

## **Straight Up Ventura County**

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## **Straight Up Receives Award**

*Nonprofit receives citations from PTA honoring work with youth, alcohol awareness*

VENTURA, CA (March 31, 2009) – Straight Up Ventura County, a youth development project that promotes awareness and issues surrounding underage and binge drinking, was honored by the California Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, Inc. (PTA) in March.

Straight Up, made possible through funding from Ventura County Behavioral Health Department Prevention Services, received an Honorary Service Award from the California State PTA, at a ceremony hosted by the 12<sup>th</sup> District PTA. In addition to the Service Award, Straight Up also received additional honors, including certificates of acknowledgment from several members of the U.S. House of Representatives and California's Senate and Legislature Assembly.

Representatives from Straight Up were on hand to accept the awards, including Program Director Katherine Kasmir, as well as Brandon Freiberg, Nate Hawk, and Daniel Goodkin-Gold, three youth volunteers who have been working with the organization for quite some time.

"It's really cool being honored," says Daniel Goodkin-Gold, 15, a Ventura High School sophomore. "It's great knowing we're on a scale so that we are recognized for all the work we do." Daniel regularly participates in Straight Up events, including Reality Parties for Parents and teen leadership events.

"Getting the awards was awesome," says Nate Hawk, 17, a Foothill Technology High School student. "Katherine puts a lot of work into Straight Up. This is her life, and she deserves this."

Also on hand was Brandon Freiberg, 17, a Foothill Technology High School senior, who was instrumental in urging the Ventura City Council not to allow Target Store to acquire a liquor license. Brandon was honored by the Ventura City Council for his efforts last November.

Dan Hicks, Senior Program Administrator of the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department's Alcohol and Drug Programs Division Prevention Services agrees that Straight Up has an important mission. "The best thing about work of Straight Up is that it engages young people to share with adults who can change things. Youth know that its adults who have the power, and the responsibility, to change the equation."

Straight Up is a youth development project that promotes social change regarding underage and binge drinking and impaired driving using improvisation and interactive performance and workshops with engaging discussion, exploration of issues, and the development of personal and community solutions to these problems.

PHOTOS CAN BE VIEWED at <http://tinyurl.com/cd6gs6>

Please contact Straight Up if you require high-resolution images for publication.

Straight Up is made possible through funding from Ventura County Behavioral Health Department Prevention Services. For more information, please visit their website at <http://www.straightupvc.org>.

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