

*What is Recovery Month? By Nell Lobdell, Kings Partnership for Prevention, Coordinator*

**Recovery Month** is an annual observance that takes place during the month of September.

The **Recovery Month** observance highlights the societal benefits of substance abuse treatment, lauds the contributions of treatment providers and promotes the message that recovery from substance abuse in all its forms is possible. The observance also encourages citizens to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective substance abuse treatment for those in need. Each year a new theme, or emphasis, is selected for the observance.

**Recovery Month** provides a platform to celebrate people in recovery and those who serve them. Each September, thousands of treatment programs around the country celebrate their successes and share them with their neighbors, friends, and colleagues in an effort to educate the public about treatment, how it works, for whom, and why. Substance abuse treatment providers have made significant accomplishments, having transformed the lives of untold thousands of Americans. These successes often go unnoticed by the broader population; therefore, Recovery Month provides a vehicle to celebrate these successes.

**Recovery Month** also serves to educate the public on substance abuse as a national health crisis, that addiction is a treatable disease, and that recovery is possible. **Recovery Month** highlights the benefits of treatment for not only the affected individual, but for their family, friends, workplace, and society as a whole. Educating the public reduces the stigma associated with addiction and treatment. Accurate knowledge of the disease helps people to understand the importance of supporting treatment programs, those who work within the treatment field, and those in need of treatment.

Locally, treatment providers and the recovery community of Kings County, spearheaded by the Kings County Behavioral Health Board and supported by the Kings Partnership for Prevention, hold **SOBERFEST**. This year the event will be held September 5<sup>th</sup> in the Hanford Civic Park. A variety of events to celebrate recovery will be offered including a Chili and Salsa Cook-off, Volleyball Tournament, kids' rides and games, prizes and raffles, music and entertainment, a car/truck show, inspirational speakers, a teen Karaoke contest and a recognition ceremony. There will be information and food booths as well. This event traditionally attracts hundreds of individuals at various stages of recovery. It is a day to celebrate drug free & alcohol free lifestyles. Sue Braz from Champions is the chair for this year's event. If you want to get involved, you can contact her at 583-9300.

On this day we push the envelope on traditional roles and ask the whole community to embrace this segment of our community. The event itself serves to reduce the negative stigma associated with being in treatment or being an addict. This day is to celebrate equality and living life a day at a time while celebrating in a clean, sober community fashion.

What I like about SOBERFEST is that it is a day, set aside to acknowledge the efforts of the many citizens in our county who have trod the difficult road to recovery. It is a day for them to stand proud and enjoy sober festivities just for them. It is also a day to give all the treatment & prevention providers a pat on the back for all their hard work and for a job well done. It is more than a festival in the park, it is a celebration of community, drug free and proud. Lets make that Kings County!