and to comply with state alcohol laws and campus policies regarding the possession and use of alcohol. These include:

- **Sobriety Checkpoints**: law enforcement operations in which every nth vehicle on a public roadway is stopped to investigate possible alcohol and other drug impaired driving or other vehicle code violations.

- **Saturation/Party Patrols**: increased police presence and visibility surrounding on-and-off campus student party/drinking events to ensure neighborhood and traffic safety, prevent underage drinking, enforce alcohol-use laws and campus alcohol policies, and intervene before behaviors escalate to violence or vandalism.

- **Merchant Compliance Checks**: local law enforcement officers visit licensed alcohol establishments to remind licensees of the responsibilities and accountabilities associated with the sale of alcohol. The officers also inspect the premises for compliance with State and local laws. The purpose of the visit is primarily educational; however, officers will issue a citation if they see any major violations during the inspection.

Each campus is required to implement nine enforcement events during the first 10-weeks of the fall semester or quarter. Evidence suggests that, because many students initiate heavy drinking during the early days of college, the potential exists for excessive alcohol consumption to interfere with successful adaptation to campus life.

The awareness strategies of the project target incoming and transferring university students and their parents. These strategies are designed to educate students on California alcohol laws that are reinforced by university policy, to inform students about the personal, social and academic consequences of violating the law and university policies regarding alcohol as well as highlighting alcohol-related problems such as violence and sexual assault. The awareness campaign also informs students of scheduled sobriety checkpoint locations, and on-and off-campus saturation and party patrols as deterrents to high-risk drinking.

New students receive an email letter from the university’s Division of Student Affairs articulating the importance of making responsible decisions regarding alcohol and highlighting campus alcohol policies. Alcohol prevention is a major component of the mandatory new student orientation held in the summer before the start of fall semester/quarter on California university campuses.

“When UCI transitioned to Phase II of the study, we identified a Law Enforcement Team that includes representation from UCI campus police and Irvine, Newport Beach and Costa Mesa Police Departments because we know many of our students live and party off-campus,” said Leigh Poirier Ball, Associate Director, Health Education Center, UCI.

“While most of the enforcement activities are on campus, through the Law Enforcement Team we have created infrastructure and opportunities for sharing information more effectively
with our partner agencies,” said Poirier Ball. “Now, we also have a California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) officer who participates in our meetings. The Safer California Universities Project has been extremely helpful to our alcohol prevention efforts; the residual benefits have been even greater.”

“Nearly all CSUF students live off-campus due to limited on-campus student housing; consequently, our participation in Phase II of the Safer California Universities Project is a community-wide effort,” said Mary Becerra, Director, Health Education and Promotion, CSUF. “During the planning for Phase II, we partnered with the City of Fullerton Police Department (FPD) on the enforcement component. As a result of this partnership, FPD has increased DUI enforcement and expanded their merchant compliance program.”

“The CSUF campus police are performing saturation and party patrols on campus and in community neighborhoods with a high density of student residents,” said Becerra. “Through the awareness campaign, we have informed students about the project and its emphasis on enforcement. When students see campus police in residence halls or patrolling residential neighborhoods, they associate the police presence with saturation or party patrols, which, hopefully, is a deterrent to high-risk behavior.”

“We consider attending CSUF to be a protective factor against excessive drinking, as most of our students work and the majority live at home with their parents and have family obligations. Consequently, our student population is very busy with little time to party,” said Becerra. “We do, however, have high-risk drinking going on, along with other related behaviors such as violence and sexual assault. The Safer California Universities Project strategies are helping us to identify this student population and target prevention services.”

The effectiveness of the prevention strategies implemented through the Safer California Universities Project cannot be fully assessed until Phase II of the study is complete. The Project will continue through the end of the 2013 academic year. On participating Orange County campuses, the project is coordinated through the UCI Health Education Center and CSUF Student Health and Counseling Center, Health Education and Promotion.

For more information on the Safer California Universities Project research, please contact Leigh Poirier Ball, 949/824-9688, email: lpoirier@uci.edu or Mary Becerra, 657/278-2847, email: mbecerra@fullerton.edu.