

MEDIA RELEASE

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Calling Ventura County to Action Ventura County's WEEDUI Summit

(OXNARD, Calif.) – “How could we let this happen?” This question, asked of Erin Prewitt by her young daughter, opened the Ventura County WEEDUI Drugged Driving Summit. Erin, widow of local educator Chris Prewitt, shared the impact of drugged driving on her family when her husband was struck and killed on April 6, 2014 by a driver under the influence of marijuana and Xanax.

Supervisor Steve Bennett welcomed Summit faculty and participants, inviting them to “bend the trend” of increasing rates of driving under the influence of marijuana and other drugs. Other speakers, including Dr. Javier Romero, MD, Co-Director of VCMC's Trauma Department; Undersheriff Gary Pentis; Deputy District Attorney Erik Nasarenko; and Randy Weismann, Deputy Director for the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), echoed the need.

Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) is working in partnership with law enforcement, community leaders and the California Office of Traffic Safety to bring attention to the dangers of drugged driving, and to prevent these tragedies from happening. After hosting the WEEDUI Drugged Driving Summit on September 17, 2015, the agency is leading conversations to change the public's idea on what drug-impaired driving means.

“Drug-impaired driving is on law enforcement's radar. People's views on marijuana may be changing, but so are the laws. If you drive high you can get arrested for impaired driving, what we call a WEEDUI,” Undersheriff Gary Pentis acknowledged. “We are working together to raise awareness that marijuana and many legal prescription drugs can impact the ability to drive. The WEEDUI Summit gave the community the tools necessary to ignite a dialog about the risks.”

David Tovar, OTS Grant Coordinator for VCBH, closed with, “We are working to change minds, so people do not end up in the criminal justice system. Our goal is to reduce deaths, injuries, and DUIs in Ventura County and to impress upon the public the cost isn't an individual one, it is taken on by our entire community.”

The WEEDUI Summit is part of Ventura County Behavioral Health Alcohol and Drug Program's *Risks and Realities Campaign*. For more information about the campaign, contact David Tovar at (805) 981-9115 or at David.Tovar@Ventura.org. Funding for the grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information, go to www.venturacountylimits.com/WEEDUI

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