



HYPERLOCAL ORGANIZING: POSTCARD CAMPAIGN LED BY THE COMMUNITY DRIVES SUCCESS IN HESPERIA

THE SUCCESS

Driven by the Way Resource Center's (Center) efforts, the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free San Bernardino County collected more than 480 postcards in support of stronger tobacco regulation in Hesperia. The postcards were presented to the Hesperia City Council by district, demonstrating that each council member had supporters in their district.

The Hesperia City Council adopted a policy establishing a tobacco retail license (TRL) on November 2, 2021.

While the pandemic forced the Coalition and its partners to recalibrate its plans, it also enabled it to employ effective new approaches and digital tools that will strengthen future campaigns and build connections with new community partners that may not have been previously engaged in tobacco issues.

APPROACH

Recognizing that postcard campaigns can offer a powerful demonstration of broad community support, the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free San Bernardino County partnered with the CALI Youth Group (CALI), the non-profit The Way Resource Center (Center), and other Coalition members in Hesperia during the fall of 2019.

The campaign employed a hyperlocal approach, relying on the strength of existing community relationships, which proved crucial after the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted many traditional campaign tactics.



The postcard was created through a collaboration of CALI Youth members and integrated a map overlay focused on Hesperia's downtown area and Sultana High School to reference the impact of tobacco on local youth. The postcard design was tested with Coalition members to ensure that it reflected the Hesperia community.

"Making the design personal to the city so that people recognize, "This is my city," was really important," said Monika Gracian, Program Manager for the California Health Collaborative's San Bernardino County Tobacco Control Program (SBCTCP).

CALI and Center members began collecting postcards at events and through door-to-door canvassing in late 2019 but had to recalibrate after the COVID-19 pandemic restricted in-person activities.

Coalition Postcard Collection Tactics:

- › Door-to-door canvassing
- › Food distribution sites
- › Digital form
- › Community Events

As an essential service provider for food distribution, the Center used its unique role to engage community members and resume the campaign. The Center also leveraged digital tools and platforms to engage the community, including geofencing and a virtual presentation during a quarterly meeting of the High Desert Food Collaborative.

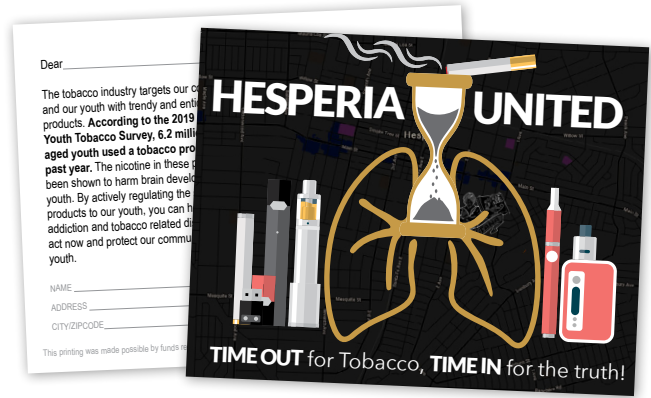
“It’s important to be adaptable and be prepared to shift to use whatever opportunities come your way,” said Pastor David Green, Sr., the Center’s chief executive.

A postcard campaign can be an effective tactic but requires significant groundwork and may not work for every community. “It worked well in Hesperia because we had buy-in from youth and community,” Gracian said.

Consider the messenger. With its offices in Victorville, SBCTCP lacked the necessary local ties in Hesperia. Partnering with trusted local organizations with deep community ties, such as The Way Resource Center, which has provided services in Hesperia since 1987, was key to the campaign’s success.

“It can’t be something that is largely agency driven,” Gracian said. “It has to come from the community and be very grassroots.”

Look beyond tobacco. While the Center is not focused on tobacco issues, Green was able to link the risks of tobacco use to other equity issues at the core of its mission, such as food insecurity, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on mental health among youth. Pointing to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that linked tobacco use to youth who



were also food insecure, for example, enabled the Center to effectively engage with the High Desert Food Collaborative, comprising of more than 80 local organizations, Green said. The Center also presented to faith communities on the connection between mental health and youth tobacco use.

“Engaging groups that may not work on tobacco but have the reach and respect of the community far outweighs whether they have tobacco experience,” Gracian said. “Tobacco is related to everything.”

Leverage network. With limited in-person events, the Center employed its broad network to reach more residents. Green organized virtual events through prominent faith-communities and through the High Desert Food Collaborative to engage residents on the issues of youth tobacco access and collect postcards. Green didn’t limit his efforts to the Center work. He distributed postcards through events hosted through his for-profit companies that provide in-person services, including auto-detailer Super Clean Mobile, pit barbecue seller Green’s Catering Service, and Excalibur Development Co, which hosts twice-monthly community garage sale events.

LEARN MORE

For more information: Coalition for a Tobacco-Free San Bernardino County, tobaccofreesbc.org or tobaccofreesbc@gmail.com.