

---

**For Immediate Release**

**Press Contact:** Monica Nicholas

Santa Cruz County, Substance Use Disorder Prevention  
1400 Emeline Ave. Bldg. K, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 359-8450



## **Friday Night Live Youth Flip the Script on Underage Drinking with a Poster Scavenger Hunt**

Santa Cruz County, CA — October 3, 2022— **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live (FNL) youth leaders from Pajaro Valley High School, Pajaro Middle School, Watsonville YMCA, and Watsonville High School Chapters are tackling the issue of underage drinking by sharing the positive data that the majority of youth in our community are choosing **NOT** to consume alcohol before the age of 21.

FNL youth recognized that peer perceptions of substance use significantly influence a young person's attitudes and behaviors. Unfortunately, these perceptions are often inaccurate. Using local California Healthy Kids Survey data, youth developed messages to educate and reinforce positive social norms and behaviors by highlighting the fact that the majority of youth in Santa Cruz County are choosing NOT to drink alcohol.

To share these important messages, youth developed a series of educational poster designs, aired public service announcements on local radio stations, and distributed messages through ongoing posts on social media through Instagram and Facebook.

"The best part about working on this project was that it made me feel that we were helping to make a positive change to educate and influence our peers and others with the posters we made and displayed around local stores in Watsonville and across the County. I even shared our Public Service Announcement with my entire school and I wasn't nervous because through Friday Night Live, I had already practiced this skill by speaking to City Council about a different project. It's important to educate not only about the harms and dangers of underage drinking, but also to share the positive statistics to motivate us to keep this trend going." -Cesar Rodriguez, 12th grade, Watsonville High school Chapter and Youth Council

FNL members developed a series of youth-targeted positive poster messages. Using the data for Pajaro Valley Unified School District, youth highlighted that 98% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 91% of 11<sup>th</sup>-grade youth choose not to drink alcohol (California Healthy Kids Survey, 2020-2021). Youth also highlighted Countywide data showing that 98% of Santa Cruz County 7<sup>th</sup> graders, 85% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders have not drunk alcohol in the last 30 days (CHKS, 2020-2021).

Adult-targeted educational materials, and a Public Service Announcement (PSA) were also developed to change the community misperceptions and promote positive norms that support young people's healthy

choices. Parent education materials encourage parents to talk to their kids about alcohol and to safely monitor and secure alcohol in their homes to prevent unintended access.

“We often underestimate the number of youth who are making healthy choices. One thing we know is that social norms campaigns can be effective in communities and settings where most people believe that young people are drinking alcohol when in reality, they are not,” said Martine Watkins, Senior Community Organizer at the Santa Cruz County Office of Education.

Friday Night Live, a California program started in 1984, is a youth development program that promotes healthy lifestyles free of alcohol, tobacco, or other substance use among youth. Friday Night Live builds partnerships for positive and healthy youth development, which engage youth as active leaders and resources in their community. For more information about the Friday Night Live, or the poster scavenger hunt, email: [sccfnlp@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:sccfnlp@santacruzcounty.us), call: 831-359-8450, and follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook @sccfnlp.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.