

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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United Way Awards \$75,000 Grant to Child Abuse Prevention Council

San Luis Obispo, Calif.- United Way of San Luis Obispo County has awarded a new Community Collaboration Grant to the San Luis Obispo County Child Abuse Prevention Council (SLO-CAP). The grant will be used to expand the Beginnings program, a collaborative effort that aims to make San Luis Obispo a community where every child is born free of the effects of alcohol, tobacco and drug exposure. The three-year, \$75,000 grant will ultimately enable SLO-CAP and their partner agencies to reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by pregnant women.

The Beginnings program was one of 24 Letters of Interest originally submitted at the request of United Way late last year. After a thorough review of the many challenges facing our community, the United Way Board of Directors decided to focus this first Community Collaboration Grant on helping children and youth achieve their potential. The Beginnings grant was selected from a group of seven formal proposals after each was reviewed by a panel of volunteer community and United Way Board members. Before arriving at a decision, however, representatives from Beginnings were asked to meet with the review committee to answer additional questions. Monica Irons, United Way Vice President of Community Impact, stated, "The Beginnings program gets at the very root of the issue. Healthy pregnancies result in healthy kids who have a much higher probability of reaching their fullest potential. The committee felt a positive impact in this area could have an enormous positive impact on our community in a relatively short time."

According to the Journal of the National Association of Neonatal Nurses, "prenatal alcohol exposure is the leading preventable cause of birth defects, developmental disorders and mental retardation in children." Once children have been exposed however, the issue becomes much more costly and difficult to address. According to a study updated in 2002 to reflect population growth and inflation, the total annual cost associated with fetal alcohol syndrome in the United States is \$4.5 billion (Harwood, et al., 1992). "The heartbreaking truth of children prenatally exposed to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is that they end up with emotional and mental health problems that go undiagnosed and untreated," said Lisa Fraser, Executive Director of the Child Abuse Prevention Council.

United Way is focused on making measurable, lasting changes in the community by strengthening partnerships among stakeholders and increasing work in areas that affect the root causes of our community's most pressing needs. Funding used in the Beginnings program on education and prevention will help reduce future treatment needs and costs, while increasing the quality of life in the community. "Increasing awareness about prevention goes a long way to strengthening our community. Tomorrow's leaders will be more successful if they are born without the effects of abuse. You can help United Way in supporting these important community-wide causes by visiting our website for volunteer and donor information," said Rick London, CEO of United Way of San Luis Obispo County.

For more information about United Way of SLO County or to make a donation, visit www.unitedwayslo.org or call (805) 541-1234.

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*This news release is available on the United Way of San Luis Obispo County website at
<http://www.unitedwayslo.org/News/index.html>*