



Center Community Organizing Update

Opposition Attack Can't Discourage Kings County Coalition TRL Campaign

Although opponents of our policy goals may not always be visible, they are out there and can damage our campaigns if we're not prepared.

Just last week we saw strong opposition to tobacco retailer licensing in the city of Corcoran when Oralia Vallejo and the Kings County Tobacco-Free Partnership invited the Center for a strategy session. Instead of preparing for a presentation to city council, the entire meeting was disrupted by a representative of the Chamber of Commerce who argued loudly against the ordinance, complaining about big government, excessive fees on small businesses.

Corcoran is in the very heart of the Central Valley, with less than 13,000 residents and a very pro-business political climate. In 2007 Oralia Vallejo and the Kings County Tobacco-Free Partnership were shocked to learn that 20% of retailers were still selling tobacco to minors after years of merchant education. Even the city council wanted to do something about it.

But the early enthusiasm faded somewhat as Coalition members came and went, opposition reared its head, even their city council champion became preoccupied with her reelection campaign. But Oralia didn't stray from her mission.

After years of consistent work and networking, the Tobacco-Free Partnership will be presenting to the city council in December, despite the disruption of the strategy session by the Chamber representative. Oralia says, "Relationships in a small community like this

"Without the Center's trainings we would have lost momentum long ago."

Did you miss the TALC/Center FDA Webinar?

The Center can tailor a special FDA policy training or strategy session for YOUR coalition.

Strategy Chart Training in Carpinteria Reveals Tight Knit Community

Marybeth Carty moved to Santa Barbara 32 years ago to attend UC Santa Barbara. Now she is deeply involved in the small, tight knit, beach community just down the coast called Carpinteria, or "Carp" by the locals. She helped set up Carp Cares for Youth four years ago following the suicide death of a 16 year old girl.

Tobacco issues weren't on the top of her agenda when she accepted an invitation to attend a planning session for a tobacco retail licensing campaign in August. However, she was seeing a resurgence of smoking among the kids attending the concerts at Thunder Bowl, a local venue for music by Carp kids, for Carp kids, and strongly supported Carp's first in the County beach smoking ban.

The training was organized by Dawn Dunn, head of the County's Tobacco Prevention Settlement Program who thought that the Carp advocates would benefit from a strategy chart

are key, and we have relationships with key community leaders that should balance out the Chamber's opposition. It took time to build these relationships, but the coalition has been amazing. And without the Center's trainings we would have lost momentum long ago."

Oralia is also pioneering a new approach linking tobacco retailer licensing with meth which is opening doors in Corcoran to important community leaders within the Kings Partnership for Prevention.

Despite the ups and downs, Oralia is upbeat. "I want to be a part of providing solutions to my community. Despite our challenges, sooner or later this ordinance will pass, and it will be a legacy we can leave to our community."

Let's keep our fingers crossed in December for the Kings County Tobacco-Free Partnership!



training led by the Center. She knew how participants were motivated by the clarity and direction that can come from these sessions.



Jack Nicholl, the Center trainer, led the group of 12 through the fundamentals of strategic planning: What are the group's goals? How will pursuing these goals help the organizations around the table? How will city council members react? What tactics will be most effective in persuading council members to support it? Participants identified 26 organizations to approach for support, and three groups who might oppose them. They figured that one councilmember might oppose, two were undecided and two might support. The group's Circles of Influence chart was a dream come true. In Carp, if you're involved, you know many influential people.

"It was super helpful to have a facilitator to consolidate ideas and make sure that what's on paper reflects what's been said," observed Marybeth. "Figuring out where decision makers might stand on the issue and describing the group's Circles of Influence were my favorites."

Since the training, Dawn and Marybeth have concentrated on finding an agency to spearhead the campaign. Once that is accomplished, the group will move forward.

The Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing assists local Prop 99 funded projects throughout the state meet policy objectives using proven community organizing strategies, and serves as a statewide and local tobacco policy resource. The Center is a project of the American Lung Association in California and is funded by the California Tobacco Control Program.

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