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Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council Honors Parent Leaders

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By Katharina Zulliger for the Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council



Showing off the booklet created by the parents, Barbara Finch, center, chair of the Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council, poses with two of the honored parent leaders, Yoly Monzon, left, and Brenda Lopez. (Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council photo)

'Parents Forever' helps guide other parents in strengthening family and preventing abuse and neglect

The [Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council](#) on Friday honored a special group of parents who have stepped up to do their part to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Three parent leaders received certificates of commendation signed by their district's county supervisor for spending many volunteer hours creatively developing strategies about how best to teach other parents some simple ways to strengthen a family and prevent child abuse and neglect.

“Now having finished our booklet, the feeling is indescribable,” said Cecilia Herrera, one of the parent leaders. “It is a mix of satisfaction, excitement and expectation about how it will work. As a parent, I want to make the difference and encourage other parents to recognize if they need help and ask for it.”

Annually, more than 4,000 children are reported to the [Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Hotline](#). Research shows that child abuse and neglect are preventable if a community comes together to protect children and help strengthen families. Parents are a vital part of a community-wide prevention effort, because they know their communities and can relate to families with whom they come in contact in a spontaneous, supportive way before a problem occurs.

The member agencies of the Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council began deliberately engaging parents as leaders in their prevention work in 2008, encouraged by the interest and willingness of parents to step up and support each other.

“The importance of peer-to-peer teaching cannot be overestimated,” said Arcelia Sencion, director of health care and social services at [People Helping People](#), one of the council’s member agencies. “We know for a fact that a parent’s first resource is other parents. It is so valuable to have a group of parents willing to share about what works for their families, learn about child abuse and neglect prevention and combine this knowledge into information that is accessible to other parents.”

The parent leadership group, Parents Forever (or Padres Para Siempre), is utilizing a nationally recognized prevention approach, Strengthening Families Through the Five Protective Factors, to promote their message of prevention. Guided by Barbara Finch, CAPC chair, and supported by their sponsoring agencies, [CALM](#) and [Isla Vista Youth Projects](#) in South County, and People Helping People in midcounty, the parents created a booklet that they plan to use as a basis to teach this information to their peers. The printing of the booklet was funded by a grant.

Santa Barbara County’s goal is to intervene early with services and supports for families to prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring. To that end, nonprofit agencies, volunteers, parents and county departments work together as the Child Abuse Prevention Council to educate the community and coordinate services.

For more information on preventing child abuse and neglect, community and parenting resources, or to find out how to get involved, [click here](#) or call the Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council at 805.346.8222.

— *Katharina Zulliger is the network manager for the [Santa Barbara County Child Abuse Prevention Council](#).*

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