

MONTANA METH PROJECT®

Montana Meth Project Officials Thank State's Teens for Unprecedented Show of Support

Thousands Converge at State Capitol in Historic March Against Meth

Helena, MT—February 16, 2009—At an event at the State Capitol today, officials from the Montana Meth Project thanked the state's teens, public officials, community leaders and volunteers for their commitment to the statewide campaign.

The event was part of the March Against Meth, in which more than 2,300 teens led the call for continued funding for the Montana Meth Project. It was the largest teen demonstration in Montana's history, and culminated in the delivery of petitions signed by more than 55,000 Montana residents requesting financial support for the Project from the State Legislature. The petitions were accepted on the steps of the State Capitol by Speaker of the House Bob Bergren and state Senate President Robert Story. U.S. Senator Max Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock were also in attendance.

"Today's event happened thanks to the incredible leadership of young people from all across Montana," said Mike Gulledge, chairman of the Montana Meth Project. "They worked for more than six months to collect signatures and plan today's activities. Their dedication is unprecedented. I want to thank them, and everyone who participated in the March Against Meth, for such a remarkable show of support."

The March Against Meth began with a rally at Helena High School, where participants were greeted by Helena Mayor James Smith, who proclaimed the day "March Against Meth Day" in the state capital. The group then marched en masse to the capitol steps, escorted overhead by the Homeland Security's Blackhawk helicopter, accompanied by recovering Meth addicts, local Native American tribes, teachers, parents and volunteers of all ages. Event sponsors included First Interstate Bank, Martel Construction, Rio Tinto Energy and State Fund.

At a press conference following the March, Senator Baucus cited recent reports on the economic burden methamphetamine use places on the U.S. and on Montana as evidence of the need for a continued focus on prevention.

"Meth use costs the United States more than \$23 billion each year, and it costs the state of Montana \$200 million," said Senator Baucus. "These are dollars we cannot afford to spend and lives we cannot afford to waste. The Meth Project's prevention program works, which is why I have called on the federal government to devote additional funds to support the Project and I will continue to provide leadership to rid our state and nation of this destructive drug."

The March Against Meth event coincided with the release last week of a new report by the Montana Attorney General's office that found that methamphetamine use costs the state more than \$200 million every year in crimes and criminal justice costs; Meth treatment; Meth-related child endangerment; health services used in the treatment of medical conditions attributed to Meth use; and lost productivity due to absenteeism, unemployment and premature death. Those costs are down from a peak of \$300 million in 2005, when the Montana Meth Project launched. In the same period, teen meth use declined by 45%, and adult use declined by more than 70%.

“We cannot afford to pay the price of methamphetamine use any longer,” said Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock citing the report. “It’s important that we reach out to the next generation and continue to educate our kids about the devastating consequences of Meth.”

About the Montana Meth Project

Launched in September 2005, the Montana Meth Project—a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Missoula, Montana—implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use in the state. Combining extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign, it has been repeatedly cited as an effective response to a devastating social problem. For more information, visit www.montanameth.org.

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