



# Glenn County Alliance for Prevention Emboldened by Tobacco Retailers Targeting of Kids & Families

## The Success

A coalition based in Glenn County used public outrage about a community event, hosted by a local tobacco retailer, to reinvigorate its coalition, engage the community and build momentum for a new city policy to protect kids from tobacco. This coalition responded to a local tobacco retailer's public event targeting of youth and families with a letter to the editor in a local newspaper, and an underage tobacco purchase decoy operation. The results from the decoy operation gave the coalition members fresh data that helped grow public support for Tobacco Retail Licensing policies in both the city of Orland and the unincorporated areas of Glenn County.

## The Coalition

The Glenn County Alliance for Prevention (GCAP) is a coalition of community organizations in Glenn County that works to create a substance-free community. Coalition members include the California Health Collaborative's Si Se Puede program, which works to raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco use in the Latino community, Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Glenn County Public Health, Glenn County Office of Education, Glenn County Behavioral Health, American Lung Association in California, local churches, and county police and fire departments.

### Glenn County Alliance for Prevention included:

- California Health Collaborative's Si Se Puede program
- Students Working Against Tobacco
- Glenn County Public Health
- Glenn County Office of Education
- Glenn County Behavioral Health
- American Lung Association
- Local Churches
- County Police Departments
- County Fire Departments



## The Approach

In early June 2023, residents of Orland, a small city 100 miles north of Sacramento, saw a Facebook post by a tobacco retailer promoting a community party to “show their appreciation for their customers.” The business was offering free entertainment, including a water slide and bouncy house for kids, and food and drink as a way of saying thanks to the community. The post was generating a lot of buzz, both from residents who seemed excited about the upcoming event and those who were outraged that the tobacco retailer was advertising themselves and their products to attract children and others under the age to purchase tobacco products.

Esther Craig, the program manager at the California Health Collaborative (CHC) North Valley Si Se Puede program during the time, knew that a response to the tobacco retailer's event from a young person would resonate stronger than an adult with the community and reached out to coalition partners at Orland High School Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) to coordinate a response. Students decided to write a letter to Orland City Council to voice their opposition to the planned event, and contact each council member separately. The students didn't receive a single reply. Undeterred, the students worked with CHC to turn the email into a letter to the editor, which they sent to the local newspaper, the

Glenn County Observer. The newspaper ignored them too. But the students persevered, contacting another local newspaper, the Tri County News, which ran their letter about a week later. Even though the event had passed, Si Se Puede and other coalition partners were able to link to the letter on social media, keeping the conversation about the dangers of tobacco going.

“We knew we had to act fast enough to get the letter into the paper,” said Craig. “We wanted to get attention around it and wanted to continue the momentum. We knew there would be a strong reaction.”

Two months later, Si Se Puede, Friday Night Live, a teen program run by the local office of education, and the Orland Police Department conducted an undercover youth tobacco purchase operation that showed that nearly a quarter of the city’s tobacco retailers (4 out of 15) sold tobacco and vaping products to underage youth. GCAP broadcast the findings in a press release that got picked up by a community paper, creating more shareable content for coalition partners.

“The young adult purchase surveys were an effective tool because we could now share local data instead of just placing the issue before the council in a hypothetical way,” said Craig. “It became a lot more tangible and showed that there is still a problem in the community.”



The operation provided momentum toward a Tobacco Retail Licensing policy for the City of Orland, which the coalition is working to pass and plans to work with the city’s economic development committee to find the most suitable approach.

Carolina Cabral, who coordinates the Tobacco Education Program at the Glenn County Public Health Department, says “This is a small, rural and conservative area .... So our focus is on how the work we’re doing protects children. With the decoy operation we were able to provide accurate local data on the impact on the community and that was effective.”

For more information, go to:  
[www.countyofglenn.net/dept/health-human-services/public-health/tobacco-education-program](http://www.countyofglenn.net/dept/health-human-services/public-health/tobacco-education-program)



▶ Check out the Center's Resources at [organizingtoendtobacco.org](http://organizingtoendtobacco.org)  
 "Tips for Engaging and Retaining Coalition Members"  
 "Sample Letter to the Editor"