

## Otter lets anti-meth ads speak for themselves

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Community and business leaders joined Gov. Butch Otter at the Simplot mansion Wednesday to see a series of gritty, graphic anti-meth ads that could be on Idaho TV screens and billboards by fall.

Otter wants Idaho businesses, organizations and individuals to pony up \$2.7 million a year to borrow the concept and ads from a Montana businessman who has gotten national attention for his provocative anti-meth campaign.

Otter said Monsanto Co. had pledged one-quarter of its Idaho advertising budget, but didn't specify the amount. One Idaho TV station has promised free air time, and other businesses have shown interest in getting involved. Mike McKinniss of the Idaho Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs said he wants to help with education.

If supporters can form a nonprofit corporation and raise the money by March, the ads can run in Idaho this fall — likely starting with a radio campaign, said Otter's drug chief, Debbie Field.

The Montana ads were launched in September 2005 as part of a \$15 million "Not Even Once" campaign against methamphetamine. The Montana Meth Project was founded by software billionaire Tom Siebel, a father of four and a part-time Montana resident, who said he modeled the effort on the successes of the American Cancer Society's anti-smoking ads. Siebel met with Otter and Idaho leaders at the Boise meeting Wednesday.

The ads run in prime-time and focus on preventing teens from ever trying the drug. The "Not Even Once" message specifically aims to keep kids from experimenting even one time with the addictive drug. Siebel said a series of focus groups told him that teens needed to be convinced of the effects meth can have on their bodies and their lives.

The ads play heavily on the gruesome physical effects of meth, showing scabbed bodies and blood running down drains as addicts pick their skin off. They also feature images of normal teens having to do the unthinkable to get more of the drug.

In one ad, a teenage boy watches a scabby, crazed version of himself rob families in a laundromat. In another, a teenage girl starts fresh-faced and ends up bruised and vacant-eyed, selling her body to get more meth. The campaign also includes a series of billboard ads and radio spots with real meth addicts telling their stories.

In one billboard, a filthy public bathroom is shown beneath the words: "No one thinks they'll lose their virginity here. Meth will change that."

"It's very loud, it's flashy, it's edgy and it's MTV-like," Siebel said Wednesday. "They're not public service announcements that run at 2:30 in the morning. We're prime-time, 7 p.m. to 11 p.m."

Advertising Web site Adcritic.com ranked the ads among their top 20, Siebel said, although additional details were not available.

Idaho would not be the first state to borrow Montana's model. In his presentation to Idaho leaders Wednesday, Siebel said Illinois and Arizona are launching campaigns using the ads. Siebel said Idaho would need about \$2.7 million annually to implement the program here and could use his ads for a nominal fee to offset a small portion of production costs.

The Montana project has been a success, according to Montana Attorney General Mike McGrath. A report released this month by McGrath's office said the number of methamphetamine-addicted patients reported by Montana hospitals declined 67 percent between 2005 and 2006. Methamphetamine seizures by law enforcement agencies decreased 51 percent, and meth-positive crime toxicology tests decreased 45 percent in the same period, the report said.

Meth is a big problem in Idaho. Canyon County Sheriff Chris Smith, for example, estimates that more than 90 percent of the people booked into the Canyon County Jail have had some association with meth. Ada County officials say about 72 percent of those entering Ada County Drug Court use meth. About half of Idaho inmates report that abuse of methamphetamine directly contributed to their arrest, according to the Department of Correction.

Siebel's project also included regular surveys on the success of the message. He said those showed a significant change in perception of methamphetamine use among teens, the project's goal. For example, the March 2006 survey showed 76 percent of teens thought using meth greatly increased their chances of stealing, compared to 57 percent in August 2005.