



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, May 16, 2023

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City of Stockton Office of Violence Prevention Inaugural Symposium *Transforming Harm into Healing and Hope: Resilience from Gun and Gang Violence*

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) will hold an inaugural symposium titled, "Transforming Harm into Healing and Hope: Resilience from Gun and Gang Violence." The event will take place on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at the Hilton Stockton, 2323 Grand Canal Blvd, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Art Blajos, whose life inspired the 1993 award-winning crime drama, *Blood In Blood Out*, is the keynote speaker.

Blajos emerged from the darkness of Los Angeles gangs and the Mexican mafia, and is now an evangelist, who has dedicated his life to saving others from the darkness of gangs and guns. His inspiring story of transformation and resilience is an excellent example of how individuals can overcome the harmful effects of gun and gang violence.

The symposium aims to bring together community members and professionals in the field of violence prevention to share their experiences and knowledge about transforming harm into healing and hope. The event will allow attendees to learn from one another and develop new strategies to reduce gun and gang violence in Stockton.

"We are thrilled to host Art Blajos as our keynote speaker," said Lora Larson, Director of OVP. "His story is a testament to the human spirit and the possibility of overcoming even the most challenging circumstances. We hope this to inspire attendees and provide them with tools to help transform harm into healing and hope in their communities."

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The symposium will feature various speakers and panel discussions covering trauma-informed care, restorative justice, and community-based violence prevention strategies.

The OVP encourages anyone interested in learning about violence prevention and supporting their community to attend this event. Registration is \$15 per person and available at [Eventbrite](#).

The first Champion of H.O.P.E. Award, honoring outstanding prevention efforts, will also be announced during the symposium. The goal is to make this award annually, recognizing and honoring an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution toward reducing violence in our community. To submit a nomination, please download the submission form linked at www.stocktonca.gov/OVP. Completed nomination forms must be received by the Office of Violence Prevention by 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 5, 2023.

For more information, please contact the Office of Violence Prevention at (209) 937-8409.

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