

**In this issue:**

- Local agencies partner up to form a Family Wellness Coalition
- Project updates for JUNTOS & PADRES
- Preview of upcoming OPEN HOUSE event
- IRS brings free tax prep services through VITA program at IVROP, other sites

**In the Spotlight**



In this section local agencies who partner with IVROP Projects Juntos & PADRES will be highlighted.

The first to be *In the Spotlight* is the **Imperial County Department of Child Support Services**.

*Location:* 2795 S. 4th Street, El Centro, CA 92243

*Representative:* **Liza Bar-raza**

*Title:* **Supervising Child Support Attorney**

*Reason for Partnering:* **“We support IVROP’s vision to provide parenting skills and workforce skills to child support obligors as it may result in placing them in a job so they can contribute to their child’s/ children’s lives financially and emotionally.”**

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# PROJECT JUNTOS/PADRES NEWSLETTER



## Have you heard of the Family Wellness Coalition?

Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily business around Imperial County, the men and women of the recently formed “Family Wellness Coalition” work tirelessly in their jobs with one overarching purpose: To aid and strengthen local families.

The Family Wellness Coalition is a professional network of agencies where client referrals, disclosable information, ROP workshops and informal meetings between partnering agencies happen, according to a Memorandum of Understanding between

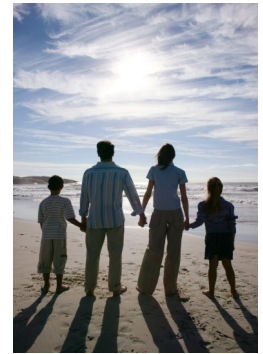
the IVROP, Imperial County and the Imperial County Department of Child Support Services dated Oct. 25, 2011.

Presently, the Family Wellness Coalition consists of six local agencies partnered with the IVROP to form the bonds of a professional partnership between agencies which help families and/or fathers, said Project Juntos grant author and project coordinator Edwin Obergfell.

“The Family Wellness Coalition is a concept that, when we were

writing these (Project Juntos and Project PADRES) grants, Mary Camacho and I talked about an agency-formed group of people that could not only help PADRES and Juntos but could help families county-wide,” Obergfell said in an interview.

Obergfell said the grants were written in such a way that they aim to make the partnership a “win-win-win,” meaning IVROP, the partnering agencies and all of the organizations’ clients benefit not only from the IVROP’s projects but The Coalition itself. *(Continued on Page 2)*



*“A healthy marriage is the best foundation for raising children.” - Juntos curriculum*

## UPDATE: What’s new with Project Juntos?

Hello, new Project Juntos Job Development Specialist and newsletter writer extraordinaire Roman Flores here to fill you in on some facts about the former Project JUNTOS and the fabulously NEW Project Juntos.

Project Juntos came into existence to help foster healthy marriages or relationships for the betterment of families in Imperial County.

The former brand of Project JUNTOS, which was funded by a federal grant that ran from 2006—2011, targeted low-income unwed expecting parents or low-income unwed parents with a child or children three months of age or younger in Imperial County (for couples ages 17 or older). The former JUNTOS served 50 couples per project year and was limited to these types of parents.

Now, after JUNTOS served 250 couples during that five year period, the NEW Project Juntos has expanded to local couples in three “allowable activity” categories: III—unwed couples with children, IV—engaged couples or singles looking to marry and V—already married couples. This has enabled the new Project Juntos to serve 100 couples per year.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

### Contacts:

#### JUNTOS:

- Edwin Obergfell: 482-2642
- Martha Arteaga: 482-2608
- Roman Flores: 482-2619
- Diana Garzon: 482-2628
- Reyna Harvey: 482-2627
- Irma Jimenez: 482-2618
- Sandra Martinez: 482-2606
- Marysol Redondo: 482-2609
- Stephanie Valenzuela: 482-2632

#### PADRES:

- Juan Campos: 482-2625
- Victoria Henos: 482-2641
- Priscilla Jimenez: 482-2639
- Arturo Ramirez: 482-2640
- Liliana Ramirez: 482-2620
- Joaquin Reyes: 482-2649
- Vanessa Santillanes: 482-2624
- Kristine Zara: 482-2638



WELCOME TO FAMILY WELLNESS



The Family Wellness Coalition agencies in Imperial County are:  
 IVROP, Dept. of Child Support Services, One Stop Centers, Dept. of Probation, Sheriff's Office, CalWORKS & The Center for Family Solutions

**People served by JUNTOS:**

100% — below federal poverty  
 50/50 — male to female  
 90.8% — Hispanic/Latino  
 4.3% — African-American  
 4% — Caucasian  
 0.72% — Native American/Alaskan  
 0.18% — Asian/Pacific Islander  
 66% — Young adults (20-35 years old)  
 29% — Adolescent (17-19)  
 5% — Adults (36 & up)  
 50 — couples per year  
 250 — couples in 5 years

For full report contact Edwin Obergfell at [eobergfell@ivrop.org](mailto:eobergfell@ivrop.org) or by phone

*"There were a lot of things I liked about JUNTOS."* —  
 Analisa Hernandez



Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor. In 2002, 7.8% of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4% of children in female householder-families.

Source: [fatherhood.org/U.S. Census Bureau](http://fatherhood.org/U.S.CensusBureau)

## ESLR OF THE MONTH: JANUARY

*Interpersonal Learners who: Possess appropriate work ethics.*

### Family Wellness Coalition Cont.

"Even though great services were already here in the community for families and individuals we saw the opportunity to form the Family Wellness Coalition so we could all have a clearer understanding of what each agency does for families," Obergfell said. "There's a lot of great communication going on already at the county level."

"Ever since we first met with Mary Camacho and Edwin its been a very involved relationship," Liza Barraza, ICDCSS supervising child support attorney, said. "We have constant communication with

them. It's a daily communication that's in place so it's going pretty well."

From the ICDCSS standpoint, Barraza said both projects could help child support obligors, or child support clients mandated to pay child support, overcome their various barriers to employment. This could lead to them finding work and paying their child support, which helps their children.

"We think if they join these programs and they go through those classes that it is something posi-

tive in their lives because it allows them to learn how to be a better parent and spend more time with their children; and the more time they spend with their children the less child support they have to pay.

"(The Coalition) seems like it encompasses every aspect of the person's whole life," Barraza said. "If there's other agencies that have other clientele, chances are they'll see the benefit in one of these classes IVROP offers.

"It's all tied together," she said.

### What's new with Juntos? Cont.

In addition, new curriculums are being used including the nationally recognized, evidence and research-based healthy marriage and relationship curriculum named "PREP—Within Our Reach."

Other curriculums in the new Juntos include parenting, financial planning and a new employability component. Lastly, our top clients in allowable activity III will be selected for job placement after they have completed all other components of Project Juntos.

Presently in the new Project Juntos, some participants have already completed 20 hours of the HRM curriculum and are eagerly awaiting the start of our parenting classes.

Yet the success of the former JUNTOS cannot be denied as "the qualitative and quantitative data and performance measures collected for the past five years...overwhelmingly states that IVROP-Project Juntos was a successful project that significantly

changed hundreds of lives in Imperial County in a number of ways," according to the JUNTOS final report written by Dr. Elizabeth D. Cordero, assistant professor of psychology at San Diego State University—Imperial Valley.

Just ask our former participants.

"I liked the way they taught us about parenting, how to be responsible with money and have a good relationship," said Analisa H.

## In the Spotlight Q & A: Liza Barraza of Child Support Services

**What do you think of working with IVROP?**

I like working with them because they are a group dedicated to promoting a wide variety of family services in Imperial County.

**What are the benefits of working with Project Juntos & PADRES?**

Many of our Child Services obligors have barriers in obtaining employment and therefore meeting their Child Support obligations. These programs help them remove those barriers.

**What do you hope comes out of this partnership?**

I hope that this strengthens families in the Imperial Valley in the emotional, financial and familial aspects of their lives. I hope it strengthens families and their relationships to one another as a whole.

## ESLR OF THE MONTH: FEBRUARY

*Technological Producers who: Use appropriate resources to complete a task.*

**Padres** IVROP

### IVROP lends a hand with taxes for tenth year through VITA program

Income tax filers once again descended upon the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program main office Monday as certified volunteer tax preparers from IVROP continue to help local residents calculate their numbers for the 2011 tax season.

The free assistance local residents have been receiving at IVROP since Jan. 23 stems from the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, said Justine Tate, IRS stakeholder relationship tax consultant and VITA coordinator for Imperial County.

According to irs.gov, the VITA program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. (IRS) certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools and other sites and most locations offer free electronic filing, according to the website.

Tate said the VITA program's help is available to anyone who earns

less than \$49,000 annually. This helps locals receive tax money through the Earned Income Tax Credit, a credit provided by the government to bridge the gap between lower income people and average earners.

"It basically helps working families to assist them in taking care of their children," Tate said. "The people can do whatever they want with the money. A lot of people use it to pay their bills or even put down on a home."

(Continued on Page 4)



"It helps me get my taxes done," said Cynthia Salazar of El Centro (pictured on left). "I trust them because I've been here before," she said of IVROP VITA volunteers. "It was quick and fast."

### UPDATE: Project PADRES / By Juan Campos, Project Coordinator

Hello, IVROP Project Coordinator Juan Campos here to update you on one of our newest projects at IVROP, Project PADRES.

Project PADRES hit the ground running in mid-November 2011.

The purpose of Project PADRES is to increase successful pathways to responsible fatherhood by developing and enhancing healthy marriage and relationship skills, responsible parenting skills, and improving the economic stability of our targeted participants, which are fathers.

Now, with more than two months under our belts and all of our full-time project staff on board, our team is

proud to announce that we are already serving two groups of participants, with approximately 20 participants enrolled in either responsible fatherhood classes or healthy relationship classes.

The aim of our project is to serve 200 participants per year, over the next three years, by providing parents with the education, services, and resources they need to maintain healthy relationships and to become better fathers, parents, and providers.

There is a constant daily bustle in the PADRES office as the staff continues to enroll new participants into the program while conducting community outreach and

facilitating classes.

As our team continues to meet new participants we tend to hear a common theme, "Finally, a project that specifically targets the needs of fathers." During one of our recent classes, participants shared their enthusiasm over the benefits of the project and after just a few sessions some felt the project already made a profound impact on their lives.

If you are interested in learning more about Project PADRES and its services and/or activities, please call (760) 482-2638 or visit our office at the Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program, 687 State Street, El Centro, CA 92243.

#### PROJECT PADRES By The Numbers

\*20 participants enrolled with more arriving daily

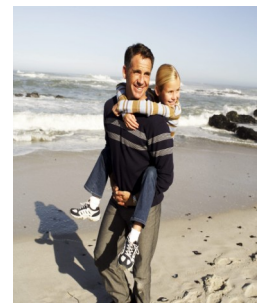
1 parenting course completed

1 fatherhood course completed

1 new fatherhood course started

Superbowl XLVI airs this Sunday, Feb. 5 @ 3:30pm on NBC

"Finally, a project that specifically targets the needs of fathers."



"A man can't become a good dad without becoming a good man first."— PADRES curriculum

## Meet A Staff Member



In this section a Project Juntos or PADRES staff member will be featured.

Allow us to introduce you to **Irma Jimenez Galindo** of Project Juntos.

Title: Clerk Typist III

Age: 42

Family: I have two sons: **Allan (23)** and **Christopher (17)** and my daughter **Abby (21)**

Pet(s): a 7-year-old Pomeranian named **Jewel**, as in "Jewel of the Desert"

Hobbies: I like to exercise, read and I love shopping and doing community service.

**What do you do?** I keep track of expenses, do all the shopping for our different classes, send reports to our funding agencies and assist staff as needed.

**What do you like about working at IVROP?** I like that we get along very well. Even though we all have different ideas and backgrounds we try to accommodate everybody's needs and we work as a team. We have a great supervisor and a great superintendent that make the workplace an enjoyable experience.

## Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program

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Visit us on  
the web!



## 3 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE PROJECT JUNTOS/PROJECT PADRES OPEN HOUSE ON FEB. 8

*As told by Project Coordinators Edwin Obergfell & Juan Campos*

**1**— The reason we're having it is to **introduce people and agencies to our new services**. If I were a partnering agency I would want to find out how these projects might possibly help make my job and my life easier.

**2**— The Open House is a great service for our **partnering** agency's clients. These projects are two great services for our area that meet unmet needs locally. The event is a great opportunity for people to find out about these services.

**3**— This is unlike anything that's available in the Valley & we have two (of these projects) now: We have something for relationships and something for fathers. And the **free food** and **giveaways**, of course, is part of the draw of the event.

## Preparing Students For Work: It's Our Business.

### IVROP Vision Statement:

*The Imperial Valley Regional Occupational Program is dedicated to developing and providing quality training, career, technological, and educational services. These programs will meet the needs of all students empowering them to become successful contributing members of a global society.*



**National Marriage Week  
USA is February 7—14**

**WHAT: IVROP OPEN HOUSE FOR PROJECT JUNTOS & PADRES**

**WHEN: WED., FEB.**

**8TH, 4 P.M. TO 6 P.M.**

**WHERE: EAGLES LODGE, 661 W. MAIN STREET IN EL CENTRO**

**WHO: OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

## IVROP—VITA program Cont.

Tate said the IVROP is one of 14 VITA sites in Imperial County. She said four local tax prep sites are also sponsored by the AARP. Tate said while some tax prep has been available in Imperial County since the early 1980's it has been fairly sparse until the forming of a coalition of partnering agencies in 2003.

"IVROP has been (participating in the VITA program) the past 10 years," IVROP VITA co-coordinator Irma Jimenez said in an interview.

"Usually the training (for volunteers) starts in October and we start helping people the last week of January," she said. "This year the tax deadline is April 17 and

we'll be doing this until April 16."

IVROP VITA site co-coordinator Patricia Robledo said she enjoys volunteering in the VITA program not only because she enjoys working with numbers but also because she enjoys helping people so they do not get taken advantage of by other tax preparers. She said it's all about the clients' needs.

"Many people don't know about our services because we don't have the funds to advertise; it's either word of mouth or our flyers," Robledo said.

"They come back because they know the IRS audits our work through the website automatically so they feel it's more safe," she

said. "They come because it's free and when you tell them they'll get (their returns) within 10 days they get more excited."

"I just love it. I like the challenge," Robledo said with a smile.

For full listings of VITA site locations in Imperial County visit the Project Juntos Facebook page by logging into Facebook and searching for "Project JUNTOS."

