

## SANTA BARBARA

### Community Action Theater Team (CATT)

**Contact:** Interface Children Family Services  
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“As long as they come and participate, I will give them a part and put them in front of an audience. Eighty percent of the true learning is putting them in front of that audience.”

– Irene Silbert, CATT Director

“Students within the program get help themselves. It is not just about who we perform for – those who are depressed or in abusive relationships. It is a positive influence on so many people’s lives.”

– Stephanie Blaze, age 20, CATT participant for six years and now CATT Assistant Director

**Mission:** To tackle violence through art.

**Overview:** CATT uses theater as its medium. Youth write and perform plays about domestic violence, teen dating violence, and suicide. CATT is a collaboration between Interface Children Family Services and Santa Susana High School for the Performing Arts and Technology. CATT offers:

- Year-round training, rehearsals and performance;
- One hundred percent participation;
- Student involvement in all aspects, from design to execution of all productions;
- Student training as peer mediators;
- Conflict resolution training on the road;
- Performances at elementary, middle and high schools; and
- Theater “graduates” who return to take on peer leadership roles.

### **Results:**

- Productions seen by more than 18,000 people, mostly middle school and high school students, from as far south as Costa Mesa and as far north as Sacramento,
- Produced three plays written and directed by youth: “Have you seen Tanya?,” “Leaving with Hope” and “I Can’t Go On.”
- Ninety-one percent of student audience members are able to identify three or more signs of abusive behavior after the presentations.
- Ninety-six percent of CATT performers report increased skills and information that help them help others, as a result of program involvement.

### **Key Elements of Success:**

- Puts participants in front of an audience
- Uses art to communicate about the signs of abusive relationships among youth
- Trains actors to provide peer counseling for the audience after productions
- Offers outreach and resources to youth in abusive relationships
- Develops leadership by creating productions written and directed by youth

**Target Population:** An average of 25-50 students are part of the program each year. CATT is open to any teenager who can travel to Santa Susanna High School.

**Evaluation:** Interface Community Services Quarterly Report, December 2003

“We are getting the word out that if someone is in an abusive relationship, they have people to go to, to get them out of that situation. We are taught about peer tutoring and how to deal with a situation when kids come up to us and share afterwards. One time, we performed at a middle school and then talked with girls about what to do if they find themselves in an abusive situation. Afterwards, they all left except for one girl who was crying her eyes out. She had told her mother, counselors – everyone – that her boyfriend was hitting her, and no one believed her. [After our program] she was able to get help and get out of that situation.”

– *Stephanie Blaze*