

## Anti-meth Ads Take Softer Tone

By ANGELA BRANDT Independent Record | Posted: Thursday, January 14, 2010 12:00 am

“Before meth I had a daughter. Now I have a prostitute.”

The message is clear — and noticeably less graphic — in Montana Meth Project’s latest advertising campaign, which was unveiled Wednesday. While previous years’ campaigns included controversial billboards such as one depicting a young, pock-marked, glassy eyed girl selling herself for drug money in the grass next to a chain-link fence, these are more subtle, showing a framed photo of a school-aged girl on flowered wall paper.

This wave of advertising, the project’s fifth, once again includes print, radio and billboards, as well as television ads.

The latest television spots were directed by three-time Academy Award-nominated cinematographer Wally Pfister, who is known for his work on the movies “The Dark Knight” and “Memento.”

Students at Capital High School were given a sneak peek at the campaign.

In one of the radio spots, Oriah, a Boulder boy who started using meth at age 12, speaks about hitting a total stranger with a tire iron and also striking his mom.

“You can’t take something like that back,” he says.

Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State and former director of the Office of Public Instruction, said meth use has dropped 63 percent in the state since the Meth Project launched in 2005.

“This campaign is working thanks to every one in this room,” McCulloch said to the crowd congregated in the auditorium at Capital High School.

“One person can make a profound difference by speaking out,” she added.

During a question period after the ads were unveiled, one student asked why the ads were less graphic than previous campaigns if the past ones worked so well.

Montana Meth Project Director Bill Slaughter said any ad will lose its effectiveness after a while. The advertising is evolving, he said, and the new message is to speak out if a friend or loved one is even contemplating trying meth.

Another student asked about the projected goals of the Montana Meth Project.

“At what point do you declare victory? Never,” Slaughter said. “This is the most highly addictive drug we have ever seen. You can’t really compare it with other drugs, it’s way worse.”

Slaughter said the campaign must continue to keep the message of meth’s danger in people’s minds. Montana has gone from fifth in the nation for meth use to 39th.

“While there’s no question we’ve made a ton of progress, there’s more work to be done,” he added.

Students also questioned whether the project will move on to other drugs at some point.

“This war is not over,” Slaughter answered, saying the focus will remain.

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