

EPASAPC/YouthEPA in Washington, D.C.: CADCA National Leadership Forum Experience

February 2, 2015



Representing the East Palo Alto Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Khabral Muhammad and Vei Finau of One East Palo Alto's (OEPA) YouthEastPaloAlto (YouthEPA) initiative took part in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s 11th annual Prevention Day on February 2, 2015. This national gathering is organized by SAMHSA in conjunction with Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)'s 25th Annual National Leadership Forum from February 3 - 5, 2015 in National Harbor, Md. and the Washington D.C. metro area. It is attended by over 2600 other community leaders from across the nation and 12 countries. For the first time in OEPA's six year history of participating in this major event, two YouthEPA participants were able to attend, Fernando Contreras, 16, of Palo Alto High School and Alessandra "Ally" Valencia, 18, of Foothill College. Both applied for and were awarded scholarships to accompany Vei and Khabral to Washington D.C. and participate in the forum.

SAMHSA's Prevention Day focused on "The Power of Prevention: Making Impact in a Time of Change." The one-day event provided a place for prevention practitioners, community leaders, researchers, scientists, consumers, and advocates in the behavioral health field to learn about effective programs and the latest prevention-related developments in the areas of substance abuse and mental health. Participants were able to network with other SAMHSA grantees and partners and had an opportunity to take part in workshops to enhance their strategic planning and to share experiences and information.



CADCA's National Leadership Forum is the nation's largest training event for substance abuse prevention and treatment professionals and researchers. Training sessions addressed some of the most pressing issues facing communities today – from how to prevent prescription drug abuse and marijuana use among youth to how to reduce tobacco use and underage drinking. While Khabral and Vei were able to choose from over 80 different CADCA trainings throughout the event, Fernando and Ally attended the National Youth Leadership Institute (NYLI), a parallel set of youth-specific trainings focused on the latest evidence-based leadership development and prevention best-practices.

The CADCA Forum also included an opportunity for community leaders to hear from members of Congress during Capitol Hill Day and meet with U.S. Representatives and Senators. YouthEPA was able to spend some time discussing substance abuse prevention at the office of our own 14th Assembly District Representative Hon. Jackie Speier.