



Prevention in Motion: October Highlights

October brings a wealth of important observances all centered on increasing understanding, reducing stigma, and supporting wellness in our communities. From mental health to substance use prevention, this month is packed with opportunities to learn, reflect, and take action together.

National Depression & Mental Health Screening Month

This month reminds us of the importance of understanding depression and recognizing its signs. Unfortunately, stigma is still widespread. One study found that nearly 30% of people believed depression was caused by a “weak personality.” 💔 That’s why education matters. The American Psychological Association (APA) offers a variety of tools to guide providers in assessing depression across different populations. One example: the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), a questionnaire for parents that helps identify children’s social and behavioral challenges.

👉 Explore more resources here: [APA Depression Guidelines](#)

Substance Misuse Prevention Month & Healthy Lung Month

October also highlights the importance of prevention. SAMHSA is inviting everyone to share how prevention is making a difference in their community. For us, prevention happens year-round, of course! This year alone, we’ve reached more than 61,000 lives in Palm Beach County with prevention education!

Our 16th Annual School Bus Drug Prevention Media Contest Is Underway

🏆 Scholarships will be awarded

🚌 Winning artwork will appear on hundreds of school buses

📝 Past contests drew 700+ entries from 30+ schools

💡 Learn more at PBCBusPoster.org and don't forget: this year's theme is "The Art of Self-Care" 💡

💡 New this year: High school participants and winners are eligible to count the contest as a qualifying event for the prestigious Seal of Fine Arts on their diploma, a big boost for college and career pathways! Learn the details below.

Other Key Dates this October

Mental Illness Awareness Week (MIAW) October 6–12

Led by NAMI, this week spotlights the importance of mental health education and support.

World Mental Health Day October 10

Established by the World Federation for Mental Health, this day unites people globally in raising awareness and taking action.

Red Ribbon Week October 23–31

Founded by the National Family Partnership, this campaign encourages youth to live drug-free lives.

National Prescription Drug Take Back Day October 25

Join us at Walgreens in either Boynton Beach or Wellington for our annual Take Back Day! Bring unused or expired medications for safe disposal. These events help us collect pounds upon pounds of medications to keep them out of our waterways and away from children and pets.

- Walgreens 1: 1601 S Congress Ave, Boynton Beach, FL, 33436
- Walgreens 2: 10420 Forest Hill Blvd, Wellington, FL 33414

School Bus Drug Prevention Media Contest

Attention high school students!

We're proud to announce that the 16th Annual School Bus Drug Prevention Media Contest is now a qualifying Fine Arts event for the **Florida Seal of Fine Arts**.



PBCBHC
Palm Beach County
Behavioral Health Coalition
Building A Healthier Community



SCHOOL BUS
DRUG PREVENTION
MEDIA CONTEST

THE ART OF SELF-CARE



**CALL OR TEXT
A FRIEND**



**DO SOME
JOURNALING**



**STAY ALCOHOL &
VAPE-FREE**



**ENTER OUR CONTEST TO
WIN SCHOLARSHIPS FROM
\$100 TO \$1,000**

**PLUS EARN
COMMUNITY SERVICE
HOURS**



**ENTER TO EARN YOUR
FINE ARTS SEAL**



**SHORT VIDEO
REEL CATEGORY**

**VISUAL & DIGITAL ART
CATEGORIES**

Deadline to receive entries
February 8, 2026

Questions?
Prevention@pbcbhc.org
561-374-7627

**FOR MORE INFO ON
HOW TO ENTER, VISIT:**
PBCBUSPOSTER.ORG
OR SCAN HERE



SPONSORED BY






IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:








**Southeast Florida
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NETWORK**

**CORAL SHORES
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

**Rotary
Club of Wellington**

September Recap

We are grateful to have been part of Alexa Lee's journey. As she leaves the Coalition, we wish her all the best in her next adventure.

Alexa is tremendously committed to the safety of all students traveling on the School District of Palm Beach County's bus service. She has been dedicated partner in promoting awareness on our buses for over 15 years.
Shane Sarchwell, Palm Beach Schools Transportation

Alexa Lee has been an outstanding partner to our PBSO/PAI Sports-Academics and Mentoring Summer Camp, dedicating years to youth alcohol, nicotine and drug prevention. Her efforts have empowered countless students to make healthier choices, and her impact continues to resonate throughout our community.
Deputy Kenneth Torrence (Coach T), PBSO

I've worked with Alexa for over 15 years and have been awed at her dedication and commitment to help young children to be aware of the dangers of abuse in any form. She is tremendous in her caring for children and dedicated to prevention.
Tom Carreras, past PBCBHC Board Member

Since the turn of the century, Alexa and I have facilitated fun together. In the past 5 years, we have also impacted our community for better. I say "we" because I have learned so much from Alexa about community engagement, listening to youth, remembering our "why" and how to plug through obstacles. She is a force and I am most grateful for her leadership, passion and encouragement to be part of the solution.
Best wishes in your next season.
Susan Foley, Innovative Leisure and PBCBHC

Alexa could never be described in just one word.
A - She's able to make anyone feel loved and comfortable around her.
L - She's a true leader who lifts others up and leads with heart.
E - She's extremely kind, always choosing empathy over ego.
X - She's extraordinary in every way - someone who goes above & beyond.
A - She's authentic, never afraid to be real, honest, and human.
She's always been more than just a boss - she's a mentor, a cheerleader, and a friend. Alexa, wherever you put your foot down, you brighten the place up.
You leave a little bit of sunshine wherever you go. Your energy, grace, and heart have made a lasting impact on everyone lucky enough to know you.
Marie Charleus, former colleague, current fan

Alexa has always put her heart and soul into the future of our school children. The School Bus project has been a great way to reach young students before they are in trouble with Drugs and Alcohol.
Don Gross, Past President of The Wellington Rotary Club

Alexa Lee consistently seeks out opportunities for collaboration, reminding us that our greatest strength lies in working together. Her inclusive spirit and commitment to collective impact make her an invaluable part of the behavioral health community.
Katherine Murphy, NAMI

"Alexa has had a consistent impact in substance use prevention in Palm Beach County for years. PBCBHC is one of leading coalitions the FL National Guard Counterdrug Program works with across 11 counties because of her commitment.
Sgt Pierce, FL National Guard

Thank
You

Alexa Lee



Alexa and I had a wonderful working relationship during my time volunteering with Palm Beach County Behavioral Health Coalition and Teen Coalition in Action. She is a thoughtful leader and mentor, and encouraged me to take steps outside my comfort zone to help impact our local community!
Tessie Goron, Past TCIA President, Advocate, Drop the Vape author

I have known Alexa Lee as a professional colleague for many years. I have always admired her vibrant enthusiasm, commitment and dedication in engaging the youth of our community to live healthier, drug and alcohol free lives. She has had great impact on our youth and their families as well.
Patrice Schroeder, 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast

Alexa Lee has been a passionate advocate for empowering students by giving them a voice through their artwork. Her efforts have provided opportunities for young artists to share their creativity with the community, turning their talents into a force for positive change. Through her dedication, student artwork has not only been celebrated but has also supported meaningful causes for Alcohol and Vape Prevention, inspiring others to see the impact of art beyond the classroom!
Natasha VanDer Kamp, John I Leonard High School Art teacher

Throughout my time with TCIA, Ms. Lee has always been welcoming, accommodating, and an incredible speaker I have learned so much from. She has left an impression on me through her kind and dedicated leadership, and I will forever be grateful to her. I hope she continues to do what she loves and to inspire those around her through her devotion.
Mara Popa, TCIA President

Alexa is a dedicated committed soldier in the prevention army.
Verece Jenkins, Federation of Families of Florida

From a grateful community!

Ever since I first started volunteering with the TCIA when I was 13, you have been a steady presence there. When I came back as an adult to volunteer, I carried your example with me. Thank you for paving the way so powerfully for all of us and best of luck in all of the great things you'll do next.
Grace Putnam, former TCIA Agent / PBCBHC Volunteer

Alexa has been such an awesome partner to get to know and work with over the past few years. Her passion for improving the health and well-being of Palm Beach County youth is inspiring.
Alita Faber, BeWellPBC

With my position with the Sheriff's office I was given the opportunity to partner with Behavior Health Coalition and Alexa I was very impressed with her dedication to increase the quality of life for the residents of Palm beach county and am proud to call her friend.
Sgt James Hightower, PBSO

Wow it's has been a honor working with someone with such dedication and passion that made an impact in our work relationship as well as the impact she has made on the community and families she has worked with. Alexa I wish you well on your new journey.
Valerie Jordan, Peer Specialist, Recovery Community Center HUB of PBC

Alexa Lee's training and advocacy for our youth in the Glades area has given students vital knowledge and support to grow and succeed. She has been a powerful force in our community, always leading with compassion and unwavering commitment. Her impact has opened doors of opportunity, and I am confident she will continue to shine in her new role.
William Freeman, People of Purpose

Alexa is the face of the Coalition. She has made extraordinary contributions to the community through the media contest, Youth Summit, and raising overall public awareness. Alexa's dedication to her work is an inspiration for all.
Marcia Bahia, PBSO, PBC Youth Summit

Alexa is such a great asset to Palm Beach County with her understanding of the correlation of trauma and its effects of mental health and substance use disorders. Thank you Alexa for your never ending enthusiasm and compassion.
Tammy Fields, Deputy County Administrator, Palm Beach County

Thank you for your many years of dedication and service to the Palm Beach County Behavioral Health Coalition. Your commitment, passion, and hard work have left a lasting mark on the coalition and on me. I deeply appreciate all that you have contributed to advancing our mission. Your efforts have made a real difference in the lives of children, families, and communities across Palm Beach County, and I am grateful for the time and energy you poured into this important work.
Ryan Wertepny, PBCBHC

Alexa has poured her heart and soul into the community through her work at the coalition. She has been a gift to PBC prevention efforts. She works tirelessly, is creative and always keeps a smile on her face. I wish her the best in her next adventure.
Wynne Stallings, Soul Spring Counseling

CAPE Universal Teen Center Ribbon Cutting

We were proud to witness our community partner, CAPE Universal, open their second Teen Center at their ribbon cutting ceremony at 1855 Indian Rd, West Palm Beach, FL 33409. We're excited for this new center, which will empower youth across Palm Beach County and beyond through cultural arts, mentoring, tutoring, and career and college preparation.

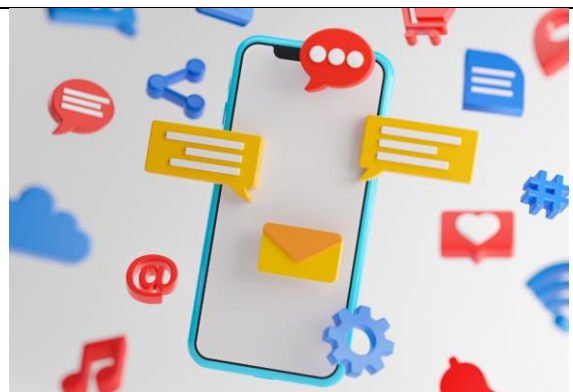


News You Can Use



Ob/Gyn Group Advises Against Cannabis Use During Pregnancy

According to [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists now recommends



Ideas to How to Use Social Media Healthfully

Laura Marciano, a former research associate in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health,

avoiding cannabis use during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Current research shows that cannabinoid receptors appear in the fetus as early as five weeks, and THC, the main psychoactive component of cannabis, can cross the placenta and pass into breast milk.

This is even more concerning when you consider that a 2019 National Institute on Drug Abuse analysis of over 450,000 pregnant women in the U.S. (ages 12–44) found that cannabis use more than doubled between 2002 and 2017.

shares what current research tells us about how to use social media healthfully on [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health's blog](#). In summary, here are her tips:

Check in: Ask yourself, “Am I using social media to connect or just out of habit? Is it adding to my day or taking away?”

- **Keep perspective:** Balance social media with other activities that support well-being.
- **Curate your feed:** Follow accounts that inspire; unfollow those that cause stress or comparison.
- **Set boundaries:** Use timers, turn off notifications, and create phone-free routines, especially before bed.
- **Value real-life connection:** Face-to-face interaction can't be replaced by screens.



**More Good News:
Gen Z Is Drinking
Less**

[Research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) indicates that lifetime, past-year, and past-

FDA Urges Nicotine Pouch Manufacturers To Use Child-Resistant Packaging Following Increasing Reports of Accidental Exposure

Between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2025, U.S. Poison Centers saw a steady rise in reported nicotine pouch exposure cases, with about 72% involving children under the age of 5.

To address this growing concern, [the U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) is calling on nicotine pouch manufacturers to use child-resistant packaging to better protect American children from accidental and harmful exposure

month drinking among young people began to decline around the year 2000, right as Gen Z was coming of age. "It is becoming clear that, for whatever reasons, today's younger generations are simply less interested in alcohol. They are more likely than older generations to view it as a health risk and to engage in periods of abstinence, such as Dry January," said George F. Koob of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in a statement.

Community Service



 **Calling All Volunteers for Spookeyville** 
Join us for some Halloween fun while making a difference

 When:

- **Sat, October 11 at 12:30 to 4:30 PM or 4:00 to 8:00PM**
- **Sat, October 25 at 12:30 to 4:30 PM or 4:00 to 8:00PM**

 Where: Yesteryear Village

 What you'll do:

Help us hand out swag and share important info on substance use prevention and mental health support at this kid & teen–friendly Halloween event.

 Bonus: High school students can earn community service hours!

 Ready to join? Email Prevention@pbcbhc.org to sign up.

VOLUNTEER

Community Happenings



Neuroarts, Stress Management & Emotional Resiliency

PRESENTED BY PBC NEUROARTS COLLABORATIVE

Learn simple, science-supported arts practices for building emotional resilience and supporting brain health.

Discover the hidden impact of stress on the body, brain, and behavior before sampling proven arts-based techniques for helping your brain return to its calmer state (homeostasis).

Learn new ways to build emotional resiliency through free-association drawing, contemplative art gazing, poetry, music, rhythmic movement, and mindfulness practices—there's something for everyone!

- Coffee & Refreshments
- Panel Discussion
- Interactive neuroarts experiences

October 8, 2025
9:00 am - 11:30 am

Armory Art Center
811 Park Place
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

FREE EVENT

Limited Sp

REGISTER

PalmHealthFoundation.org/Event




TRAIN THE BRAIN

Join us for a special event designed to empower caregivers with practical, science-based tips to support brain health and emotional well-being at home.

For Kids:

- Yoga to promote calm focus and body awareness
- Art Class to spark creativity and self expression
- Music Circle to encourage connection, joy, and brain growth

For Caregivers:

- Interactive sessions with research-backed strategies for nurturing emotional health
- Guidance from experts on fostering brain health
- Tools you can start using the very same day

Wednesday, October 15, 2025
9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Boynton Beach Arts and Cultural Center
125 E Ocean Ave.
Boynton Beach, FL 33435

Snacks and refreshments be provided

This is a **FREE** event for all ages. Online booking is required.

www.schoolhousemuseum.org 561-742-6780





Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

SAVE THE DATE

2025 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

Please join Bert Rothenbach, Ph.D., in partnership with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to discuss methodology and key findings from the 2025 survey.

Event Details

Date	Time	Location	Hybrid
October 10, 2025	9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	2415 North Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32303 Auditorium C100	Via Microsoft Teams

Please contact **Jennifer Williams** for additional information regarding the event:
Email: Jennifer.Williams1@myflfamilies.com | Phone: (850) 481-2954

Be the First to Learn About Florida's Youth

Presentation Topics:

- Substance Use Prevalence Rates
- Trends for Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Marijuana
- Vaping Nicotine and Marijuana
- Delta 8, Delta 9, THC, Kratom
- One Pill Can Kill and the 988 Crisis Lifeline
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)



ARTS ON THE MUCK



A Fun Day of Brain-Stimulating Activities for Seniors!

October 22, 2025

11AM-2PM

Lois Lewis/Mary O. Evans Community Center
1224 SW Avenue E Place; Belle Glade, FL

Join us for a football-themed afternoon filled with:

- Engaging arts & crafts
- Memory-boosting games
- Music & movement
- Tailgate-style refreshments
- Prizes, fun, and friendly competition!

Wear your favorite football team colors!
MAROON AND GOLD ROYAL BLUE AND WHITE

This event is FREE!

Let's celebrate community, creativity, and cognitive wellness – the Muck way!

For more information, contact:
Annie Hill, Project Director healthierglade@hpb.org or (561) 485-4829





TRAIN THE BRAIN: *Neuroscience Community Conversation*

Saturday, Oct. 25
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Doors open at 8 a.m.
Program begins promptly at 9 a.m.



Body, Mind & Emotion Lessons Across the Lifespan

Florida Atlantic University's Stiles-Nicholson Brain Institute invites you to the **Train the Brain Community Conversation** to explore how body and brain function, health and promote resilient

Hear from **prominent, front-line brain researchers** from across the state revealing the significance of body-brain connections throughout life and sustain brain health.

 **Palm Health FOUNDATION** This event is presented with support from Palm Health Foundation as part of the Train the Brain series.

 **Register Required!**
Scan or visit www.fau.edu/brain.

 View the full line-up of speakers and topics.
Registration is free.

 **Stiles-Nicholson Brain Institute**
on FAU's campus



CAREGIVING YOUTH INSTITUTE CONFERENCE



RESEARCH



POLICY



PRACTICE



Putting Caregiving Youth on the Map
November 13, 2025 | 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

American Association of Caregiving Youth, Inc.*

Join Us For AACY Caregiving Youth Institute Conference

Putting Caregiving Youth on the Map Research, Policy, and Practice

WHAT: Join us in person for this pivotal event as we bring healthcare professionals, social workers, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders to showcase research, shape policy, and develop strategies to better support Caregiving Youth in Florida



WHERE: Safe Schools Institute | 1790 Spaniway Blvd
Boca Raton, FL 33431

WHEN: Thursday, November 13, 2025 | 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

GENERAL ADMISSION: \$50 | (includes coffee and lunch)
School District Employees: \$35 | (with valid ID)

Sponsorships Available

VENDORS: A limited number of vendor tables are available. Each table includes two chairs and registration for two conference attendees. For details, please contact Milka Santos at milka@aacymiami.org

American Association of Caregiving Youth | 6401 Congress Ave. Suite #200, Boca Raton, FL 33431
www.aacy.org | A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION (#CH12431) AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM THE
DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WWW.FRESHFROMFLORIDA.COM. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



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Update your contact info today to be in on all things behavioral health in Palm Beach County.

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Text **PBCBHC to 888-687-0035** for text updates on Coalition happenings.

[Visit our Linktree](#)

